

# BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203*

*Board of Education Regular Meeting*

*August 19, 2024*

## Focus on Civil Discourse, Critical Thinking a Priority for New School Year

As New Trier begins a new school year with both optimism and acknowledgement of challenges that lie ahead, the Board of Education and Superintendent Paul Sally reiterated the District's commitment to civil discourse, critical thinking, and the core mission of educating students.

Board President Jean Hahn asked the entire New Trier community to partner with the Board and District in this commitment.

"As in the past, this year holds the same promise as we eagerly resume our continuing efforts to teach our students how to think wisely, converse civilly, and engage conscientiously in a world of competing ideas," Hahn said. "Yet this year, our early enthusiasms are also particularly vulnerable to disruptive pressures that likely will be brought to bear by divisive local, national, and global events.

"So, in anticipation of the coming year, the Board would like to take this opportunity to ask every member of the New Trier community to reaffirm the commitment we made to our students, and to ourselves, in 2020 when we adopted the following Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse Statement:

*New Trier Township High School believes that a fundamental aspect of our mission is to develop critical thinkers who can navigate a complex world through civil discourse, respectful inquiry, engaged listening and open consideration of multiple perspectives. Key to fulfilling this charge is the cultivation of a school environment in which all students feel welcome and free to explore a wide range of ideas. Our firm commitment to this principle reflects not only New Trier's obligation to prepare our students for their future but our belief that the open exchange of ideas lies at the core of a democratic society in which individuals are accountable for their actions and treat one another with dignity, compassion, and respect."*

Sally added that amid complex local, national, and global events, New Trier's priority is to safeguard students' ability to fully engage in school. He gave examples of ways in which New Trier supports students who may be affected by events outside of school, including:

- Partnering with families and community groups to provide resources and supports
- Working with Graduating Class Teams, Advisers, and the Social Work Department to refer individual students who may be struggling to appropriate resources

- Making discussion spaces available for groups of students and staff who may be affected
- Collaborating with teachers and leaders to provide context and approaches for difficult discussions
- Preparing advisers and other staff with information about the event so it can be thoughtfully discussed in adviser rooms or classes as appropriate

Sally also said that as the school focuses on creating a culture of belonging for everyone and focusing on its core mission of educating students, in all but rare cases, the superintendent will not issue public statements on news events. The priority will remain on caring for the well-being of anyone affected by these events and assuring that all students can learn and thrive. Click for the Superintendent's message on [Supporting Students During Complex Events in Our World](#).

## Planned Facilities Work: Science Labs, Solar Panels, Student Services

The next phase of work in the District's 15-year Facilities Plan will bring new science labs, solar panels, and student services and administrative spaces to the Winnetka Campus, along with water main projects and other maintenance projects at both campuses.

Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson told the Board that planned work over the next three years prioritizes continuing improvements at the oldest remaining buildings at the Winnetka Campus, the North Building (1934) and Tower Building (1957). The renovations include 10 redesigned science labs with modern features, for a net gain of three science labs replacing outdated labs that were built in the 1990s.

The labs will be built during the summers of 2026 and 2027, with preparation work beginning in 2025. They will occupy space that now includes administrative and student services offices on the 2nd floor. Those offices, including spaces for Graduating Class Teams and Post-High School Counseling, will move near the Trevian Way entrance, making them more visible and accessible to families and students. The location will also improve security by placing some of the most-visited areas on campus close to secure entrances.

Reflecting New Trier's commitment to sustainability, the District plans to install a solar array at the Winnetka Campus, following the successful completion of a solar energy project at the Northfield Campus. The Northfield project came online in March 2024 and generates more than 40% of electricity for that campus.

In addition, the District plans to conduct important Health Life Safety work at both campuses, including the replacement of water main systems that are more than 60 years old and have outlived their useful lives. This work will assure the District's continued compliance with Illinois Department of Public Health code. Click for the [Facilities Plan Presentation](#).

## Superintendent Search: Online Survey, Upcoming Open Forums

All New Trier High School community members are invited to share their thoughts on the District's search for a new superintendent in an online survey and/or by attending an upcoming open forum.

Superintendent Paul Sally has announced his planned retirement on June 30, 2025 after 30 years of service to New Trier. The search firm Hazard, Young, and Attea (HYA) is assisting the Board of Education in the superintendent search.

HYA is conducting both online and in-person forms to gather community input about the qualifications and characteristics New Trier needs in its next leader as well as what participants see as the District's strengths, challenges, and immediate and long-term priorities.

Online forums:

1. Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
2. Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
3. To access the forums:
  - a. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6872610179?omn=89338554781> OR
  - b. By phone: Dial (312) 626 6799 and enter Meeting ID: 687 261 0179 when prompted

In-person forum:

1. Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Northfield Campus (7 Happ Road) in room C234. Parking is available in the lots off of Happ Road or Frontage Road. You may enter through the gates by either the B door or D door.

Working with HYA, the Board has also developed a short survey on these same topics. The survey takes less than 8 minutes to complete. It will close at midnight on Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>. Community members may access the survey via this link: [Superintendent Search Survey](#).

The information from the open forums, the survey, and focus groups will be compiled into a Leadership Profile Report that will be presented at the September 16 Board meeting. This Profile will be used to recruit candidates, establish criteria for selecting the next superintendent, and develop interview questions for the Board to ask candidates.

The Board is encouraging all New Trier community members to take part in these opportunities to provide input on the District's next leader.

*The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.*

Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nths.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>

Information about Board of Education members, upcoming meetings, agendas, minutes, and other documents are available at <https://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation>