

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
February 22, 2022  
New Trier Township High School  
7 Happ Road, Room C234  
Northfield, IL 60093**

A **Regular Meeting** of the Board of Education of New Trier Township High School District 203, Cook County, Illinois was held at New Trier High School – Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road, in Room C234 on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

**Members Present**

Ms. Cathy Albrecht, President  
Ms. Kimberly Alcantara  
Mr. Avik Das  
Mr. Keith Dronen, Vice President  
Ms. Jean Hahn  
Mr. Brad McLane  
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

**Administrators Present**

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent  
Mr. Christopher Johnson, Associate Superintendent  
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Asst. Supt. for Special Ed. and Student Services  
Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction  
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal – Winnetka Campus  
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

**Also Present**

Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Ms. Aileen Geary, Social Studies Department Faculty and New Trier High School Educational Association President; Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, Math Department Faculty; Mr. Mike O’Connor, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Linda Straube, Library Department Faculty; Ms. Teri Rodgers, Social Studies Department Faculty; Mr. Mike Lee, Assistant Principal for Administrative Services; Mr. Mark Hines, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Bridget Butterly, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Shelly Fowler, Business Office Associate; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; students, members of the press and community.

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:00 p.m. – C234**

Ms. Albrecht called the Regular Meeting of February 22, 2022 of the Board of Education to order at 5:00 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus.

Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

Ms. Albrecht asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Ms. Alcantara moved that the Board adjourn to closed session for the purpose of collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the District, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired; the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District; security procedures, school building safety and security, and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property; the placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students; and litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

**II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:00 p.m. – A303**

### **III. BUSINESS MEETING – Open Session – 6:30 p.m. – C234**

Ms. Albrecht recalled the Regular Meeting of February 22, 2022 of the Board of Education to order at 6:30 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

### **IV. Minutes**

Ms. Albrecht asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 18, 2022 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of February 12, 2022 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Dronen seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 18, 2022 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of February 12, 2022 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

Next Ms. Albrecht shared the following comments:

*Welcome everyone, we appreciate your taking the time to attend our meeting tonight. We are assuming that many of you are here regarding the resolution we will vote on tonight to move to a mask optional policy on our campuses starting tomorrow, February 23<sup>rd</sup>. As a school district we are a rules-based organization and as we expect our students to follow the rules, we also expect our visitors to be modeling good behavior and following the rules of our campuses. Today we are still mask mandatory. Masks are required in this room and in this building and we expect our community to comply. As an accommodation, we also are making available a mask-optional room outside of this room where this meeting is streamed. This is the only place we are making masks optional today. Because of the interest in the resolution, we will reorder the agenda as follows: After approving the minutes and before Public Comment, Dr. Sally will present on the School Year Update and our process and planning over the past few weeks leading up to the resolution vote tonight. After that we will have Public Comment for 60 minutes, extending the 30 minutes to 60. The next order of business after Public Comment will be the discussion and vote on the resolution.*

### **B. 2021-2022 School Year Update**

Dr. Sally gave an update on the 2021-2022 school year focusing on the manner that Dr. Sally has framed his thinking about making decisions throughout the pandemic. Dr. Sally also provided a legal summary given the Board's fiduciary responsibility as well as the oath they took to uphold the law.

He began with why the District is recommending mask optional and how it has been working with students and staff. Dr. Sally shared that the District is ready for this move, and he would not bring this recommendation forward if he thought otherwise. This is not to say that the pandemic is over, but rather this moment is another time during the pandemic when the District can shift its practices and approach. Dr. Sally noted that the District has been working with students and staff who are medically more vulnerable for a number of weeks and he thanked Health Services for discussions with families which began in early February. Dr. Sally shared the reasons why the District is ready, which included a high vaccination rate, the continuation of the usual mitigations such as the enhanced HVAC system and cleaning regime continue, new cases have dropped, high-quality masks are available, and Shield testing continues. The District will continue to monitor metrics. In thinking about the pandemic, Dr. Sally shared a graphic of collective action versus individual action and, depending on the severity of the pandemic, mitigation efforts would fall along this continuum. Severity is based on a number of items, including the likelihood of serious outcomes, transmissibility, virus prevalence in the school and community as well as the effectiveness of vaccines and treatments. There are many actions that can be taken and range from collective to individual. He shared comments around this, noting that collective action may continue to be needed which the resolution will allow for, but there are actions that individuals can take that are right for them. Dr. Sally then walked through the various mitigation efforts available such as remote/hybrid/in-person learning, limits on extracurriculars, level of masking/type of mask, level of testing and social distancing. This also includes support for those medically at risk and there are plans in place for students and staff in this position. As shifts have taken place during the pandemic, these are the items that the District is tracking and understands.

Next, Dr. Sally walked through the legal framework, beginning with the Governor issuing an Executive Order mandating masks on August 25, 2021. This allowed the District to focus on educating students and transitioning

them back to school. On February 4, 2022, the State Circuit Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order against the mask mandate. This allowed for the lifting of the mask mandate for the plaintiffs in the case. New Trier was not a part of the lawsuit; therefore, the District was still required to operate under the Executive Order. It was at this time that the District began to work with families and staff on the potential transition to mask optional. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) did not extend the Illinois Department of Public Health's (IDPH) emergency rules. In consultation with the Board, New Trier wrote a letter to the Governor as the Appellate Court had not yet ruled, asking for a quick return of local control. At this time, the District was also in discussion with State Senator Fine. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the Appellate Court determined that the Governor's appeal was moot as IDPH's emergency rules were not extended. Dr. Sally noted that there are still substantive issues that remain in the court case, however, the District and the Board are no longer subject to the Executive Order as they were before the appeal was decided.

One item that the District focused on during this time was to ensure that the transition was done in a way that was supportive of all students and that they felt like they belonged no matter their choice. The school emphasized respect for the choices of others, sharing that students and staff are making the best choice for themselves for a variety of reasons. *Trevians Care for Trevians* was emphasized- being kind both in person and on social media as well as continuing to stay home if ill. The school knows that students will do this well, but it also needs the support of families and the community to ensure this approach happens.

The recommendation in front of the Board was the approval of the Amended Resolution Regarding Local Control to Mitigate Covid-19. This would make masks optional for students, staff, and visitors as of February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. Sally noted that students with Covid are excluded from school for at least five days. They are able to return to school after day five as long as they have no symptoms. If they are able to return, they must mask until day 10. Covid cases must continue to be reported to Health Services. The District will return to collective measures it has implemented in the past as needed.

#### **IV. Communications**

Ms. Albrecht invited anyone from the audience who wished to address the Board to come forward and fill out a yellow communications request form and give it to Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Before beginning Ms. Albrecht read part of the Civil Discourse and Critical Thinking Statement which was adopted by the Board at the October 2020 meeting, *"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."* She went on to share *"that last Friday was not an attendance day for students but was a professional development day for staff. The keynote speaker's topic was about Civil Discourse and Critical Thinking. She made an interesting point that in addition to how we speak to each other, Civil Discourse also means that we listen to each other. Please respect each person's right to speak without anyone weighing in with approval or disapproval. Please refrain from clapping, booing, cheering or any similar actions related to anyone's public comment. The school district expects mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct of all people on school property. We are a community of members who share this exceptional school district. Under Board policy, comments should be kept to 3 minutes or less. If comments are substantially repetitive or comments made by previous speakers, please consider presenting as briefly as possible to allow for more people to speak during the period. Questions and comments should be addressed to the Board as a whole, and not to an individual member, nor to a principal, staff member or another audience member."*

Ms. Albrecht noted that masks should be kept on while speaking and that there was a mask optional room which the meeting was streamed into. There were 13 requests for public comment.

