

## LOCAL NEWS

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## Bullying a problem; Parent says people aren't getting the full story

CLIFF WELLS  
The Western Star

CORNER BROOK — A Corner Brook woman is worried about the bullies her son faces daily at G.C. Rowe Junior High School.

She said her son has been attacked several times this year and the issues have been dealt with by the school.

One of the bullies was recently suspended for the third time, she says, and she wonders what more can be done to protect her son.

The mother, who requested not to be named for fear her son would be targeted further, said parents need to be aware of what goes on in the school, but they aren't being given the whole story.

She said the reason she's speaking about it at all is because it needs to be talked about.

"I don't think parents are aware of the situation that's going on up there," she said. "...I don't know what else to do, but if parents are aware of it, they can speak to their kids about it."

The parent called the school board and was told to do what she needed to do, such as calling the police. She brought the matter to the attention of police, who are investigating the incident, she said. The next time, she says she wants charged laid.

"I'm sick over it," the woman said. "I'm so stressed out. He's gone to school today, not really wanting to go to school. He's scared. I'm frightened to death if he goes to Wal-Mart for lunch, they might get him on the way, or on the way back.

"I'm going to school myself and I'm sick going to school."

The boy who says he's bullied said there are three students that do most of the intimidating at the school. He said they come at him and other children out of nowhere.

"It's kind of hard to fight off three guys at once," the boy said.

He said the attacks mostly happen in the change rooms where there's little or no supervision.

He said the fact that he's not alone is not very comforting.

"It's not only me," the boy said. "I've seen a lot of people get beaten up in the change rooms over the years."

Eugene May, who is responsible for student support services for the Western School District, said the board tries to involve as many partners as possible to combat bullying. He said although he couldn't comment on an individual case, he believes the schools and board are doing what they can to combat the problem.

"The safety of our students and our staff — that's something we look at very closely and consider very carefully when we deal with these issues," May said. "In all of our issues we deal with things in a progressive nature and try to deal with them before they get to that level, but by no means to we compromise the safety of individuals."

He said local partners such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the provincial government help. He said the provincial ad campaign against bullying is a great asset.






"One of the worst things we can do about bullying is nothing," he said. "It's something we can't be an issue we back away from..."

"Parents need to be aware of it. The community needs to be aware of it. It has to involve different partners. It has to involve police agencies. It has to involve counsellors and a whole range of people need to be involved in it."






09/02/08

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**ANON from NL writes:** I'm the aunt in this story. I see how my nephew gets treated and how it makes him feel. He's a small boy for his age, but that is no excuse for these other boys to be doing the things they are doing. One of the bullies went after my son at one point this year. The bully got suspended only because my son went to the principal instead of hitting back. This happened outside on the playground. If my son had hit back, he would have been suspended too. What else can a parent tell their child if there are no teachers around to help and they can't get away? A parent can't very well tell their child to lay there and take it to avoid a suspension. These two bullies talked about in this article have been suspended at a minimum three times this year for the same reasons every time. I think it should be three strikes, you're out! Kick them to the curb. Do not let them continue their education at GC Rowe. They'll be forced to go to school at Presentation. If the same thing happens at Presentation, then I guess it's time to send these boys off to a boys home in Whitbourne. Obviously they cannot be controlled by their parents, and teachers can only do so much. I don't think it's fair for us as parents to have to go to work, school, or even sit at home, all day and worry about our children in school like this, worrying that you might get that call that our kid is seriously hurt. I know what these guys did to my nephew that day, and let me tell you, they could have put him in the hospital if it didn't stop when it did. I am sickened by the whole situation. The principal at GC Rowe is trying her best, I'm sure, but there are times when she has had to deal with incidents at school that she hasn't even let the parents know what went on that day. That's a story in itself tho. I know these boys involved, and in my opinion, they should be sent to a boys home, out of town, away from their familiar surroundings, with a stricter lifestyle, to smarten them up.

Posted 09/02/2008 at 9:59 AM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

**A Parent from NL writes:** Being a parent myself, I have either witnessed or was made aware of the subject of bullying. I feel some of these kids are exactly what their parents are and come from all walks of life. It's almost to the point where there should be cameras on the kids when they're inside the school doors and be monitored the whole time. I have seen pictures posted on the internet when students are on school property and probably taken without their knowledge. Privacy protection on internet websites doesn't protect the person who is being displayed as they may not even be aware that their picture has been posted on the internet. Cyber bullying is not only an issue with kids, but also with adults as I have been a victim of that myself because I have a right to express my opinion and others have deemed it necessary to plaster my name and false accusations over the internet. It's time that this issue is no longer tolerated either by kids or adults and victims be protected by those that bully. It seems that today's society lacks respect for one another and unfortunately victims like this kid who has been bullied and others are going to bear emotional trauma for life. It's time for laws to address this issue in a more severe manner to protect victims.

