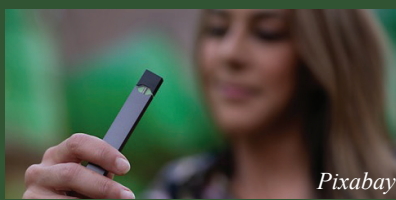


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Schools struggle with addressing hateful graffiti

Anti-semitic graffiti demonstrates a need for dialogue

by Claudia Levens

On Thursday Oct. 25, anti-semitic symbols were discovered etched onto a toilet paper roll in an NT bathroom.

"I had just finished teaching one of my afternoon classes when one of my students walked in right as the bell was ringing," said social studies teacher Spiro Bolos.

"He said 'you should probably come see this' so I followed him into the bathroom where he showed me a Jewish Star of David with an X under it and a Swastika symbol with a check mark under it."

Two days after the graffiti was discovered at NT, a man walked into a Pittsburgh Synagogue, killing 11 people and injuring more.

"I expected them to find out who did it and have some sort of response as a school, since we've had different incidents of racist graffiti in the past," said Bolos.

This graffiti incident comes a year after three separate incidents of racist graffiti also found in NT bathrooms and implores a return to the conversations started last year.

Senior and Student Voices in Equity member Izzy Cox said that she herself isn't sure what the correct way to handle hateful graffiti is, but felt that not talking about it or waiting too long to act makes it seem like those actions are okay.

"I think conversation is important," she said. "No one knew about it so how could there possibly be healthy conversation if according to the student body, it never existed? If we're trying to truly understand hate, we must be able to talk about how it affects our own communities."

At Oak Park River Forest High School, a string of hateful graffiti messages shook the community earlier this school year.

In October, hundreds of community activists, parents, students and teachers filled the OPRF cafeteria to air grievances and get answers about why it happened and what was being done to stop further incidents.

The administration held assemblies where students walked out in protest. School administrators notified parents by email and student leaders facilitated classroom discussions.

"Here I am, ready to take this on with students, staff and the community," said OPRF School District Superintendent Dr. Pruitt Adams.

Declan Johnson, Editor in Chief of OPRF's student newspaper,

said that "it definitely appears to be different from how NT has handled their graffiti incidents. Obviously NT and OPRF's incidents are different, but I actually believe our administration would have handled it the same way NT did except for the fact that once the students found it, they took photos and posted them to social media where it spread like wildfire. After that it was really the students who put pressure on the administration to act on it."

NT Assistant Superintendent Timothee Hayes said, "on one hand, we don't want to go on the announcements every time there's graffiti in the bathroom. We don't want to incentivize these acts. Who knows, there could always be people who would see that and do the same thing because they know we'll give attention to it."

"We also don't want to cause fear, especially with all of the overwhelming hatred in the news that occurred that weekend with the shootings and pipe bombs," said Hayes.

"But at the same time, we also believe students have a right to know about things that could affect them at school to a certain extent," he added.

Cox said, "I didn't know about it and that upsets me."

Senior Josh Pickard agreed, "As a Jewish person, I wish I would've known. I think it's weird that I'm only finding out about it now."

"I don't understand why the racist graffiti was addressed last year but not when it's anti-semitic. If they really thought that we should know, why didn't they say anything?"

Last year, the administration did not address the first racist graffiti until it was printed in this paper.

"There are so many what ifs about the intentions of the person who did it that at the end of the day, whatever those motives were, the student chose to express themselves in a hateful way," said Pickard.

Hayes emphasized the tricky position the administration was put in.

"How do we really address these situations appropriately? One thing we did was make an announcement on Monday, reflecting on the hateful events that took place over the weekend. It was a way of condemning anti-semitism which is the form that the graffiti took and making sure we were supporting our students and making them feel safe."

Cox said addressing these instances indirectly isn't a sufficient way to handle them.

"The shooting and graffiti are separate issues. One was in Pittsburgh, one was here," she said.

"I think what will make people feel more unsafe is if they know there's graffiti-- since people are going to find out, it'll spread to the Newspaper-- but know that the administration didn't address it. To

me, that feels worse than if I knew it was addressed and knew they were doing something about it."

Hayes explained that the administration's long term steps for addressing hateful graffiti is through the new Strategic Planning Program that includes a committee called Climate, Culture, and Equity that was created with last year's racist graffiti incidents in mind.

"We're having meetings in January to establish goals and set up plans of action to create more opportunities for conversation at NT about gender, race, religion, equity and more," he said.

But Cox sees this instance as a missed opportunity for conversation that could initiate reflection.

"I agree that conversation is important. But it almost feels like they're using a long term plan to procrastinate addressing the issues," she said.

"I think they truly recognize the issue but they're resting on the fact that change happens slowly. It definitely does help to an extent but those long term conversations stem from the short term ones. This was an opportunity for that," she said.

Bolos said, "The administration is this big, mechanical mass, so it's understandable that things take time. I didn't expect anything to happen so rapidly-- the gears move slowly."

