

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
December 11, 2023  
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 Monday, December 11, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara  
Mr. Avik Das  
Mr. Keith Dronen, President  
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President  
Ms. Courtney McDonough  
Ms. Sally Pofcher  
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

**Administrators Present**

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

**Also Present**

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Ms. Angela Burns, Library Department Faculty; Ms. Molly Lombardi, Social Studies Department Faculty; Mr. Nic Meyer, Music and Theatre Department Faculty; Ms. Gardiner Funo O’Kain, Art Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; 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 – 4:30 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 4:32 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, and Ms. Pofcher. Mr. Dronen asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Ms. Tomlinson moved that the Board of Education adjourn to closed session for the purpose of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor, or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity; 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 placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Tomlinson, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

**II. CLOSED SESSION – 4:30 p.m. – A201A**

**III. BUSINESS MEETING – Open Session – 7:00 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 7:07 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

#### **IV. Minutes and Reports**

##### **\*A. Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023 (open and closed session) and Special Meeting of November 30, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of November 30, 2023 (open and closed session). There was one request for changes by Ms. Hahn to the Regular Meeting minutes, which was incorporated. Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of November 30, 2023 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

The motion passed.

##### **B. 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:

- The Frosh Soph Musical, *Putnam County Spelling Bee*, took place on November 30<sup>th</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. The dress rehearsal took place during the school day so the performers' peers could see the talents of their classmates. Mr. Waechtler was a guest speller along with Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Chris Johnson, Associate Superintendent, Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield and Ms. Sarah Struebing, Assistant Principal of the Class of 2025. He noted that it was a fantastic show and a lot of fun for the actors and audience.
- Every year a Holiday Luncheon takes place on the Northfield campus the day before Thanksgiving. Ms. Branahl and Ms. Vaughan, Music and Theatre Department Faculty, led freshman chorus performances for staff. Mr. Pete Collins, Kinetic Wellness Department Coordinator, Mr. Jason Dane, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty, and Mr. Ted Koulentes, Adviser Chair, smoke brisket, pulled pork and salmon for the entire staff. It is a fantastic meal and a great community building event.
- A Trivia competition took place in November's as part of the Adviser Room Olympics.
- Several Bake Sales took place to raise money for various charities such as Northwestern University Settlement House (NUSH).
- The Canned Food Drive recently took place. Over 20 adviser rooms collected over 500 pounds of canned food, 12 adviser rooms collected over 1,000 pounds and two adviser rooms, Mr. Hsieh's and Mr. Mortier's, collected over 4,000 pounds. The Northfield campus alone collected over 20,000 pounds of food and online donations totaled \$56,000 which will provide 185,000 meals to Cook County residents.
- Ms. Paige Neimi, Library Cataloger, and others in the Library created different scenes in the Library based on book recommendations shared by Rusty the Elf.
- Freshmen are preparing for their first End of Semester Experiences next week. Comfort dogs will visit the Academic Assistance Center (AAC) on Thursday to help relieve some stress. The AAC is also hosting sessions on how to manage test anxiety.
- Mr. Waechtler wished Board members a wonderful winter break.

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

- She shared that the Post-High School Counseling Department is moving from Naviance to Maia Learning. She and the department spent time with the New Trier Parents' Association discussing this. The department is in the ground stages of the transition now and more information will be shared when it's available.
- Mrs. Dubravec noted that the Board recognized students just prior to the meeting at the Board Recognition Program in the Cornog Auditorium. She highlighted the music program and shared those students who competed in the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA) in the categories of chorus, vocal jazz, senior instrumental, and jazz band. She shared how proud she was of these students' dedication not only in the classroom, but outside of it.
- Two students, Miriam Goroff-Behel and Duke Baur, were winners in the YoungArts National Competition in jazz/sax/tenor and jazz/sax/alto respectively. Mrs. Dubravec noted that this is a very high honor.
- Mr. Spiro Bolos, Ms. Cassie Yoon, and Mr. Danny Rothschild, all Social Studies Department Faculty recently presented at the National Council for Social Studies Conference in Nashville. Their presentation explored "hard"

history through the lens of art and photography. They connected two thematically similar eras of US History (Reconstruction through Civil Rights) through visual art by artists Kerry James Marshall, Alfredo Jaar, and photographer Gordon Parks. Mr. Bolos, a veteran teacher, brought in these two newer teachers, Ms. Yoon and Mr. Rothschild, and provided guidance and mentorship with this experience.