1. Mr. Mark Weyermuller, former New Trier parent, requested to take his mask off. Ms. Albrecht reminded him that masks were to be on in the Board Room. Discussion ensued between the two. Mr. Weyermuller then went on to share comments about masks.
2. Ms. Amanda Nugent, former New Trier parent, shared comments about masks, noting that there are many who support the hard decisions that have had to be made. Other comments included the need for accurate and equitable education around the history of this country for students. She also shared comments about the behavior of some community members.
3. Ms. Aidia Steen, senior, shared comments of gratitude to the Board, Administration, and staff for the effort they invested in navigating the pandemic. She went on to share other comments regarding the behavior of some community members as well as any future decision-making process regarding the pandemic.
4. Ms. Annabel Miller, senior, shared comments commending the Board for their work urging them to not be

dissuaded by those who complain about masking and critical race theory. She went on to share additional comments regarding the behavior of some community members. She also shared that students appreciate when their minds are pushed and value a curriculum that cultivates discussion and reflection.

5. Ms. Shelley Shelly shared comments in support of being mask optional.
6. Ms. Cindy Fey, New Trier parent, shared comments of gratitude for the 2030 Strategic Plan and its emphasis on equity, social emotional learning, compassion, courage, and empathetic consideration of diverse viewpoints. She also shared comments that young people need to learn about hard truths and actual history. Ms. Fey noted her appreciation for Mr. Tragos' presentation last summer on the care taken when selecting texts for English classrooms and the thoughtfulness of the teachers who use them.
7. Ms. Eve Williams, New Trier parent, shared comments of gratitude to the Board, Administration, and staff for their work during Covid. She spoke in support of New Trier moving forward with its equity goals.
8. Ms. Beth Feeley, New Trier parent, spoke on behalf of New Trier Neighbors regarding mask optional.
9. Ms. Dorothy Elfring, future New Trier parent, shared comments that safety is a matter of opinion and went on to thank the Board for following the advice of experts and data instead of opinion. She also noted her appreciation for the District's equity statement.
10. Mr. Rusty Magner, parent, shared comments in support of going mask optional and other thoughts regarding the pandemic. Next, he shared comments opposing critical race theory, the 1619 Project and other revisionist history. Finally, he shared comments about gender, particularly regarding restrooms, locker rooms and sports.
11. Mr. Myles Mendoza, parent, shared comments about the lesson he has observed during this time. He also shared comments about the content of curriculum.
12. Ms. Amy Mattle, parent, shared comments of gratitude to the Board and faculty for their example of leadership during the pandemic. She also shared comments against the District going mask optional.
13. Ms. Anne Stevens, parent, shared comments that it has been two years since the first pandemic email from Dr. Sally and wanted to mark the anniversary with gratitude. She shared that she represents over 275 community members who have signed an online thank you card for staff, faculty, administration, and the Board. Ms. Stevens noted that she would send the link to the Board. Ms. Luisa Struck, student, shared comments of gratitude as well.

#### **\*C. Resolution Regarding Local Control to Mitigate COVID-19**

The next order of business was to discuss and vote on the resolution regarding local control of Covid mitigations. Ms. Albrecht commented that this was *“a good time to address our role as members of this Board of Education. School board candidates run as nonpartisans. As members of this Board, it is our fiduciary duty to follow the law, to work for the best interests of our students in providing an excellent education for all, and to be good stewards of our community's considerable investment in our school. No school board member should have a political or personal agenda affecting that duty. Nor be subject to the influence of others with such an agenda. During my seven years on this Board, I have been fortunate to serve with board members who regularly demonstrate that independence in support of New Trier -- and that is when we agree, and when we disagree.”* Dr. Sally and Ms. Albrecht invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn shared the following comments:

*“I would like to start by thanking everyone who has shared their perspective with the Board – both in person here tonight and in the weeks prior to our meeting. Listening to our community is always important in our role as public servants, but even more so when we're faced with an issue that to my mind does not present an obvious solution.*

*And thank you Dr. Sally for your comprehensive overview of the operational and legal context in which you are making this recommendation and in which the Board is asked to make this decision. I have taken this period where we're examining this issue to reflect on the last two years, and I was struck by the frequency with which we have had to adapt our approach to managing Covid since March 2020. Over the course of these almost two years, as the New Trier community joined together to shepherd our children through the dislocations that have been caused by Covid and we have steadily reclaimed a normal school experience and during this time, we have often had to struggle to keep pace with and adapt to a novel and quickly-evolving virus, this is a struggle that at times taxed our collective and individual reserves of patience, empathy, and creativity.*

*But while change often feels like the only constant, one thing has remained certain from the outset and that is our shared commitment to the common goal of providing our students with a **safe, stable, and sustainable** learning environment.*

*And in the absence of certainty about how best to manage this evasive enemy, it is our **trust** in one another's unwavering commitment to this singular goal that has sustained our steady progress toward normal. Moreover, this mutual trust has*

*allowed us to transcend the profound disagreements that seem to arise when we find ourselves contemplating yet another change or transition like we do tonight.*

*But as anyone in any manner of relationship can attest, trust is a precious yet fragile commodity that is painstakingly earned and easily lost. By remaining open and transparent about our intentions and our actions, the Board and administration endeavor to be worthy of the trust this community has placed in us. To that end, I want to be abundantly clear about what my decision tonight means – or perhaps more accurately, what it doesn't mean.*

*First, lifting the mask mandate is not an indication that I believe the pandemic is over or that we simply ignore covid. This is not a "Mission Accomplished" moment by any sense. Rather, this decision is an acknowledgement that current circumstances warrant a modification of our response to Covid from a collective approach to a more individualized approach. Again as Dr. Sally noted, we will continue to monitor data to assess the risk Covid poses to our clear and constant goal of providing a safe, stable, and sustainable learning environment for our students.*

*Second, lifting the mask mandate is not an indication that I think masks are ineffective as a means of preventing the spread of disease. Rather, the decision to lift the mask mandate is an acknowledgment that while masks can keep us safe, they can also impede a student's ability to realize their educational, social, and emotional goals. And, while current circumstances warrant shifting our approach to reflect this evolving risk-reward calculation, we will continue to monitor data to assess the impact on our clear and constant goal of providing a safe, stable, and sustainable learning environment.*

*As our response to Covid continues to evolve, this next step toward normal (which for many may feel more like a leap) not only demands that we place our trust in one another, but that we trust **ourselves** to make the decisions that are right for us, and to trust our friends and peers are making the decisions that are right for them. I am confident that our circumstances warrant this transition from a collective to an individual approach, but the shift is not without uncertainty and inevitably will require further refinements. I am also confident, however, that if we maintain our trust in one another, the New Trier community will navigate this latest change on our path toward normal with continued dignity and grace. Accordingly, I support Dr. Sally's recommendation to move forward with a mask optional policy."*

Mr. Das noted his appreciation for Ms. Hahn's comments and acknowledged his fellow Board members, administration, and faculty for their endurance, thoughtfulness, and fellowship as they work through the challenges and navigate this ambiguity together in the best possible way forward. He also indicated his support for Dr. Sally's recommendation. He referenced the "Why We Are Ready" slide in Dr. Sally's presentation and noted it is where he felt most compelled to support the recommendation, acknowledging the District could find itself in a position where it may need to revisit its mask policy and mandate and to what extent that will be an exercise of the Board's discretion of their conversations. The strong thoughtfulness that has been brought to come to this position may need to be revisited moving forward. Mr. Das shared his thanks for presenting and framing the challenges to date as well as the work and consideration going into this decision.

Ms. Tomlinson shared the following comments:

*"First, I want to thank all of our community members who have taken the time to show up at this meeting to share their points of view with us. I want to thank all those people who took the time to email us. There were tens if not a hundred emails and I want to assure you that I considered them all thoughtfully and carefully.*

*Second, I'd like to thank our teachers and all the people inside of this building that have gone to great lengths in getting and keeping the kids in the classroom these last 2 years.*

*Before us is a resolution recommended by the administration to make masking optional. Many people both for and against have expressed that this is an easy decision. Yet, in my opinion, the choice comes with a set of costs and benefits – and clearly different groups weigh those costs and benefits in different ways.*

*At this point –with cases declining, extremely high vaccination rates, on-going Shield testing, the availability and effectiveness of N95 masks, advancements in therapeutics, and hospital capacities – I do believe the administration has made a compelling argument for why the school can start to relax collective mitigations in favor of individual action. And I will support the resolution so that our student population can begin to move away from fear, isolation, and other mental health challenges towards a school experience that approaches normalcy and meets their academic and social emotional needs. And I believe that we can do this in a way that still protects the vulnerable and delivers a safe space."*

Ms. Alcantara shared her support for the recommended resolution. She also noted that she agreed with the points made by Ms. Hahn and Mr. Das. Ms. Alcantara noted, as Ms. Tomlinson stated, that the Board received many emails from community members. She went on to share that overall, they were respectful and thoughtful as well as a big part of her consideration along with the “Why We Are Ready” points that Mr. Das referenced. Ms. Alcantara wanted to confirm, in thinking about emails that were received by parents who are uncomfortable with a mask optional environment in school and may have medically fragile children or family, that if Covid circumstances were to change in the community or school population, the administration can be nimble in moving to more collective efforts if deemed necessary. Dr. Sally confirmed this and noted that one important piece for students and families in this transition is communication with teachers and advisers. He noted that the school can pivot and make decisions that will keep the community and school as safe as possible.

Mr. McLane shared the following comments:

*“I will lead with my “headline”. We are ready to say “masks are not required” for all the right reasons. We are also as ready to return to masking if warranted as Kimberly just inquired. Tonight, the Board will vote to reaffirm the authority for Paul and the administration to make these critical decisions. Why? Because we are well informed by, and listen to, a cadre of physical and mental healthcare experts and we have instituted a matrix of mitigation. We talked about those in detail with Paul’s presentation. We’re ready. But who knew that this could continue to be as contentious as it is?”*

*This has been a real learning experience for me, and I think offers an opportunity for many of us and I want to address that here.*

*My anchor point is to look ahead and focus on one word: Communication, and three thoughts on how we communicate. First, as a Board, can learn to communicate better, especially with you, our constituents, and taxpayers. I will continue to push for better communication practices and, perhaps, policies so that we acknowledge and respond to your outreach across all media on a more timely basis and I think we’ve been missing that. Second, there is a reciprocal to this: The communication we receive. A quick reminder: email, texts, voicemails, public comments are directed to the volunteer board are public record. For the most part, we received very thoughtful and well-reasoned missives. As Kimberly pointed out and this was exemplified tonight, I found many of these to be thought-provoking and helped me to navigate my own thinking. I also found that a “silent majority” is present. This was manifested in the online petition that Ms. Stevens shared. I appreciated this positive and affirming perspective as well. Then there has been a third bucket of communication. This is a very small group, but exceptional as their messages were vile, vitriolic, hateful, odious, and threatening; fill in your own adjectives. I found these were extraordinarily counter-productive. You are welcome to lob these in, but they can elicit the opposite outcome you desire. These parents have students at New Trier and the sender schools. What concerns me is they are modeling this behavior so that their children learn to embrace these tactics and carry them forward, perhaps into classrooms. This leads to my third and final point. This is an opportunity for each of us as parents to set an example for our children to practice empathy and embrace grace. Consider talking to your kids about “stepping in the others’ shoes” before they make a comment across a lab table in chemistry class or while walking in the halls. I am glad we are encouraging our teachers to monitor corrosive behavior in classrooms, and to step in and refute some of the blatant falsehoods conveyed by some students. Ask your kids to first breathe in, count to 10, then to try and see the situation through the other person’s eyes. This is an extraordinary opportunity to teach our kids to stand on higher ground and amplify all the good that embodies our broader community.”*

Mr. Dronen noted that in the presentation Dr. Sally spoke about immune compromised students, teachers, and staff as well as people with pre-existing conditions. He asked Dr. Sally to go into further detail about what the Administration has done and will do to protect this group. Dr. Sally responded that the Health Services staff has done an amazing job. The District started reaching out early as it understood that these thoughts, decisions, and processing can be difficult. This allowed time for families and staff to think through how they would respond and see their doctor if necessary. Individual conversations happened with almost all of these families. Some of these conversations lasted a significant amount of time, but that listening by the school was necessary. Some needed special consideration which the District has given. Human resources spear headed the effort with staff to work through with them is best for them and their families. Mr. Dronen noted it was important to him and the Board that this group be protected, listened to, and taken care of.

Next, Mr. Dronen referenced paragraph six of the resolution, noting it is his understanding that if an executive order is issued in the future to require the wearing of masks in schools and that order is interpreted as being required by

law, then the District would have to follow the law and reimpose the face mask requirement, which Dr. Sally confirmed. Dr. Sally went on to state that when there is law that as a school and as a Board, it needs to be followed. In the circumstances that Mr. Dronen spoke about, the District would have to shift. Mr. Dronen noted that as Board members, they have fiduciary responsibilities to follow the law through an Executive Order up until the recent changes in the appellate court, which Dr. Sally confirmed.

Independent of an Executive Order, under paragraph five of the proposed resolution, Mr. Dronen stated that the District has the authority under its local control to reimpose a face mask requirement if conditions warrant, which Dr. Sally confirmed and spoke further about the mitigations that could be used.

Mr. Dronen inquired if voluntary testing will be maintained, which Dr. Sally confirmed, noting it will be available for the rest of the year. It also serves as a potential lever that can be used if a situation develops.

