

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

December 9, 2024

**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, December 9, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Avik Das
Mr. Keith Dronen
Ms. Jean Hahn, President
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. Kimberly Alcantara
Ms. Sally Pofcher

Also Present

Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services; Mr. Paul Moretta, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Gretchen Stauder, Post High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Tom Shorrock, Post High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Kerri Simons, Adviser Chair, Ms. Cassandra Barca, Post High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:15 p.m. – C234

Ms. Hahn called the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 5:17 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. Ms. Hahn 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 and 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. Mr. Dronen seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

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

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:15 p.m. – A201A

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

Ms. Hahn called the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Alcantara and Ms. Pofcher.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of November 18, 2024 (open and closed session)**

Ms. Hahn asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 18, 2024 (open and closed session). Ms. Hahn had one request for changes to the closed session minutes, which was incorporated. Ms. McDonough moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 18, 2024 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY:

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, 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:

- The Frosh Soph Musical, *Seussical*, recently took place. It was an overall fantastic show and Mr. Waechtler enjoyed seeing students, parents, community, and staff with their families in attendance.
- The Northfield Holiday Luncheon took place before Thanksgiving break. He thanked Mr. Pete Collins, Kinetic Wellness Department Coordinator, Mr. Jason Dane, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty, and Mr. Ted Koulentes, Adviser Chair, for staying overnight and cooking the meat. He also thanked the New Trier Parents Association for providing pies.
- There have been a variety of great service opportunities available. They include an adviser room hosting a hot chocolate sale to raise money for Northwestern University Settlement House (NUSH) and a coat drive organized by the Frosh Social Service Board. Tri-Ship hosted their canned food drive, where they collected over 16,000 pounds of food along with over \$50,000 for the Greater Chicago Food Depository. This translates to over 150,000 meals for families in the greater Chicagoland area.
- End of Semester Experiences will take place next week. Mr. Waechtler thanked Ms. Steph Moretta, Academic Assistance Center (AAC) Coordinator, for hosting comfort dogs this Friday. He also shared that the senior helper in each adviser room went over how to prepare for exams and manage test anxiety.
- He provided an update on a Northfield initiative, Understanding Ourselves and Others, which is part of the annual plan. A significant goal of the Northfield campus is to build community for the class of 2028. Mr. Waechtler thanked Ms. Kathleen Tallmidge, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Liana Pasquini, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Markham, English Department Faculty; and Ms. Steph Moretta, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, for assisting him in creating the adviser room lessons. He shared what the student experience is like, noting that not only are there adviser room activities, but items throughout the campus and embedded in the curriculum. The next department where students work on this goal is in Kinetic Wellness (KW); Mr. Waechtler thanked Mr. Alex Zilka and Ms. Kristan Kenney for helping to develop the lesson as it fits in well with KW's social emotional learning curriculum, use of language and decision-making. Mr. Waechtler then highlighted a couple of units that he and Mr. Dean Pinos, Social Studies Department Coordinator, worked on together.

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

- Ms. Michael Christensen, Social Studies Department Chair, organized an opportunity for students to come together from New Trier as well as from Waukegan High School who are enrolled in AP African American Studies, which Mrs. Dubravec shared details about.
- The NTPA hosted their annual pie day. Mrs. Dubravec noted that the faculty and staff luncheon will take place on Thursday for the Winnetka campus.
- The Assyrian Club was recently created and the Director of Security, Mr. Rai Pavey, sponsors the club. He connected with the Assyrian Clubs at Niles North and West High Schools as well as with Maine East High

School and all the clubs got together at Niles West. The Assyrian Police Association also joined the meeting where topics around safety, bullying, cyber bullying, and internet safety were discussed.

- The Girls Club participated in the Village of Rosemont's Nutcracker Wonderland Project to help raise money for student scholarships. Their Nutcracker will be on display at the Donald E. Stevens Convention Center Showroom.
- New Trier has an amazing Korean Drum Club, and they participated in this year Chicago's Thanksgiving Parade.
- The Booster Club's Night League basketball had the highest participation ever and Mrs. Dubravec thanked the parents for all their work on this for students.
- Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services and Special Education, shared that the High Five Choir performed at the 91st Annual Joint Conference for school boards, school administrators, and school business officials. Dr. Panopoulos thanked Ms. Sue Vaughan, Director of the High Five Choir, Ms. Elizabeth Bennett, Music and Theater Department Chair, the instructional aides and accompanist who all supported students with this opportunity.
- Dr. Panopoulos also noted that it was at this conference where Dr. Chris Johnson, Associate Superintendent, received an award of distinction for the educational environments created by the East Side Academic and Athletic project.
- The school's work with "*Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud*" is also discussed in adviser rooms. The sophomore and junior graduating class teams hosted an awards breakfast for students who were nominated by their advisers for their modeling of being brave, kind or proud. Seniors will have an awards breakfast at a later date.
- The winter play, *Our Town*, was spectacular. Ms. Nina Lynn, who is retiring this year, directed the play. It was also the first play she directed when she started at New Trier.
- New Trier Special Olympics recently hosted a basketball tournament that was renamed in memory of Johnny Vassallo, a student who passed away. The students enjoyed the day, and Mrs. Dubravec thanked the staff for their work.
- Mrs. Dubravec then shared about the use of the athletics spaces, noting that while Special Olympics was in the main gym, fencing was taking place in the Bickert Gym, while a wrestling tournament took place in the field house.
- On Sunday, the 107th Annual Winter Music Festival took place in the Gaffney Auditorium. There are two performances and during the time in between, there is a musical instrument petting zoo for kids to try out various instruments.
- Student Council put together a "Home Alone" themed video in celebration of Winter Break. She thanked the students for their work on it and staff for participating in it.
- Mrs. Dubravec wished everyone happy holidays.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there had been no FOIAs since the last Board meeting.

