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New security measures address safety concerns

School will now enforce ID policy and restrict entrances during the day

by Layla Saqibuddin

On Sept.16 a Wilmette Junior High student was found with a loaded firearm in his bedroom. Police were called and school resumed on Monday as normal.

The threat of school violence is apparent all across the country including the New Trier district.

In response to this trend, the administration has installed new kiosks, double-buzzer vestibules at entries, an upgrade of the district's video surveillance, a smaller entrance, limited entrances during the day, and enhanced visitor management systems.

According to the Chicago Tribune, future plans to implement shatter resistant film and window shades are also in the works.

Metal detectors, while commonly used in other schools, are not part of the plans.

According to Assistant Principal of Student Programs and Operations, Athena Arvanitis, New Trier is not looking at metal detectors, which are commonly used in other schools. Instead, New Trier is installing new prominent kiosks near the doorways.

Arvanitis believes that these



Security guard Marva Smith watches the front entrance after school | Pearlman

security enhancements bring us closer to a safer environment.

"We also installed a buzzer system because before, it was difficult for a security staff member to supervise the entrance. But now with a condensed entrance, security will be able to see who's entering or exiting the school," said Arvanitis.

Orchestra teacher Peter Rosheger agreed, the ID buzzing system creates a sense of containment.

"New Trier wants students to feel safe, but not feel like they are being watched. I want students to know that we take our student's safety as our priority."

Junior Feinerman feels safer with the new updated ID system.

"I like the ID system because it creates a safer environment for everyone. I think carrying ID's are essential because we don't want anyone who's not supposed to be

at the school enter the school," Feinerman said.

PPS member, Amir Anail feels safer with the new security system, too.

"To be honest, in my previous years when I didn't have an ID, I felt like something was missing, but now I feel safer as a worker and feel happy for the students."

"Teachers are very happy with the system. New Trier is giving every resource and opportunities for students and staff," said Anail.

In fact Anail said his management admires the security:

"My management loves the security and the accountability for safety I'm given. Unfortunately, I know many schools who don't have these additions and opportunities for students and faculty, so I'm very lucky."

And many faculty and students

believe it's about time the school implemented an updated ID system.

Junior Charlotte Cleary believes it is essential for every school to have these policies.

"I think these new security updates are definitely relevant. Lockdowns and intrusions are possible anywhere and it's important not to underestimate any area or incident."

In fact, some teachers even prepared for lockdowns or intrusions since last year.

"We have planned for any intrusions or lockdowns since last spring. My class talked about what we could during the event, but this process is still evolving, this challenges the new facility, and this is still a working progress," said Rosheger.

Essentially the school is always working on ways to improve on their security. According to Arvanitis, "We have hired security consultants from Deerfield-based Telgian Engineering and Consulting, and from Washington, D.C.-based Facility Engineering Associates to look at our facility and look at ideas for improvement."

However, while some faculty and students think this system is necessary, some believe the school should focus its efforts on issues such as mental health issues and drug addiction. Senior Andrea Lopez said, "I believe there are other issues regarding drugs and student mental health issues that are more important at this time."

"Some students are questioning the extent that these attempts to make school safer are actually not changing much."

Junior Tenzin Jamyang said, "I don't think the policy makes a big difference because most students were already carrying their IDs around in school."

Senior Elizabeth Johnson believes the security is not enough.

"First, most shootings are done by current or former students who would have a student ID. More importantly, I feel pretty strongly that anyone could walk into the building between 8 and 8:15 and wouldn't be questioned which makes the ID situation pointless. The school feels secure throughout the day, but I think the mornings are lacking".

Senior Maggie Graves thinks the school's security is still pretty loose.

"It's still easy for people who don't go to NT to walk in with the students in the morning or when they are leaving in the afternoon."

Despite criticisms, NT is working on improving their security.

"Our biggest goal is for New Trier to maintain a welcoming, but secure environment. We just finished a huge phase of implementation, and now we are working on the next phase. I would also like to give a big thanks to the New Trier community. We are happy to see staff and people who are mindful and supportive of the changes," said Arvanitis.

School Juuls: NT responds to national vaping epidemic

Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows sharp increase in e-cigarette usage

by Molly George

The response of the FDA to the sudden spike in e-cigarette use has sparked a disciplinary response by administrators, increasing the consequences of Juuling in school.

Sophomore Boys Adviser Chair, Ted Koulentes, said "In conversations with students, they didn't always know what they were getting themselves into: a lifelong journey they were about to embark on related to nicotine."

Junior Tenzin Jamyang said students vape because, "They don't realize the effects on their future life. Some kids don't even know that a Juul has nicotine in it. Also, especially in this area, those devices are easily attainable."

While the government has recently focused on cigarette smoking as a public health problem, the FDA said that teens' use of e-cigarettes "has reached an 'epidemic proportion,'" as research shows more and more of the negative effects, according to the New York Times. The FDA's research involves the legality of marketing nicotine products to teenagers.

The FDA stated that if "Major manufacturers fail to halt sales to minors, the agency could remove their flavored products from the market," threatening criminal charges to those selling products in bulk online. The agency also sent warning letters to retailers such as Walgreens and 7-Eleven that have been breaking the federal law by selling e-cigarettes to kids under 18.

Several students, however, said that their access to Juuls is not limited to stores and gas stations nearby.

"If they stopped selling them, it would not decrease the amount of Juuling at school. If someone really wants to do something, they will figure out a way to do it", said one senior.

An anonymous senior said she thinks one reason students Juul is, "Because the school hates it so much. I feel like a lot of students just do it out of spite. School says we can't do it? Let's do it."

Koulentes said, "It's a bigger problem than we'd like to admit. We saw those numbers jump really quickly," referencing the statistics from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) from the CDC.

The spike in the use of e-cigarettes more than doubled from the last survey, according to the Feb. 2018 survey which collected the responses of 3209 students.

This is a major spike given that a 5% increase in marijuana use since last year was considered alarming.

Assistant Superintendent for



Student e-cigarette usage has doubled since the last YRBS survey, according to Feb. 2018 questionnaire | AP Images

Student Services, Timothy Hayes, who analyzed the survey data, mentioned that "Perception is higher than actual use, and if kids believe everyone's doing it, they are more likely to."

Police Liason Josue Perez explained, "The less other kids perceive it as a normal thing, the less likely they are to get involved in it. The temptation is there, but we don't want it to be at school."

The administration is doing everything it can to help students make good choices by preventing them from using e-cigarettes, said Assistant Principal for Student Services, Scott Williams.

The consequences have

heightened as the administration prioritizes preventing harmful habits in school, "A safe place that is supposed to be a learning environment," said Perez.

If students are caught with e-cigarettes in school, a citation can be issued at the discretion of the officer, and it is treated differently at each campus because of the way each village enforces ordinances.

Perez said, "I didn't get involved, now I do. The problem has been increasing, so we've gotten more serious about the consequences."

This change is meant to encourage education so that "Young people can be better trained to deal with the temptation," said Perez.

The discipline model is a growth model, as Williams explained, "If you make a bad choice, we give you the opportunity to reflect and learn from the situation. We don't just give a consequence."

Williams added, however, "The school doesn't protect students from the law, which is not a shift at all compared with substance violations."

Perez explained that possession of e-cigarettes or nicotine, like alcohol and other paraphernalia, is a status offense — it's only illegal for juveniles.

"It's early in the year," Koulentes said, "but in my office I have not had any violations yet."