Mr. Dronen shared the following comments:

*“I want to thank members of the public who have commented tonight and the many parents who sent emails with comments and suggestions, whether you are for or against the mask optional proposal by the Administration. Thank you to our teachers and staff who have worked tirelessly to educate our students during these past two years. Most of all, I want to thank our students, many who have struggled during this pandemic, as these have been difficult years.*

*It is important for the public to know that the District has devoted thousands of hours to develop and implement a safe and comprehensive plan to keep our buildings open to educate our students. Just as Covid has evolved with new variants, the plan evolved, as the District always said it would. As mitigation strategies have been successfully implemented, such as Shield testing, enhancing ventilation, and hosting vaccine and booster clinics to name a few, these strategies have also evolved to adapt to changing situations in a highly immunized school community. You heard earlier from Dr. Sally that there is a low prevalence in school and no evidence of school spread. I have heard from many parents and students and there are valid concerns about the social, emotional, and mental health effects of requiring masks indefinitely.*

*Based on the information before me and considering legitimate differences of opinion among various constituencies, I will be voting in favor of the resolution. However, let me be very clear, if conditions warrant, the district under its local control has the authority to reimpose mask requirements or other mitigation measures. Furthermore, if an executive order is issued in the future requiring the wearing of facemasks in schools, and that order is interpreted as being required by law, then the District would have to follow the law and reimpose a facemask requirement.*

*Again, I want to thank our teachers, staff, parents and students and community members.”*

Ms. Albrecht shared final comments referencing the timeline that Dr. Sally shared when the District began actively looking for the offramp to mandatory masking. February 4<sup>th</sup> was a busy day for this work and Ms. Albrecht noted that although she was out of town, it felt as though Dr. Sally and Mr. Johnson were there as the three were talking and collaborating the entire time. She noted the hard work that they put into all of this. Ms. Albrecht also noted how much the teachers have helped get students ready for this next phase. She thanked them for their work in helping students to feel comfortable in their classrooms and address their needs. She also noted the work done by the Health Services staff. A lot of time and effort went in to try and get this right, at least for where the District is right now.

Mr. Dronen moved, and Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion, that the Board of Education adopt the Amended Resolution Regarding Local Control to Mitigate Covid-19. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

## **VI. Special Orders of Business**

### **A. Report from Campus Principals and FOIA Report**

Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal for the Northfield Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- Course registration is due soon, he thanked advisers and teachers for their work with students on this.
- About 200 phone calls have come in on the helpline for incoming freshmen. Mr. Waechtler thanked his assistant, Ms. Laurae Nielsen; Ms. Liz DaSilva, assistant to the Freshmen Adviser Chairs and Ms. Natalia Katsinis, assistant to the Assistant Principal for sorting the calls. He thanked Ms. Lori Worth, Eighth Grade Transition Coordinator; Ms. Gail Gamrath, Assistant Principal; and coordinators for responding to the calls.
- Mr. Waechtler provided an update on the choices available for adviser rooms next year. About 280 students have selected a single gender adviser room, 190 have selected mixed gender with around 50 selecting no preference. He also noted that of the phone calls that have been received, none have been about how a student should make this choice.
- He highlighted the program built around Black History Month including those who have gone to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. This includes Mr. Nic Meyer, Music Department Faculty, who took Jazz Band. A variety of departments also participated such as with displays on Black mathematicians while the Kinetic Wellness department highlighted the emotional intelligence and resilience of various prominent African Americans.
- Mr. Waechtler also shared the work of the campus' clubs and activities. There was a student activities fair which included information on class clubs at Winnetka such as Tri-Ship and Girls Club. Pep Club sponsored a Valentine's for Veterans project. Adviser rooms provided over 500 Valentine's that were given to the Hines Veterans Hospital.

Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal for Winnetka Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- She began by thanking the Board for their work over the past two years and to hear from others how the Board has held themselves under a variety of circumstances. She shared her pride in being part of the New Trier community.
- Mrs. Dubravec also mentioned the Black History Month program. Mr. Meyer and Ms. Pat Savage-Williams, Equity Liaison, would be bringing in students to present on their trip to Alabama.
- Kinesis Dance took place last weekend which had wonderful costumes and lighting.
- Jazz Fest, organized by Mr. Meyer, recently took place with the students doing an incredible job.
- Career Day, for those students looking for summer jobs, took place during the lunch periods. Usually this occurs at night, but this was the first time it was done during the school day. Ms. Melissa Duffy, Career Services Coordinator, organized the day.
- The Debate Team continues to travel and win competitions.
- Latin Club recently wrapped up their performances and competitions.
- The Chess Team took 22<sup>nd</sup> in the state.
- The staff versus student competitions continued with giant Jenga. Ms. Kerri Simons, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, has organized these competitions.
- Over 63 students competed in the regional DECA competition.
- Mr. Caden Greco, student, often broadcasts on Instagram on various happenings around school. He has taken what he has learned in Mr. Jim Syrek's Broadcast Journalism class to a new level.
- Next, Mrs. Dubravec shared some firsts for the school. Cheerleading has advanced to state for the first time in school history. Several years ago, there were only a handful of students participating and now there are two teams. The bowling team also advanced to state for the first time and took 15<sup>th</sup> place. One bowler advanced to singles and placed 33<sup>rd</sup>. For the first time in 46 years Mr. Jack Cummings, senior, took first place in wrestling. Mr. Nick Falk, student, is cross country runner of the year which is awarded by Gatorade.
- Boys' swimming won their sectional and regional competitions and are headed to state.
- Ms. Jen Pistorius, assistant in the Principals' Office at Winnetka, was inducted into the Illinois Hall of Fame for Gymnastics. She is in her 25<sup>th</sup> year as a gymnastics coach for New Trier.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared upcoming performances, which included *Puffs* on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, and *Mamma Mia!* next weekend.
- For Jewish Heritage Month, several faculty members have put together a gallery exhibit which will be shared with students and staff.



Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Waechtler and Mrs. Dubravec for their reports and photos and for the amazing work that goes into giving students these experiences. She also noted how she wished the community would stay to see all the amazing things that are going on at school and how far the school has come over the past two years. She noted that Covid has been difficult and challenging while facing many tough decisions, but so much good has been going on which is a testament to everyone's hard work and deserves to be celebrated.

Mr. Tragos provided an update on Institute Day last Friday. There was a lot of planning that went into the content of the day as well as the logistics of it. He thanked Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Dr. Aileen Heidkamp, English Department Faculty and Staff Professional Development Facilitator. They also co-chair the Professional Development Committee. The theme of the day was Civil Discourse and Critical Thinking in Principle and Practice at New Trier. The day began with a conversation between Mr. Tragos and featured speaker, Dr. Mary Scudder. Dr. Scudder is the author of *Beyond Empathy and Inclusion: The Challenge of Listening in Democratic Deliberation* and is a political science professor at Purdue University. He shared the focus of their conversation. After that, teachers and guest presenters hosted workshops and seminars on how to implement these principles and put them into practice. Mr. Tragos also thanked those teachers who volunteered to present amidst all of the other things they are doing. Informal feedback has been good so far and the school will continue to build on this and foster a culture of inquiry where civil spaces and critical thinking are the norm.

Mr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there were 11 requests since the last Board meeting. All are closed, except one.

- 3 for a copy of school board member bonds
- 1 for mandated reporter procedures
- 2 for communications around mask and their originators
- 1 for applications related to federal funding related to Covid
- 1 for a copy of certified payroll for one of the District's construction projects
- 1 for a copy of the block schedule survey administered by the District
- 1 for a copy of comments from the block schedule survey
- 1 for incident reports for events from the past year

#### **\*D. 2022-2023 Block Schedule Update**

Mr. Tragos presented the second part of the 2022-2023 block schedule. At the January Board meeting three key questions emerged that needed answers in order to come to a recommendation for the 22-23 school year. He thanked those who shared input into the block schedule in order to balance the needs of students, staff, parents, as well as the institution. Mr. Tragos' presentation included three parts, the first was a review of the process, the second was the recommendations in the schedules and lastly, examples of sample schedules.

