

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 22, 2024
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, January 22, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
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

Member Absent

Mr. Avik Das

Also Present

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jon Lepasca, Math Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services; Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield Campus; Mr. Scott Williams, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2024; Mr. Chris Mitchell, Associate Principal for Student Services; Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2027; Ms. Trish Sheridan, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2026; Ms. Sarah Struebing, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2025; Ms. Steph Moretta, MCL Department Faculty; Ms. Trisha Nameth-Rich, Special Education 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 – 5:00 p.m. – C234

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of January 22, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 5:00 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Alcantara and Mr. Das. 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; Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes; and the Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:00 p.m. – A201A

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

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of January 22, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 6:39 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Mr. Das.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023 (open and closed session). There was one request for changes by Ms. Hahn to the minutes, which was incorporated. Ms. Alcantara moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 11, 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, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

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:

- January 11th was Dance Day at Northfield, followed by the Northfield Dance Ensemble Showcase that evening. It included performances by the Kinesis Dance Company, Northfield Dance Ensemble, the Freshman Dance 2 class, Dance Labs 1 and 2, Menz Dance and the K Pop Dance Club. It is a wonderful opportunity for students to showcase their creativity and talent in front of their peers.
- The Northfield Student Art Exhibit is on display in the B Commons. Students in Drawing and Painting, Art Essentials, Art Exploration, and Photography selected a piece of their art to display.
- There is a lot of work taking place now for the Class of 2028 with Academic Life sessions occurring January 11th and 17th. Department Coordinators and Chairs are finishing making placement recommendations and that mailing will go out in early February. All About Electives will be on January 31st. Finally, individual conferences at each junior high will take place from February 7th – 21st.
- PPS was busy over Winter Break replacing flooring in several sections of campus and installing several water dispensers. Mr. Waechtler also shared that a couple years ago, Student Senate asked for dividers for the urinals. PPS worked with a contractor to make ones specifically for the school's restrooms and those were installed over break.
- He thanked advisers and teachers for working with current freshmen on course selection for next year.

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

- There was a snow day on January 12th which was followed by extreme cold. Mrs. Dubravec commented on how PPS was in incredibly early to make sure the buildings were ready for students. She commended Dr. Sally and others for their work in coming together to make sure it was safe for students to come to school.
- The Winnetka campus also has a Student Art Exhibit up until February 5th with a variety of mediums displayed.
- The New Trier News had three articles win the Best of Student News Organization awards. Only about 15% of those articles submitted won an award. Mr. William Karr, one of the winners, will participate in the junior's student voice presentation to the Board in the near future.
- This past Saturday was the first Central Suburban League (CSL) meet for girls wrestling in New Trier and Illinois history. New Trier took first in the conference. She displayed pictures of the team which included captains Nina and Jillian as well as the other wrestlers: Sunny, Julian, Zoe, Lola, Amelia, Madison, Liv, and Katelynn. Mrs. Dubravec met with the team earlier this evening to have pizza together and talk about making history. The next competition is regionals.
- The Dance Team placed third in their sectional and are off to the state competition.
- Today was the first day for boys and girls track. She displayed pictures of the track season starting in the new facility. There are around 220 girls and around 200 boys on the teams. Athletes were long jumping, running on the track, various drills being done on the field and some doing shot put. It is remarkable to see the facility in action.

- On February 2nd, there is Family Night for staff as well as the Athletics Hall of Honor. The boys' and girls' basketball teams will be playing Evanston. Past coaches and staff honorees include Doug Chase, John Cadwell, Gene Helfrich, Flo Malizola, Nancy Schroeder, Pete Burnside, Mary Jo Timmis, and Jim McFadzean.
- The MaxPreps Cup national fall rankings were recently released with New Trier being ranked first in the nation. New Trier won championships in boys golf, boys' soccer, girls' tennis, and runner-up in swimming. MaxPreps also does national rankings for each sport and boys' soccer ranked third, swimming fourth, boys golf 24th, and girls field hockey 25th. New Trier is the first school in Illinois to achieve this honor. Mrs. Dubravec congratulated Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director, the department, coaches and staff, as well as the athletes.
- New Trier will host a Gap Year fair on January 28th. Ms. Gretchen Stauder, Post-High School Counselor, runs the fair and there are already 220 parents registered for it.
- On February 3rd, New Trier will host its 41st Jazz Festival. There are workshops throughout the day for students. That evening, Grammy-award winning Generation Gap jazz band will perform. Mr. Nic Meyer, Music and Theatre Department faculty, organizes the festival along with parents from the Fine Arts Association.
- The ELS Club recently held their annual skating party.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared upcoming parent programming including New Trier Parents Association's (NTPA) Senior Class Parent Coffee on January 25th where post-high school counseling will present. On February 1st, the class of 2026 will preview what junior year will look like for those students. Then, on February 5th, freshmen will attend the Next Step for the Class of 2027 where they will tour the Winnetka campus as well as have a chance to see the spaces where electives are taught. This will help students as they begin to register for electives shortly after this.
- Mrs. Dubravec has been talking with NTPA and other parent groups about what culture the school wants and how it gets there. Last year, Ms. Trish Sheridan and Mr. Greg Sego, adviser chairs at the time, did a project with adviser rooms by selecting images to put on the letters of the phrase, "Belonging Through A Culture of Dignity at New Trier." This concept is now being used with adviser rooms where students can discuss what kind of culture they want at school and how it is created. Advisers also talked about the impact of one's actions on others as well as conflict resolution and repairing harm. Students were encouraged to seek an adult out when needed along with when and why they should use the Trev Tips line. Various scenarios were discussed with students. Mrs. Dubravec anticipates that this will occur yearly. She thanked the assistant principals and adviser chairs for putting this together. Ms. Hahn noted that this work was brought up at an NTPA meeting so as to bring it out to the wider community, to which Mrs. Dubravec replied that it is part of the work that the school does with parents too. She noted that working on conflict can be useful to not only adults, but students too as it is difficult for them to have face-to-face conversations. Mrs. Dubravec shared with each NTPA class year, and the New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA), the idea of when someone needs to sit down with another in order to resolve the conflict.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there has been one request since the last Board meeting regarding grants, which is 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 no request for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Graduating Class Team Update

