



More needed to stop bullying

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Tom Brown buried his daughter Sunday in Parrsboro. Pam Murchison did the same in Great Village in January. Both were teens, both were bullied, and both were students at schools under the direction of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board.

It would be blatantly unfair to lay blame for the deaths of these two girls at the feet of the board. The fact is, it is not entirely the board's fault. When it comes to bullying, blame is shared - from the bullies, to the police, schools, society, the media, the Internet and others. But, we wonder, if nothing else, could the board do more in the future? One would think that following these two cases, where parents of both girls had advised school officials of the threats, and when one of its students was buried just four days earlier, the board would have at least discussed the issue at its public meeting Wednesday night in Truro. And perhaps it did, but if the meeting agenda issued before the meeting is any indication, it did not.

If members instead chose to discuss it in private, after all that has happened since January, that too is not good enough. The public needs assurances that administrators are, in fact, doing all that is possible within their limited powers and have an adequate system and resources available. It is one thing for the board to have confidence in its system and another completely for the public to share that opinion.

The board has, publicly at least, been far too quiet. The official response has been that schools have extensive resources to deal with bullying, and that bullying is taken seriously and investigated fully. Board official Carolyn Pierce said, "We feel very responsible to put supports and services in place to create an environment where students feel safe when they come to the schools for learning." It seems by having their parents approach administrators, Courtney Brown and Jenna Bower-Bryanton did not feel safe. Something in the system failed.

We too are curious about the successes of the board's policies. One way to judge success is with numbers. So we ask the board: How many documented reports of bullying does the board have from the past 12 months? And, how many students have been subject to disciplinary action because of bullying complaints?

These two tragic deaths are not your fault, but telling parents of a bullied student to move their child to another school and hosting a wear pink to stop bullying day once a year is no longer good enough.