

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

March 15, 2021

District Plans Rotating Block Schedule for 2021-2022

New Trier is making plans to move to a rotating Blue/Green block schedule for the 2021-2022 school year in which students would attend individual classes for longer periods every other day.

After weighing input from parents, students, and faculty, the District found that the rotating schedule achieved many of the goals set out by a schoolwide committee. Those goals included allowing for more depth of discussion and longer hands-on activities in classes, maintaining a similar amount of instructional time, maintaining student course selection choices, reducing student stress over the schedule, and ensuring easy adaptation to any circumstances that might require hybrid or remote learning next year.

Under the proposed schedule, classes would meet in 85-minute blocks each day. Some student services as well as science labs would meet for half-blocks, giving flexibility for students to have the same sort of regular contacts and science instruction as they had under the 9-period daily schedule. Regular school days would run from 8 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. on the Northfield Campus and from 8:20 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the Winnetka Campus. Early Bird classes on the Winnetka Campus would not meet on Mondays and would instead meet Tuesdays through Fridays, with science classes starting at 7:05 a.m. and non-science classes starting at 7:25 a.m.

Northfield Campus Principal Paul Waechtler noted that engagement during an 85-minute block will look much different in an in-person environment than it does in a hybrid or remote learning environment. Faculty will have the ability to move students through different types of instruction during a single period, such as large group discussions and small group activities. There will also be more time to check for understanding with individual students and classes.

The rotating Blue/Green block embeds lunch in a class period instead of making lunch its own period, meaning students can still take the same number of courses as they did in a nine-period schedule except for the approximately 1% of students who have no lunch period. The school works with these students and families each year to provide individual solutions.

The District is continuing to refine the schedule around issues such as the length of passing periods and the number of paired Friday early dismissal/Monday late start days

used for staff professional development. The proposed schedule no longer includes weekly late starts.

Given the significant schedule changes over the last two years, the District will use the 2021-2022 school year to evaluate use of the block schedule moving forward, Waechtler said. The full board presentation, including sample schedules, can be found [here](#).

Update on School Reopening: Vaccinations, Grey Days, 4th Quarter Planning

Superintendent Paul Sally took a moment at the beginning of the District's monthly reopening update to reflect on the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sally thanked the entire New Trier community, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, students, and the Board for working so hard to make the best possible experience for students during one of the most difficult periods the school has faced. While individuals and groups have not always agreed on the best solutions for moving forward in unprecedented circumstances, New Trier should be proud of all it has done and continues to do to support students, Sally said.

He also noted the positive signs reflected in the reopening update, including vaccinations for staff members and the effort to get more students on campus during 4th quarter.

Vaccinations

More than 80% of New Trier staff members reported they have been vaccinated against COVID-19, and the District has been able to offer vaccines to all staff members who indicated they wanted to be vaccinated, Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson told the Board.

New Trier has now hosted one retail vaccination clinic and three first responder/educator clinics in cooperation with local first responders. While these clinics have been limited to designated groups, the District remains open to expanding the clinic to community members if additional vaccines become available from the county.

Grey Days

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, provided the Board with the results of the District's Grey Day survey of parents, students, and faculty.

The response rate was high among all three groups. Responses identified both the value of Grey Days for student support, mental health, and time management as well as

places for improvement, such as in the low number of students accessing social-emotional and academic support outside of their classroom teachers.

Overall, all three groups preferred keeping Grey Days for the remainder of the school year. Grey Days will not continue beyond this school year. Tragos said the school will continue to work with department leaders to encourage more students to access the supports available on Grey Days.

4th Quarter Planning

New Trier continues to see the number of students on each campus increase, with as high as 45% in-person attendance on the Northfield Campus and 37% at the Winnetka Campus during the week of March 9.

All parents have been asked to submit their students' 4th quarter learning preference via [PowerSchool](#) by Wednesday, March 17 as the school assesses options for allowing more students to attend in-person.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) issued new guidelines on March 9 that allow for reduced social distancing in classrooms to allow for more capacity. The guidelines still require 6 feet of distance in areas where students may remove their masks, such as during lunch.

New Trier is considering options that would allow more students to attend each day by reducing the distancing in some classrooms to less than 6 feet. Mitigation measures such as mask wearing, Ruvna screening, saliva screening, and enhanced cleaning would still be in place. However, student quarantines may increase because the IDPH definition of "close contact" for COVID-19 still uses within 6 feet of distance for at least 15 minutes as its standard.

After the District has a chance to analyze parent requests, New Trier will share assigned 4th quarter in-person days with families during the week of March 22nd.

A link to the full reopening presentation can be found [here](#).

The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nths.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>

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