The District had been committed to evaluation from the start and it has been ongoing since the spring of 2020. Mr. Tragos shared there were formal and informal processes that collected feedback from constituencies and stakeholders. Some of the ideas were put into practice and tested. This was done to optimize student learning as well as the ability for students and teachers to have relationships to improve learning and meet other objectives. In October 2021, surveys were conducted which informed this work. A common theme from the surveys was the need for more time. In December 2021, a large survey was conducted by *K12 Insight*, which also informed this work and was followed by focus groups. Mr. Tragos noted that any time he and others are in meetings with parents, students, or staff, it is an opportunity to talk about the schedule and listen but also a chance to build understanding about the complexities of any one schedule, particularly as the schedule is implemented within New Trier's existing systems. What came to light in the group is this sense that the quality of the process is as important as the quality of the decision itself. It was important that the process be inclusive, collaborative, deliberative, and iterative. Besides understanding the complexities of the schedules and balancing needs for all stakeholders, problem-solving together was another important part. Different committee members would suggest a sample schedule and it would be shared with teachers and students for their opinions regarding if they could see it working for teaching and learning. Mr. Tragos noted there is no perfect schedule for everyone.

At the January meeting, three main issues arose, the current length of the 85-minute block period, the one day per week Anchor Day and unscheduled time for students and teachers. In order to answer these questions, a group of 75 department leaders, teachers and administration gathered to weigh the opportunity costs of each. After this work, it was recommended to continue with an 8-block schedule with an Anchor Day placed on Wednesday for the 2022-

2023 school year. This recommendation is student-centered and meets institutional needs while also maintaining the current start and end times at each campus.

Next, Mr. Tragos shared key features of the recommended schedule. The Anchor Day will be on Wednesday with all eight periods meeting for 35 minutes. Blue/Green Days will be consistent with Blue Days on Monday and Thursday and Green Days on Tuesday and Friday. The start and end times remain the same. Early Bird classes will not meet on Anchor Days. The length of the block will remain at 85-minutes and there will be unstructured time for students and teachers on the Anchor Day by department rotation. In summary, the schedule will provide 195 instructional minutes per week, currently the school has 200 minutes. An embedded lunch on each Blue and Green Day will remain as well as an Anchor Days. There will be time for student support or Personalized Learning Time (PLT) on an Anchor Day. Teacher professional learning time will occur four to five times a year. Mr. Tragos shared an observation from a teacher who was very involved in this work throughout the year. This teacher said that while it was not the best schedule for them in their role, they could see that it was the best schedule for the institution. Mr. Tragos noted that the teacher went on to say that they are confident they can be an excellent teacher with the proposed schedule. This teacher's comment captures the spirit of broad thinking and the unselfish nature of New Trier's teachers.

Mr. Tragos then shared details regarding the length of the block. Many favored shorter blocks of 40-75 minutes, while others preferred 90-100 minutes. The ideal average would be about 75-minutes, however, that reduces weekly instructional minutes by 12.5%, which was a non-starter for many students and teachers. Research targets 80-110-minute blocks for effective instruction. Peer schools with block schedules have periods in the 90-minute range. After further investigation, it was determined that students and teachers wanted more effective use of the 85-minute block. 81% of students agreed that they can focus better when the teacher plans multiple transitions. Teachers note they are adapting and dedicated to improving their practice. A summer professional development workshop series will be developed aimed at improving the areas identified by students and teachers.

The Anchor Day, commonly called a modified block, will have all eight periods meet for 35-minutes each. This will allow for three contact days every week between students and teachers, with back-to-back contact days with all teachers because of the Wednesday Anchor Day placement. This day will also provide embedded PLT for students and Professional Learning Days for teachers (PLD). Teachers are working on how to make these days effective. Students like the concept of these days but are cautious about the potential workload because of them. Mr. Tragos noted not every week will have an Anchor Day, there will be approximately 27 scheduled for the year.

There was a high priority among all constituencies for more time for students and teachers. Students will use their PLT to meet with teachers, make-up tests, access resources as well as manage their student lives. This also provides an opportunity for the school to help students develop executive functioning and self-advocacy skills. Teachers will use their PLDs to meet with their course committees, develop curriculum and assessment, monitor student progress, among other work.

Next, Mr. Tragos provided a graphic of sample schedules so it could be seen where a student would have PLT during the week. The first sample was a student at Winnetka with five core academics (including science within the day), Kinetic Wellness (KW) and one elective. Mr. Tragos walked through each day noting where and why the student would have PLT. This student would have five unscheduled periods each week, compared to the three they have with the current schedule.

The second sample was also a student at the Winnetka campus who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). They have a Special Education Resource class to support their IEP goals, five core academic classes, KW and one elective. Mr. Tragos also walked through this schedule, noting that their Resource class will meet opposite their science lab. This schedule would allow the student to have two PLT during the week without sacrificing core and elective course options. In the current schedule, this student does not have any unscheduled periods for PLT.

Mr. Tragos went through a few key variables noting how they compare such as the weekly instructional minutes. In the 9-period and current block schedule there are 200 instructional minutes per week, 280 minutes for science. In the recommended schedule, there will be 195 instructional minutes per week, 275 minutes for science. The number of unscheduled periods for PLT was typically three per week in the 9-period and current block schedule. As previously noted, a fully scheduled student with an IEP had zero unscheduled periods in the previous and current schedule. In the proposed schedule, every student will have two additional periods most weeks. Regarding professional development time, all schedules have four Institute Days, two of which are before school begins. There was a range of late start/early dismissal days in the 9-period and current block schedules. Departments had 18-27 hours of

professional development time each year. Professional development will now take place on Anchor Days on a rotating basis providing about 20 hours of time for each department per year.

Next steps include the logistics of building the master schedule which is a collaboration between department leaders, administration and technology that maximizes students having all classes they have asked for and minimizes schedule conflicts. Details around PLT programming and Professional Development will be defined and developed along with ongoing collaboration with stakeholders.

Dr. Sally thanked the teachers and department leaders who have been involved in this work. He spoke of the anecdote that Mr. Tragos shared, of the understanding that there are tradeoffs. Dr. Sally then spoke to the length of the block, noting some were not satisfied with it. Dr. Sally noted that it was too soon to give up the structure, on top of figuring out how to recover the instructional time. It also has the possibility to limit the evolution of the block in the future, particularly regarding the use of half-blocks. He then shared comments about Anchor Day. The one piece of feedback that the school will continue to work on is student stress. There will be general surveys such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Climate Survey that will provide data on this. This schedule will also mean that students will not need to use their lunch time as frequently to complete tasks. Dr. Sally also noted that Mr. Tragos and leaders are working through some of the ways that Anchor Days can be used. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Tragos for the comprehensive report and work. She also noted her appreciation for the comment about the tradeoffs that are necessary in a complex system and shared further thoughts on it. Next, Ms. Hahn inquired if she understood correctly that if there were no school on Monday or Friday, there would not be an Anchor Day that particular week. Mr. Tragos confirmed this, noting that there would be two pairs of Blue/Green Days instead. Dr. Sally added that there was much discussion around if the Anchor Day should be Monday or Wednesday, noting that there would be disruption with either day due to days off in the school calendar.

Next, Ms. Hahn inquired if it was coincidence that in both examples it was an electives class in the embedded lunch or if it could be any class. Dr. Sally and Mr. Tragos confirmed that it could be any class in the embedded lunch.