Mrs. Dubravec began the presentation updating the Board on the Graduating Class Teams (GCT). After giving a brief background, Mrs. Dubravec noted that during the process of planning and implementation, there are routine touchpoints the teams have that they wanted to share progress on with the Board. The focus of this presentation was the implementation of the teams and their impact on the overall student and family experience as well as the school's response when students are in need of increased support. Presenters also highlighted the impact these teams have had on creating a culture of belonging and connection through the use of restorative practices during this school year. Mrs. Dubravec then shared an anecdote about a student which exemplified the significance of every individual student and their unique stories that need to be uncovered. Mrs. Dubravec noted that the GCT piece of bringing people together to support students has been very beneficial and she shared her pride in the work that the team has done.

Mr. Chris Mitchell, Associate Principal for Student Services, shared that the presentation would focus on the impact that the GCTs have had on two of the school's systems. The first is the work they do that benefits all students also known as Tier 1 supports. Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2027, will present on this topic,

while Ms. Sarah Struebing, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2025, will present on the school's targeted systems also known as Tier 2 and Tier 3. These systems support students who need additional targeted support and interventions.

Mr. Paustian provided background on the adviser system, noting it is a core system at New Trier. Advisers have daily touchpoints with every student, which helps students build positive relationships with a staff member and fellow advisees. Adviser rooms make a big school feel accessible and supportive while building a sense of belonging and community. Advisers get to know students and their families and serve as a central hub for communication from teachers, coaches, sponsors, and families. With the implementation of the GCTs, these components remain true and there is the enhanced ability to provide programming, opportunities for reflection and development, and to respond to the increased complexity of student needs. Each year group focuses on a different theme, freshmen concentrate on identity, sophomores on community, juniors focus on impact, and seniors focus on ownership. Adviser chairs at each grade level have councils that regularly seek out student input to help share their perspective on the student experience, year-group programming, and how the school can be responsive in meeting their needs. The GCTs are excited by the enhanced continuity throughout a student's high school experience and the relationships that they will have with students, families, and advisers over a longer, sustained time.

Next, Mr. Paustian shared that Tier 1 data review meetings look at data targeting attendance, grades, behavior, and social emotional needs for all students. Through this holistic review of data and discussions, they provide an opportunity for the GCTs to identify students in a time sensitive manner, to partner, collaborate, and intervene if appropriate. These meetings also provide a chance for follow-up with a student's adviser or family to understand what numbers alone cannot tell. If a student meets pre-established thresholds, they might be moved to a problem-solving team to further identify and understand what is going on for a student.

Mr. Paustian shared attendance data on first semester. The percentage of students attending less than 90% of first semester in 2022 was 31.0%, however, the percentage of students for 2023 was 9.1%. He also shared that every graduating class saw significant improvement from the 22-23 school year to the current one. There continues to be significant work from a dedicated group of faculty, staff, and administration to research and understand the complexity of student attendance. This group developed an attendance policy to provide a tiered response to help students reach positive attendance patterns by universal messaging, targeted communication, and providing interventions and supports as needed. Mr. Paustian also recognized that this success represents a significant commitment from students, families, advisers, teachers, sponsors, coaches, staff, administration, and the Board. He thanked all those involved. Finally, Mr. Paustian shared attendance data on students attending 95% or more during first semester. That number from first semester of the 22-23 school year was 32.6%, which increased significantly to 57.3% during first semester of the current year. This improvement could be seen amongst all four graduating classes. These numbers represent a foundation for the compounding benefits of students being in school. After additional comments, Mr. Paustian noted that the group looks forward to future collaboration and refinement and is excited to provide updates throughout the course of this year and beyond.

