



Department of Justice

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**FORMER MELVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO
FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES
NOW FACES FIVE TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON**

ST. LOUIS, Missouri -Thomas Mantle, Barnhart, Missouri pled guilty to federal child pornography charges, U.S. Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway of the Eastern District of Missouri announced today.

“Nothing we do is more important than protecting children from these on-line predators. I am very grateful to the St. Louis County Police Department for their investigation of this case. Working together, we will investigate and prosecute those who promote child pornography, said Hanaway.

In December 2005, an undercover detective with the Keene, New Hampshire Police Department, posed as a 14-year-old boy and exchanged emails with Mantle. The emails continued over the course of three months and often were sexual and graphic in nature. Between December 2005 and February 2006, Mantle emailed files that contained images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. The detective traced the email account to a computer belonging to the Mehlville School District in St. Louis County. At the time, Mantle was employed with the Mehlville School District as a network specialist.

Mantle, 44, 2400 block of Sunrise, Barnhart, pled guilty to one felony count each of transportation and possession of child pornography. He appeared before United States District Judge Donald J. Stohr.

Mantle now faces a **mandatory minimum** of five years in prison and a maximum of 20 years on the transportation charge; the possession charge carries a maximum of ten years; along with fines up to \$250,000 and supervised release for life. Sentencing has been set for May 11, 2007.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue

victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov

Hanaway commended the work on the case by the St. Louis County Police Department, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Assistant United States Attorney Reginald Harris, who is handling the case for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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