

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

November 18, 2024

New Trier Board Selects Dr. Peter Tragos as Next Superintendent

Dr. Peter Tragos, New Trier's current Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, will become the District's new Superintendent beginning July 1, 2025.

The Board of Education announced the appointment following community, parent, student, and staff input on a leadership profile and an extensive nationwide search. Tragos will succeed Dr. Paul Sally, who previously announced that he will retire as superintendent at the end of June 2025 after 31 years at New Trier.

"A lifelong learner, compassionate educator, and dedicated servant leader, he truly embodies the values professed in the New Trier motto," said New Trier Board of Education President Jean Hahn. "Now in his 27th year at the District, Dr. Tragos has worn many hats – first as a teacher in the social studies department, during which time he also served as an adviser and president of the New Trier Education Association, later joining the ranks of the administration, where he served as the Assistant Principal for the Northfield Campus, and since 2017 as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. In each of these roles, Dr. Tragos not only honed his mastery of teaching and learning, but also his authentic passion for students and teachers.

Remarkably, in addition to his innumerable contributions to New Trier, Dr. Tragos has also found the time and energy to establish himself beyond our walls as a visionary thought leader. A self-described 'insider who thinks like an outsider,' Dr. Tragos has partnered with prestigious national organizations like the Carnegie Foundation, Aspen Institute, and America Succeeds Educational Advisory Panel, becoming a prominent voice in conversations about the most crucial issues facing public education – how to bridge divides, adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing workplace, and reimagine a brighter, hopeful future for our children."

Tragos is a 29-year veteran educator who began his career teaching at Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago before joining New Trier's Social Studies faculty in 1998. He was promoted to Northfield Campus Assistant Principal in 2013 and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in 2017. In his current position, he is responsible for overseeing all major curricular initiatives as well as faculty supervision and evaluation, professional development, and testing. Most recently Tragos has led several initiatives that fulfill New Trier's strategic plan goals, including development of the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, implementation of New Trier's Civil Discourse and Critical Thinking statement, establishment of a first-of-its-kind partnership with the

University of Illinois' Siebel Center for Design, and leadership of a Future Programming Committee charged with developing innovative, experiential, and flexible opportunities for students in anticipation of future career pathways.

"I am humbled and grateful to be New Trier's next superintendent, following a line of superintendents who have maintained the district's history of excellence while adapting the institution to the needs of each generation of students and families," Tragos said. "What makes New Trier so special is its people and mission, and I'm excited to work together with *all* stakeholders to achieve the vision of the strategic plan and chart a course beyond 2030."

Like education across the nation, New Trier is amid a period of change, and we will continue to embrace the call to be a lighthouse school, leading change that prepares our students to thrive in the future while staying grounded in our core values of inquiry, compassion, and service."

Tragos holds a bachelor's degree in rhetoric, speech communication, and history from Drake University, a master's degree in education and history from DePaul University, and a doctoral degree in educational leadership and administration from National Louis University. A Northfield resident, his family includes four New Trier alumnae - wife Karen (1988) and daughters Isabel (2018), Olivia (2019), and Fiona (2021).

His selection follows a process that formally began in May when the Board of Education hired the firm Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (HYA) to assist in the search. HYA solicited input from community members, parents, students, staff, and alumni through 21 focus groups, five open forums, nine interviews, and an online survey that received nearly 1,000 responses. They used this input to build a Leadership Profile that guided the Board as it recruited and assessed a highly qualified pool of applicants that included educational leaders across the country. The Board interviewed finalists over the past several weeks.

Sally has led the District as Superintendent since 2017, and his retirement on June 30, 2025 will cap 31 years at New Trier - 15 as a math teacher and 16 as an administrator. He has been instrumental in creating and advancing New Trier's comprehensive strategic plan, *New Trier 2030*, overseeing important facilities improvements including the opening of the East Side Academic and Athletic project, and leading the District through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This announcement marks an exciting time of transition for New Trier, and with the selection of Dr. Peter Tragos, I can say without a doubt that the District will be in excellent hands for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead," Sally said. "Peter is an innovative thinker who has pushed us to consider how to prepare students not just for college or career, but for a fast-changing world that values collaboration, critical thinking, flexibility, respect for differences, civic responsibility, and civil discourse. I am excited to work with him over the next several months as he prepares for this new role and develops his plan for leading New Trier into the future and advancing its tradition of excellence."