- The Winter Play, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, recently concluded, and was directed by Mr. Ryan Dunn, Science Department Faculty. Mrs. Dubravec noted that the stage crew and scenery were spectacular.
- Junior Ben Crane placed 24<sup>th</sup> at the Foot Locker Nationals and is coached by Mr. Matt Sloan, Science Department Faculty.
- Next, Mrs. Dubravec displayed pictures of a “Day in the life of New Trier” about different happenings taking place around campus such as a visit from a member of the army, bake sales from students participating in UNICEF and NUSH, the Latin club, and students competing in chess. Students in the Educational and Life Skills (ELS) program hosted their holiday party and finally, students from the social service board were out in the community over the weekend.
- Work has begun with the winter communities on Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud initiative for extracurricular activities. The bowling and fencing teams met to discuss what their legacy and culture will be. Another session will take place for the upcoming play.
- The 106<sup>th</sup> Winter Music Festival took place on Sunday. Mrs. Dubravec thanked the students and their adult mentors for the work on their performances. In between the two concerts, the Music Department provided activities like the instrument petting zoo.
- This is the first year that New Trier has a girls’ wrestling team with a coach separate from boys’ wrestling. There are matches coming up. At Northfield, the Dance Ensemble Showcase will take place in January.
- This year’s Student Council winter break story is “How Trevius Stole Winter Break 2023.” Students and staff participated in the video which focuses on Trevius trying to stop them from leaving for winter break.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there have been six requests since the last Board meeting. One regarding facilities testing reports, one regarding records related to a vendor, one related to discipline policies, two related to facility vendor payments, and one regarding bid documents. Dr. Johnson noted that all are closed.

### **Communications**

Mr. Dronen 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. There was one request for public comment. He reminded the commenter of the three-minute limit. He also shared that if there is a question, either he or someone from administration will be in contact.

1. Ms. Hannah Fording, senior and member of Students Demand Action, shared comments on safe gun storage.

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

### **A. Student Voice: Seniors journey through New Trier**

Mrs. Dubravec began the presentation on Student Voice: Seniors journey through New Trier. This is the first of four presentations that will be shared with the Board. She shared that student voice stands out as one of the most vital sources of information available to the school noting their input is essential in shaping the school’s educational decision-making processes. It also guides the District towards creating a more responsive and student-centered educational environment. The school prides itself on students having a deep sense of connection and belonging to the school community. Mrs. Dubravec highlighted two graphics that represent the larger outcomes, skills, and dispositions New Trier seeks to develop in each student. The first, *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, are the non-academic outcomes or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that the school seeks to develop in its graduates. The second graphic, Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud, is being used with the school’s extracurricular programs. It represents the actions, behaviors, and relationships that the school wants students and staff to aspire to and model within the extracurricular programs, so they feel as though they belong to that community. After further comments, Mrs. Dubravec introduced Mr. Duke Baur, Mr. Ignacio Hampton, Ms. Zoe Kozina, Ms. Grace Hester, and Mr. Asher Alcantara. Each student shared their high school story which provided a fuller picture of who they are, what they have done, what they can do, and what they have learned about themselves, and what skills they possess to differentiate themselves. Students then also offered constructive feedback to assist in enhancing the overall educational experience.

