Parent asks if teachers are held to same standard

A parent's complaint during last week's Northern Ozaukee School Board meeting took some of the luster off Ozaukee Middle School Principal Pam Warner's presentation on steps to control bullying at the school.

Warner said the school has been conducting a comprehensive anti-bullying program, which includes ongoing classroom discussions, student surveys and a "bully box" where violators can be anonymously reported.

In part because of the effort, Warner said surveys showed bullying has dropped at the school — from 100 incidents in January of 2009 to 39 last month.

She said there is little physical aggression going on in the school, but things like name calling are still common.

"These things may seem like small things to us, but they can be really painful to kids," Warner said.

"Some of the horrible things they would never say to a person face to face, they seem to feel free to put on Facebook and on the Internet."

Warner said a program is being implemented that recognizes students for random acts of kindness and a "No Name Calling Week" is being planned.

A protocol is also being prepared so students get consistent feedback from the staff when a bullying incident is reported.

But before she could outline the measures, a parent asked whether teachers are being held to the same behavior standard that students face.

"I feel there is bullying going on by some of the teaching staff," the parent said.

"My daughter is a good student, but she is in a tech education class where the teacher repeatedly calls students lazy and stupid."

The parents said she confirmed the comments with other parents.

"I feel the anti-bullying should apply to teacher, too," the parent said.

Warner said teachers are expected to set examples for students, but the message can sometimes be muddled.

"There are times when teachers are going to reprimand kids and they are going to raise their voices, but calling students names is something else," she said.

Supt. Bill Harbron said the district expects staff members and students to show respect for one another, lamenting a move away from civility in today's culture.

"Our society has changed. Do we expect our children to be civil? Of course, but I never expected the schools to teach my children how to behave. I felt that was the job of my wife and I," Harbron said.