Lastly, Ms. Hahn inquired if the PLD and PLT is replacing the current rotating department half block. Mr. Tragos confirmed this replacement, but noted it is a version of this. It is the department's as well as the individual's professional development time on that particular day. Ms. Hahn followed up by inquiring that professional development is going to occur on a department's particular Anchor Day, which Mr. Tragos confirmed. Ms. Hahn noted that to her, it seemed like a short amount of time for professional development and inquired how it compares to the time now. Mr. Tragos replied that currently teachers have had about 18-27 hours on the early dismissal/late start days and with the new schedule, they would have about 20 hours. He also noted that teachers would have the full day, so they would not be teaching on that day. For instance, if it was the math department's professional development day, a student could not see their math teacher, but could use their 35 minutes to see other teachers or complete tasks.

Ms. Alcantara inquired if there would still be the early dismissal/late start days, to which Mr. Tragos replied that the schedule does not allow for the same wraparound weekends, but that valuable interdepartmental time could be scheduled as an early dismissal pair on Thursday and Friday. She then inquired if a split class with lunch in the middle of it is happening currently, which Mr. Tragos confirmed. Dr. Sally added that the feedback about this is interesting and varies by department and by teachers within that department. Some like having their class split while others prefer to have lunch on one end or the other.

Discussion then took place between Ms. Alcantara and Dr. Sally about twice weekly science labs. Ms. Alcantara then focused just on the Anchor Day, noting that the science block will always be there, but the other two times could be any class. Dr. Sally referenced sample schedule one walking through when the student would have their PLT. Discussion continued between Ms. Alcantara and Dr. Sally. Ms. Alcantara then noted that a student who takes many classes including an Early Bird science, will not have a Tuesday/Thursday break, which Dr. Sally confirmed, noting that they would still have two periods for PLT on the Anchor Day. Mr. Tragos shared that this would typically be a student who is working or completing other tasks during their lunch. This new schedule would allow them time to complete tasks as well as have lunch. Ms. Hahn inquired if this would be part of advising that students receive when selecting their courses. Dr. Sally replied that every student is getting some sort of increase in their PLT. He does not think that students need to ratchet down the set of courses they take because they have more free time. What Dr. Sally does not want to happen is students ratcheting up their courses because they have extra time. He encouraged

students to take the number of courses that makes sense for them. Ms. Hahn and Ms. Alcantara further discussed Early Bird science. Ms. Alcantara wanted to clarify that there would not be an adjustment to the Early Bird schedule, which was confirmed, with Mr. Tragos mentioning that there would be no Early Bird classes on Wednesdays.

Ms. Tomlinson applauded Mr. Tragos for his work with a 75-person committee in figuring out this new schedule. She then inquired if teachers are happy with the tradeoff of less professional development time, as they are moving from half days of professional development time to a full day. Mr. Tragos replied that the District is still solving for interdepartmental time. Dr. Sally noted that another level of processing was still needed for that question. It is also one of the ones reasons why the District is not bringing forward the full year calendar as there are several items that still need to be worked out.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that the early dismissal/late start days were an opportunity for junior students to go on college visits. Dr. Sally replied that it was accounted for, and it is possible that the school would do an early dismissal on a Thursday/Friday. The District will not be able to do what it has in the past with Friday/Monday. Ms. Tomlinson confirmed that the swim meet day was also eliminated, which Dr. Sally confirmed but stated that there will still be Institute Days. He noted that now that New Trier is no longer hosting the swim meet, there will be more flexibility around when Institute Days can occur in the future.

Mr. Tragos acknowledged and thanked three members from the committee who attended the meeting – Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Bridget Butterly, Social Studies Department Faculty; and Ms. Aileen Geary, Social Studies Department Faculty and New Trier High School Educational Association President.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if it is confusing for teachers to develop the cadence of building in transitions for the 85-minute block period to then have the 35-minute periods on Anchor Day, to which Mr. Tragos agreed. Ms. Albrecht noted the importance of transitions in an 85-minute block. Dr. Sally noted it is one of the drawbacks that was thoroughly discussed. The benefit is the three contacts per week, especially for the student services faculty. It is also a beneficial for students and Dr. Sally shared an anecdote as to why. Ms. Albrecht confirmed that summer professional development will also address this, which Mr. Tragos confirmed.

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the 22-23 Block Schedule as presented. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

### **E. Facilities Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project**

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (ESSA). The District had an opportunity to work with the State's Historical Preservation Office to document the history of the Gates Gym. The work was made easier by the school's predecessors who took care to document the space and its history. Archives from other organizations, such as the Chicago History Museum, were also used. Mr. Johnson shared several slides with pictures and blueprints, some from yearbooks and the student newspaper New Trier News, of the initial designs for the space. Students also participated in the project, including Mr. Greco, who interviewed athletic director, Mr. Augie Fontanetta, coaches, including a tour of the space. Drawing students also did illustrations and sketches of some of the spaces. Mr. Johnson noted it was a good time to reflect on what the building allowed New Trier students to do, the achievements they had there, and the learning that occurred as well as to think about the opportunities that will be created in the new space. Mr. Johnson thanked Mr. Kevin Havens, Wight & Co., for coordinating this as well as for the students who participated.

Mr. Johnson shared the current progress of the project, noting that demolition continues, but is scheduled to be completed around the end of February. Excavation and earth retention work has begun with concrete work beginning in March and steel work in April. Mr. Johnson thanked students, parent, staff, and the community for their flexibility during the project. The smokestack was deconstructed over the weekend and stood at the Winnetka Campus for over one hundred years. Mr. Johnson shared pictures and details, noting that the process to take it down was done safely and on a day when students were not in school. An apparatus was used to push the bricks into the center of the smokestack. Mr. Johnson also shared a timelapse video of the smokestack coming down.

Typically, with a project this size, there are change orders and this one has several to date. The allocation for change orders is included in the overall project budget. Some change orders, due to their size, require Board approval. There was one for approval on the Consent Agenda regarding additional asbestos abatement. There is additional asbestos under the south and west gym floors and is several layers down. Asbestos was not found in the Gates or Stage Gyms. Mr. Johnson thanked the construction team led by Mr. Dave Conway, Director of Physical Plant Services, and Mr. Steve Linke, Facilities Manager, for identifying and testing what was found and then submitting emergency bids over the weekend. Bids were opened this morning, and with the approval of it, abatement can begin tomorrow. This will be done at the best price for the District while keeping the project on schedule. These unforeseen conditions often occur in this process and is included in the budget. Mr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Dr. Sally confirmed that the asbestos was found multiple layers below the surface and was not obvious. Mr. Johnson concurred, noting it was six layers below. Despite all the gyms being constructed at the same time, asbestos was not found in the Gates or Stage Gyms. It was not typically used at the time the gyms were built, so the guess is perhaps it was done as some sort of water barrier as the locker rooms were in close proximity.

Mr. Das shared his appreciation for the history that was presented and inquired if any artifacts or time capsules had been found. Mr. Johnson replied that there was not record of anything and nothing was found during demolition. Items that were left behind from a long time ago were found, but not anything deliberately placed. The District will discuss, if during construction, it will place a time capsule, which was done during the West Side project. Mr. Johnson shared additional comments.