Mr. Duke Baur shared his journey to his involvement in the music program, particularly jazz, by highlighting important happenings during each grade. He noted that he began high school during Covid. His plan is to study saxophone and have a professional career as a jazz musician. Mr. Baur also shared constructive feedback, noting he

wished that it would be easier for students to take music classes. He shared that he took summer school for two years in order to take the music classes he wanted to during the school year. He also wished that he had been encouraged to focus on what he really wanted to do and discovered this earlier than mid-way through his junior year about himself. He also shared about the pressure he felt to do everything as a ninth and tenth grader. Lastly, Mr. Baur shared that he wished that he had diversified himself more outside of school.

Next, Mr. Ignacio Hampton presented. He began his freshman year as a soccer player and shared what it was like to start his high school career during Covid. As he moved on to the Winnetka campus, he found himself moving away from sports. He began to engage in other programs such as the One Stop Trev Shop, which he is now the commercial director of, and which recently surpassed \$200,000 in sales this year. He shared that much of his experience started with doing DECA, which in turn, offered other experiences. As he became an upperclassman, Mr. Hampton began to focus on the impact he would leave once he graduated. He suggested that the school should address the idea of competitiveness and what it really looks like at New Trier. He believes it is developed in society rather than the school itself. Mr. Hampton encouraged discussion earlier on about ways that students could limit themselves by not doing everything, taking many difficult classes or too many extracurriculars as this can lead to the burnout that many students experience. He also shared that the school should emphasize the ideas in its motto.

Ms. Zoe Kozina shared how she was concerned about how her learning disability would impact her high school career when she began as a freshman, however, she was determined to not let her disability take hold of her academic life. Her ninth grade English teacher helped her find her love of reading and writing. As Ms. Kozina moved on to the Winnetka campus during Covid, she did not receive as much support as she would have during a normal school year through her IEP. This allowed Ms. Kozina to do things on her own that she previously thought could only be done with her resource teacher. She was then able to transition out of her IEP to a 504 plan. During her junior year, as she excelled in math, she received the Bruce James Memorial Math Award. Then, prior to her senior year, Ms. Kozina wrote a children's book, *Your Beautiful Mind*, where she tackled the confusion and fears that came with being diagnosed with a learning disability. Ms. Kozina found that by giving herself space from the special education program, she was able to discover the things she could do independently that she was not able to do before. She encouraged the school to give students the time to realize that maybe they too could do some of the things that they otherwise thought they might not be able to.

Next, Ms. Grace Hester shared about her mental health struggles during her freshman year due to covid. Towards the end of her ninth-grade year, she stepped away from school to attend Compass. She developed a way to learn that worked for her while also becoming resilient and self-aware. Going into her sophomore year, Ms. Hester and her family knew she needed more assistance in class and applied for a 504, which was denied. Though she looked to be performing and functioning fine, and although she was getting good grades, she sacrificed caring for herself in order to do well in school. Ms. Hester shared that she believes many students do not receive the help they need and should not be told that they cannot get help because they look good on paper. As a junior, Ms. Hester joined IGSS, a school within a school that focuses on English, history, and art. This program changed everything for Ms. Hester at New Trier as she was able to find a group of people to connect to, teachers to connect with who helped her succeed. Her advice to underclassmen is to take a class simply for fun or because its interesting, use the resources that New Trier provides, and to stop comparing themselves to others.

Finally, Mr. Asher Alcantara presented, noting his involvement in the music and theatre department. As a ninth grader, Mr. Alcantara took a rigorous courseload which also included classes that reflected his passion for music and theatre. In trying to balance all this, which was made more difficult due to Covid, his schedule needed to change which meant dropping choir. Mr. Alcantara's sophomore year is when he was able to fully engage in the music program and during junior year, it was solidified for him that music and theater were not just fun extracurricular activities but rather were passions he planned on pursuing in college. Mr. Alcantara has faced challenges in getting certain arts-related absences accommodated with his teachers who may not know him and his relationship with the arts as well. He also shared that he has seen other students fall away from the program as they do not have access to these classes and encouraged the Board to look at ways to make them more accessible to students without having to make serious sacrifices to their free time or other parts of their schedule.

