

Bullying in death of 13-year-old Texas Student

by Ken Kalthoff, KXAS, Terrell, Texas

More than 100 angry parents and students demonstrated outside Furlough Middle School in Terrell on Monday over a death they blame on bullying.

Zusette Moreno died in the hospital Friday on her 13th birthday after telling relatives she was assaulted in a school restroom Tuesday.

“One of the girls backed up on her neck and pushed her back up into the wall, basically. And another girl kicked her in the stomach with her foot,” said the girl’s aunt, Lupita Primero.

Primero said the girl attended the school for about a month after moving to Terrell with her mother to be closer to other family members there.

The aunt said another bullying incident happened to Moreno with the same girls before Thanksgiving, but that Zusette did not want her mother to report it to the school.

“She said ‘No, I can’t handle that, Mom.’ She said, ‘I can’t mention that,’” Primero said.

Some parents at the protest said their daughter were also bullied but that the school did not take action when they complained.

“My daughter was one,” Carla McLenee said. “She’s been bullied by these people, and I’m here to stand behind the parents that lost their little girl Friday morning.”

“It needs to stop,” Hope Beech said. “A parent shouldn’t have to worry if their kids are going to be safe or not at school.”

Terrell Independent School District police investigated the girl’s death, and Superintendent Kelly Rodgers said preliminary autopsy results from the Dallas County Medical Examiner indicate that there was no assault on Moreno.

“Our police officers looked into every rumor [and] allegation, and there’s nothing indicating that anything traumatic happened to the student physically at the school,” he said.

Rodgers said grief counselors have been at the school since Friday and will remain there as students and staff cope with the death.

“She was a very, very likable student — well-liked by the staff and students here — and that’s the way we want to remember her,” Rodgers said.

The superintendent said a separate investigation is under way about the accusations of past bullying against Moreno.

“I think our officers receive that complaint from the parent Saturday, and they’re investigating bullying,” Rodgers said.

The demonstrators are demanding answers and changes from the school.

“They need more guards at the bathrooms,” McLenee said. “They need more teachers to hire. Funding doesn’t allow it, so we lose our children because of it. It’s not fair.”