

Orange County Vaccination Rates High Throughout Schools

By [Blake Hodge](#)

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Posted November 6, 2015 at 10:29 am



Outbreaks of preventable diseases across the country in recent months prompted debate over childhood vaccinations.

Nearly 150 Americans, most of them Californians, were sickened earlier this year in a measles outbreak that began at Disneyland.

California Governor Jerry Brown has now signed legislation that bans non-medical exemptions for parents.

In North Carolina, parents can opt out of vaccinating their children through medical or religious exemptions.

Orange County health officials released immunization records this week detailing vaccination rates in public and private schools.

Judy Butler is the community health services supervisor for the Orange County Health Department, and she says this information was compiled from an annual communicable disease report.

She says outbreaks of preventable diseases are up in some cases simply because there are more children who are not fully vaccinated.

“For one thing, we have more children who are not vaccinated because of parental choice,” Butler says.

“Not a large number, the vast majority of our kids are vaccinated.

“[Outbreaks] just bring more attention to the fact that children who are not vaccinated are definitely at greater risk if they’re exposed to these diseases.”

Butler adds the risks for children who have been vaccinated also goes up as the percentage of unvaccinated children increases.

“Because the vaccines are not 100 percent effective,” she says, “the more often they are exposed, the more likely they are to become ill with one of the vaccine-preventable diseases as well. Even though they’re fully vaccinated.”

99.2 percent of students in Orange County Schools are vaccinated and 98.78 percent of Chapel Hill – Carrboro City School students are vaccinated. But that number drops to just below 96 percent for charter schools and just over 93 percent for private schools.

Those figures line up with Butler’s expectations.

“Because I’ve worked in the county for so long, I knew that we had a couple of private or charter schools where we had more parents who are not as inclined to vaccinate their children,” Butler says. “So, no, I can’t really say there was any surprise. Not to me anyway.”

Emerson Waldorf has the lowest vaccination rate throughout public and private schools in Orange County at just over 62 percent of student vaccinated. A reason for the dramatic drop at Emerson Waldorf is because 84 of the 222 students claim religious exemptions.

Butler says there is not verification required to justify a religious exemption in the Tar Heel state.

“North Carolina does not require any specific information,” she says. “All they require is that a parent say that they choose not to vaccinate their children for religious reasons.”

Butler adds there are medical exemptions to not vaccinate children as well.

“And we’re not talking because they didn’t feel good after their last vaccine or because they often ran a fever after a vaccine,” she says. “We’re talking about kids with serious medical problems that prohibit them from getting vaccines.”

Butler says a new tendency among parents has been to not vaccinate children due to fear of vaccinations causing other medical problems. But Butler says these have been proven to be nothing more than medical myths.

“A lot of the fears and a lot of the misinformation that parents had about vaccines causing certain disorders, such as Autism, has been disproven,” Butler says.

All rules governing vaccination rates are regulated at the state level.

You can find information regarding schools in the [Orange County School System](#), [Chapel Hill – Carrboro City School System](#) and Orange County [private and charter schools](#) through these links.

Most students in Orange County vaccinated

Highlights

County has posted immunization data from all schools on its website

Emerson Waldorf reports lowest immunization rate at 62.2 percent

Goal is to raise public awareness and give parents important information



State laws require all students to receive several vaccinations before starting at a child-care center or public, private or charter school. Local officials recently shared those immunization numbers with parents and the public on the Orange County Health Department website. Harry Lynch hlynch@newsobserver.com

By Tammy Grubb

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CHAPEL HILL - County health officials have released student immunization rates from local schools to raise awareness and inform parents about their child's potential for exposure to infectious diseases.

Eight schools countywide reported that 100 percent of their students meet immunization requirements this year, Orange County Health Department records show. Nearly all local schools reported immunization rates of 95 percent or higher, health officials said.

State law requires all children to be vaccinated before starting a child-care program or a public, private or charter school. Homeschooled children do not have to meet those requirements.

Parents can ask for an exemption based on genuine religious beliefs or a physician's medical advice. North Carolina does not recognize a philosophical objection to vaccinations; parents with those concerns typically claim a religious objection, officials said.

Nearly all states – except California, Mississippi and West Virginia – offer religious exemptions, while only 19 offer philosophical exemptions.