Mr. Dronen invited questions and comments from the Board. Ms. Pofcher thanked the students for sharing their stories.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that she no longer has students at New Trier and shared her appreciation for being able to hear their perspectives. Ms. Tomlinson noted that Mr. Baur felt stressed during his freshmen and sophomore years, and

inquired if there was somebody in the school who helped him through this as it was a big shift and journey for him. Mr. Baur shared that Mr. Nic Meyer, Director of Jazz Ensembles, has helped to guide him. Ms. Tomlinson also noted that Mr. Baur had to do summer school for a couple of years and inquired if that was common as she likes the idea of students having the freedom in the summer to do things outside of schoolwork. She inquired if he could not have done summer school and still pursued music to the extent that he did. Mr. Baur replied that he does not believe that he could have as he had a full schedule for most of his high school career, which also included summer school. Mr. Alcantara also agreed.

Ms. Tomlinson inquired how Ms. Hester discovered IGSS and if the program is broadly known to students. Ms. Hester replied that she does not think it is broadly known amongst students. She credits having older siblings who encouraged her about it. She noted that she thinks that adviser rooms visit the IGSS space and hear from the teachers about the program. Ms. Hester would like to find a way to broadcast the program more as she does not believe a lot of students know about it.

Ms. Tomlinson spoke to the competitiveness that the students shared about. Noting Mr. Hampton's realization of how competitive New Trier soccer is and changing from that identity, she inquired if he pivoted outside of school or if he explored other options within the school. He replied that he did a lot of things inside the school and the focus became less about the accolades and making the soccer team and more about making connections with people. Their conversation then turned to discussing Mr. Hampton's comments about feeling like he should have limited what he tried in the early years of high school in order to expand the depth of his commitment. Ms. Tomlinson shared that freshmen and sophomore years are a good time to try a variety of things, but it might be made better by not forcing a year-long commitment from students. Mr. Hampton agreed, noting there should be more emphasis on doing things casually and for fun across multiple facets. Many students feel as though they need to do something in order to get into college and that should be diminished.

Ms. Pofcher inquired if Ms. Kozina's book is available online, to which Ms. Kozina replied it is on Amazon.

Ms. Hahn thanked the students, including Ms. Fording, for coming to the meeting. She shared that their voices are incredibly important to the work that everybody in the room does. When students are heard from it helps the school support them better as well as future generations. She thanked them for sharing their stories. What struck Ms. Hahn are the varied and unique experiences through New Trier, yet common themes emerged that resonated with her. These included developing relationships within the school, the need to find a genuine interest and commit to that over time, and to take those chances, so having that space was important as well as finding balance in all their commitments. As a Board member, she hopes that the Board can endeavor to support students in their own becoming by giving them space to take risks, to try different things, and find balance and less pressure to do it all and do it all well, but rather to find what is genuinely interesting to them to take into their futures.

Ms. McDonough thanked the students for sharing their stories and was in awe of their self-awareness and growth throughout high school. She hopes the students are as equally as proud of their growth. Similar to what Ms. Hahn expressed about each having a unique path, they have shown the Board so much. Ms. McDonough shared the items she thought the Board should be looking out for, which included, self-awareness, investment, resilience, the need for balance, competition, and finding joy. She assured the students that they are heard, and the Board wants to take that feedback and make New Trier even better.

Ms. Alcantara thanked the students for their presentation. She was struck by how honest and vulnerable the students were, noting that it helps the Board significantly to understand what students are going through and their journey. They are also helping other students as well. Ms. Alcantara was struck by how self-aware they are and the wisdom that they show as high school seniors. She shared it is heartening to be on the Board at a school where students are willing to share like they did. The students' insights will help the Board make some introspection as well as looking at improvements.

