



In wake of the measles threat, area students well-protected

by Blake Sammann

In 2000, the United States officially declared measles to be eradicated after a widespread outbreak. However, in late 2014, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) began tracking an outbreak of measles in California.

According to the California Department of Public Health, “At least 40 people who visited or worked at the Disneyland theme park in Orange County in mid-December contracted measles and has now spread to at least half a dozen states.”

This latest outbreak of the disease, once thought to be almost dead, has raised serious concerns about the practice of non-vaccination, making the choice to use the Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine one of the most highly debated topics of 2015.

According to historyofvaccines.org, the debate over the safety of the MMR vaccine began in 1998 with a British doctor named Andrew Wakefield.

Wakefield suggested a link between the vaccine and autism/bowel disease, also stating that the drug was put into use before proper testing was finished. However, The General Medical Council, a third party regulator, found that Wakefield

had been financially compensated to find evidence in favor of a lawsuit involving parents who believed that vaccinations had harmed their children.

Also, in 2011, London Times journalist Brian Deer presented evidence of Wakefield falsifying data and expecting to profit from his earlier allegations.

While Wakefield’s credibility was destroyed (he was barred from practicing medicine in the UK indefinitely), his message struck a chord with many in the United States, most notably former Playboy centerfold Jenny McCarthy, who became the face of the anti-vaccination movement after her 2008 appearance on Larry King Live.

According to CNN, in 2015, 26 states did not reach the government goal of having a 95% vaccination rate. While that number of children is quite low, it is a dangerously high percent as it increases the number of individuals who are available for infection.

New Trier nurse Colleen Sheridan said in the state of Illinois there are only two acceptable reasons the state will accept for a parent foregoing vaccinations. “These [reasons] vary from state to state, but one reason is a religious objection, so parents can write a letter with a



Measles has reemerged as a health threat in the U.S., but over 99% of NT students are fully vaccinated | AP Images

specific religious exemption from immunization. If it is a written letter we do accept these but they are very rare.”

“Occasionally we will have a student with a medical exemption. We would get a letter from a doctor saying that this student has a medical exemption from immunizations. [Some examples have been] students who have had chemotherapy and immune system disorders. There are some students with developmental issues as teens but were born a traumatic birth and some of those students will be contraindicated for immunization,” added Sheridan.

Sheridan is not worried about

measles showing up at New Trier. “It’s highly unlikely, it’s almost impossible because almost all our students are vaccinated. However, we do not mandate our staff to be vaccinated, nor do we oversee that. So if one of our staff did bring the disease in the building they would get sick themselves but all of our students should be protected.”

When asked for a rough estimate of the number of vaccinated New Trier students, “I actually have an exact number, over 99% of our students are fully vaccinated.”

As a healthcare professional, Sheridan always recommends vaccination to those who are able,

“Vaccines are really an important part of life. In 2000, it was considered that measles was not an issue for the United States. However because of our travelers and those pockets of people who choose not to vaccinate, it is now becoming a problem.”

These diseases can lead to long term effects. Measles cause hearing loss, pneumonia, and lead to encephalitis.

“Vaccines are important and essential to prevent disease, and I think the measles outbreak, if we learn anything from it, is in support of everyone getting the proper vaccinations,” remarked Sheridan.

PARCC coming to East campus

by Emma Willcocks

A new form of testing, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), has been implemented this year for Illinois state schools.

This change follows the newly adopted Common Core State Standards across the nation, which makes states test with either Smarter Balanced or PARCC.

This new PARCC test has to be given to all students grades 3rd through 8th, and one in grades 9-12.

Paul Sally, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum at New Trier, said, “Originally, the state had required that year group had to be juniors, but they eventually gave schools a choice. Similar to many districts we thought it made most sense to test freshmen.”

The previous testing for juniors has been the Prairie State Achievement Exam, which was two days and included an ACT portion that students could use towards college.

“Many people don’t yet realize that we are testing the freshman, not the juniors as originally planned,” said Peg Stevens, New Trier’s testing coordinator.

The PARCC differs from the Prairie State in that it takes up twice the amount of time as the old test.

“The freshmen will be taking the first part of the English test on March 17 and Algebra I students will be taking the first part of the math test on March 18,” said Sally.

However, there will be a second round of testing for the second part of English and math, on May 19th and 20th.

