

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

September 16, 2024

Superintendent Search: Leadership Profile and Next Steps

New Trier's next superintendent should prioritize building strong relationships, student mental health and safety, educational excellence, advancing the District's strategic plan, fostering equity and belonging, open communication, and being visible in the school and community, according to the results of a community survey and focus groups.

Nearly a thousand community members, parents, students, alumni, and staff shared their opinions on New Trier's strengths, challenges, and the priorities for the next superintendent through an online survey. Another 166 participated in 21 focus groups, five open forums, and nine interviews conducted by the search firm Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA).

HYA is helping the Board lead the recruitment, engagement, and interview process for a successor to Superintendent Paul Sally, who announced his plans to retire on June 30, 2025, capping a successful 30-year career at New Trier.

HYA representatives presented a Leadership Profile to the Board that includes the information they collected from the survey, focus groups, and interviews. This profile will help HYA as they screen candidates and will guide the Board as they interview an initial slate and finalists in the coming weeks, with a final decision potentially slated for the November 18 Board meeting.

Survey and focus group participants listed several strengths of New Trier, including high academic standards, strong community involvement, dedicated staff, comprehensive support systems, an inclusive and welcoming environment, strong extracurricular programs, collaborative leadership, community connection, and a focus on individual student success.

They said challenges for the next leader include managing high expectations, the mental health of students, diversity and equity, internal communication, parental pressure on schools and students, residents' property taxes and financial pressures, staff recruitment, the detrimental impact of social media, and sustaining and strengthening special education supports.

HYA said the next steps will be to post the Leadership Profile, continue recruiting/screening candidates, develop interview questions based on the Leadership Profile, and slate two rounds of interviews in mid-October to November 1. Click for the [Leadership Profile Presentation](#).

Profile of the Class of 2024

The vast majority of New Trier's Class of 2024 took classes at different levels throughout high school, and students took advantage of more opportunities to challenge themselves with higher level classes and to explore electives in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and the creative arts.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos presented the Class of 2024 profile, which details course-taking patterns, college application trends, and college choices for New Trier's most recent graduates. He noted that the profile dispels many myths around college admissions and the course levels students choose, reinforcing New Trier's focus on finding classes that are the best fit for a student's individual pathway toward post-high school goals.

New Trier offers a flexible level system so students can find courses that match their pace and learning style. Courses are offered at Level 2 (college preparatory), Level 3 (honors), and Level 4 (high honors and AP). The student profiles that New Trier has produced for the last 15 years show that students overwhelmingly take a mix of course levels during their time at New Trier, and students studying at all levels go on to rigorous colleges and universities.

For the Class of 2024, 94.2 percent of students took core academic courses at a mix of levels. Nearly 20 percent of students took classes at all three levels (2, 3, and 4), a significant increase that continues an upward trend. In addition, 72.2 percent of the Class of 2024 took at least one Level 4 class, and 68.2 percent took at least one AP class, both increases from previous years.

Curricular changes helped more students take Honors level courses, with the English Department offering most of its senior-level courses at Honors or High Honors levels. New Trier added an AP course, AP African American Studies, and more students are taking AP classes than in the past.

As the District analyzes course-taking patterns to determine future programming and college and career pathways, the Class of 2024 profile looked at two clusters of disciplines: STEM and creative arts courses. While the graduation requirement is two semesters of fine and/or practical arts, many students are interested in going beyond those minimum requirements, Tragos said, with 313 students taking at least one non-core STEM course and 677 taking at least one creative arts course. Click for the [Class of 2024 Profile Report](#).

Safety at New Trier: Strong Partnerships and Ongoing Improvements

New Trier works to continuously improve its safety and security protocols, implementing several layers of prevention and protection that include strong relationships between staff and students, community partnerships, physical safety measures, and emergency procedures and readiness.

Superintendent Paul Sally and Assistant Superintendent/Principal Denise Dubravec updated the Board on New Trier's safety and security measures, with a more comprehensive report planned for December.

Sally noted that one of the most important and effective prevention measures is building trust between students and staff and making everyone feel they belong. Students who are connected are

less likely to make unsafe decisions, and students are more likely to report potential danger to a trusted adult. New Trier prioritizes these connections through the adviser program, graduating class teams, extracurricular programs, affinity groups, social work, and partnerships with families and with community mental health resources.

New Trier also partners with local law enforcement on training and planning and consults with state and national groups including the Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy and the I Love You Guys Foundation. The Director of Campus Safety, security officers, and school resource officers (a sworn police officer on each campus) oversee daily safety and security.

Physical safety measures and procedures include limited entry points staffed by security personnel, student ID scanning, video surveillance, online reporting through TrevTips, lockdown hardware and software, and threat assessment. New this year, all staff will have the Raptor app, which allows for quick attendance taking and alerts during emergency situations.

Students and staff go through multiple safety trainings and drills each year, including a “safety day” to review procedures in each classroom. Technology and operational staff also do regular system tests with police and fire representatives on site.

Dubravec noted that a new Safety Committee reviews New Trier’s safety plans and procedures each year and gives input on areas for improvement. The committee includes students, staff, administrators, Board members, and parents. Click for the [Safety Presentation](#).

Other News from the September 16 Meeting

- The Board approved a Final Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 that is balanced in operating funds and provides for continued support of the District’s broad academic program, numerous extracurricular opportunities, student academic and social-emotional supports, and the hiring and retention of exceptional staff. The Board is required to adopt a budget by the conclusion of the first quarter of the fiscal year, and the District takes a conservative approach to forecasting and planning each year. The \$141M Final Budget anticipates a surplus of \$2.4M after debt payments on the East Side Academic and Athletic Project bond issue. The majority of the District’s revenues come from local property taxes, and the District creates its budget to maintain New Trier’s reputation for excellence and innovation while acting as strong financial stewards for its taxpayers. In recognition of this financial stewardship, New Trier has achieved the highest bond rating, Aaa, from Moody’s and has won numerous awards for financial transparency and fiscal management. Click for the [Final Budget Presentation](#).
- The early dismissal day scheduled for **Tuesday, March 4, 2025** is now a [late arrival day](#), with regular classes scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. on the Northfield Campus and 11:20 a.m. at the Winnetka Campus. The District made the change after the state of Illinois signed a new contract for required standardized testing this year, eliminating the Illinois Science Assessment that had been scheduled on that date. The change means students will now have a paired late arrival blue day and green day on Monday, March 3, and Tuesday, March 4.

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>