Mr. Das joins the Board in celebrating what the students have shared and the time they took to do so. He appreciated the consistent framework of each student looking back at their ninth-grade self. Mr. Das shared that it might be useful to incoming freshmen to see videos of seniors sharing what they wish they would have told their ninth-grade selves. Mr. Das encourages this as a structured part of the graduating class team experience. Taking it a step further, he wonders if seniors sharing their experiences with 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> graders could be talked about in a way that is different than parents who think everything is on the line during those grades for their students to arrive at New

Trier. He is appreciative of the space that these students created to provide this wisdom that might help parents calm down as well as give space for young people to speak to, becoming examples like these seniors.

Mrs. Dubravec thanked the students for their presentations. She added that when one walks the hallways of New Trier, one finds these students everywhere. She shared how proud she is of the students, particularly for sharing their vulnerability. Mrs. Dubravec also thanked the parents who were in attendance.

Mr. Dronen thanked the students for their openness, passion, and leadership. He shared that this is why the Board is here, to hear from students as it helps them make their decisions, like Ms. Hahn alluded to.

Dr. Sally also shared his thanks and noted that this presentation is the first of four this year.

### **B. Annual Plan: Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate and Career Pathways**

Mr. Tragos presented the Annual Plan: Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate and Career Pathways. There are five sets of skills and dispositions that New Trier seeks to develop in its students. This work was developed in 2019-20 and was an anchor of the Strategic Plan. They were launched in 2020 just prior to the pandemic and were sidelined for some time. Now, the *Characteristics* are starting to drive the District's planning and programming toward the achievement of the Strategic Plan goals.

This relates to the newly created Future Programming Committee, established by the administration, but is a joint committee with faculty leadership. It represents academic, student services, and elective areas of the school as well as the Board. As the *Characteristics* are integrated, this committee will look at new programming. The committee will also include input from students and parents. The committee will define opportunities and scheduling innovations to help students design a pathway or an individualized four-year plan where they will develop academic and technical skills as well as non-academic skills. These skills are encompassed in the *Characteristics* and will better and differentiate students in a world of competitive college and career pursuits. The committee's purpose is to look at programming within the block schedule to address emerging and future student needs and interests and to create a roadmap to achieve that vision. The committee will examine what is happening in the worlds of education, career, and college. They will then put concrete plans around this purpose.

There is a new state law that is focused on the transition from high school to college and career around college and career pathway endorsements in Illinois. The Future Programming Committee is the work of New Trier, however, there are external drivers. The state mandate comes from the 2016 Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR) and is a new approach to college/postsecondary and career readiness. More recently, the state passed a law that requires implementation of the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework and the College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) Framework. The PaCE Framework guides districts on how to organize their counseling, career exploration, and preparation for college and career. This work combines nicely with the work of the Post-High School Counseling department. The CCPE Framework allows districts to award students who chose to do so to earn an endorsement in a career area. This will be required of districts beginning in July 2025 and New Trier is on pace to provide this. It is important to match what the state is trying to do with what New Trier is also trying to do. These two frameworks are focused on academic readiness and post-secondary exploration and preparation and align well with New Trier's goals in the intellectual growth and readiness framework in the Strategic Plan. Schools are required to offer the opportunity for a career endorsement according to state law but does not require a student to earn one.

Students will earn an endorsement by completing four components. The first is that they must complete an individualized learning plan. Mr. Tragos thinks about this as New Trier's current four-year planning only enhanced with the requirements for college and career planning. The second component is engaging in professional learning such as networking with professionals in their field and also includes 60-hours of work-based learning or internship. The third component is completing a career-focused instructional sequence. This would be two years of instructional coursework aligned to a student's interest in their individualized learning plan and requires at least six hours of college credit such as through Advanced Placement or dual credit. The final component is demonstrating academic readiness in the content areas. The state has determined seven endorsements areas in which students can earn an endorsement on their diploma. These areas include agriculture, food, and natural resources, arts and communications, finance and business services, human and public services, information technology, manufacturing, engineering, technology, and trades, and health and science technology. Districts have a tremendous amount of local control in developing their own pathways to these areas. There are guiding principles for developing these pathways at New Trier. The school plans to develop a pathway program that is a both/and approach, meaning both college and