Next, Ms. Struebing shared about the problem-solving teams. Students come to these teams when they are struggling with attendance, grades have declined, or their adviser has noticed a change socially or emotionally. Information comes compiled to the team in systematic manner. Ms. Struebing noted that her favorite part of these meetings is when the student's adviser speaks about them and shares their strengths. From that point, the team works to determine which interventions will help the student the most. Feedback is collected from each of the student's teachers, social worker, psychologist, an MTSS coach, and adviser. A component that is now being implemented is getting feedback directly from the student. Prior to the meeting, the student meets with their adviser to discuss what is currently working well for them and where they might need support. After the initial problem solving meeting for a student, they are reviewed on a ten-week basis. Some, at that point, are able to graduate from their interventions, while others may need more time and/or different interventions. Also, after the initial meeting, the adviser emails the parents with the interventions the team would like to try. Similar information is also sent to those who work with the student from the MTSS coach. The work of the problem-solving team is creative and works to support every student. The team works hard to gather data, communicate out findings, and follow up on students to make sure they are building the necessary skills.

Ms. Struebing then displayed data for interventions with specific entrance and exit criteria. Those interventions include the Guided Assistance Program (GAP), Guided Study, Strategic Reading, and Strategic Math. There is also a Tier 3 Social Work intervention whose data is not shared but is used very effectively to support students. The graphic displayed the number of students who are currently taking advantage of the specific intervention. There was also a

completed column, meaning 144 students have gone into an intervention, have built the necessary skills to graduate, and have exited out of those interventions successfully.

One area that assistant principals are tasked with overseeing is the 504 plan process. Currently, about 15% of students are supported by a 504 plan. Students who meet eligibility requirements receive accommodations that ensure equal access to the regular education learning environment. The biggest change this year has been the emphasis on the student and family partnership. Students complete a feedback form for this meeting and many different sources of data are reviewed. Students and parents are invited to attend their 504 eligibility meeting. Sometimes these conversations reveal that other supports are needed, or additional information is necessary.

Child Find is the process that the school uses to determine if students need a case study to determine eligibility for special education. Now that this process is overseen by the assistant principals, the data for these students is in a central place including the interventions that have been tried and the student's story which help make a very informed decision if they want to move forward with a case study. She thanked the Board for the resources that they are putting toward supporting students on an individual level.

Mr. Mitchell shared additional comments, noting the impact that the teams are having as they fill in the programming and process structure. He shared that those on the Graduating Class Teams could have waited a semester to settle in before figure things out. Instead, they have shown great leadership by digging in immediately and creating effective ways of supporting students in the new structure. He noted that it is truly remarkable work being done by the teams.

Mr. Mitchell then shared that there was a half day workshop among these teams when first semester ended. Although they have created good structures and routines, consistency is an area for continual improvement. Each team does this work a little differently, and other teams wanted to learn to see if there were pieces they could use for their own team. During the workshop, the teams reviewed and developed best practices and procedures. They also did peer observation where each team held a mock meeting, which included what data was used and what each person did during the meeting. There was time for feedback and questions. Though the vast majority of what each team does is consistent with the others, there were some things that could be improved on. The teams also took a look at the entrance and exit criteria and the success of the interventions.

Next, Mr. Mitchell spoke about Restorative Practices, noting that the work that has been done is different than discipline or restorative justice. The goal is to have students understand their place in this community and the smaller communities that make up New Trier. Students are valuable members of the community, and the small communities have an impact on how everyone experiences life at New Trier. Language has been changed in the Guidebook to have a more restorative piece. When students do make mistakes or have a behavior that needs to be corrected, the school tries to do this in a way that is not always punitive and that students learn from the situation. A large portion of this process is when there is disagreement, conflict or harm, having students understand the importance of repairing that rift as they are a part of being part of a strong community. *Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud* is also part of this structure and it has been aligned with a new awards program. Advisers nominated students for these three tenets and those students were recognized at a breakfast. Training also continues for those students in leadership positions in athletics, performing arts, and activities. Students are given tools and structure so they can lead the restorative process within their team. Second semester work will include this leadership training at Northfield for freshmen. Mr. Ted Kourentes and Ms. Cindy Fialka, adviser chairs, will be part of the Tier 1 restorative practices professional development for faculty. The adviser chairs and assistant principals had a retreat day where they created Accountability Projects that can be used when there are common behavior issues occurring and are more than just a consequence.

Finally, Mr. Mitchell displayed the goals that were completed this past fall by the teams and the ones they are focused on for second semester. One important goal is helping each team as they transition to the next year with their teams. The teams are doing a great job about being thoughtful about this and teams are already observing those events that they will host next year. Mr. Dronen invited questions and comments from Board members.

Ms. Pofcher shared that this has gone enormously well. She inquired if there was anything that had not worked out as well as the team thought it would. Mrs. Dubravec suggested that Mr. Mitchell share information about time. He went on to share that people want to be really good at what they do, but they need to be ok with the fact that things may take longer to get there. As they are learning these processes, it is taking more time for the teams. They are putting the time in, and it is a by-product that they knew might happen, but they are feeling it more than they thought they might. Next, Mrs. Dubravec suggested that he share about data collection. Mr. Mitchell shared that the teams are

using Unified Insights for certain items but are still mining data more than they hoped they would be. He noted that some reports in PowerSchool still work better for them, while some in Unified Insights work with the teams doing different things, so trying to align these is a challenge. He also noted the entrance and exit criteria piece of MTSS, with the hope to continue to use those, but they have to go through the process a couple of times to know if they are the right mark or not.

