



**For Immediate Release:** 04.09.04

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**Middle School Teacher Charged with Sexual Abuse of Juvenile**

Oak Park police today charged a middle school orchestra director with criminal sexual abuse of a female juvenile.

Edward J. Bell, 48, of Wheaton, was charged with four counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Bell is scheduled to be arraigned at 1:30 p.m. today in 4<sup>th</sup> District Court of Cook County in Maywood. The charges are Class 2 felonies, each carrying a maximum penalty of up to seven years in prison.

Charges against Bell, who has taught for six years in Oak Park School District 97, came after an investigation into concerns voiced by the former student's parents. School district officials immediately contacted the Department of Children and Family Services, which brought in the Oak Park Police Department to investigate. The investigation was conducted in coordination with the Cook County State's Attorney's Child Advocacy and Protection Unit.

School officials had placed Bell on administrative leave when the concerns were raised on March 28. He was the orchestra director at Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School, one of two middle schools in Oak Park.

Oak Park Police Chief Rick C. Tanksley praised the victim's parents for bringing the situation to the attention of the proper authorities.

"Alert parents who understand the importance of monitoring the activities of their children are crucial to law enforcement's efforts to protect juveniles," he said. "In today's world it is vital that parents know with whom their children are interacting. They must be willing to check emails, monitor computer usage and be as involved in the lives of their children as possible."

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