

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

April 14, 2025

**New Trier Township High School
7 Happ Road, Room C234
Northfield, IL 60093**

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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, April 14, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

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

Administrators Present

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

Members Absent

Ms. Jean Hahn, President
Ms. Sally Pofcher

Also Present

Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Chris Mitchell, Associate Principal for Student Services; Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; Ms. Darci Woodson, Speech/Language Pathologist; Ms. Vicki Murphy, Speech/Language Pathologist; Mr. Matt Koulentes, Outplacement Coordinator; Ms. Liz Mayer, Executive Director, New Trier Education Foundation; Ms. Katie Kritek, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Venera Stabinsky, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Chris Van Den Berg, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Meg Garton, English Department Faculty; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 6:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Tomlinson called the Regular Meeting of April 14, 2025, of the Board of Education to order at 6:31 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Hahn and Ms. Pofcher.

II. CLOSED SESSION – Cancelled

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

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of March 17, 2025 (open and closed session)**

Ms. Tomlinson asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 17, 2025 (open and closed session), of which there were none. Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 17, 2025 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY:

ABSENT: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Pofcher

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:

- Prior to Spring Break, students and staff were able to watch March Madness basketball games during the lunch periods.
- Page to Stage, the annual one act play performance for Freshmen, recently took place. Theatre students collaborate as an ensemble to share their work. Plays included “This Girl Laugh, The Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing” “Fools” and “The Revenge of Lard Butt Hogan.”
- The Freshman Choir invited the students from Bright Horizons for a sing-along.
- Frosh Social Service spent a morning making lunches for Hilda’s Place, which is an organization to help those who are unhoused.
- In Creative Cuisine, Chef Michael Kropp of Mino's Italian in Winnetka did a cooking demonstration, creating risotto and tomato sauce from scratch. The class then got to make the Italian dish.
- Mr. Waechtler thanked the Physical Plant Services department for two projects that they worked on over Spring Break. The first project was the replacement of the original to the 1964 watermain. The second project involved the electrical feed into the main switch gear for the B building which was occasionally taking on water. The building was on generator power for the week and all of the work is complete, avoiding any interruptions to the school day and upcoming summer school.

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

- She thanked the sponsors of the students who traveled to Austria over Spring Break as part of the Symphonic Wind Ensemble. They were able to sightsee and played in various venues.
- Science Olympiad won state for the second year in a row. They will head to the national tournament on May 23rd and 24th at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.
- Prom will take place on Saturday, May 3rd in downtown Chicago.
- All Commencement information has been sent out to families, there is also a webpage with this information.
- Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Ed and Student Services highlighted sophomore student, Ms. Maria Popov. Ms. Popov has been selected to receive one of Infinitec’s Outstanding Technology Awards. Infinitec is the assistive technology program of Greater Chicago that leverages the power of technology to advance independence. Ms. Popov is receiving this award because of her exceptional progress related to skill development and her application in using technology. Dr. Panopoulos shared other details and went on to thank Ms. Popov’s educational team who have play an integral role. Ms. Darci Woodson and Ms. Vicki Murphy, Speech/Language Pathologists, were in attendance. Next week, there will be a recognition dinner that Ms. Popov and her family will attend, along with some people from New Trier. Ms. Popov has also been selected to share the first words of the evening using her device.
- The Transition Alumni Luncheon recently took place. Ms. Kari Nakayama, Transitions Coordinator, organizes a yearly luncheon where former students can return to socialize and get caught up with one another as well as former teachers and staff. About 15 alumni returned for this event.
- Four students took first place in the Illinois Econ Challenge at North Central College. Ms. Jenny Niemi, Social Studies Department Faculty, is their sponsor.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared application information regarding students who would like to be part of the Lagniappe-Potpourri Leadership Board. The Leadership Board is for juniors and seniors who are interested in putting on the Frosh-Soph Musical next year. She then went on to share that one area that needed attention in the evolution of Lagniappe was sketch writing. A sketch comedy showcase has been added to part of the Senior Directors Project to address this need. Students will apply and it will take place on Saturday, May 17th at 5 p.m. This is one possible opportunity that evolved for students who have a passion for writing.
- Support staff participated in a service project on the most recent late arrival days. They made cards for Cardz for Kidz as well as bundled books for the junior class service project.
- The Academic Assistance Center (AAC) has a new look thanks to the mural that was created by the Graphic Design Club.
- This is the second year that Student Council has won the national gold council of excellence. New Trier was one of seven schools in Illinois who received this honor. Mrs. Dubravec shared the process the students went through to apply for the award.

Mr. Waechtler then announced that the District is recommending Mr. Matt Koulentes, current Outplacement Coordinator, as a Graduating Class Team Assistant Principal. He went on to provide information on Mr. Koulentes' background and experience.