Ms. Hahn shared from the memo that the Board heard about implementation in July 2023 and just a little while before that they had heard the concept, so to see it come so far so quickly and robustly is really exciting. She shared how she loved hearing the student focus. She went on to say that New Trier prides itself on having the opportunities of a large institution with the feel of a small school and this is helping to make that happen for students.

Regarding the attendance improvements, Ms. Hahn inquired if the school is hearing from teachers that this is improving their workload as they were having a negative impact on teachers. Then, when the process is analyzed in June, she inquired if the Board would hear from students, parents, and teachers about how this is going and how it could be better. Mr. Mitchell replied that the Attendance Committee has started to meet again, and their next meeting will focus on what the feedback structure will be like. Anecdotally through advisers, more students are here more often and there is less make-up that teachers need to chase. The committee needs to look for ways to survey, without over-surveying. Mr. Mitchell also shared about the faculty's and staff's ability to embrace and trust this change, noting they are working immensely hard with students at the Tier 1 level in the classroom. Mr. Mitchell shared that their partnership in connection to the GCTs makes this successful. He shared a few additional thoughts.

Ms. Hahn noted that when Ms. Struebing was speaking about problem solving teams, they were coming up with creative solutions and interventions. Ms. Hahn asked whether the team is coming up with better and new solutions or more finely tailored ones. Ms. Struebing replied that is dependent on the student, but there is a menu of options that are reviewed. The teams have not started to build brand new intervention systems yet, though it is discussed. She noted that much of it is per kid, and what things can be creatively used within the building to help them.

Finally, Ms. Hahn noted that there were four categories of data at review meetings and inquired what might be an example of SEL data (social emotional learning). Mr. Mitchell replied that it is usually behavioral or attendance data such as the number of times they have visited social work or health services, and look for patterns, for instance, during certain class periods.

Ms. Tomlinson commented on how awesome this is and how she loves data. For her, the question is how she knows this is working and she likes to see the numbers. She inquired if the chart that Ms. Struebing shared about those students in progress with certain interventions and those who have completed them is something that will be seen every semester and trends will become evident. Ms. Tomlinson noted that in July, the teams spoke about absenteeism, anxiety, among other issues and now that this work is taking place, she inquired if she would see drops in these situations and if that information would be captured. Mr. Mitchell said that they will capture the information in a consistent manner. He noted that there is even more data for Ms. Struebing's chart as there were students who were already in interventions before the school year began so they were not included in the numbers. Going forward, the teams will be more thoughtful, and this data will be included. As students have different needs, Mr. Mitchell is unsure if there will be a trend of interventions going down. Discussion continued between Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Tomlinson.

Ms. McDonough thanked the team for their presentation, noting that this initiative is near and dear to her heart. She shared that the power of consistent connection is quickly being seen as well as putting structure behind the strengths-based approach, student voice, and increased communication. These were all things that New Trier was doing before but putting it all together is so powerful. She noted it is remarkable and did not anticipate seeing this much improvement this quickly and although there is more to do, she is grateful and excited for what is to come.

Ms. Alcantara thanked the teams for all they have done and implemented.

Mr. Dronen thanked them for their report and great progress.

Dr. Sally also thanked the team, noting it is amazing what they have done and how they work together. He also noted the commitment it takes to do this work from where the school was a year ago or even six months ago. Dr. Sally shared that it has benefitted not only students and families, but staff as well.

***B. Budget Assumptions and Parameters for 24-25**

Dr. Johnson began the presentation on the budget assumptions and parameters for 24-25. The purpose of the presentation was to review the District's recent financial performance and how it has supported its strategic plan and priorities as well as looking to the future with its typical five-year plan, also identifying factors that may impact the District beyond that time. Dr. Johnson shared how the District has aligned its resources to its priorities over the past five years. Examples include the Graduating Class Teams, the Special Education Transition Center, and the new faculty contract. There have also been significant facilities improvements at both campuses as well as off-site. These successes come with significant financial accomplishments including continued balanced budgets and operating funds. The District has also extended its no referendum commitment to the community to 21 years past the five-year initial commitment and maintains the highest possible bond rating. It has also weathered two significant property tax payment delays – one for five months and the other for six.

Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, spoke about the financial performance of the District for the past five years, fiscal years 2019 – 2023, noting it was a strong five-year period for the school with each year starting with a balanced budget that was adopted by the Board. Each year also ended with a surplus, which was in turn used the following year to help fund debt service payments and capital projects for facilities. Mr. Spiwak noted that this presentation would focus on operating funds, which are all funds except debt service and capital projects. These surpluses helped while tax distributions were delayed.