career focused. Second, the District will develop pathways that are academically rigorous and relevant. New Trier will also develop a pathway program that meets the needs and aspirations of its students and the standards of the community. Finally, the District will develop a pathway program that aligns to the Strategic Plan. Mr. Tragos then shared comments about how the school is fortunate to be in the community that it is as there are partnerships through various avenues that provide students with contacts in different fields. The first pathway is likely to be human-centered design.

Next, Ms. Dizon, Director of Communications, shared about the new *Characteristics* logo. The *Characteristics* are being employed in programming and goal setting for students, but the school also wanted to make sure that its external and internal audiences are familiar with them. Ms. Dizon and Mr. Tragos have been discussing how to start a repeated messaging campaign so eventually the *Characteristics* become shorthand like the motto. Ms. Dizon shared the issues with the original *Characteristics* motto, noting that it was not uniquely New Trier. Ms. Dizon and Mr. Tragos, along with Ms. Lia Fahs, Communications Coordinator, met with HOK design who did the District's rebranding work over the summer. HOK incorporated some of the traditions and innovations that the team thought was important to convey. Having a visual identity makes it easier to start talking and repeating messaging around the *Characteristics*. Next, Ms. Dizon shared how the logo was developed and connects to New Trier. She noted that the elements of the logo are a nice story that can be told with visual cues. The *Characteristics* can then be reissued internally and eventually these logos and visual cues can be used across all the District's formats. Mr. Dronen invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn thanked everyone for their work and noted she is excited to sit on the committee. Regarding the career endorsements, she was trying to reconcile what was heard earlier in the meeting from students in terms of space to find themselves as well as not feeling pressure to do everything. In the standards, Ms. Hahn saw there is a two-year requirement and inquired if that will be limited to the upper grades so students have space during their younger years to figure out what their passions may be. She noted that the endorsement path sounds daunting and counterintuitive to what was heard earlier from students. Mr. Tragos agreed and replied that regarding the two-year requirement, whether it would be at the upper or lower grades is unknown at this point, but Ms. Hahn had a good suggestion. He went on to say that this is not quite as rigid as it sounds. The school has a lot of latitude over which courses cover a sequence and many different courses could make those pathways. He also shared that there are opportunities within pathways to be on-ramps and off-ramps, so students are not locked into anything. If a student chooses to do something differently, they have not thrown off the pace of their graduation. Dr. Sally noted that this needs a lot of thought and shared that he thinks it will come naturally from the exploration that students do. Further adding, that exploration and finding their interests are the first part of what students need to do in high school. Ms. Hahn added how these pathways are communicated to students is important such as these areas are something to explore versus colleges want to see this so you should do this.

Ms. Hahn noted how fortunate the school is to have the community partnerships available to it that it does. She wondered if the District might consider partnering with neighboring communities that may not have that same access as a way to ensure this program is available to many people and it is not ratcheting up the competitiveness of post-high school. Mr. Tragos thanked her for the suggestion and sentiment.

