

# Kirchoefer pleads guilty to 3 felony porn counts

Fritz Busch

NEW ULM - A 32-year-old former Sleepy Eye St. Mary's teacher pleaded guilty to two felony counts of using minors in pornographic work and one count of possessing pornographic work in Brown County District Court Monday.

As part of a Rule 15 plea agreement in hearing using remote technology, five counts of possession of pornographic work involving minors and two counts of disseminating pornographic work were dismissed against Neil A. Kirchoefer of Eden Prairie. A pre-sentence investigation was order and sentencing was set for 9:15 a.m., Monday, Oct. 5.

Charges were filed Aug. 1, 2018. Kirchoefer had no prior criminal history other than speeding tickets, according to his attorney Charles L. Hawkins of Minneapolis.

Kirchoefer was placed on unpaid leave after the allegations surfaced. He resigned shortly thereafter.

According to the complaint, on Nov. 28, 2018, Sleepy Eye Police met with Sleepy Eye St. Mary's school staff members who wanted to report a staff member viewed potential illegal images on a school network computer.

A school staff member said they saw boys about 12 years old in their underwear on a computer used by Kirchoefer. Police later got a search warrant, received a school laptop computer retained the Washington County Sheriff's Office to do forensic analysis of the devices including a MacBook Pro, MacBook Air and HP laptop.

A Washington County Sheriff's Office investigator searched the computers and located 1,452 images of child pornography, 18 movie files containing child pornography or belonging to a series of child pornography. In addition, it was determined Kirchoefer sent links of child pornography to others, including a 22 minute, nine second video.

On Jan. 14, 2019, 169 images and 27 movies containing child pornography or belonging to a series of child porn were submitted by authorities to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, law enforcement portal. Images/videos appeared to depict at least one child previously identified by law enforcement.