

Law enforcement investigates alleged stalking at Hinsdale school

By Noah Diedrich, Sentinel Staff

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HINSDALE — Local law enforcement is investigating a report of alleged stalking at Hinsdale Middle High School, Police Chief Melissa Evans said Thursday.

The topic was broached at a school board meeting Wednesday night, when a Hinsdale parent — who wished to remain anonymous because of concerns about her and her family’s safety — alleged that school and district administration failed to take action after a teacher made a report that a staff member was stalking children at the school.

Superintendent David Ryan said Thursday that he was aware of three students who were involved in the investigation, only one of whom had alleged they were stalked.

Ryan told The Sentinel after the Wednesday meeting that he would not confirm or deny the parent’s comments, and that the district investigates such matters when they are reported and that administrators work together with police.

Federal law prohibits school officials from sharing most information about investigations, discipline and some personnel matters.

Evans said she could not comment further on the investigation, as it is ongoing.

The student’s mother told The Sentinel Thursday that she did not hear about the alleged stalking at the school in November until police contacted her earlier this month.

“This is unacceptable,” she told the board on Wednesday. “Our children are in your care during the school day — they deserve to be protected.”

Timothy O’Neil, a teacher at Hinsdale Middle High School, shared an email with The Sentinel Thursday reporting the matter to Chief Evans on May 4. During Wednesday’s meeting, he said that he had witnessed “a consistent pattern of administrative decisions that have directly harmed students.”

“When student safety reports are reaching outside agencies because internal channels failed, the board has both the authority and the obligation to find out why,” he said. “If you’ve not been briefed on what was reported and how it was handled, you should be asking for that briefing tonight.”

Separately, O'Neil said he and his wife, who also teaches at the school, both filed a complaint with the district regarding multiple grievances, including Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations that they felt were not met, he told The Sentinel. Later, both were told that their contracts were not being renewed for next school year.

O'Neil said the grievance has not yet been resolved and that he and his wife have not received written communication as to why their contracts were not renewed.

The board did not respond to comments made by the Hinsdale parent or O'Neil Wednesday night and did not discuss either matter during public session.

Ryan told The Sentinel after the meeting that he could not respond to O'Neil's remarks because they pertained to personnel matters.

On Monday, O'Neil was placed on administrative leave for "unprofessional conduct towards administration, fellow staff, and parents, and your failure to 'maintain a reasonable standard of care for the supervision, control and protection of students commensurate with their assigned duties and responsibilities,'" according to a copy of a notice he shared with The Sentinel.

A Hinsdale police officer was present at the meeting, which Evans said is normal if a higher attendance than usual is expected.

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