

Schools reach settlement without suit

T.S. Last / Journal Staff Writer

Santa Fe Public Schools and the parents of a girl who used her cellphone to capture video of a school bus driver inappropriately touching her and another girl in 2011 have reached a settlement.

On Monday, an attorney for Santa Fe Public Schools filed a joint petition for court-approval of settlement, the amount of which was undisclosed, in Santa Fe District Court. In addition, the document requests that a hearing date be set to finalize the agreement.

Ann L. Keith, the attorney representing the school district, did not immediately return a phone message Monday.

But Carolyn M. "Cammie" Nichols, who is representing the girl's parents, David Vigil and Brenda Gurule, said that while a settlement has been reached, the agreement requires court approval because a minor was involved.

Nichols said she was pleased the settlement was reached without the family having to file a lawsuit.

"We're grateful that we were able to resolve this case expediently without having to put our client through the case, and that now she has a chance to move forward with her life," Nichols said.

In May 2011, school bus driver Martin Gonzales was arrested after several girls told police Gonzales had touched or flirted with them, and even invited them over to his house.

One of the girls, Vanessa Vigil, provided a key piece of evidence to police when she used her cellphone to capture video of Gonzales grabbing her and another girl on their thighs.

Vigil, who was 13 at the time of the incident, was later hailed as a hero by Santa Fe police, who presented her with a plaque at a City Council meeting in August.

She was one of eight girls police eventually identified as victims.

When questioned by police, Gonzales admitted inappropriately touching three girls. At the time, Gonzales said he liked to flirt with the girls and tickle students "because he cares about them and likes to make them laugh," according to a police report.

Gonzales, 55, ended up pleading guilty to a felony charge of criminal sexual contact of a minor and three misdemeanor counts of enticement of a child.

Under District Court Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer's sentence last year, Gonzales didn't get any prison time but he was required to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life and ordered to attend a six-month inpatient treatment program. He also was sentenced to probation for five to 20 years.

Jail records show that Gonzales did spend five days in at the detention center when he was first arrested, about two weeks in custody a few months later after he was indicted and before he posted bond, and close to three more weeks in jail for failure to comply with terms of his release under electronic monitoring.

Gonzales was facing a maximum of six years in jail under a plea agreement.

At a hearing last August, Gonzales apologized to the parents of the victims.

“I’m very sorry for what I’ve done to your children. I know you’re right. I’d be angry, too,” he said.

Suggested Reading:

- [Santa Fe County, UDV Reach Settlement](#)
 - [No Prison for Admitted Molester](#)
 - [Ex-Curry County Jail Official Reaches Settlement](#)
 - [Broken Arm Results In Settlement](#)
 - [County To Pay \\$100,000 Settlement](#)
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