Next, Mr. Spiwak displayed the financial performance of the past five years and highlighted a few points. Revenue is driven by heavy tax collections as those account for about 90% of revenue. On the expenditures side, about 80% of that goes to salary and benefits. Both areas tend to increase about 3% on average each year. Surpluses ranged from \$6.8 million to \$11.5 million. As noted, this allows the District to fund debt service payments and make the transfers to capital projects. Even after making these transfers, in two of the five years, there was a bit of surplus left that was added to the fund balance. Finally, the percentage of expenditures that the fund balance covered, was robust at 75%, 80%, and even 86% one year. This percentage equals how much of the District's budget expenses could be covered with the fund balance on hand. Mr. Spiwak noted that there is a Board policy that requires the fund balance to be kept at a minimum of 50%.

Mr. Spiwak shared some prominent events that occurred over this five-year period. He spoke about the levy in the first couple years of this period which had minuscule CPIs of 0.8% and 0.9%. The levy is limited to the lower of CPI or 5%. More recently, the CPI has been above the 5% figure, so the District has been capped at that percentage. This cap is due to Cook County being a PTELL county. There were also unique finances during this period due to covid. The District collected three rounds of reimbursement from federally funded ESSER (Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief) grants as well as two FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) grants. Even though over this time, the District's expenditures have grown at a slightly faster pace than revenues, the District has still been able to add to the fund balances. However, with expenditures growing a little faster, the percentage of expenses covered by the fund balance has decreased. Overall, there was a cumulative addition of \$47 million to the fund balance, even after the transfers and projects, the District was still able to increase it by \$2 million.

Dr. Johnson then shared the five-year projections, which include fiscal years 2024-2029. Looking forward, five-year projections show operating fund performance continues to be strong in the near term assuming the District's revenue and expenditure expectations are met. The District shows good alignment in terms of revenue and expenditure expectations over the next five years. Significant capital facility needs remain such as the 1934 North building and the 1957 Tower building and a path is not apparent to address these with the District's existing revenue sources. Enrollment drives much of what the school does as it looks to align resources to support students. Recent enrollment decreases have helped the District to align those resources for some of the previous accomplishments. Going forward, the District expects a continued short-term decrease in enrollment. The community does not have the same opportunities for development that exist elsewhere. Dr. Johnson noted that census data shows that many community members remain even as their students graduate. Enrollment begins to rise at the end of the decade and preparation is needed now from staff and facilities to make sure they are ready to support this increase.

Mr. Spiwak provided a snapshot of financial projections for the next five years. Revenue is expected to continue its trend of increasing 3-3.5% with expenses keeping pace with this. Projecting out, the District has a balanced budget and surplus each year. Mr. Spiwak noted that there will be a shift in the District's philosophy going forward. After making the transfers for debt payments, the surplus will be a little lower at \$2-2.5 million. These transfers are necessary as the District committed to fund the projects and debt service payments out of operations. By making those transfers, the fund balances that were in the 75-80% range of expenditures, now are falling below 60%. These

percentages are dropping to around 60% without any transfers to capital projects. In the previous five years, the District was transferring anywhere from \$7.5 million to almost \$14 million to help fund facility projects out of operations and fund balances. If any transfers like this going forward were to happen, it could drop the fund balance below the 50% threshold. The only committed transfers the District is making going forward are for the debt services payments as it is no longer projecting to have enough fund balance to send it to capital projects.

Mr. Spiwak went on to share revenue assumptions. The CPI for the next tax levy is 3.4%, therefore tax revenue will not grow as quickly as it has in the past couple of years. For projections, the District is using 2.5%, which is the ten-year average. The District has alternated using the five or ten-year average and felt that using the five-year average was artificially inflating what CPI is likely to be headed. The District was also conservative in its estimation of new property at \$30 million. Regarding interest, the District anticipates significant decreases as the fund balance is reduced and interest rates decline. There is also limited opportunity to lock-in long term rates due to the unpredictability of property tax disbursements. The Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) is based on how well Illinois' businesses are doing. Mr. Spiwak noted that there were a couple years that were quite a windfall for the District, but CPPRT is already going back down, so the District is using around \$2.5 million in its projections.

On the expenditures side, the assumption is made that salaries and programming will primarily remain the same. For any programming changes, the District would need to re-allocate the funds. Mr. Spiwak noted that the TRS pension costs continue to be borne by the state. For the past couple of years, there have been fairly high increases for health benefits, which has been a trend nationwide. The District is using 10% for its FY 25 projection. Starting in FY 26, that figure is capped at 7% for the District. Any overage will then be covered by employee contributions. Other expenditures such as supplies and purchase services are projected to increase 3% each year.

