

Students seek updated sex ed

by Carina Brendl and Anastasia Maragos

Taking sex education is an experience all New Trier students have in common, and while sophomores might not be ecstatic about taking it, older students tend to have a more reflective perspective on it.

The curriculum encourages students to feel comfortable being open and asking questions about their sexuality.

Senior Ella Brown, a member of the school's LGBTQ+ community, remembers that students naturally tended to hold certain questions back.

"There was that air of caution because I was thinking, 'What if people think that I'm not straight, or if people think I'm a certain way because I'm asking these questions?' I don't think that was necessarily my concern but other people probably didn't ask questions or make comments because of that reason," Brown said.

Senior Nathan Jaffe thought that taking sex ed is an important step for all students because it informs them about

sexual health. But he also added that he doesn't remember most of what he learned and that an optional 'refresher' course for juniors and seniors would be useful.

Coordinator of the sophomore health curriculum, Kinetic Wellness teacher Andy Horne, agreed with Jaffe in that an optional sexual education course should be offered for upperclassmen.

"Students develop at different rates and so they might be experiencing something their senior year that they had no idea about their sophomore year. They then might want more of that information," Horne said.

Horne further explained that what students seem to remember the most from sex ed is talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

This is taught using the cult classic film, "No One Would Tell," more commonly known as "Bobby and Stacey" at New Trier.

Jaffe thought the course should emphasize the movie less and instead focus more on how relationships can be healthy. But Horne explained that the school

shows the movie because it teaches students to think about and remember what makes up a good relationship and what the red flags of unhealthy relationships are.

Junior Sarah Rocap agreed with Jaffe, saying that what she remembers the most from Sex Ed is "Bobby and Stacey."

She added that she would like to see a more gender-balanced perspective on abusive relationships, because she thought that the course discussed mostly how women, not men, can be abused.

Sophomore Rhys Murphy, another member of the LGBTQ+ community, felt that this equal gender representation in sex ed should be taken a step further.

"They basically didn't have it targeted towards the idea that the LGBT people are also in the room and they didn't really go into depth on anything specific on LGBT people. It was more like an afterthought," Murphy said.

For example, Murphy explained that while the course covered various methods of

contraception and STI prevention for heterosexuals, it did not cover the "whole other array of options" of "safe sex" methods that are used within the LGBTQ+ community.

Brown, who is friends with Murphy, agreed with Murphy's ideas and suggested that the course spend more time discussing gender identity.

"Spending more time on it will make people think that it's more important than a topic that can be addressed in two days," she said.

Brown further explained that the short amount of time spent on sexual orientation could be problematic for those who discover their true gender identity after taking the course and might not have paid sufficient attention while taking it.

Regarding this gender identity/LGBTQ+ discussion in sex ed, Horne explained that, "The experiences of students differ amongst different teachers, but we're trying to equalize it to have the same experiences for everyone."

He further emphasized that he meets regularly with student-run organizations, such as

the New Trier LGBTQ+ support group called SKITTLES, to improve the curriculum.

On top of that, the school collects information through surveys to better assess students' needs and to address them.

Horne explained that the gender identity part of sex ed is not perfect and has room to grow.

He also feels students are getting a well-rounded experience.

This includes discussing not only gender identity and sexual orientation, but extends to what it means to be masculine or feminine, how our biological sex plays a role and to allow everyone to "get to know themselves better and to be who they have a right to be."

It's important to remember that the school isn't the only factor controlling students' experience in sex ed.

As Murphy said, "The students need to put in just as much as the teachers put out and sometimes people are a bit reluctant. They just kind of want to sit back and have the information thrown at them. But for a topic like this it's kind of important to give feedback."

Sexting and Snapchat go hand in hand

by Brooke Bernstein and Brooke Evans

Snapchat's goal is to provide a form of safe and clean communication, but over the years many New Trier students have utilized the disappearing content to share crude pictures and explicit material.

In 2014, twelve boys, ages 15 and 16, were arrested for sexting at New Trier, according to the Winnetka-Glencoe Patch. "The boys were accused of trading and/or sharing nude images of others under the age of 18," Winnetka Police said. "The boys were arrested between Oct. 14 and 17 for distribution of harmful material to a minor."

Typically, the students who alert the school of the sexting are the ones pictured in the distributed photos. These students claim to be the victims of harassment.

In the 2016 New Trier Guidebook, the bullying and harassment policy says, "It is the policy of New Trier Township High School District 203 to provide an educational environment free from harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, and hazing."

