

Parent kicked off board after participating in protest

By Amanda Baumfeld, Staff Writer
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WEST COVINA - A month after participating in a one-day protest in support of teachers, a parent was ousted from an Options Preschool Parent Board.

Vanessa Madrid, 25, was voted out of the Head Start Parent Council by fellow members on Jan. 5 after serving on the board for five months.

"I wasn't even allowed to defend myself," said Madrid who's daughter is in Head Start. "They said I will never find out exactly what I did, but I was very ignorant in helping the teachers."

West Covina-based Options administers the state's Head Start low-income preschool program, among other services.

The company is a childcare and human services agency providing early care and education to families in the San Gabriel Valley.

Deputy Executive Director Dolores Meade would not say if Madrid's participation in a boycott with 200 other parents on Dec. 15 played a role in her dismissal. The parents kept their kids home for a day in protest of teachers' rights.

"I am assuming the person who brought the motion forward felt Vanessa was not following the rules she is expected to follow," Meade said. "What role her participation in the boycott had? I can not speak to that."

Meade would not disclose who made the motion or disclose the names of any of the parent council members.

Madrid's dismissal comes in the midst of the teachers' union - Service Employees International Union Local 99 - negotiating a new contract with Options officials.

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"We want the parent to be reinstated," said Terry Carter, spokeswoman for SEIU Local 99. "The ultimate goal is a fair contract with very basic protections."

But Options officials said the union is using Madrid as a leverage in negotiation talks.

"It is disheartening to the administration of the agency and the board that the union has decided to use parents as a tool to influence what they believe needs to be in the contract," Meade said. "The contract will be decided at the negotiating table."

On Monday, Madrid along with about 20 other parents went to a Board of Directors meeting pleading to be reinstated to the parent council.

Also at the meeting and speaking on Madrid's behalf was Board of Equalization Chair Judy Chu and a representative from State Assembly Member Ed Hernandez, 57th District - West Covina.

Madrid is hopeful she will be reinstated.

"I love being part of my daughter's education; it hurts me," Madrid said Wednesday. "Why would this happen?"

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