Children who do not have an exemption or the required vaccinations can be suspended after 30 days and return to school after their parents get an exemption or proof they were vaccinated.

Emerson Waldorf School outside Chapel Hill reported Orange County's lowest immunization rate – 62.2 percent of the K-12 students are immunized. The school, which has had previous outbreaks of pertussis and measles, reported 84 out of 222 students had religious exemptions.

The school's policy is to meet all state requirements, Emerson Waldorf administrator Christina Wise said. A number of families have made a different choice, she said, and the school chooses to respect their decisions.

"We consider it a private matter for the family to make decisions, and then we observe all North Carolina laws regarding it," Wise said.

Emerson Waldorf's immunization rate lowered the overall rate for six local private schools to 93.2 percent, health officials reported. Those schools reported 96 religious and two medical exemptions.

Two charter schools – Orange Charter and Expedition School – had a 95.8 percent vaccination rate. Those schools reported 22 religious exemptions and none for medical reasons.

The Orange County Schools district led the county with the most vaccinated students at 99.2 percent, reports show, followed by the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools with 98.78 percent. The county schools reported five medical and 57 religious exemptions, compared with 15 medical and 127 religious exemptions in the city schools.

Exemptions bill

The state Senate considered a bill this year that would have ended religious exemptions; it's still in the Committee on Health Care.

Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools also attempted to eliminate the religious exemption a few years ago, said Judy Butler, the Health Department's public health nursing supervisor.

"They found out legally that they probably could not do that," she said. "The concern about having the legislature do away with religious exemptions ... was that it might backfire, and they may actually pass a law that allows personal exemptions, which a lot of states have done."

Orange County has the second-highest number of religious exemptions in the state, Butler said, after Buncombe County. Roughly 4 percent of Buncombe's school-age children are not immunized, state reports show.

Unvaccinated students can be asked to stay home for up to 21 days if an infectious disease strikes a school with low immunization rates, Butler said. The incubation period varies from one disease to another.

"If we had a pertussis case in a school that is 99 percent vaccinated," Butler said, "we may not need to exclude the unimmunized students, because of the herd immunity in the population."

"Herd immunity" means the school has enough vaccinated students that it also provides some protection to unvaccinated students.

The state reported 780 cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, in 2014 – the highest number reported since 1991. Twelve cases were reported in Orange County, state records show; Durham County had 20 cases, and Wake County had 53.

Orange County reported 13 pertussis cases in 2012, and one confirmed case of the measles in a local private school in 2013. A 14-year-old student at East Chapel Hill High School died from meningococcal disease in 2014.

Public fears

Public health experts worry the fear that vaccinations may be linked to autism and other disorders, plus the number of unvaccinated homeschool students, may be causing resurgence in some diseases that have been eradicated for years in the United States.

Since 1988, more than 16,000 claims of adverse vaccination effects have been filed with the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. More than \$3 billion was paid in 4,277 of those claims, government records show.

Orange County's health department works with medical providers to address those fears, Butler said, and encourages parents to consider science-based research that says the vaccines are safe.

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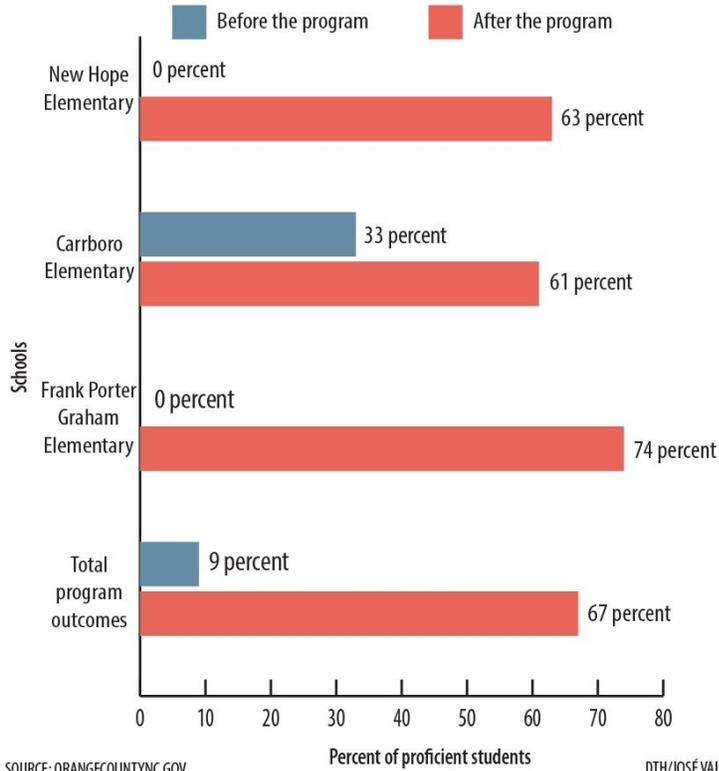
Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/community/chapel-hill-news/article42266670.html#storylink=cpy>