V. Communications

Ms. Hahn 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 Dr. Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Tragos noted there were no requests for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Campus Safety

Dr. Sally began by saying the presentation on campus safety was a way to give the Board and community a sense of the extent and comprehensive nature of the plans the District is putting in place regarding safety and security.

Dr. Sally shared details about the four layers which include connection, support, and prevention; community partners; physical safety measures and daily procedures; and emergency procedures and readiness. He discussed the Standard Response Protocol, which when practiced helps prepares staff and student for a variety of emergency situations.

Mrs. Dubravec shared details about the Raptor Alert App and how it is used to account for every student and staff member in an emergency. Through the App, faculty and staff are also able to communicate any injuries or needs that they have which aids law enforcement. The app provides real-time data which a data team can review and then pull necessary information from PowerSchool. This accountability information then becomes part of a comprehensive

reunification process. Next, Mrs. Dubravec provided details about the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which is created with several versions, one for the public, one for the staff, and the most detailed one for select administrators and law enforcement. It is a large document that has 65 sections broken into four parts. The next steps toward completion of the document include implementing the accountability structure for reunification, completion of all sections of the EOP, and continued training and professional development. Mrs. Dubravec noted that the District is making good progress on this extensive and complex task. Dr. Sally then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson commented that many parts of the buildings are old and still need to be rehabbed and that when discussing money to improve facilities, this is an important part of what the District is looking to improve and is a vital reason to keep pushing forward on its facilities plan.

Next, Ms. Tomlinson inquired if there was any connection between the safety and security work and the work being done by the cell phone policy committee. Dr. Sally noted that this will be part of what the committee needs to discuss. Dr. Johnson reiterated Ms. Tomlinson's earlier comments, noting how pleased the District is with the investments it has made in physical safety. Safety will continue to be incorporated into future projects as well. Mrs. Dubravec then shared that in talking with parents at NTPA meetings, the topic has come up about cell phones and students needing to put them in the caddies in the classroom to which she shared further details.

Ms. McDonough thanked the team for their work. She inquired if the District is partnering with local schools and schools within the consortiums it belongs to, so it knows what others are doing. Mrs. Dubravec replied that New Trier seems to be further ahead in some areas compared to its consortium schools. Dr. Sally replied regarding the District's sender schools, noting that the level of communication with its sender schools is very important. Dr. Johnson noted that any meeting that administrators have with their peer groups, security is a standing topic on the agenda. Ms. McDonough, who sits on the Safety and Security Committee, shared that the representative from NIPSTA (Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy) who attended a meeting noted that New Trier is way ahead of many districts across the country. She shared that a lot of work is going into making this possible.

Mr. Dronen commented that there has been a tremendous amount of work by the administration and the Board regarding security. Due to the nature of the topic, often the public does not see this work. He commends the administration for moving this work forward. He then inquired about privacy procedures that might be in place regarding data collection with the Raptor system. Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer, replied that the Raptor App syncs a student's information such as their schedule and teachers, but it does not have additional private information. He went on to share that in the middle of an event, people who are in emergency leadership roles have access to cell phone numbers so as to contact an employee or student during the crisis.

Ms. Hahn thanked the team for the report and commended them for finding a balance of what feels right for the community and buildings as well as keeping students safe. She noted that Mrs. Dubravec alluded to, in the operations plan, that people are assigned various roles, and wanted to confirm that positions are assigned to those roles and not individual people as people change roles or retire. Mrs. Dubravec confirmed that positions are assigned to roles. Ms. Hahn then inquired when the onboarding happens for people who take on a new role. Mrs. Dubravec spoke to that and also noted that people are trained in various roles. Dr. Sally noted that great progress has been made and thanked faculty and staff for their work on this. He went on to share that an explicit plan is needed regarding new hires as well as subs, which Dr. Zoladz, Director of Human Resources, is working on.

Ms. Hahn noted that at a previous Board meeting where there was a safety presentation, she had inquired about TrevTips and educating students about the purpose of them; she asked Mrs. Dubravec for an update. Mrs. Dubravec responded that most of the TrevTips are meant to help care for students and they are using them for the right reasons, however, the school does continue to remind students of its purpose. She went on to share additional details.

