

## School board behavior focus of public comment

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 19 October 2018 08:58

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Two parents were given the opportunity to speak during the public comment period at the Oct. 16 Gallup-McKinley County Schools board meeting at Tohatchi High School.

The first to speak was Andrea Thomas, parent of a Tohatchi High student, who brought up a topic she had discussed in the past, namely she said the board needs to be more professional and respectful of each other.

Thomas spoke about the contracts for new lobbyists for GMCS, a topic she said she brought up during the board meeting on Aug. 13.

At that meeting, Thomas said the school board should learn to better work together, and that it was a shame state and city government officials are making decisions for the school district when the board should be capable of doing so themselves.

On Oct. 16, Thomas said the contract should have a just cause behind it, adding that the move for lobbyists is looking like an opportunity for personal gain for the school board.

She said the behavior and actions of the school board have a domino effect on the rest of the district.

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“It goes down to our kids, schools and students,” She said.

Thomas also said her daughter had to write a paper on groupthink as part of a college course, and her daughter wrote about the school board.

The conclusion drawn from her daughter’s assignment, Thomas said, was that salary increases, lack of experience and personal interactions come before student interests for the school board.

“[Stop the] groupthink with outside people who should not be involved,” Thomas said. “Let the school board worry about the schools and students.”

Meanwhile, Rebecca Nez, who also has children in Tohatchi schools, spoke, too. She said students and children have much to overcome before graduation.

“There is a bullying epidemic infesting our schools,” she said. “They never get a chance to accomplish things.”

She said bullying is already an uphill battle for parents, teachers and learning advocates, but it’s made more complicated since much of the bad behavior comes from the board.

“All we hear is bullying from adults, [as in] the board, at an adult level,” Nez said.

Nez said she was selected to work with the New Mexico Public Education Department, and when she was asked by the New Mexico Secretary of State about her school board’s behavior, Nez called the situation an embarrassment.

“Can you imagine how ashamed I felt?” she asked.

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Nez said the board should use the energy to battle bullying at all the district schools instead of acting poorly toward one another, and to leave opportunities for personal gain out of the picture.

“Focus on your main job: the future and education of our children,” she said. “Remember why you wanted to be on the board. The children’s futures are in your hands.”

When asked for a response from the district, Hyatt said an official statement would be released in the near future. As of press time, the *Sun* had not received a statement.

By Cody Begaye

Sun Correspondent