Family Success Alliance fills gaps in community

Rachel Herzog | November 2, 2015 Photo by José Valle / The Daily Tar Heel

Family Success Alliance boosts proficiency in CHCCS

Kids who enrolled in the Family Success Alliance kindergarten readiness program went from 9 percent to 67 percent proficiency in literacy, math and social skills by the end of the summer program.



When Alecia Gattis thought about her son starting kindergarten in the fall, she felt panicked.

His daycare and preschool hadn't had a lot of supervision, Gattis said, and allowed her son, Melvin "Trey" Babbs, to wander from room to room.

Every time I picked him up, he was in another classroom, or he was in (the director's) office," she said.

Gattis was worried this freedom would translate to him not being able to sit in one place and learn in kindergarten at Northside Elementary School. But then, Trey attended a three-week kindergarten readiness program from the Family Success Alliance.

"I was really, really worried he would not be able to settle in and not be in trouble and not be such a busybody, and that program, it worked," Gattis said.

"Like, wonders."

While Trey attended preschool, lots of kids in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools do not. Many also lack other resources that help them succeed in school.

Kids who enrolled in the Family Success Alliance kindergarten readiness program went from 9 percent to 67 percent proficiency in literacy, math and social skills by the end of the summer program.

Additionally, the Alliance seeks to address community needs throughout the school year by matching families with the resources they need.

Staffed by the Orange County Health Department and funded by the Orange County Social Justice Fund, the group began its work in August 2014. But its programs didn't start until July, spokesperson Stacy Shelp said.

"In the first year, a lot of the work was information gathering," Shelp said.

The group spent the first four months identifying pockets of poverty in Orange County and identifying their needs. This school year, the program is working with two pilot zones, in central Orange County and downtown Chapel Hill.

During the school year, the group's "navigators" work directly with families from these zones to connect them with whatever resources they need. These include tutoring, parenting classes, literacy help and substance abuse counseling. The group partners with local organizations including the Orange County Literacy Council and the Carrboro organization Volunteers for Youth.

"I like to say that we're navigators because we're guides," said Beatrice Parker, the program's Zone 6 navigator.

"Parents with jobs and long hours might not be able to investigate the best after-school program themselves," Parker said.

Gattis, who is studying to be a registered nurse, said she is working with the program now to find tutoring for Trey's older brother and for Trey, who's adapting well to kindergarten.

"I have had no complaints from the teachers — she said she has no idea who that child that I explained was," Gattis said.

Read more: <http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2015/11/family-success-alliance-fills-gaps-in-community>

The News of Orange County

Kindergarten readiness program finds success



Two students work on an assignment during a kindergarten readiness program held this summer in three schools, including New Hope Elementary School, which was made possible by the Family Success Alliance.

Posted: Friday, October 23, 2015 4:04 pm | Updated: 4:44 pm, Fri Oct 23, 2015.

by Amanda VanDerBroek

Just a few months after Family Success Alliance launched, the group along with the county's school districts are making strides.

On Monday, Oct. 19, FSA announced it has seen an early victory through a summer kindergarten readiness program.

"After working with community members and organizations in our two zones, the Family Success Alliance felt the best place to start work in our pipeline was with a kindergarten readiness program, which is early in the pipeline of success from birth through first job or early college," said Dr. Michael Steiner, chief of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at UNC Health Care and chair of the Family Success Alliance Advisory Council. "These programs were developed using best practice and enrolled children from low-income families as well as children identified as needing additional support. Those children participated in programs that would help them prepare for kindergarten. Programs were held in three elementary schools that are present in the two zones [chosen by FSA]—New Hope Elementary School, Frank Porter Graham Elementary School and Carrboro Elementary School."