Ms. Albrecht referenced the asbestos abatement bid and wanted to confirm that it was a not-to-exceed bid number. Mr. Johnson affirmed this and shared additional details. He noted that the company that won the bid has done work for the District for many years and is confident that the work will be done efficiently and safely to the expected quality.

Ms. Tomlinson noted there was a contingency fund of around \$5 million, which Mr. Johnson confirmed. He noted that in March, he will report what the District is spending in contingency and what the monthly billings are so the Board has transparency as it tracks the budget. The Board is able to see the dollars spent on the Bill List, but a separate report will be created to allow them to see that information in context towards the whole project budget.

## **VII. Administrative Items**

### **A. Treasurer's Report for January 2022**

Mr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for January 2022. Fund balances for all District accounts are \$147,447,315. Short term interest rates continue to be low; the District will look for more long-term opportunities, especially as rates start to go up. The District continues to see timely local, state, and federal payments. The 2020 levy is almost completely paid. Next month, when reviewing the February report, the Board will see that the first installment of the 2021 levy has arrived in a timely fashion.

### **B. Financial Reports for January 2022**

Mr. Johnson presented the Financial Reports for January 2022. Operating revenue was \$59,591,768 for the first seven months of the fiscal year, or 11% higher compared to last year. Other local sources continue a year-long positive variance. These are the fees that the District collects, such as for field trips, that are returning to normal after Covid. The District received several Federal reimbursements for Covid expenses this month: \$577,000 from FEMA, bringing the total amount received to \$950,000. This is a direct reimbursement for FEMA qualified reimbursements such as masks and cleaning supplies. The District has received \$665,000 from the American Rescue Plan (ESSER III) grant, raising the total cumulative amount for the three ESSER grants to just over \$1,095,000. Mr. Dronen inquired if the District has received all federal money, to which Mr. Johnson replied it is still waiting for one more FEMA payment of \$800,000 for expenses that were already submitted. Another FEMA application will be submitted for other supplies purchased. On the ESSER side, the District was due to receive \$1.2 million and has received most of the money already. These are for qualified expenditures and under the guidelines the District is reimbursed directly. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 5% this year so the District is trending higher to budget, mostly due to the funds received from FEMA and ESSER as well as timely payments.

Operating expenditures are also trending higher than last year, excluding transfers, which were 5.61% higher. This is to be expected due to offering a full academic and extracurricular program this year with more in-person

opportunities. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is slightly higher this year, but the District expects this to normalize as it gets closer to the end of the year.

Student fees were presented for approval on the consent agenda for next school year. The administration is recommending a 1.4% increase after two years of freezing these fees. Fees are a small but important part of the budget, and as the District sees inflationary pressures, having continued small increases can help, particularly after two years of a freeze. They are certainly behind overall CPI.

Bus fees are increasing 6%. The year over year transportation CPI was 20%. The District is pleased that it has negotiated a bus fee increase with AllTown of 6%, other districts are seeing double-digit increases. Buses are subsidized by the District, with it paying roughly half the cost while families pay the other half. When an increase is seen by the bus company, a similar increase is typically given to families. Financial aid is available for students riding the bus with many families taking advantage of this opportunity.

Also on the consent agenda, the Board will be asked to approve the scholarship trust fund. Mr. Johnson noted this is one of the most exciting things the District does, and it has been providing opportunities for students since the late 1940s. He thanked Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, for his work coordinating the process with the District's outside investment advisor who does this on a pro bono basis. The District is asking the Board to approve \$255,000 for student scholarships for the class of 2022. This approval begins the process of students applying for scholarships based on merit and need, which is coordinated by Ms. Athena Arvanitis, Assistant Principal for Student Services. The recipients are announced at graduation. The Board is also able to see a list of the scholarships paid out from the trust fund last year. Mr. Johnson then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Dronen asked Mr. Johnson to send along the Board's thanks to the outside advisor who did an excellent job not only managing the money, but in the report he provided. Mr. Johnson shared that Mr. Rick Drake has done this on a pro bono basis for the District for the past five years.

Next, Mr. Dronen noted that the District has different types of fees. He agrees with all the fees, but continues to take issue with the general fee, although he applauded the District for holding that flat for the past two years. When looking at what the \$123 charge covers, he has a problem distinguishing what is a curricular fee versus a user fee. Mr. Dronen noted that it is his position now, and always has been, that curricular expenses should be borne across all taxpayers in the District and should not be borne by parents. He would like, at some point, to look at the general fee again and how to distinguish the items within it. Mr. Dronen recognizes that it has been built into the District's budget and generates about \$400,000, which Mr. Johnson confirmed. After sharing additional thoughts, Mr. Dronen asked the Administration and the Board to look more closely at this in the future.

Mr. Dronen then requested, as it would be instructive for the public, that when there is the fee history and proposed charges, along with the percentages, the projected revenue that each fee may generate or at least the actuals for the prior year should be included. Mr. Johnson noted he would pass this along to Mr. Spiwak to be added in future years.

Ms. Albrecht inquired that the increase in student parking is a direct correlation to what the Village of Winnetka charges the District. Mr. Johnson confirmed this and noted the District was in the process of speaking with the village about what the right amount is for parking. He noted that the Village has been very gracious in welcoming a conversation about this.

Regarding the transportation fee, Ms. Alcantara asked for clarification that New Trier shares these fees with parents and that the District is not making money on these fees as well as there are increased costs that are being passed along from the bus company to the District that are unavoidable. Mr. Johnson confirmed all of this, noting that wages for drivers are increasing, along with fuel costs and recruitment costs. The District subsidizes about half the cost of the bus with families paying the other half.

Ms. Alcantara inquired about what the marine biology fee increase was attributed to. Mr. Johnson responded that students achieve scuba certification, so the fee goes directly to pay an outside instructor who provides instruction to students with the supervision of the teacher.

Ms. Alcantara inquired if there was a link on the website where each of the scholarships are listed in the same place with important details included. Mr. Johnson noted that he would check into this but shared there is a process where this information is shared with students regarding the merit and need-based scholarships. He was not aware of a

single place on the website for students to go but will follow-up about it. Ms. Alcantara noted she was aware of piece-meal emails that are sent, but it would be a great resource to have a compilation of those in one place. Mr. Johnson noted that he would reach out to Ms. Arvanitis who manages this to see what is done as the school wants the post-high school counselors to talk about them as well as have them available on the website and for parents.

Ms. Albrecht referenced the Covid-related expenses and reimbursements, noting that the reimbursements have come in during this fiscal year for expenses incurred during last fiscal year and inquired how this was measured. Mr. Johnson noted that FEMA is reimbursing the District for expenses from last fiscal year. After further comments, he noted that the payments end up being additional revenue in the current fiscal year. Ms. Albrecht noted that for a few years out, there will be a footnote included about this. Mr. Johnson noted that when reviewing the long-range plan at the Finance Committee, it showed a decrease in federal revenue as the District knew ESSER funds would be this year, but not next year. For ESSER III, it is about \$700,000, which will reimburse expenses that happened this year. It will directly reimburse the expenses for learning loss portion as well as the other supplies and materials. Ms. Albrecht inquired if that was all, and Mr. Johnson replied that the District was still waiting for \$800,000 from FEMA. The District will then look to see what it has spent on masks and other items since the last FEMA application in October to determine if there are any other qualifying expenditures.