Posted 09/02/2008 at 10:33 AM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

**West Coast Teacher from NL writes:** I'm a teacher in the Corner Brook area. I can not even begin to tell you how much our hands are tied in this matter. The most we can do is suspend those who bully. And yes, if the kids being bullied fight back, they will be suspended too -- we cannot condone any type of violence. So I think the boy in this story did the right thing in going to the principal at his school.

The real issue here lies with the school board. The most they can allow administrators in a school to do is suspend students because the Schools Act (a document that dictates our rights and freedoms as Canadians within the education system) says that each child in this country is entitled to a free, equal-quality education. The school board can do very little because of this document -- it essentially dictates most of what happens in our school systems.

As sad as it is, a bully would have to do something pretty drastic before they would be removed from the regular system. Hence, this is why we often see things escalate to the point of Columbine or other tragedies in our schools. Usually it is the oppressed that finally snap and react extremely because they feel they have no other options. It is very difficult to think rationally when every day your emotional and physical health is threatened.

Our school systems need to change in many ways and perhaps this is where we need to start.

Posted 09/02/2008 at 3:31 PM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

**Me from NL writes:** I believe the only thing to do is to have zero tolerance, meaning when it comes to bullying there should be No warnings of suspension, expulsion, etc. If someone is traumatized every day by a bully whether it be a boy, girl, teenager, etc, and of course they are found out, they should get the extreme punishment right off the bat...no waiting until something horrific happens. This is too serious, we need change in our school policies and we need it NOW. Is anybody listening????

Posted 09/02/2008 at 8:30 PM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

**Julie oakley from South Gloucestershire, United Kingdom writes:** My Journey - By Julie Oakley

Five years ago my eldest daughter attempted suicide as a result of persistent verbal bullying in school. I was devastated and consumed with guilt as I hadn't recognised the symptoms and assumed it was just adolescent mood swings. As a parent it made me feel a total failure. I always thought we could talk about anything, and as someone who was also bullied, would know the signs. How wrong could I have got it?

I knew I couldn't let her down again, so I approached the school and the local authority and did not seem to get anywhere. I was told the usual, we have an anti-bullying policy and everything is in place. What did that mean? I wanted action, I wanted the perpetrators brought to justice. I wanted them out of the school.

My daughter spent five months out of school having treatment, while those who caused her problem were getting on with their education. How can that be justice? How could I get the school to listen to the parent who worked in an office? Who really didn't know the rules of the school or the protocol?

I decided to find out if other parents had problems with bullying and how were they able to deal with it. The local newspaper highlighted my story. The response was massive, I received many phone calls and letters. The stories were heart breaking and everyone needed some sort of support. So Bullywatch was formed to give help and support. [www.bullywatch.org](http://www.bullywatch.org)

I then had to spend hours searching the internet, attending conferences and training to gather information. I was then approached by Lucy Thomson a Graphic Designer, who offered to set up a website. I established a link with a group of professionals who wanted to set up an anti-bullying partnership. Through this process I began to realise what a complex issue bullying was. It wasn't a straightforward subject that could be addressed without looking deeply into why young people

would behave in this way and how could they be helped to recognise and change their behaviour. This meant I had to rethink my values and opinions on how bullying should be dealt with.

With my increased knowledge I volunteered at a local senior and primary school to provide individual and group work to support victims of bullying. I also decided that I should work with the perpetrators, who I now know have their own issues and that exclusion doesn't solve them. Often children are modelling the behaviour of adults and you can be challenging the culture and values within their families and communities. I am now employed by the school and a fervent campaigner on anti-bullying issues. I also work with two Anti-bullying agency partnerships which gives me a chance to have a real say on bullying issues. So parents if you don't get anywhere as individuals form a parents forum and a young peoples forum. people have to listen to the mass.

I wanted to transform what was a really terrible experience for my family into something positive that could prevent other children and their families experiencing the same thing.

Posted 09/02/2008 at 10:29 PM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

**carolann corbett from st johns, nl writes:** I agree with all the parents that there is too much bulling going on in schools and something needs to be done! This has been going on since forever and it needs to stop!!!

Posted 10/02/2008 at 11:57 AM | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

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