Assistant principal Scott Williams said, "We start with an interview and an investigation. The school talks with the victim, or whoever brought it to our attention, so that we understand the gravity of the concern. Then the investigation component can be anywhere from checking student electronic devices to checking network use." After all these steps have been taken, they determine the severity of the situation.

Williams said, "Simply having images on the device with you at school, you're automatically on our network. That is inappropriate."

A senior student, who wishes to remain anonymous, agreed that Snapchat's disappearing pictures encourages teens to send explicit photos. The

student said, "People feel like there's less of a risk of others seeing their pictures if it's on Snapchat rather than text."

Senior Baker Rahaley agreed that the legal matters behind the scandals stop some students from sharing and screenshotting.

"A lot of people think they won't get in trouble. I think everyone knows in some degree that it's illegal, but people don't realize the magnitude of sending or screenshotting an explicit picture," Rahaley said.

While students are aware of how illegal this behavior is, it stills happens, especially due to the pressure many feel from the opposite gender.

An anonymous male sophomore said, "I feel like males pressure girls into sending nude pictures and sexts. They have a need for pleasure and that's how they get it." This student admits he is aware of the consequences, but believes that if he doesn't save it or share it he will be okay.

He continued, "I know I would never be the person to save anything I received, but you really can't trust anyone. Boys feel like they will gain respect by showing their friends."

An anonymous female said, "I think it's just a part of being a teenager. I know that sounds bad, but girls want boys to give them attention and I guess that's one way of getting it."

She continued, "I'm not someone who sends pictures, because I don't trust anyone, but I know girls who do and some of them are dating the guy and some aren't. I don't think it will ever stop even though everyone's aware of what will happen."

Despite students' knowledge that it is illegal, this sexting trend doesn't appear to be stopping. An anonymous female said, "In twenty years, we will one hundred percent look back on what we sent and regret it, but I guess it's just a part of growing up and learning from your mistakes."

tinder is on the rise



by Anna Ferguson

Since Tinder's launch in 2012, dating apps have become immensely popular, with Tinder alone garnering over 1.6 billion users, a small portion of which are New Trier students.

More and more, New Trier students have started using Tinder over the past couple of years. Tinder has an 18 and under policy which prevents users ages 13 to 17 from matching with users 18 and older.

"I'm on the under 18 Tinder so sometimes I scroll past a bunch of 14-year-olds and I'm like, what is this?" a senior girl said. Because of this limitation, the majority of New Trier students using are 18-year-old seniors.

Tinder is appealing to students for a number of reasons. First, Tinder makes it easier for students to find and meet people who they might be interested in hooking up with.

Hookup apps like Tinder are particularly helpful for New Trier's LGBT students. "It's nice to be able to talk to other guys you know are interested because it's really hard to find other gay guys at New Trier," a senior boy said.

Meeting up with people through Tinder also gives users the opportuni-

ty to be completely honest with what they want out of the relationship. "In many ways meeting up is a lot less pressure because it's obvious that you are both there to just hook up," the same senior boy said.

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Students also use Tinder as a way to meet or hook up with non-New Trier students. Some students actually make a point of avoiding other New Trier students on Tinder. "I turned off Tinder here in this area of fear of finding people from school on it," an anonymous senior girl said.

Tinder is also used by some students as simply a fun social experiment. "A ton of my friends and I were on a trip near a lot of colleges, and we were bored so we all got them [Tinder accounts] for the weekend," a senior girl said.

For those students who use Tinder but don't actually meet up with people, Tinder is more of a fun and pressure-free way to flirt. "We aren't actually going to get with these peo-

ple. For the most part, it's just interesting to see other people in this area. It also gives validation to people because they don't get it at school," a senior girl said.

Dating apps such as Tinder open up the dating pool for students who have trouble meeting others at New Trier. For the New Trier area specifically, Tinder allows students to connect with both students at other high schools and at nearby colleges, notably Northwestern University.

Not all New Trier students are fans of Tinder, however. "Basically it's just talking to random people and not actually working up the confidence to meet them," senior Brendan Loftus said.

Even those students who do use Tinder recognize the negative aspects of the application. "There will always be 'creeps' and also the hyper aggressive guy who will bluntly ask for sexual favors, which is rude," a senior girl said.

The students who admitted to using Tinder all seemed to agree that Tinder's biggest attraction is the convenience and the pressure-free aspect of anonymous hook ups. "Everyone's there for the same purpose, so it's easy," a senior girl said.