Dr. Johnson shared information about faculty retirements, noting that Mr. Spiwak said that salaries and benefits are 80% of the budget with faculty being the largest percentage of that figure. The District is in a period of significant turnover amongst its faculty largely due to demographic trends and a pension incentive that was in place in the early 1990s. A large number of teachers were hired at this time and now those teachers are due for retirement. Through the work of Dr. Zoladz, Director of Human Resources, her team and other leaders, the District is able to recruit and retain excellent teachers and is working to hire with a broader mix of experience. There will be budgetary pressure later in the decade as the number of faculty members increase due to enrollment increases and as faculty members who are hired now gain experience and additional financial recognition that comes with that experience.

Looking ahead in operating funds as the District plans for the future, it is important to keep these principles in mind so it can continue to meet the needs of students while maintaining its overall financial health. The District will work carefully to align the needs and its resources as it explores changes in programs. It will also be important to maintain strong programs as enrollment drops and key faculty members retire. Larger economic factors will also impact the District and those will be monitored with the Finance Committee. The District will also continue to monitor the cost of supplies, materials, and services like healthcare. As the District enters the later part of the decade, additional financial resources beyond the typical tax levy increase may be needed to balance the operating fund budget. Dr. Johnson noted the 21-year no referendum commitment, and while the next five years look healthy, looking toward the end of the decade, this will have to be monitored more closely to make sure the District is understanding the data.

Next, Dr. Johnson spoke about facility accomplishments and future needs. There have been significant accomplishments in recent years, which have allowed students to spend a greater portion of their day in modernized classrooms that support current instructional methods. There is a community-based space for the Transition Program. There are also new extracurricular spaces such as the indoor track and gym. Security has been improved with a significant investment as the District works to implement best practices. There was significant progress in facilities through the 15-year planning process where the District worked to prioritize its limited resources in order to meet its needs. Projects are added and prioritized each year. Dr. Johnson noted that \$122 million was expended over the last five years and was done within the existing tax base and taxes were not raised beyond a typical CPI increase. He went on to provide a summary of recent debt, noting that one of the tools used to finance this work were bonds. The bonds average a 2% rate and referendum debt has also been refinanced resulting in direct savings to taxpayers. Although significant work has been accomplished, much remains to be done. One area is the Winnetka campus where 45% of the campus is still in need of renovation. The center of the campus was constructed in 1934 and 1957 and only a small portion has been renovated. There is significant remaining instructional, energy, building systems, and security work needed. This work would also include the Gaffney Auditorium and Bickert gym. The District has a plan to renovate these areas, with one section done each year for ten years, however, it has only identified a funding

source for a small portion of this work. The spaces are well past their useful life expectancy. The District has identified what it would like to do in the first two phases – the first floor of the North building and the second floor of the Tower building. This would address instructional needs, administrative support, and security needs. Dr. Johnson provided pictures of the current classrooms. There have been significant facility accomplishments, but there are a limited number of funding sources to complete all the work that remains, and additional revenue may be needed beyond what is available in a typical tax levy as the District reaches the end of the decade. Dr. Johnson thanked the Board and community for their support from the resources the community has provided to the guidance that the Board has given. Looking ahead, he noted that the District is financially strong, but it will need to look at potential revenue opportunities as it gets to the end of the decade to address facility and operating fund needs. He also thanked Mr. Spiwak, the Business Office staff, and the administrative team for all of their work. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn thanked them for their presentation, noting her appreciation for the look back at the last five years as well as where the District aspires to go in the next five. She noted it is important for the community to hear that the District has done a fantastic job through prudent financial management, judicious investment in its facilities, and rigorous strategic planning to make sure its resources align with its priorities. Ms. Hahn went on to say that in order to continue this work, the District does need to think about creating future revenue streams. She went on to share her two biggest takeaways, the first is facilities work that has been done is part of a 15-year plan that is very strategic. That work is rigorously thought out, planned, vetted, and necessary. These updates are necessary for teaching and learning in the 21st century, for keeping people safe, and avoiding unnecessary cost and waste of maintaining these facilities. Second, Ms. Hahn shared that if the District wants to keep this going, noting that about less than half of Winnetka still requires work as well as what the Northfield campus also needs, the work needs to be done and a frank conversation with the community in the future is necessary about what it wants to achieve for future generations.

Ms. Hahn then spoke to the fund balance policy, noting that staying at the 50% level keeps the District out of financial uncertainty, it also allows it to issue attractive debt at the lowest rate possible, which Mr. Spiwak confirmed. Ms. Hahn shared that the District could not accomplish what it did if it had had lower fund balances as it would not have gotten the rates it received or accessed as much money from operating funds. Referencing the Cook County tax receipt delays and noting that this is year two which is keeping the District from long-term investments and earning interest it would like to, she shared that there would be only one more year of this, but inquired if it might go on longer than that. Dr. Johnson replied that it is hard to tell, noting that Cook County assesses every property in the county and is doing a great job in terms of modernizing their systems. Dr. Johnson's understanding is that they need to get through all triennial assessments on the new system and then the timeline should return to normal. The District, however, will not have confidence until it sees one to two years of normal distribution before money is put into longer-term investments. Dr. Johnson shared additional details around this. Ms. Hahn thanked them for a frank discussion and noted all that has been accomplished is worthy of celebration.