Mr. Dronen inquired if this program is optional for students, which Mr. Tragos confirmed. Mr. Dronen then inquired if there was any reason why a student may choose not to do this, to which Mr. Tragos shared a variety of them. The individualized learning plan is something pre-pathways that had been in discussion with the post-high school counseling department. It is one reason that the change was made from Naviance to Maia Learning as it helps students to plan a four-year sequence. New Trier's four-year plan does align with the individualized learning plan. Mr. Dronen shared comments from a conversation he had earlier with Mr. Tragos regarding the concept of an individualized learning plan. He noted they also discussed concerns about pigeonholing student's career paths when they are young as students change their majors during college or begin college not knowing what they want to do so students need opportunities to explore different areas. Mr. Dronen also mentioned, similar to what Mr. Tragos has shared, that there are careers that do not even exist right now, so the concept is to develop a set of skills that will allow a student to adapt to those careers. Mr. Dronen's overall concern is that the focus needs to be on developing students to meet these career opportunities that may not yet exist. Mr. Tragos replied that there are concerns that the pathways are too rigid, but he does not believe it has to be that way and that the school will do its best to ensure that students find these opportunities. The school will show students the opportunities that exist, through pathways as well as the *Characteristics*, to develop a broad set of skills along with targeted skills. Mr. Tragos went on to share further comments about this. Mr. Dronen then noted that the school is doing many of the things that would be found in an individualized learning plan, but inquired that as more students select this, if the school has the existing

resources to accommodate more students. Mr. Tragos replied that it is too early to say if the school has all the right resources in the right places, but resources will be needed.

## **VII. Administrative Items**

### **A. Treasurer's Report for November 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for November 2023. The District has begun to receive tax receipts, totaling about \$20 million. Regular state and federal disbursements are expected. Interest income continues to be strong as there is about \$1.4 million year-to-date on a budget of \$2 million, which the District is projected to exceed if performance continues this year. The weighted portfolio yield rose about 4.68%, although most investments matured as the District was awaiting property tax receipts. The cash coming in is earning 5.5% in the Illinois School District Asset Fund. The District is also starting another round of short-term investments that mature before the end of the fiscal year that are aligned with its cash flow that will allow it to lock in current rates, at least through next July. This will be done as the District prepares for a possible delay again in property tax bills next year. The cash balance for all accounts is \$84,183,285.

### **B. Financial Report for November 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for November 2023. Operating revenue was \$29,376,493 for the first five months of the fiscal year, or 300% higher compared to last year. This is due to property tax payments coming out a month earlier this year, so the receipts came in during November rather than December. The other local sources category is higher than last year due to investment earnings, which will likely continue all year. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 6.51% higher than last year.

Operating expenditures were \$24,882,000 through November, or 12.93% lower than last year. There was a transfer to the Capital Projects Funds which was posted now that revenue has come in. Exclusive of the transfer, the expenses are 1.67% higher than last year. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 5.61% higher than last year. The book balances for all accounts were \$86,570,000 through November 30.

## **VIII. Consent Agenda**

- Bill List for Period, November 1 - 30, 2023
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Retirements, Resignations, and Stipends - Appointment)
- Approval of the Driver's Ed Waiver/Modification IL School Code 105ILCS 5/27-24.3
- Approval of contract for bookstore managed services
- Approval of student fees for 2024-25
- Alltown Transportation Renewal - Regular Service (2024-25)
- Alltown Transportation Renewal - Special Education (2024-25)

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Tomlinson moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, November 1 - 30, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Retirements, Resignations, and Stipends – Appointment); Approval of the Driver's Ed Waiver/Modification IL School Code 105ILCS 5/27-24.3; Approve the agreement with Beck's and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement subject to attorney review; Approval of student fees for the 2024-25 school year as presented; and the extension of the Alltown Bus Service transportation agreement for the 2024-25 school years and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Ms. McDonough, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

The motion passed.

## **IX. Board Member Reports**

Ms. McDonough was unable to attend the **Booster Club** meeting in November due to a last-minute date change. Their next meeting is December 19<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** will meet on Wednesday.



Ms. McDonough shared that the first **Safety Committee** meeting took place last month. It is made up of staff, students, administration and parents who will work together to evaluate the safety protocols and procedures of the school and develop security goals that can be integrated into the District's plan. During the first meeting, the committee toured the Winnetka campus as a way to think through how the multi-layered approach of security is implemented at the school. The same will be done at their next meeting, tomorrow, at the Northfield campus.

