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Ex-Hilton principal's appeal denied despite claims of snoozing juror

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Former Hilton Central School District elementary principal Kirk Ashton, now imprisoned for the molestation of young boys at his school, has failed with an appeal that challenged his convictions.

Ashton maintained in the appeal that a juror slept during readbacks of portions of the trial and could not render a fair decision with the verdict.

The regional appellate court ruled Friday that State Supreme Court Justice Alex Renzi was alerted to the snoozing juror during the trial and stopped the readback. Afterward, the juror appeared to stay awake.

Renzi 'also noted for the record that the juror heard the same testimony during the trial,' the appellate judges decided.

Ashton was arrested in 2021 and accused of sexually abusing more than 20 male students while he was principal at Hilton's Northwood Elementary School. Ashton was the school's principal for 17 years and his trial raised questions about how the abuse, occurring behind closed doors in his office, went unnoticed or unchecked by others in the school.

A jury convicted Ashton of sex crimes in 2022 and he was sentenced to 63 years. However, corrections regulations limit the sentence to 23 years because of the lower level of his felonies.

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