

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

December 9, 2024

New Trier Uses Partnerships, Planning, and Prevention to Protect School

New Trier is continually improving its safety and security planning and procedures to help students, staff, and visitors feel both welcome and secure while they are in New Trier buildings and facilities.

Principal/Assistant Superintendent Denise Dubravec updated the Board on the work of the District's Safety Committee and recent District improvements, including upgraded technology, procedures, and revamping the District's comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan.

Dubravec noted that the District relies on several layers of prevention, safety, and security, starting with building relationships and connection among students, staff, and families. Studies show that students who feel connected at school are much less likely to commit acts of violence. In addition, students and families who have relationships with trusted adults are more likely to report threats to the school.

New Trier also has strong relationships with village partners including police, fire, and mental health officials who can assist the school in a crisis. Physical safety measures such as staffed security kiosks, swiping in with IDs, and visitor check-ins also help protect the school. Technology plays an important role as well, with cameras, auto-locking doors, and a new app to account for students and staff in a crisis among the District's tools for emergency planning.

Security procedures are another important part of the New Trier's overall preparedness, and Dubravec said a security planning team has spent the last year working with partners to overhaul the District's Emergency Operations Plan. The new plan includes detailed checklists and instructions for preparing and responding to different types of emergencies and providing information in a crisis.

Once completed, the Emergency Operations Plan will be the basis for continued staff training on emergency procedures, another important element of the overall security plan, Dubravec said. Staff go through training every year and receive updates in staff meetings to assure everyone knows how to respond in any type of emergency. Students also learn how to respond through drills and an annual Safety Day. Click for the [Safety and Security presentation](#).

New Trier Gets Top Marks on State Report Card

New Trier remains among the state's very top high schools in academic performance, ranking first in English and third in math among non-selective enrollment high schools, according to results of the 2023-2024 Illinois State Report Card.

Both the Winnetka and Northfield campuses were rated "exemplary" by the state, meaning they placed in the top 10 percent of all Illinois schools when measured on a number of indicators, including proficiency rates in English, math, and science, graduation rate, 9th graders on track, and chronic absenteeism.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos told the Board that the District made its most significant gains in its efforts to decrease chronic absenteeism, which includes students who are absent for 10% or more of the school year. Most school districts have struggled to manage absenteeism after a spike during the COVID pandemic, and New Trier has been no exception, seeing that rate climb to 31% in the 2022-2023 school year.

After the Graduating Class Teams led a targeted effort to stress the importance of daily attendance to all families in the 2023-2024 school year - and to provide interventions for students at risk of becoming chronically absent - the rate dropped to 15%. Those efforts continue this school year, Tragos noted.

The District's next steps include preparing students for the state's shift from the SAT to the ACT, identifying and supporting the growth of students who do not meet benchmarks, and maintaining progress to meet the state's annual proficiency goals. Click for the [State Report Card presentation](#).

Other News from the December 9 Meeting

- Northfield Campus Principal Paul Waechtler updated the Board on a strategic plan goal of building community within the freshman class through lessons and activities that help them better understand themselves and others. As New Trier seeks to create a culture of belonging, Waechtler gave examples of lessons that help establish the foundation for students to bring their unique identities and experiences to class while acknowledging the different perspectives and experiences of others. In freshman adviser rooms, for example, students watch a TED talk from Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie called "The Danger of a Single Story" in which she explains what we lose by reducing people or cultures to a single, preconceived idea. This lesson helps students engage with monthly observances of different identities on display across the campus. Other examples include lessons in Kinetic Wellness and Social Studies in which students read personal stories and statistics about the impact of antisemitism and learn about the historical roots of antisemitism. Social Studies classes also include units on Islam that help challenge "single stories," such as that most Muslims live in the Middle East or that all Muslims practice their religion in the same way. Click for the [Understanding Ourselves and Others presentation \(slides 7-13\)](#)

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://nthsp.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>