Beyond misbehavior

More students fall victim to rise in misbehavior post-pandemic

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This increase drove administration to schedule a 45-minute long assembly on Oct. 19 for each graduating class to address the issue and 25 minutes in school on Oct. 21 dedicated to smaller classroom discussions on the topic.

Principal Greg Minter says that coming back out of remote learning, the faculty and staff were prepared to deal with helping students academically and through mental health struggles, one way they did this was by implementing tutoring groups. But they didn’t predict the impacts of the lack of socialization last school year.

“We’ve never experienced this before,” Minter said. “We’ve never had to have these meetings [addressing behavior with the student body]. We’ve never had those kinds of behaviors [at this level].”

Olson and Dean Adam Levinson have already caught about 20 students who vandalized the building. Some even posted video of their misconduct on TikTok, and Olson said one student told him about how many likes it got and “how good it made him feel.”

Despite the positive affirmation from social media, students must go through a police investigation for vandalism and theft since it’s a crime chargeable up to a felony and often leads to suspension from school. As for using hate speech, the direct consequences can be suspension or even expulsion on top of completing an educational project on why that behavior is wrong.

In addition to the trans-phobic comments and actions, Prospect has seen nearly a 100% increase in behavior referrals this year compared to years pre-pandemic, according to Dean Nic Olson. These behavior referrals include a variety of misconducts from parking violations to hate speech. But the referrals that stand out are those for bullying and vandalism.

In a typical year, freshmen and sophomores have been found to be responsible for most acts of misconduct; however, this school year there has been a significant rise in those populations as well.

This increase is part of a national trend of misbehavior referred to as post-pandemic misbehavior. According to Olson, the recent passing of her grandmother; they felt more encouraged to embrace that part of their culture, so she decided to wear her boots to Prospect.

Not long after, she heard a number of people making comments about her shoe choices, asking why she wore them and adding that they were ugly. People knew she even started notifying her that other students were making distasteful comments about her attire.

“I feel like having that … taken away from me … I can’t be myself, and I can’t express myself as a Hispanic,” Navarro said. “I was really hurt when people were talking about my boots, because they come from Mexico, and I think they’re so beautiful; they helped me feel so beautiful; they helped me feel beautiful. And then hearing negative things said — it hurts.”

Even off campus, it’s a struggle for some students to get home unaffected by others’ behaviors. Nearly every day, without knowing a target and solely a bystander, junior Neomi Patyck is hit by either food or drenched in water being thrown across the bus that she takes to go home.

“It’s just really frustrating because after a day at school, you’re tired — you just want to go home, but then [those kids] just start screaming and throwing water everywhere,” Patyck said. “It’s just chaos.”

Patyck remembers having to walk home from the bus stop just for her parents to see her soaked in water. At that point, this activity on the bus was normal, and she decided to email administration to just get it along with her enraged parents.

The next few days after he reported it, there was a full in the discord, but the bus resumed to its perpetual water-park state a week later after even a number of those students had been suspended.

Patyck, Navarro and Rickher were all happy that the assemblies happened and that administration specifically mentioned certain behaviors, but they do fear that no matter how much it will come out of it if it isn’t repeatedly discussed or followed up on.

It wasn’t a surprise to Patyck to hear students laughing about the assemblies either. It just reaffirmed her fear that she may need to start finding a different mode of transportation to school or next month. And for Rickher, he worries that he won’t be able to use the bathroom most convenient for him. For Navarro, she is uncertain that she will be able to display her heritage proudly without receiving negative comments from her peers.

Olson acknowledges that many of the perpetrators don’t realize the magnitude of their actions until they end up in his office to be investigated. At Prospect, depending on the gravity of the violation, a student may face losing the ability to participate in an extracurricular event such as assemblies either — it just reaffirmed her fear that she may need to start finding a different mode of transportation to school or next month. And for Rickher, he worries that he won’t be able to use the bathroom most convenient for him. For Navarro, she is uncertain that she will be able to display her heritage proudly without receiving negative comments from her peers.

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One student, Olson recounts, was mortified about the possibility of his coach outside of Prospect knowing about his behavior, knowing that he would be able to face the fact that he let down his team.

“For them, the worst part ... is the embarrassment, the fact that he let down his team and his parents,” Olson said. “I think when they’re in here with their family [with that embarrassment] and then you crying and feel horrible, you know [they regret it]. Good kids make poor decisions at times, and that’s OK. That’s what we have here [for] — to help them learn.”

At the assemblies, administrators stressed the importance of notifying the school about misbehavior and have placed QR codes on fliers around the school providing a link to an anonymous tip line. Olson recognizes that it’s difficult to speak up and understands that most bystanders don’t, but he hopes that students realize that it will make a difference.

Navarro is the type of person to stand up for others, and she has in the past, but she does admit that it’s hard sometimes to do so. One time, she was told that she was a “match” and a “pay-off” for using her voice. But in another instance, a freshman boy walking through the cafeteria as other freshmen made fun of him and threw food at him.

Navarro asked if he was OK, and he said he wasn’t — and that they were having a use him as a target to throw food at. Her parents notified her that other students laughing at him.

Even though Navarro may not see immediate resolutions to these situations despite her intervention, she still advocates for herself and others because she doesn’t want to stop trying. Rickher, Patyck and Navarro all know fully well that change doesn’t come easily, but knowing that they’re helping others is the very first step in that process if there is hope for any shift in behavior.