Mr. Dronen stated as it stands right now with the interest earnings that the District is not losing anything because the short-term interest rate is higher than the two- or three-year rate. Dr. Johnson replied that the District is getting 5.5% interest on its cash right now and is exceeding its interest rate projections for the year. Mr. Dronen shared that the issue is that the District does not have the opportunity to lock in on year two or three on the ladder right now due to the delays in property tax receipts. Mr. Dronen then inquired what fund balance the District would have to maintain in order to not worry about these delays. Mr. Spiwak replied it would have to be over 70% in order to move ahead. He went on to share additional details, with Dr. Johnson adding that there is \$22 million in the Fifth Third Bank portfolio, which is the District's one-to-three-year ladder and even through this, that money has not been touched. He went on to say that as some of those investments mature, they could be locked in and he would have a further conversation with Mr. Spiwak about it. Ms. Hahn added that the short-term rates will also start to come down. Mr. Spiwak noted that the District was fortunate that at a time when it needed to stay short-term, the rates were so good, but it is not sustainable to bank on this.

Mr. Dronen then noted that 45% of the Winnetka campus still needs significant work done over the next 10-15 years, if not sooner, and it is important that the public recognizes that. Dr. Johnson replied that the pool at the Winnetka campus is a very important need. New Trier was the first high school in the country to have a pool in 1912, which was rebuilt in 1934, but now is 90 years old and no longer meets the school's needs. He noted that there is a group engaged in fundraising and the District is looking at options, but the pool is a big piece. Mr. Dronen stated that if the District needed the additional revenue, it would be capital instead of operating, which Dr. Johnson agreed with.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the budget calendar as presented and authorizes the administration to begin the budgeting process. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das

The motion passed.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for December 2023

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for December 2023. Balances for all accounts totaled \$97,838,943. There have been significant tax payments, and the District is catching up to the prior year. The second installment bills are due March 1st and were delayed a month so as to give taxpayers a break between the two installments. Revenue from those payments is expected later in March. The weighted portfolio yield is at 5.21%. The District has also begun to place some less than one-year investments. Overall interest earnings continue to be strong at \$2.4 million in earnings for the first six months of the year in operating funds.

B. Financial Report for December 2023

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for December 2023. Operating revenue was \$65 million for the first six months of the year, or 67% higher compared to last year due to the timing of tax payments. The other local sources category is higher due to the investment earnings. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 6.51% higher for this year with Dr. Johnson reporting the District is on track halfway through the year.

Operating expenditures were \$35 million through December, or 6.44% lower than last year. Exclusive of transfers, the expenses are four percent higher than last year. The December CPI was 3.4%, and the District will watch for the effect of decreasing inflation on expenses in the second half of the year. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 5.61% higher than last year. The District is trending slightly lower on this side, which is good, this will also be monitored as the year continues.

C. Policy Revision First Reading - PRESS 113

Dr. Sally presented the first reading of policy revisions for PRESS 113. The Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) PRESS service updates New Trier's policies and then the policy committee reviews them, making changes that are appropriate for the District. Dr. Sally highlighted two policies that were discussed by the committee which he then consulted an attorney about. The first is policy 2:200 which has added a new reason to go into closed session. The language that is used is the language that is in the law. Dr. Sally went on to say that the policy talks about making a decision in closed session, which the District does not do. He anticipates the language needing to change, but for the policy, having it match the law is most appropriate. The second policy was 7:270. Dr. Panopoulos shared that school districts have an option with undesignated medications to maintain a supply of oxygen. She noted that the District selected to go that route in terms of "may maintain" a supply of oxygen. At this point in time, there is not a direct need for it, however, if that changes in the future, the District will have the opportunity to do so. The District would then go through the process of storing it, ensuring it is in line with fire department requirements.

Ms. Hahn, as one of the Board liaisons to the committee, shared that policy 2:220 – Board of Education Meeting Procedures, when approved, will have an option for another reason to attend a meeting by audio or video means. One of those reasons, in addition to family emergency, employment, or illness, is unexpected childcare obligation. This allows for more flexibility for Board members should they need to attend remotely.

Mr. Dronen noted that it will be a voting item at next month's meeting, which Dr. Sally confirmed will be part of the consent agenda. Mr. Dronen thanked the policy committee for their work.

*D. 15 Year Plan Summer 2024 Bid Approval

Dr. Johnson presented the 15 Year Plan Summer 2024 Bid Approval, noting that the District will undertake a small amount of work (compared to previous summers) primarily at the Northfield Campus. All parking lots between Happ and Frontage Roads will be replaced. EV chargers, additional lights and security cameras will be installed as well as

new landscaping. Cement work will continue on the interior of the campus. There will be two small new offices completed for the Graduating Class Team structure in the campus administration area. The District received four bids and recommends that the Board approve a contract with Blinderman construction for \$4,528,326. For this project, a general contractor model will be used this time, rather than a construction manager model as it is a smaller project, with a limited number of trades, and is focused work at one campus. It is more efficient with the District's resources as well. The District was happy to have four bids in this bid environment. There were several subtrades that were bid by Blinderman. Dr. Johnson noted that the paving work alone had 12 separate bids. It represents a very competitive price as there were four bids from general contractors and within those bids, each had bids for various trades. Blinderman has done significant work before on campus. The two brothers who own the company attended New Trier in the 1970s. The District has been happy with the quality of work that Blinderman has done in the past, which they won through a competitive bidding process. Dr. Johnson invited questions or comments from the Board.