Steiner said a total of 66 families and their children participated in the programs that lasted two to three weeks. The aim was to prepare the children socially, emotionally and academically for when they entered school.

"We're thrilled to report that we saw significant improvements in the assessment scores of children that participated in this first year of the kindergarten readiness program," Steiner said. "As I said in the beginning, this is the start of multiple interventions that will carry these children on a pipeline to young adult success."

The achievement in numbers

Sheldon Lanier, director of equity for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, said overall students enrolled in the program at the three schools, moved from 9 percent to 67 percent in proficiency.

“When we talk about proficiency, we’re talking about leveling the playing field and having students ready to move into kindergarten and actually, I don’t want to say compete, but basically be able to achieve on the same level of students who may have gotten some of those resources,” Lanier said.

Students at New Hope Elementary went from 0 to 63 percent in proficiency while Carrboro Elementary went from 33 percent to 61 percent. Frank Porter Graham saw the largest gain in proficiency from 0 to 74 percent.

Forty-eight percent of the children enrolled came into the program with no prior education experience and 70 percent of the group qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Seventy-five percent of participants were a race other than white with 62 percent identifying as Hispanic.

“In terms of the teachers that were working with the program over the summer, 100 percent of the teachers surveyed felt that the program was extremely beneficial for their students,” Lanier said. “And 64 percent said students made substantial gains while 36 percent indicated that students made moderate gains.”

All of the families involved with the program reported feeling satisfied with kindergarten readiness and 84 percent felt their child was ready for kindergarten following participation.

Setting kids up for success

Ambra Wilson, assistant principal at New Hope Elementary who served as the administrator of the kindergarten readiness program at New Hope, said numerous parties were involved in making the program happen at the school.

“As we began planning for this camp, we didn’t have as much time as we hoped to have in the upcoming year,” she said. “So we started out by talking with our kindergarten teachers—who had met these children who were coming into kindergarten—and asked them to give us their expertise.”

From there those involved knew which students should be focused on for kindergarten readiness.

“We then reached out to all of the families who were recommended because we knew all of them would not respond or be able to participate,” she said. “We were hopeful to get 30 participants. However, due to people moving or vacations that were already planned and things of that nature, we ended up with 21 students who participated consistently throughout the program.”

Wilson said when it came to recruiting teachers, many came from across the spectrum K-5, each wanting to be a part of the program bringing a passion of helping kids get ready for their grade school career.

Wilson said involving parents in an informational session was also key to making the students successful.

“We wanted to provide parents with specific questions to engage in meaningful conversation with their kids about the learning that was taking place and also use that as an opportunity to provide them with strategies that could then be intertwined to their daily activities—utilize that time traveling in a car and reading a book at night before they went to sleep and questions to go a long with that text,” she said.

Wilson said part of the goal was inspiring children to want to learn.

“We wanted those children to develop a love of learning and feel successful because they were going to be successful when they came to New Hope,” she said. “Now that these children are at New Hope and I see their shining faces everyday, it’s funny because I’ll ask them, ‘Who was your teacher last year?’ and you know they count last year as summer camp. ... It’s developing that passion in our kids and our teachers.”

Wilson said she’s starting to collect data on children involved in the program.

“We are beginning to track data on these children as we move into the beginning of the year assessments,” she said. “So I’m beginning to compile that data so I can look and see is this an alignment with the assessments that we used in the summer program? Are we seeing this carryover into the assessment that we use throughout the school year? I will continue to monitor the data on the children that were in the program as well as the students who did not participate that were invited, so we’ll still have that controlled group to monitor.”

Magda Parvey, assistant superintendent for Instructional Services for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, said the district has been working on an achievement gap for some time.

“And we feel like the kindergarten readiness program really aligns very nicely with the work that we’re doing in addressing the achievement gap, specifically in terms of pre-teaching and preparing students in advance of being in school,” Parvey said. “It aligns very much with our K-12 initiatives in terms of strategies that are evidence based. So we really appreciated the ‘it takes a village’ approach that the Family Success Alliance provided and we’re really honored to be a part of that.

“The gains that Mr. Stiener and Mr. Lanier have talked about really mean a lot to students. We’re talking about not only kindergarten readiness, but also college and career readiness, putting them on the right trajectory for success in school. It starts with kindergarten readiness.”