Another difference is that the PARCC testing does not include an ACT, as the Prairie State did. From the Class of 2017 onwards students will have to take the ACT on their own.

“Nor will any part of the PARCC testing be used by colleges for admission in the foreseeable future,” Sally said.

While the test doesn’t affect the Winnetka Campus this year, it most likely will in the future. Sally reported that the state plans to have all freshmen, sophomores, and juniors taking the PARCC in 2016.

The testing is offered digitally or on paper. New Trier plans to stick to the traditional methods for this year’s test, with iPad testing creating a big liability.

At the local district elementary and middle schools, the PARCC testing is causing even more of a mess.

All kids in grades 3-8 will be doing their testing on computers, which results in the school’s technology labs being closed for eight weeks and about 13-14 hours of instruction time being lost per grade, according to The North Shore Weekend.

Many parents have been expressing concerns about the testing and have wanted to know if they can opt out of it.

However, the kids would have to stay in the exam room if they refused to take the test.

Peg Stevens concluded, “With so much confusion and all the complaints about the testing, it will be interesting to see how it all turns out.”

Tip Line launched to combat bullying

by Sarah Zhang

On Feb. 19, 2015, New Trier launched the Trevian Tip Line, an anonymous online forum for any student who wishes to report school related issues.

According to the website, the Tip Line was created for students who don’t feel comfortable due to hazing, bullying, harassment, or any other threatening circumstances. Students aren’t required to enter their name, e-mail address, or phone number.

This anonymous venue was also created in accordance with a recently passed law stating that all schools must have a reporting system for bullying, according to the administration.

For some schools, this can look like an email sent to a special section of administration, a text sent to social workers, or a website dedicated to curbing bullying and resolving issues.

For New Trier, the Tip Line is a four-question forum that can be found on the New Trier website’s homepage.

The idea for a Tip Line has been in the works for a while, according to Athena Arvanitis, Director of Student Life.

A safety committee made up of students, parents, faculty, and administration focused on safety at New Trier, and specifically how to better ensure students’ safety. One of the recommendations was developing a Tip Line.

One goal of the Tip Line’s creators was to have it be New Trier-

specific.

“We talked a lot about what this would look like at New Trier, so we catered it to our school’s environment,” said Arvanitis, “We’re a big school, so we always talk about maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment, and I believe that that’s how it’s really catered towards New Trier.”

As a larger school, New Trier’s environment is different than some smaller schools, which can translate to how the safety of New Trier is monitored.

The Tip Line is relatively new, and some students have yet to fully warm up to the idea or even fully understand what it does.

Sheharyar Lalani, a senior, said, “I have no clue what that is, but I don’t think I would use it.”

Administrators hoped that the anonymity of the Tip Line would help in drawing in students. They also thought that it may be more comfortable for some to submit something online than in person.

“Of course, we encourage everyone to speak to adults. We have advisers and adviser chairs who are really great resources, and we know that that’s the best avenue to take when a student wants to report something—but we also know that sometimes students aren’t comfortable doing that,” said Arvanitis.

Despite the lack of contact information, some students still feel uncomfortable using the Tip Line.

Alex Holliday, a sophomore, thought the Tip Line’s anonymity caused risk.

“I wouldn’t use the Tip Line because, to me, it feels too risky. There’s no way to trace anything, so if something reported wasn’t true, there’s no way to know,” said Holliday.

Others felt as if the Tip Line wasn’t needed, such as junior William Kirby.

“If there was a really severe incident that I witnessed, I would definitely intervene myself, or just go to the administration directly,” said Kirby.

With this sort of anonymity, another possible liability is abuse of the Tip Line. To prevent that, the Tip Line is monitored by a member of the administration.

Senior Nina Zhou felt there was room for abuse.

“I personally feel like a lot of people could misuse the Tip Line,” said Zhou.

Susie Paunan, Sophomore Adviser Chair, spoke to the screening process, saying “The Tip Line is monitored by one of our school administrators. [He/she] screens the tips brought in and evaluates the need for follow up. We want to make sure there is enough specific information there to follow up on, not just a vague statement.”

Arvenitis believes the students body is mature enough to be trusted with the tip line.

“There is a part of the Tip Line, the anonymous part, which makes it free, people can submit whatever they’d like. I think it’s up to us internally to disregard or take action on something.”