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Parents say bullies drove their son to take his life

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They claim school district took no action

Asher Brown's worn-out tennis shoes still sit in the living room of his Cypress-area home while his student progress report ? filled with straight A's ? rests on the coffee table.

The eighth-grader killed himself last week. He shot himself in the head after enduring what his mother and stepfather say was constant harassment from four other students at Hamilton Middle School in the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District.

Brown, his family said, was "bullied to death" ? picked on for his small size, his religion and because he did not wear designer clothes and shoes. Kids also accused him of being gay, some of them performing mock gay acts on him in his physical education class, his mother and stepfather said.

The 13-year-old's parents said they had complained about the bullying to Hamilton Middle School officials during the past 18 months, but claimed their concerns fell on deaf ears.

David and Amy Truong said they made several visits to the school to complain about the harassment, and Amy Truong said she made numerous phone calls to the school that were never returned.

'We want justice'

Cy Fair ISD officials said Monday that they never received any complaints from Brown's parents before the suicide about the way the boy was being treated at school.

School district spokeswoman Kelli Durham said no students, school employees or the boy's parents ever reported that he was being bullied.

That statement infuriated the Truongs, who accused the school district of protecting the bullies and their parents.

"That's absolutely inaccurate ? it's completely false," Amy Truong said. "I did not hallucinate phone calls to counselors and assistant principals. We have no reason to make this up. ? It's like they're calling us liars."

David Truong said, "We want justice. The people here need to be held responsible and to be stopped. It did happen. There are witnesses everywhere."

Numerous comments from parents and students on the Web site of KRIV-TV Channel 26, which also reported a story about Brown's death, stated that the boy had been bullied by classmates for several years and claimed Cy-Fair ISD does nothing to stop such harassment.

Durham said the school counselor and an assistant principal received an e-mail from Amy Truong earlier this month, asking them to keep an eye on her son, but Durham said it was because of ongoing concerns at home and not about bullying.

Shot himself with pistol

Brown was found dead on the floor of his stepfather's closet at the family's home in the 11700 block of Cypresswood about 4:30 p.m. Thursday. He used his stepfather's 9 mm Beretta, stored on one of the closet's shelves, to kill himself. He left no note. David Truong found the teen's body when he arrived home from work.

On the morning of his death, the teen told his stepfather he was gay, but Truong said he was fine with the disclosure. "We didn't condemn," he said.

His parents said Brown had been called names and endured harassment from other students since he joined Cy-Fair ISD two years ago. As a result, he stuck with a small group of friends who suffered similar harassment from other students, his parents said.

His most recent humiliation occurred the day before his suicide, when another student tripped Brown as he walked down a flight of stairs at the school, his parents said.

When Brown hit the stairway landing and went to retrieve his book bag, the other student kicked his books everywhere and kicked Brown down the remaining flight of stairs, the Truongs said.

Durham said that incident was investigated, but turned up no witnesses or video footage to corroborate the couple's claims.

'I hope you're happy'

The Truongs say they just want the harassment to stop so other students do not suffer like their son did and so another family does not have to endure such a tragedy.

"Our son is just the extreme case of what happens when (someone is) just relentless," Amy Truong said.

To the bullies, she added, "I hope you're happy with what you've done. I hope you got what you

wanted and you're just real satisfied with yourself."

Services for Brown will be held Saturday.

Sep. 27, 2010
News Article
http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/7220896.htm... [1]
Houston Chronicle
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