

# BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203*

*Board of Education Regular Meeting*

*February 22, 2022*

## 2022-2023 Block Schedule Features Anchor Day, Personal Learning Time

New Trier will operate on an eight period block schedule in 2022-2023 that features an “Anchor Day” on Wednesdays with all eight class periods and personalized learning time for students to meet with teachers, make up tests, or access student services such as the Academic Assistance Center.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos presented the new block schedule, which incorporates feedback from students, staff, and families through surveys and focus groups. A schoolwide committee has been studying the schedule all year, and school leaders spent the last month taking all input into account to build the best schedule for 2022-2023.

The Anchor Day on Wednesday has the advantage of increasing student contact with teachers to three days every week. It also fixes Blue and Green days for most weeks during the year. Student services staff noted that the increased consistency and the extra contact with teachers will be particularly helpful for students who may be making up work after an absence or who need additional help in a class, assuring they can stay on track.

Periods will be 35 minutes on Anchor Days, and students will generally have one and often two unscheduled periods for personalized learning time on these days. Fourth period will be the lunch period on Anchor Days and will be split for each student into three 35-minute parts: one for their fourth period class, one for lunch, and one for personalized learning time. In addition, on most anchor days, one department will have a full day of professional development, and students will have personalized learning time in place of class in that subject area that day.

On Blue and Green days, students will meet for four 85-minute periods, as they do in the current schedule. While survey feedback favored a shorter block, the schedule committee found that shortening the block would reduce weekly instructional minutes by 12.5%. Tragos said that discussions with students and teachers have focused on more effective use of the longer block, including different learning activities within the period. Teachers already have been reflecting on and improving their practices in this first year of an 85-minute block, and New Trier will continue to focus on professional development on effective use of the block, Tragos said.

Click for the [Block Schedule presentation](#), including sample schedules.

## Improving COVID Numbers Allow Adjustments to Mitigation Strategy

New Trier’s campuses moved to a mask-optional environment following a Board vote to modify the District’s operational and instructional plan for this school year.

Superintendent Paul Sally recommended the change, noting that while COVID is not over, many factors make the time right for a safe move from more collective actions such as universal masking to individual actions such as mask choice, booster shots, and testing. The Board resolution allows the District to return to collective actions should conditions change.

New Trier has a very high vaccination rate, accounting for more than 92% of students and 96% of staff. The community's vaccination rate is also far higher than the state average. In addition, Sally said, COVID cases at New Trier are low, and community metrics such as hospitalization rates and new cases have dropped significantly since the peak of the Omicron wave. Students discussed the transition in their adviser rooms, with an emphasis on respecting each other's individual choices.

Sally said the school would continue to offer voluntary Shield testing to all students and staff, and N95 and KN95 masks are available to any student or staff member who wants them. Other COVID mitigation measures, such as enhanced air handling, remain in place. Students and staff still should stay home if ill, and anyone with COVID must remain home for 5 days. They may return if they have no symptoms but must wear a mask on days 6-10 to protect others.

Board members said the change is aligned with the District's ongoing monitoring of COVID conditions and recommendations from its COVID Re-entry and Community Wellness Team. Several members noted that while this is the right time to make masks optional, the District also needs the ability to respond in the future if health or government officials issue new guidelines in light of changing conditions. Click for the [presentation on COVID mitigation](#).

## Update on East Side Academic and Athletic Project

Demolition work is nearly complete and excavation work is beginning on the East Side Academic and Athletic Project, with concrete work set to begin in March and steel work in April.

Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson updated the Board on the project, which will replace the Gates Gymnasium and Boiler Plant buildings with a new facility that includes 13 new classroom spaces, a new multipurpose competition gym and auxiliary gyms, a six-lane indoor track, a new climbing wall and high ropes course, and improved maintenance and energy efficiency. The new building is set to open at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

Johnson showed the Board some of the District's work documenting the history of the 1928 Gates Gymnasium before the demolition, including photos, yearbooks, student newspapers, and architectural drawings. He noted that current students were involved in recording this history for future generations, including through a broadcast journalism video and student artwork featuring notable fixtures and portions of the old gymnasium.

The project has included several change orders to date, as is typical for a project of this size, Johnson said. He told the Board that the overall project budget includes allocation for change orders and other unanticipated costs. Following his presentation, the Board approved a change order for additional asbestos abatement for the project. Click for the [East Side Project Presentation](#).

## Other News from the February 22 Meeting:

- The Board approved an allocation of \$255,115 from the New Trier High School Scholarship Trust Fund for scholarships for the class of 2022. Each year, dozens of need- and merit-based scholarships are available for graduating seniors, funded by the Scholarship Trust Fund and individual and organizational donors. Students receive applications and information in adviser room each year.
- The Board approved student fees totaling \$248 for the 2022-2023 school year, representing a 1.4% increase following two years of fee freezes. Student fees include a general fee, activity fee, and New Trier Parents' Association fee. The fees cover costs such as college testing, lab materials, ID cards, towel service, materials and supplies for extracurricular programs, free student entry into athletic contests, and special parent programming, publications, and events arranged by the NTPA. The fee for families who use school bus service was increased by 6%, an amount far lower than the 20% average increase for the transportation industry. The District pays about half of the cost for student bus service, with families paying the rest.

*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://nthsmediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>*

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