B. School Report Card

Dr. Tragos presented on the school report card which is published by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for every district in Illinois showing how the state, each district, and each school are progressing on a wide range of educational goals. He went on to share the highlights of the annual report card for New Trier, noting the headline is that the District's academic performance remains amongst the highest in the state. The state uses multiple indicators of student success categorized by academic indicators as well as school quality and student success indicators. These factors take into account how a school is performing in these areas which translates into a summative designation or the rating of a school. The data collected is mostly based on SAT data for the class of 2024. He explained further

about the annual report card and how it is used by the District. After he explained the accountability metrics for both academic and school quality and student success indicators. New Trier scored full points in four of the five academic indicators, and less than full points on the three school quality and student success indicators.

Dr. Tragos noted that the state counts each campus as separate schools, but both earned a rating of exemplary or the state's highest rating. These schools are ranked in the top ten percent of all schools in the state and have no underperforming student groups within the school. Last year, both campuses were rated commendable largely due to the chronic absenteeism rate. That was the only time that New Trier was rated commendable since the inception of the accountability system in 2018. The District reduced the chronic absenteeism rate significantly thanks to the work of the Graduating Class Teams (GCTs), a new attendance plan, and a school-wide effort by all constituents. Dr. Tragos also spoke to a discrepancy between how the state counts homebound and hospitalized students versus how New Trier counts those students. Dr. Tragos then shared the five-year trend data for the academic metrics of English Language Arts and Math including various highlights. He finished by sharing where continuous improvement or attention is needed – including preparing for the shift from the SAT to the ACT in the spring; the District continuing to identify and support students who do not meet benchmarks; and maintaining progress to meet annual proficiency targets. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Dronen noted the fantastic work by the GCTs, faculty, and staff on the absenteeism rate, which went from 31% down to 15%. He pulled data from New Trier's benchmark districts, and with the exception of one, the District far out ceded them in bringing the number down.

Ms. Tomlinson noted it is great data and shared some that was in the report but not presented that she found interesting. That included survey information from the superintendent search where respondents shared that one of their top concerns or criteria was to hire and retain high caliber teachers. She noted that the District's teacher retention rates are in the 90-plus percentage and the same is true for the percentage of teachers who have master's degrees or higher. She thanked the teachers who continue to serve the community.

Ms. Hahn wanted to confirm that given the switch from the SAT to the ACT, that when this information is seen next year, if the state will come up with some sort of comparison so districts are not comparing apples to oranges. Dr. Tragos replied that he believes the state will come up with some sort of crosswalk to try and have some historical data but that remains to be seen. Ms. Hahn thanked the community for their partnership addressing chronic absenteeism.

VII. Administrative Items

Treasurer's Report and Financial Report for November 2024

Due to the timing of this meeting the Treasurer's and Financial Reports are not yet completed. Board members will receive them upon completion, and they will also be posted to BoardDocs. Dr. Johnson added that the District completed its upgrade to the finance system. He thanked those in the business and human resources offices for their work.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Personnel Report (Appointment, Change of Status, Resignation, Retirement, and Stipends - Appointment)
- Notice to Remedy
- New Course Proposals Approval
- Security Camera Bid Approval
- Technology Backup Services and Hardware Contract

Ms. Hahn 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: Personnel Report (Appointment, Change of Status, Resignation, Retirement, and Stipends - Appointment); Resolution Authorizing Notice to Remedy Approval of New Course Proposals; Approve and award a contract to Allied Universal for \$201,418 to provide and install the cameras and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the contract subject to final attorney review; and the contract with CDW-G as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. McDonough noted that the new mass communication system, ParentSquare, was shared in the **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)** meeting and the **New Trier Parents Association (NTPA)** meeting. It will roll out after Winter Break and staff have already been training on it. Ms. McDonough shared that NTPA class coffees took place with the class of 2026 having over 100 people in attendance. It was an informal and conversational meeting with Post High School Counseling. In the CEC meeting, attendees heard about the storytelling video that the school is working on. It will be a 5–6-minute video focusing on relationships, making a big school feel small, individual pathways and what differentiates New Trier. The final video should be ready sometime in January.

Mr. Dronen noted that the **Booster Club** met on November 19th. He updated the group on the Superintendent Search process and the selection of Dr. Tragos as superintendent. He also shared the New Course Proposals. The Booster Club updated attendees on various sports, including the start of pickleball. The Booster Club Benefit will be on April 25th at the Woman’s Club of Wilmette.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF)** will meet on Thursday.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- End of Semester Experiences will take place next week, Tuesday through Thursday with Winter Break starting on Friday.
- Second semester will begin after break.
- The next Board meeting is on Tuesday, January 21st.
- He wished everyone a wonderful Winter Break and hoped that students have successful end of semester experiences as well.

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

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Jean Hahn, President