Dr. Tragos then announced that the District is recommending Dr. Melissa Dudic for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction position as Dr. Chimille Tillery, current Director of Curriculum and Instruction, will become the new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Tragos shared about the hiring process that Dr. Tillery oversaw. Dr. Tragos then provided information on Dr. Dudic's background and experience.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report noting that there have been four requests since the last Board meeting, one is closed, while three remain open. One was regarding materials related to a former employee, one regarding documents related to a previous FOIA, one regarding school initiatives and one regarding information related to Holocaust Remembrance Day.

V. Communications

Ms. Tomlinson 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 Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications. Ms. Tomlinson stated that due to the number of issues which must be considered at the Board Meeting, commenters should limit their statement to three minutes per Board Policy 2-230. Likewise, if a comment requires a response, either Ms. Tomlinson or an administrator will contact the commenter in the days following the meeting. Questions and comments should address the Board of Education as a whole only. No comments should be directed to an individual Board member, audience, principals, or other staff members. No complaints against individual employees are allowed during a Board of Education Meeting. She also asked that the audience refrain from clapping or a response of any kind regarding people's comments. There were two requests for public comment.

1. Ms. Erin Stone, Board President of Wilmette School District 39, wanted to take a moment before Dr. Sally retires and Mr. Dronen rolls off the Board, to say thank you for the work of the District and Board. Speaking as a parent, Ms. Stone shared comments about Lagniappe Potpourri and her daughter's experience with it.
2. Lucas Weissbluth, student, spoke about reform in areas that the school has been lacking. Lucas went on to outline the necessity of building menstrual product facilities in all bathrooms, including the men's and boy's rooms.

Ms. Tomlinson thanked both speakers, noting that an administrator would reach out to Lucas.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Communication Update and Annual Report to the Community

Ms. Dizon presented an update on communications and community engagement. Communications is embedded in the New Trier 2030 Strategic Plan which includes the framework of Community Engagement, Governance, and Partnerships, which is the context for the presentation. Ms. Dizon then highlighted the three key points for effective communications programs: meeting stakeholders where they are at, informing program assessment with data, and keeping up with audience trends.

Next, Ms. Dizon shared some of the major initiatives that have occurred this school year and are a part of the Annual Plan. The first was "The Trevian Experience" which is a video that tells New Trier's story. It provides a look inside New Trier, showing extraordinary teaching, learning, relationships, and student opportunities. Ms. Dizon noted that while words usually can convey the message, sometimes seeing a video helps get the message across better. Mayday Productions produced the video. Ms. Dizon noted that there are 33 hours of footage, and the plan is to identify topics and themes that Maday Productions can create short-form videos from.

Another initiative that took place this year was the selection of a new mass communications system, ParentSquare, which launched on January 20th. ParentSquare has provided the District with improved features such as emergency communications, an easy-to-use platform, and parents ability to select the way they want to receive information. The community is now able to subscribe to newsletters and Ms. Dizon's plan is to promote this by working with the District's village partners. Another next step that Ms. Dizon will work on is to ensure that parents can effectively use it.

The Communications Department is also part of a website refresh in partnership with the Technology Department. Blackboard was selected as the vendor who assisted the District in a website overhaul in 2021. About a year later, Blackboard was purchased by Finalsity, and support of the current site ends this year. Ms. Dizon went on to share the goals of the refresh that will take place. The Communications and Technology group is in the design phase now and

has received stakeholder feedback. The plan is to launch the site next school year.

Another initiative of the department is the superintendent transition that will occur next school year. Ms. Dizon will work with Dr. Tragos to ensure he has appropriate visibility in the community as well as how he will want to communicate with various stakeholders. The department also assisted in the superintendent search and is planning farewell events in honor of Dr. Sally's retirement.

Ms. Dizon shared concluding comments and invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. McDonough thanked Ms. Dizon, and her team, including Ms. Lia Fahs, Communications Coordinator, for all their work. She is the Board liaison to the Community Engagement Committee and enjoys seeing the department's progress along the way. She is most excited about the upcoming work to engage the community on a deeper level. Ms. Dizon thanked Ms. McDonough for sitting on the committee as well as previous Board members who have served.

Mr. Dronen noted how much he enjoyed the video and thanked Ms. Dizon for her presentation.

Ms. Alcantara sat on the committee previously and was excited to see how the department has evolved over the past year; she noted how great the video was as well. She inquired if Ms. Dizon anticipates having additional shorter videos available, to which Ms. Dizon shared that it is one of her goals for the next school year.

Ms. Tomlinson shared comments about the video, noting that it enables the viewer to feel the impact that the school's opportunities and faculty have on students. She also looks forward to how the additional footage plays out in the District's messaging. Ms. Tomlinson encouraged telling the story of financial stewardship as a way to remind taxpayers what they are getting with their tax dollars – many opportunities for students led by incredible staff and there has not been an operating rate referendum in 22 years. She is also excited about ParentSquare with its ability to get information out to the broader community. She thanked Ms. Dizon and her team for their work. Ms. Dizon shared additional concluding comments, particularly thanking those who participated in the video.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for March 2025

Dr. Johnson provided the Treasurer's Report for March 2025, or the ninth month of the fiscal year. Revenue receipts are as expected, with significant property tax revenue for the first installment, which was due March 1st. Dr. Johnson estimated that the District has over 90% collected for that installment. State and Federal disbursements continue as expected. Interest income continues to be significant. The weighted portfolio yield for PMA, where most of the District's funds are invested, is 4.16% and the long-term investments at 5/3 are 4.34%. The balance for all accounts is \$162,020,710.

