

Crooked Oak chief acquitted

By Jay F. Marks

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A six-person Oklahoma County jury deliberated for less than an hour Monday before finding a Crooked Oak Public Schools official not guilty of interfering in a police investigation.

Superintendent Shannon Goodsell had maintained his innocence as his attorney argued the case was the result of a power struggle with Oklahoma County authorities.

"I'm pleased the jury understood the evidence," attorney Richard O'Carroll said after the verdict.

Goodsell, who did not testify during the four-day trial, was facing up to six months in jail and a \$250 fine on each count if convicted.

The charges were filed after county sheriff's deputies investigated a September assault allegation against transportation director Richard Dale Thomas.

Goodsell, 38, has been superintendent at Crooked Oak, a school district southeast of downtown Oklahoma City, since 2000.

Thomas was accused of shoving a black student into a locker. The investigation unearthed a similar incident, leading to two misdemeanor hate crime charges being filed against Thomas in October.

He is set for trial on those charges in June.

Goodsell's troubles began after he called the prosecutor who agreed to file charges against Thomas.

His attorney claimed that intervention angered authorities, resulting in the charges against him.

"It's a turf war between the schoolhouse and the courthouse," O'Carroll said in his closing argument.

School board member Diann Germany said she was glad the matter is resolved.

Goodsell has not faced disciplinary action from the district since the charges came up, Germany said. Board members will decide whether to renew his contract later this year.