“I just feel like we all shouldn’t be scared to speak up. There’s people that know what’s going on and watching, and they’re not doing anything about it,” Olson said. But we should all stick together and take care of one another.”
Homecoming dance starts discussion

Staff Editorial

After claims surface, students ask: what’s next?

Senior Allie Winkler re-members hanging out with her friends in the middle of the football field at the homecoming dance when she saw a small, young girl’s dress getting ripped down the front, and she soon realized that it was not an accident. The girl was visibly distraught, but the crowd was loud, and the scene was dark as colored lights flashed on and off.

The following school day, Winkler went to voice her concern to the student administration about the situation.

“Just to experience something like that would be incredibly traumatic,” Winkler said. “I think that was the one [event] that got me the most [outraged].”

This was not the only situation that was witnessed at the dance. She also observed an incident that wasn’t sexual assault but was still extremely distressing: a tall male student grabbing another petite girl’s waist and throwing her into the mash pit unwillingly.

It’s been over a month since Winkler saw this incident at homecoming, and over a month since students reported cases of sexual assault and harassment from the dance to the school.

According to Principal Greg Minter, only two students came forward to report incidents, so he is unable to get a complete picture of the number of students impacted and the number of cases that occurred. Because of this, he said, he didn’t want to send out a communication to the whole school and community which would put everyone “on high alert.”

Minter specifically mentioned the claims of assault and harassment at the Oct. 19 student meetings to discuss general acts of misbehavior in the community. Minter also approved the establishment of a club for discussing sexual assault that is being initiated by juniors Hannah Liiton and Juliet Aquino. The club will be supervised by a counselor, so that there is someone knowledgeable on how to discuss those topics appropriately.

A parent says that she certainly doesn’t want any one to think that we’re sweep ing something under the rug because we follow up on every thing,” Minter said. “We have an obligation to follow up on reports, and we do so. But at the same time, I have to balance that with creating some level of alarm.”

We, The Knight Media, thank administration for making the sexual assault and harassment from homecoming at the assemblies and for allowing students to start a club to spread awareness about this. However, we believe that the school should not end the discussion.

Now that the unfortunate events from the dance are being talked about among the student body, administration should take this chance to evaluate how students are taught about sexual assault during a school year. Sexual assault is defined as “sexual contact or behavior that on its face is unwelcome or implied consent of the victim,” according to RAINN, an anti-sexual assault organization.

It is foolish to believe that even if only two students reported these instances formal ly to the school that it doesn’t need to be acted on further. The school has a policy to place an educator in a safe environment and should take action to teach students about how to talk about sexual assault and harassment, how to report it and how it can impact people.

We understand that the school is d a 1 in 4 with other sexual behavior issues at the m o n t h level, and discussing the topic of sexual assault shouldn’t only be addressed by a guest speaker or solely as another one of the behavior problems on campus.

The two brave girls that came forward shouldn’t be the only reason the school plans to address this behavior, and it shouldn’t be addressed only once. This should be taken as an opportunity to review how the school has been educating students about sexual assault and harassment and how they can promote more safe discussions. The sooner the issue of sexual assault is added to mandatory CSHS discussions, the sooner students will have the tools to help themselves and their own bodies.

Within the required health class that sophomores take at CSHS, there are two modules afforded to discussing the top ic of consent and sexual abuse.

Children’s Advocacy Center, an organization that works to prevent the topic of abuse and victims rights, comes in to speak for one day within that semester long course.

“He is a 1 in 4 teacher Asst. on Marnstein says that there are a number of topics the state requires the health unit to cover in the human biology or English or social science course, but he thinks that it’s important for the topic to be taught about in a safe, structured environment.

The more we put to the forefront, the more it’s likely to change attitudes around it,” Marnstein said. “I think that we can talk about it enough to be honest.”

In order to bring the topic of sexual assault to discussion, Marnstein organized for a guest speaker to come talk about sexual assault nearly a decade ago. He thinks that it was important to have someone send out a message about a serious topic.

At the time, the guest speaker gave a speech to the school and who were later split into smaller groups within their classes, the teachers. Marnstein says that it was a successful session, but there wasn’t one to speak on the topic since.

Repeated education, however, is important. A Columbia University study found that women in college were half as likely to be sexually assaulted when they took sexual educa tion classes before college. But sexual assault isn’t a women’s problem when most perpetr ators of the act are male.

However, education for every one is clearly important, and it’s clearly needed if any change is expected to happen. Whether it’s through discussions, artful presentations or in their own bodies.

With the first encounter with information about sex is not through wrong sources because their first encounter with information about sex is not through parents or schools but through wrong sources. Especially now with the internet, there is more access to misleading material.

This leads Marnstein to think that how sexual assault is talked about and viewed is a societal issue.

“I think we’re really far from getting to where we need to be, so I think the constant thing to do is to keep talking about it, to keep addressing it [and] to keep talking about what’s acceptable behavior,” Marnstein said.

Winkler observes that the number of students discussing inappropriate behavior first hand when being educated about the topic in health class.

She remembers walking through the Clothes line Project display, in which victims of sexual assault anonymously write their stories on t-shirts to be hung up during health class, and hearing a few male students in the back making jokes.

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