"But I do expect a response eventually," he said.

Late start proposal rejected after student and staff pushback

Early bird classes, lab days, and long weekends lead list of priorities

by Molly George

The recent decision not to implement weekly Wednesday late arrivals for the 2019-2020 school year has been a complicated topic between parents, students, and staff, and the school board.

According to Superintendent Dr. Paul Sally, there was not a consensus for or against late starts in any one group.

The follow up email addressed New Trier families and discussed how "the proposal also raised concerns about issues such as transportation to school, disrupting the consistency of student and family schedules, and loss of instructional time."

While these are major concerns, Sally assured that these issues would be resolved in the transition to a new schedule. Students were not so worried.

Junior Kaeleigh Flannagan said, "I want late starts, and I couldn't care less about losing ten minutes from class."

Sally was surprised by the priority students placed on the current Friday schedule with no double period lab in science classes.

Early bird biology teacher Brian Woodruff said, "Most early bird teachers were concerned how this would affect the continuity of the

class." Early bird science classes would have only run two days in a row, interrupted by late start Wednesdays and weekends. The solution to add fifteen minutes onto early classes created the problem of too long of classes.

"You can only absorb so much information in a class period," said Woodruff.

The administration took careful consideration of the rhythm of the week, especially with students' use of the extra free period on Friday.

With the current schedule, students use early release Friday and late start Monday weekends to visit colleges, Sally said. The block of time off helps them stay on top of school by missing only half their classes to go out of town.

One of the most prominent goals of weekly late arrivals was to help manage student stress.

The initial email sent out to parents with the proposed calendar listed "extra sleep or schoolwork" as possible uses for the extra 75 minutes on Wednesday mornings.

The shared morning time scheduled for teachers to collaborate would have been helpful, but Sally emphasized that the staff will continue to find other times to meet.

In a followup email about the feedback surrounding weekly late starts, Sally detailed that the final schedule will include one more early dismissal and late start weekend, several homework-free breaks, and "more professional development time in the school day for faculty."

Throughout the planning

Winnetka:

Period	Length	Start	End
EB			
Adv	0:10	9:30 AM	9:40 AM
1	0:33	9:45 AM	10:18 AM
2	0:33	10:23 AM	10:56 AM
3	0:33	11:01 AM	11:34 AM
4	0:34	11:39 AM	12:13 PM
5	0:34	12:18 PM	12:52 PM
6	0:34	12:57 PM	1:31 PM
7	0:33	1:36 PM	2:09 PM
8	0:33	2:14 PM	2:47 PM
9	0:33	2:52 PM	3:25 PM

The proposed schedule featured 75 minute late starts on Wednesdays | NT

process, the calendar committee considered scheduling a 90 minute late start every week next year, but this plan did not make it to the proposal stage because further reducing class time would impact classes more, according to Sally.

While they wouldn't consider the same solution, the administration plans to take time to put a more comprehensive solution together with the Strategic Planning Committee, while maintaining the opportunities that early bird and a nine period schedule provide.

Still, Sally emphasized the need for the administration to help students manage & balance their lives.

In support of weekly late starts, Flannagan mentioned that students with Saturday morning sports rarely get to sleep in, and "it feels like a short week when there's a break in the middle."

When the proposal was not passed, some students were

disappointed to lose the prospect of an extra hour and a half to sleep in every week.

In a New York Times article, a study by The American Academy of Sleep Medicine revealed that three out of four high school students do not meet the recommended eight hour minimum of sleep. The same health organization suggested that high schools (and middle schools) do not start earlier than 8:30.

As an early bird science student, junior Janey Matejka said sleeping in one hour a week is significant. "It's the difference between six AM versus seven AM."

Matejka expressed, "I would one hundred percent not mind losing the late start and early release days if it meant sleeping in one day a week."

On the other hand, junior Karl Florida reasoned that for students who take early bird and those who do not, the schedule would mess up labs on Fridays. "In general the late start

doesn't make sense logistically, he said."

While other options to achieve the benefits of the late start proposal without the scheduling hassle exist, the administration is not willing to change certain traditions, like sacrificing daily advisery, which "brings so many benefits to so many kids and to the whole structure of the school," said Sally.

Ultimately, like the first day, breaks, and other dates on the school calendar, the schedule is not up to students. However, after receiving such strong negative feedback (especially from early bird students and teachers), Sally said this particular late start Wednesday plan will not be considered again.

In response to the advisery assembly to discuss the decision against weekly late arrival, senior Alanna Goldstein said the Student Alliance President, Bill Yen, referenced the survey which showed overwhelming student support of late starts and informed students that the school would like to implement weekly late starts in the future.

"Parent and teacher concerns delayed the prodigal for next year. I personally think that the students who are in favor of the late starts tend to be younger so they haven't had the opportunity to do early bird classes which would be severely limited under the late start proposal," said Goldstein.

Overall, Sally said, "we really appreciated the process and the input from everybody. People were involved and voiced their opinions, and that's powerful for a community."