From the parents’ perspective

Claudia Yerena and Eddy Morrison know about the success of the kindergarten readiness program first hand.

Yerena said she is the mother of two sons, ages 7 and 5, and the youngest participated in the New Hope kindergarten readiness camp.

“I can see the difference between my two boys,” Yerena said. “It’s a huge difference between them. My older boy was very scared and shy and refusing to go to school. It’s totally different from my second boy. He was totally excited. He was ready to go. He has more confidence.”

Yerena said her youngest son started school with more academic skills even though she works with him at home.

“At school, I think he takes it more seriously,” she said.

Morrison, a grandmother of a student who participated at the camp at New Hope, agreed with Yerena and said she wished her own children could have participated in a similar program when they were young.

Morrison said kindergarten readiness helped her grandchild get familiar with the school and meet some of her classmates and make friends.

“Therefore it lowered the anxiety level and settled her a little bit more so she’s willing to pay attention more,” Morrison said.

Steiner said FSA hopes to continue the kindergarten readiness program in the coming years and learn from the initial program.

“This program is currently the entry point into this long pipeline,” he said. “We promise to continue to developing programs that will build the pipeline, strengthen partnerships and make resources available to children and their families as they successfully move through their school years with early college and early career being the end goal of our work.”

Officials: FSA kindergarten readiness program a success

- [Katie Jansen](#)
- Updated Oct 24, 2015

HILLSBOROUGH — The new kindergarten readiness program launched this summer is meeting its goals, the Family Success Alliance announced this week in conjunction with two local school districts.

The program rolled out this summer after the Family Success Alliance collected surveys and held community listening sessions to help in prioritizing the communities' needs.

“This is the start of multiple interventions which will carry these children on a pipeline to young adult success,” said Michael Steiner, chairman of the Family Success Alliance advisory council.

The program, which was held at three elementary schools and served 66 families, hoped to provide academic, social and emotional support for underserved families and for students who didn't have previous school experience.

Of this summer's participants, about 48 percent didn't have prior school experience, and 70 percent of families qualified for free and reduced lunch.

The students were given pre- and post-tests to measure their level of readiness for kindergarten. By the end of the 15- to 16-day program, many of the students moved from the bottom two levels — beginning and in progress, to the top two levels — basic or full proficiency.

At New Hope Elementary, 63 percent of students exhibited basic proficiency — up from 0 percent during the pre-tests.

At Frank Porter Graham Elementary, 26 percent of students fell in the basic proficiency level and 48 percent of students were fully proficient — both up from 0 percent two weeks prior.

Magda Parvey, assistance superintendent for instructional services for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, said the readiness program aligns nicely with other steps the district is taking to close the achievement gap the district has struggled with for years.

Some students entered the program with little to no English. At each of the three sites, the majority of students were Hispanic.

“Language and vocabulary put students at a deficit,” Parvey said. “So when you give them the exposure to read-alouds where they’re hearing language and learning to have that listening comprehension, it very much helps them in terms of school readiness ... Coming in with some language, coming in and understanding what school is about, that puts them on equal footing.”

Ambra Wilson, New Hope Elementary’s assistant principal and site administrator for the kindergarten program, said the program was not only about helping the students adjust to school, but about helping the parents feel comfortable, too.

“And really, we’re a family at New Hope,” she said. “So now (the students are) a part of that family, and we want the parents to feel a part of that family. And they did tell us at the end of this program 100 percent of them felt welcomed and ready to be a part of our school. So we really feel like the kindergarten readiness camp provided us with that springboard that we needed to really launch this school year in the right direction.”

Wilson also said that although some program participants needed behavioral interventions during the summer program, incidents have been few and far between since they've started school.

"The benefits to this program go outside the data that can be put on paper," she said.

Steiner said the Family Success Alliance hopes to continue offering the program in the future, as well as expand enrollment.

This year's program was funded by \$75,000 from the social justice fund, which was allocated by the Orange County Board of Commissioners. Steiner said the alliance plans to continue working with the commissioners and both school districts to secure future funding.

The organization is also working toward implementing other programs along the pipeline to continue working with these students.

Parvey said the district looks forward to working with the Family Success Alliance in the future.

"We have really appreciated the 'it takes a village' approach that Family Success Alliance provided, and we're honored to be a part of that," she said.