Ms. Tomlinson shared that the **Environmental Committee** met on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The Environmental Club provided an update sharing that students continue to work on educating other students and increasing awareness of ways in which the school community could improve its green efforts such as food composting and waste in the cafeterias, recycling throughout the school, and reducing the use of plastic and paper. Through a Project of Excellence, various science classes are helping establish research gardens at both campuses as ways to introduce biodiversity and urban sustainability. At the Winnetka campus, LED fixtures have replaced 40 halide lamps in the pool area. The Binary Heart Club continues to collect, repair and redistribute old electronics. Five electric vehicle (EV) charging stations have been installed and will allow up to ten cars to charge at a time. Talks have also begun with the village about possibly adding solar panels to Winnetka. At the Northfield campus, the solar panel installation and system is scheduled to be up and running in the spring. Four EV charging stations have been installed at Northfield, which can accommodate eight cars.

Ms. Alcantara shared that the **New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA)** met on December 5<sup>th</sup>. They discussed the changes in attendance that were reported on at last month's Board meeting, fielded questions, and talked about the upward trends and progress. Mr. Waechtler and Mrs. Dubravec both gave reports. The group also received a report from the communications chair and also some discussion around possible changes from the programs chair. The next meeting is scheduled for January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dronen shared that he, Dr. Sally and Ms. Hahn have attended several **Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee on Mental Health** meetings since March of this year with the most recent meeting being on December 7<sup>th</sup>. It is composed of elected officials from New Trier, Districts 37 and 39, New Trier Township, Wilmette Park District, the Village of Wilmette, and Wilmette Public Library. Each unit of government has its own unique role towards mental health and its constituents. The group looked at the role of the Village of Wilmette in helping to support positive mental health as the Village is seen as a connector and awareness builder. Current challenges were discussed. Dr. Sally shared the New Trier approach to mental health. The committee is still looking at recommendations which Mr. Dronen shared. The key takeaway from the meetings is that each unit of government has its own constituencies whose needs are different and determining the best way to address these particular needs is on-going. It is a good example of various government agencies getting together on common issues within the community and showing concern for it.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF) Liaison Committee** met on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Planning is underway for the biennial Gala in 2024 and the hope is to raise \$120,000. This money supports their grant program for two years. They have also named the eight Hall of Honor recipients who ranged from the Class of 1969 to the Class of 2002, and represent the fields of music, art, and science. Invitations will go out soon, but tickets are available for purchase now. The Gala will take place on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Das noted that the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** met on November 15<sup>th</sup>, however, there will not be a meeting in December. He shared that there is a comprehensive guidebook available on their website that speaks to the details and features of their work including principles and values. The council also had a presentation that focused on dispelling the myths of inclusive education and the movement towards having diverse learners be with each other in general education environments. There is a strong movement recognizing that the path to independence in young adulthood is very much supported when diverse learners are learning together in a general education environment. He went on to share that Illinois has a long way to go to try and move towards that kind of vision due to a significant historical investment, perhaps third or fourth most invested, in separating diverse learners from general education environments. The movement to change this has taken national favor at this time and it is something that the council will keep an eye on. Mr. Das shared his appreciation for TrueNorth featuring how they support this kind of move in the current environment here in Illinois.

Ms. Pofcher noted that the **Facilities Steering Committee** meeting was rescheduled.

Ms. Pofcher shared that the **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)** met, but unfortunately, she and Ms. McDonough were unable to attend.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- The school is headed into the last two weeks of the semester. End of semester assessments begin on Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. Friday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> is a grading day and the beginning of Winter Break.
- The Vocal Jazz concert will take place on Wednesday evening.
- The High Five Winter Sing is on Thursday afternoon.
- The January Board Meeting will take place on the fourth Monday of the month.
- The Policy Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

Ms. Pofcher requested a longer amount of time be allotted to the agenda when there are student voice presentations.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

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Keith Dronen, President