Financial Report for February 2025

Dr. Johnson then provided the Financial Report for February 2025. The operating revenue for the first nine months of the year was \$133,158,000, or 3.83% higher compared to last year. The revenue from all sources follows expected trends and will likely end the year at or above the adopted budget for operating revenue, which is 4.26% higher than last year.

On the expenditure side, exclusive of transfers through March, the District was at \$88 million or 7.55% higher than last year. The variance compared to last year's budget continues to decrease, and finishing the year at or near the budget appears likely if the District's historical spending patterns continue. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 6.64% higher. The District is within a point of its variance now.

Ms. Tomlinson thanked Dr. Johnson, noting that a lot of work goes into these reports. Dr. Johnson, in turn, also thanked Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, and his office, for their preparation of the reports.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, March 1 - 31, 2025
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Dismissals, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Terminations, Administrators Contracts and Addendum)
- Resolution Authorizing the Reduction in Force of Educational Support Personnel
- Resolution Authorizing the Reduction in Force and Recall of Educational Support Personnel

- Northfield Campus Electrical Work Expenditure Approval
- Winnetka Campus Plumbing Bid Package #2 (HLS)
- Donation Agreement with New Trier Education Foundation
- Northfield Campus Athletic Field Replacement

Ms. Tomlinson inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, March 1 - 31, 2025; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Dismissals, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Terminations, Administrators Contracts and Addendum); Resolution Authorizing the Reduction in Force of Educational Support Personnel; Resolution Authorizing the Reduction in Force and Recall of Educational Support Personnel; Waiver of bid requirements for emergency electrical repairs for McWilliams Electric; The bid awards as presented by Pepper Construction; Donation Agreement between the New Trier Education Foundation and New Trier Township High School District 203; Northfield Campus Athletic Field Replacement Project and a contract with AstroTurf for Phase 1, subject to attorney review and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement. Ms. McDonough seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY:

ABSENT: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. McDonough attended the **Safety Committee** meeting. The committee received feedback about the shelter drill that took place in March from administration, staff, and students. There has also been great feedback about the new security protocols that have been implemented this year. Ms. McDonough thanked Mr. Rai Pavely, Director of Campus Security, Mr. Angel Villaluz, Director of Technology, and Mrs. Dubravec for all their work on this.

Mr. Dronen shared that the **Booster Club** meeting that was scheduled for the day after last month's board meeting was cancelled and April's meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. The Booster Club will host its fundraising event at the Women's Club of Wilmette on Friday, April 25th from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Mr. Dronen, along with Ms. Hahn and Ms. Tomlinson, attended the Township's Annual Meeting. Dr. Sally was the guest speaker and was the recipient of the Harriet Hahn Lifetime of Learning and Service Award, while former Board member, Mr. Al Dolinko, received the George E. Noyes Community Spirit Award.

Ms. Alcantara attended the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** on April 9th. The committee received an update from Ms. Alcantara and Mrs. Dubravec after taking a group photo. An update was provided on the Pursuing Your Passion event which will be held tomorrow. The NTFAA board is filling positions for next year. They also received updates on summer scholars and the graduation raffle. The next meeting will be in May.

Mr. Das attended the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** meeting last week. In addition to governance matters, he noted that it continues to be in front of the Council the formal withdrawal of Glenview District 34 while Glenbrook High School District 225 also intends to withdraw, but no formal action as of last week had been taken. The next meeting is May 7th and this will continue to be a topic of discussion.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that she, Ms. Hahn, and Mr. Das attended the **Parent Community Advisory Group** meeting on April 3rd. The topic for the meeting was civil discourse and critical thinking. The dialogue was robust, and participants wanted to spend more time discussing how New Trier's concepts can be applied more broadly in the community, therefore, there is another meeting scheduled for May 1st to continue the conversation.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- There is no school this Friday, April 18th.
- The Parent Community Advisory Group will meet on May 1st.
- The District will hold a Special Board meeting on May 5th. At this meeting, the District will thank Mr.

Dronen for his service on the Board and welcome new member, Mr. Joo Serk Lee. At that time, three additional Board members will be re-seated: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, and Ms. Tomlinson.

- Dr. Sally encouraged everyone to look at the Performing Arts calendar as there are many events coming up, including the Spring Play in the McGee Theatre on May 15th and 16th as well as the new sketch comedy showcase on May 17th.
- The next Regular Board meeting is May 19th.

Ms. Tomlinson inquired whether there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Jean Hahn, President