New Trier Gives Students Opportunities to Lead Peers, Provide Input

An important goal in New Trier's strategic plan, *New Trier 2030*, is to provide opportunities for students to show leadership and have a voice in school initiatives. Senior student leaders in several

New Trier organizations told the Board how they use their voice to help lead peers and build inclusive communities within the school.

Sophie Bloom said her participation in Student Council has taught her the importance of mentoring younger students and of giving every member a voice. When Bloom first ran for secretary in school-wide elections as a sophomore and lost, older students encouraged her to stay with the club and try again. Now as Student Council vice president, she sees one of her duties as building community and encouraging others to share ideas.

As co-head of one of New Trier's largest competitive clubs, Science Olympiad, Kevin Huang said he has learned the importance of getting to know everyone. Huang has to make difficult decisions building rosters for competitions, and his relationships with fellow competitors help him encourage others to try new events or partners. He also works with fellow leaders to make sure all members have a chance to participate, such as organizing a freshman-only invitational.

Neil Sanderson, co-editor in chief of the New Trier News, said he views his role as a student leader as getting the best out of everyone at the newspaper. Sanderson said he is just as proud to see another reporter's byline as his own, and he works to foster a positive environment of collaboration in large group meetings as well as one-on-one conversations with reporters. He also said the newspaper helps give voice to topics that are most important to students.

Kennedy Glinn, senior captain of the field hockey and softball teams, echoed Sanderson's belief that being a student leader means getting the best out of her teammates. Glinn noted that it can be difficult to navigate how to resolve disputes among others who are the same age. She uses her leadership to set a positive tone for her teams, to emphasize respect and unity, and to make sure every teammate knows they will have a voice on the team.

Having older students as role models can inspire future student leaders, said Amelia Hoffmann, student director of the fall play *Almost, Maine*. Hoffmann looked up to student directors when she was younger and seized the opportunity to follow in their footsteps. She said a priority in performing arts is letting everyone know they are valued. In one example, cast and crew members wrote compliments to each other that they shared after the last performance.

Board members noted the common themes students shared about what they learned in their leadership roles across the school and praised them for their servant leadership.

Proposed New Courses Include Game Design, Aerospace Engineering

Students will have new opportunities to design video games, explore aerospace engineering, create jewelry and metal artwork, learn the foundations of teaching, and mix and match more one-semester courses under proposals for the 2025-2026 school year.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos presented proposed new courses and course revisions that have been vetted through a thorough process that includes review by administrators and instructional leaders. Tragos noted that the proposed courses fulfill many of New Trier's strategic plan goals, including expanding offerings in career-connected and experiential learning, providing interdisciplinary opportunities, and offering more scheduling flexibility.

The proposals include three new courses. Game Design 1 and 2 are semester offerings in which students will learn the fundamentals of game development and basic coding through hands-on projects. The third new course, Aerospace Engineering, is a yearlong course aligned with the national Project Lead the Way curriculum that will teach students aerodynamics, spacecraft design, coding, and analytics. This course expands New Trier's engineering offerings and includes a path to create a future interdisciplinary offering with the Science Department.

In major course revisions, the current Fashion Construction classes will become semester courses - Introduction to Fashion Design and Principles of Fashion Design - allowing students to learn and build upon design, sewing, and construction skills. In Art, the Sculpture 1,2,3 sequence will become Metal, Jewelry and Sculpture 1 and 2, bringing metal into the sculptural curriculum.

Human Growth and Child Development will become Foundations of Teaching, reflecting a shift many schools are making in their child development curriculum. In this course, students will learn about teaching as a career pathway. New Trier also plans to offer an Internship Program for upperclassmen, providing a capstone experience in career pathways through real-world experiences in different industries. The school will spend the 2025-2026 school year building community connections and capacity for this program, with plans to offer it beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

The Board is scheduled to vote on the new courses and revisions at the December regular meeting. Click for the [New Course Proposals presentation](#).

Other News from the November 18 Meeting

- The Board approved the District's tax levy for 2024, which supports the fiscal year 2024-25 and 2025-26 budgets. The District's ability to increase its tax extension is limited by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 5%, whichever is less. The 2023 CPI was 3.4%, which means the levy is capped at 3.4%, and that capped increase will be used in the calculation of the tax extension (exclusive of new property). Under the levy the New Trier portion of property tax bills should rise by 3.4% on average for property owners. The levy is the primary funding source for the District, and the revenue it generates funds New Trier's hiring and retention of high quality faculty and staff, broad and deep curriculum, expansive student services, and extracurricular programs. The levy also helps fund needed facility improvements at both campuses. Click for the [Levy Presentation](#).

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://nthsmediaspace.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>