

# Watchung board talks 'students recognizing students' initiative

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**WATCHUNG** - Board of Education member Thomas Sicola says students should be empowered to celebrate their classmates.

Sicola said at the Wednesday, Dec. 13, board meeting he knows the district has honor rolls and other acknowledgements for students, but he doesn't believe "students recognizing students" for positive behavior gets enough attention.

"I wanted to bring up for discussion and board consideration the idea of putting together something for students to recognize students," said Sicola. "I know of a couple instances that happened during



**THOMAS  
SICOLA**



**MICHAEL  
VIGNOLA**

the school year where students have stepped up and done the right thing. They've been acknowledged by their peers for having done it, but it never makes it to us to get official recognition."

Through such an initiative, Sicola said he hopes the district would foster an environment where positive behavior is recognized and supported by other students so that doing the right thing be-

comes the norm.

"I think if we really want to change the culture of the school so that the students are looking out for each other and preventing the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) at the student level, I think we have to make more of an effort to acknowledge those things and find some way to make it a badge of honor," he said. "I'm not sure what the mechanism would be; maybe anonymously a student could write to a teacher and say 'I saw seventh grader so-and-so break up a fight in the school yard' or 'somebody was feeling bad and so-and-so went over to help them out.' It gives them the opportunity to recognize that type of stu-

dent."

Bayberry School Principal Michael Vignola said the school uses a "Shout Out" program to promote good behavior, among other programs. Students nominate each other for the award.

"The students are announced over the loudspeaker, usually on Fridays," he said, "and then the students involved have their pictures taken by the guidance counselor and we have a 'Shout Out' board where those go in the middle hallway of the school."

Board President Ellyn Margulies called Sicola's suggestion a "great idea." She asked that the discussion be brought to the board's curriculum committee.