### **C. Board Policy Revisions – PRESS 108 – First Reading**

Dr. Sally presented the first reading of the Board Policy Revisions from PRESS 108, noting it was an active legislative session that the committee is now responding to. He thanked the committee for their work as well as the administrators who take charge of certain sections to make sure the District's practices, which are usually aligned with any new policy changes, are modified as needed. Dr. Sally noted that in his memo, he highlighted a few of the 60 policies that had more significant changes. He then asked if Ms. Hahn or Ms. Alcantara, the Board liaisons to the Policy Committee, had any comments. Ms. Hahn emphasized that it sounds significant to say 60 policies, but the three meetings the committee had were quick, efficient, and productive. She also noted that she learns a lot about how the District works when reviewing policies. Ms. Hahn said it was a smooth process with Dr. Sally highlighting the appropriate ones in his memo. She also encouraged the Board to read through them to better understand important pieces of the District as they are what the Board implements.

Mr. Dronen thanked the Policy Committee for their work.

Dr. Sally added that the District using the PRESS Policy Service to keep its policies up to date is essential and was a good investment on the part of the District.

Ms. Albrecht confirmed that the Board will vote on the revisions at the March Board Meeting, which Dr. Sally replied that it would be on the consent agenda. Dr. Sally noted that if any Board members had questions in the meantime to let him know.

### **VIII. Consent Agenda**

- Bill List for the Period, January 1 – 31, 2022
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirement, Stipends - Appointment, Stipends - Separation)
- The approval of student fees for the 2022-23 school year as presented.
- Extend the Alltown Bus Service transportation agreement for the 2022-23 school year and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement
- The maximum allocation of \$255,115 for scholarships for the 2022 graduation class
- Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2022-2023
- Pursuant to Board Policy 4:60 and Section 10-20.21 (xiv) of the Illinois School Code authorizing approval of a contract under the emergency bidding exception, I move to approve the purchase of asbestos abatement and related professional services from ECH Industries in the amount not to exceed \$335,980.00, and related engineering services from Hygieneering, Inc., in the amount of \$28,335.00.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Mr. Dronen moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for the Period, January 1 – 31, 2022; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirement, Stipends - Appointment, Stipends - Separation); The approval of student fees for the 2022-23 school year as presented; Extend the Alltown Bus Service transportation agreement for the 2022-23 school year and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; The maximum allocation of \$255,115 for scholarships for the

2022 graduation class; Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2022-2023; and Pursuant to Board Policy 4:60 and Section 10-20.21 (xiv) of the Illinois School Code authorizing approval of a contract under the emergency bidding exception, I move to approve the purchase of asbestos abatement and related professional services from ECH Industries in the amount not to exceed \$335,980.00, and related engineering services from Hygieneering, Inc., in the amount of \$28,335.00. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

## **IX. Board Member Reports**

Ms. Tomlinson shared information from the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** which met on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Board voted to shift \$4,000 from their financial assistance budget to grants in light of the reduced travel opportunities for students during the pandemic. This will allow for more students to benefit from the visiting artists and workshops such as the Kabuki workshop which NTFAA has been supporting for the past ten years. A summer scholar reported on his experience taking private lessons in percussionist techniques which he will apply to jazz band, orchestra, and concert band. The scholarships are about \$300 and the application deadline for students is April 15<sup>th</sup>. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Pursuing Your Passion zoom presentation for students interested in pursuing fine arts in college. Tickets are on sale for *Mamma Mia!* which is running March 3<sup>rd</sup> – March 5<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Alcantara provided an update from the **New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA)** meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. The group discussed the Profile for the Class of 2021, the block schedule and Covid mitigation efforts and questions. Mrs. Dubravec and Mr. Waechtler presented about what has been going on at their respective campuses. Each of the class co-chairs gave reports on their respective class. The next meeting is scheduled for early March.

Ms. Hahn noted that the **Board Policy Committee** meeting took place on January 19<sup>th</sup>, February 9<sup>th</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup> and culminated in the Policy revisions discussed earlier.

Mr. McLane provided updates on the **Facilities Steering Committee (FSC)** and the **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)**. He began with FSC, noting that over 90% of the materials being removed from the Gates Gym demolition are going to be recycled. The summer work plan is underway. The Duke Childs work is moving forward and on schedule with the Village and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD). The Board will vote in January of 2023 for funding and then June 2023 will be when New Trier begins their portion of the work. He also shared comments about looking at solar for Northfield versus Winnetka.

For the CEC, Mr. McLane highlighted the 2021 Annual Report, which was team effort, but driven by Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications and Ms. Lia Fahs, Communications Coordinator. The group also discussed communications around the Alumni Achievement Awards on March 11th and the New Trier Day of Service.

Mr. Dronen shared that the **Finance Committee** met on February 14<sup>th</sup>. The committee discussed the scholarship trust allocation, which was shared earlier. Mr. Dronen also thanked Mr. Drake for his report and work. The Winnetka Campus East Side project was discussed along with student fees.

Mr. Dronen then shared that **TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804**, met on February 9<sup>th</sup>. They continue to struggle to hire and retain teaching assistants due to higher paying districts and in the private sector. They are exploring ways to retain staff including raising the minimum hourly wage. Mr. Dronen has also discussed this with Mr. Johnson and Dr. Sally. Other topics discussed included Covid mitigation strategies and budget assumptions. TrueNorth has started a new strategic planning process and is gathering input for the new plan.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **Covid Recovery and Community Wellness Team (CRCWT)** has met frequently over the past few weeks. The group was supportive as the Administration and Board moved through the decisions they were faced with. Members provided honest feedback which helped to fashion a plan going forward.



Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF)** was in the final planning stages for the Alumni Achievement Gala on March 11<sup>th</sup> at the Renaissance Hotel. The Kinesis Dance Troupe will be performing as well as a student string quartet. She encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Das shared that the **Booster Club** met on February 15<sup>th</sup>. They are on track with their membership goal and hope to generate more memberships during the spring. The Booster Club also joined as a partner organization to draw attention to the NTEF's Gala as a way to encourage people to attend and support the event. The Booster Club is establishing a Junior Board with student applications due March 7<sup>th</sup>. The Junior Board will work alongside the Booster Club Board on various activities. New style and spirit wear is available including white sweatshirts with various graduation years on them. The Booster Bash is on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Wilmette Harbor Club.

Ms. Alcantara shared that concert choir is performing on Sunday during the 11:00 a.m. service at Alice Millar Chapel in Evanston and again at 4:00 p.m. The concert at 4:00 p.m. will be their presentation of their Illinois Music Association repertoire.

#### **X. Calendar of Events & Board Members' Requests for Staff Research and Future Agenda Items**

Dr. Sally highlighted the following:

- He, along with Mr. Tragos and Dr. Panopoulos will be meeting with the Benchmarking Consortium superintendents, assistant superintendents for curriculum and special education directors from Wednesday, March 2 through Friday, March 4. Dr. Panopoulos, along with her colleagues from the other high schools, will present on special education issues. Attendees will share their experiences as the schools are similar as are the communities they reside in. There will be a report at the March meeting about what is learned and discussed.
- The Board Policy Committee no longer needs to meet on March 8<sup>th</sup>.
- The next Board Meeting is March 21<sup>st</sup>. There will be a Board Recognition Program prior to it.

Dr. Sally asked that Mr. Dronen's request to review the general fees and how to distinguish the items within them be added to the Staff Research and Future Agenda Items document.

#### **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. McLane seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

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Cathleen Albrecht, President