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## Students use words against sticks, stones

### Children write anti-bullying book

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Claudia, a fifth-grader at Forest Home Avenue School, knows how it feels to be pushed around.

Not long ago, she took repeated thrashings from a boy who demanded she do his homework. The bully took her money and threatened Claudia when she raised her hand to speak in class.

On Monday, Claudia and classmates at the bilingual elementary school on Milwaukee's south side read excerpts from a book on bullying that they wrote and illustrated. SHARP Literacy Inc., a local nonprofit organization, will publish the finished product, called "Is Anyone Listening?"

"It's a topic that hasn't been discussed," said Marlene Doerr, the organization's director.

Raoul, a student, spoke Monday of daily harassment on the school bus.

"I would come home with cuts," the boy said. "I know how it feels to be bullied."

The book, which is written in English and Spanish with contributions from students at eight area schools, is the fourth in SHARP Literacy's catalogue of publications written by and for children. A previous topic included a guided tour of Milwaukee from a child's perspective.

But Sara Marquez, principal of Forest Home Avenue School, 1516 W. Forest Home Ave., suggested the group tackle a problem she's seen increasingly among her students.

"We've been receiving a lot of concerns from parents regarding the bullying of children," Marquez said Monday.

Students sent to detention for mistreating classmates will have to read and discuss the book, she said.

"Is Anyone Listening?" includes tips from pediatricians at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa for parents and teachers who want to know how best to mediate children's conflicts.

Marquez teamed up with SHARP Literacy nearly a decade ago when she started adopting the organization's workbooks and teacher guides into Forest Home Avenue School's second- through fifth-grade social studies curriculum. The organization's focus on getting students to write in both English and Spanish was appealing, she said.

SHARP Literacy uses the visual arts and art history to infuse core academic subjects with opportunities for creativity.

Publications such as the bullying book, mural projects, field trips and in-school presentations help get students excited about writing and critical thinking, said Doerr, SHARP Literacy's director.

Monday's event began the organization's annual fund drive, through which leaders hope to raise \$600,000 by July, said Anne Gardner, the group's development director.

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