

# Trail hears from third grade parents

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Lackawanna Trail School board faced a light agenda Monday night, but wanted to introduce its new Elementary Center Principal Brian Kelly to the public.

Kelly noted he was only in his third week on the job, and was quite excited about the career move.

“I firmly believe we’re headed in a super direction,” Kelly said, “and I want it known that I have an open-door policy of communicating with parents.”

He looked at about a dozen visitors in the room, and said, “It’s imperative I get back to you ASAP with your concerns. I look forward to working with you all for the benefit of our children.”

Parent Tangee Hughes said during the visitor comment period that she was a bit concerned about an action announced at the board’s June 30 meeting, and that was that the school district was going to be hiring one less third grade teacher for 2014-15.

She said she had a child going into third and she felt the action would be detrimental for the students. “My child’s bright, but I worry there will be times he or others will need attention and won’t be able to get it,” she said.

“I’d like to understand your rationale,” she said.

School board president Mark Lombardi said he would not put the new principal on the spot, but turned to Superintendent Matt Rakauskas to explain.

The superintendent reviewed that as a savings measure the school looked at one retiring teacher leaving the district and by attrition would like to eliminate a position.

“We studied it with former Elementary Center Principal Tania Stoker, and that seemed to be the most logical,” he said.

Hughes said she realized money was an issue, but she asked how the board could recently vote to give Stoker a raise to \$90,000 and it seems the students won’t benefit directly from that.

It was explained that her job changed to curriculum director.

Board member Kevin Mulhern also said he was privy to discussions the public wasn’t because he is on the board, and he, too, has a third grader.

“I know your concerns, because they are mine as well,” Mulhern said

But he also noted after looking at everything on the table, the district was making the right move.