Ms. McDonough moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves a contract to Blinderman Construction Company in the amount of \$4,528,326.00 for the work included in the Contract Documents for the Northfield Campus 2024 Renovations Project. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, December 1 - 31, 2023
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Retirement, Resignations, Termination, Stipends - Appointment, and Stipends - Separation)
- FY 23 Audit Report
- Safeway Transportation Renewal - Special Education (2024-25)
- Towel Service Bid
- Closed Session Records Review

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Alcantara moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, December 1 - 31, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointments, Retirement, Resignations, Stipends - Appointment, and Stipends - Separation); FY 23 Audit Report; The extension of the Safeway transportation agreements for the 2024-25 school year and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreements; The extension of the contract with Aramark through August 31, 2025, and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; and The destruction of the Closed Session Meeting tapes of January 2022 through June 2022. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. Pofcher noted that the **Facilities Steering Committee** met. In addition to discussing the construction that the Board just approved with Blinderman, they also reviewed five different alternatives for an aquatic center with a better understanding of different scales of costing and benefits from investing in various types of layouts and design, both in the service of the school and community. This will start to inform whether or not there could be private fundraising through the aquatics community, and through that process, there would be a better understanding of whether this could make a material dent in cost and what the implications would be as well as what would need to be considered in the context of capital fundraising or any other use of resources.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF) Board** met on December 14th. They recently concluded their first round of grant proposals. There were seven applications for approximately \$43,000. The Foundation awarded three grants for approximately \$11,000. One was for the Binary Heart Next Generation Project, another, the Broadcast Journalism News Desk, and the Scrounge microwave. This grant was requested by Student Council and may be the first time that students have made a request. The Foundation shared that the students were professional and did a fantastic job working with the grant committee. NTEF is also funding a guest speaker, Mr. Ben Wildavsky. He is coming to speak to the Future Programming Committee, who have started their work discussing career pathways. She noted that the Foundation is a wonderful partner in the work of the school.

Ms. Alcantara was unable to attend the **New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA)**, but Mr. Das attended in her absence. The exec board members were encouraged to hear the presentations made by the seniors who shared their impressions of their school experiences since they began as freshmen. He also offered this as an interesting area of comparison as to what the journey looks like prior to implementation of the GCTs and how that may also correlate to how the NTPA subcommittee for the class of 2027 or later, may envision what their eventual senior students may share. Mr. Das also shared about Mr. Tragos' *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate* presentation, the commitment to future programming, and establishing college and career pathway endorsements in compliance with recent legislative mandates. The exec board recognized all the efforts by administration and faculty but did suggest that some emphasis and attention be given, starting in freshman year, to healthy and proper use of social media and cell phone use on campus, both in and out of the classroom.

Ms. Tomlinson shared that the **Environmental Committee** met on January 9th. Mr. Dave Conway, Director of Physical Plant Services, accepted an award from the Village of Winnetka's Environmental and Forestry Commission in recognition of New Trier's commitment to sustainability with the East Side Project. The Winnetka campus solar project had a kick-off meeting the same day with architects. The solar panels are projected to cover 13% of the campus' annual energy use when it comes to fruition. For comparison, the Northfield solar project is scheduled to start up this spring and will cover about 40% of the campus' daily use. She thanked Dr. Johnson for replying to her about permeable pavers versus asphalt regarding the parking lot project. There were cost premiums and higher maintenance costs associated with pavers versus what is currently planned. During this project, conduits will be installed for future charging stations with the ability to add more than the four dual-charging stations that are currently planned.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **Safety Committee** met on December 12th. They reviewed the emergency procedures and protocol identifying areas of strength and for improvement. She noted it has been informative hearing the various perspectives from staff, students, and parents. The next meeting is scheduled for February 5th.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** met, and Jazz Fest will take place on February 3rd. She also highlighted the efforts of the association reaching out to younger students within the community, which is in line with the strategic plan. Kinesis is hosting a dance day on February 10th for kids ages 10-14. They will spend time in a dance class, eat lunch together, and attend a Kinesis performance.

Ms. McDonough attended the **Booster Club** meeting last week. They have exceeded their member goal with over 835 members. Intramurals are wrapping up in the next few weeks and they report it has been a huge success again this year. The Junior Board is spearheading a dodgeball tournament, open to the entire school, on February 25th.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- The Athletic Hall of Honor induction will be on February 2nd.
- Board members received information on Jazz Fest.
- The next Board meeting is on Tuesday, February 20th after a long weekend for families and students for Presidents' Day.

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

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Keith Dronen, President