

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Meeting

December 14, 2020

District Moves to Mandatory Saliva Screening for Hybrid Instruction

Starting after winter break, participation in [New Trier's COVID-19 Saliva Screening Program](#) will be mandatory for all students coming on campus for hybrid instruction.

Saliva screening is already mandatory for students participating in athletics or on-campus extracurricular activities. Board members agreed that the District should move to mandatory screening for hybrid students as another safety measure to allow for consistent in-person instruction. Students who do not wish to participate in the saliva screening program will be able to access their classes through the all-remote option.

Families received an [email with information about the change](#), a link to the [online sign-up form](#), which must be completed to participate, and other details about the program

Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board that while about 84 percent of hybrid students have been participating in the program, the District cannot have a complete picture of the risks of in-person instruction without full participation. The new mandatory program will begin January 3. In addition to monitoring participation and contacting parents about missing saliva samples, the District will add a question to its Ruvna health screening form about participation in the program.

Sally also clarified the role of the Reopening Advisory Board (RAB), which is a non-voting committee that includes administrators, faculty, staff, medical consultants, parents, and students. The RAB reviews data and provides feedback, but does not advocate for or recommend reopening decisions. Those decisions rest with the Board of Education and Superintendent.

Spots Still Available for Students to Attend In-Person Instruction Weekly

The Board affirmed its commitment to moving to the two-track (50%) hybrid model for second semester, which begins January 26. Parents still can [request weekly in-person instruction](#) for the rest of first semester for students who would benefit from coming to school every week, particularly before remote final exams January 19-21.

At their last meeting, Board members asked the District to establish a process to add students for weekly-in person instruction. So far, more than 275 students have taken advantage of that opportunity.

Parents who wish to request weekly instruction for the remainder of first semester should log on to the [PowerSchool Parent Portal](#) and follow these steps:

1. Select your student and click on "Forms" from the left side navigation bar.
2. Click on form "*Request for Additional Days of In Person Learning.*"
3. Complete and submit the form.

The full reopening presentation can be found [here](#).

Update on East Side Academic and Athletic Study

Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson, Athletic Director Augie Fontanetta, and representatives from architecture firm Wight & Company updated the Board on the East Side Academic and Athletic Study, presenting options to address aging and inadequate academic and athletic/Kinetic Wellness facilities on the Winnetka Campus.

More than a year ago as part of its 15-Year Facilities Planning process, the District began studying ways to improve or replace nearly 100-year-old student athletic facilities with modern spaces that support the needs of students and have significantly reduced maintenance costs. Parameters of the study include using existing resources and typical funding sources that would **not** require a referendum. Both the Facilities Steering Committee and the Finance Committee have reviewed the progress of the study over several meetings.

The goals of the study include:

- Addressing inadequately sized, inflexible, and antiquated spaces built in 1928 (Gates Gymnasium) when the school had $\frac{1}{4}$ of the current students enrolled.
- Strengthening New Trier's academic, athletic, and wellness programs to meet the needs of current and future students.
- Allowing New Trier students to have comparable experiences and facilities to peer schools.
- Continuing the successful approach, design, and functionality that occurred on the West Side of the Winnetka Campus.
- Investing taxpayer funds in improving the student experience rather than maintenance costs.

Wight & Company presented five options to the Facilities Steering Committee, ranging from minimal renovations to the Gates Gymnasium to the replacement of all buildings on the East Side of the campus. The committee has favored an option that would allow for the replacement of the Gates Gymnasium within the existing boundaries of Essex Road and Trevian Way, allowing for the creation of new academic classrooms, a new indoor track, and a multifunctional athletic space aligned to the school's athletic and Kinetic Wellness programs while maintaining the same amount of parking and a design aesthetic consistent with the rest of the campus.

The Board plans to hold a workshop meeting in January to hear more about this option, including its potential cost, funding options, and a potential timeline. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

Profile of the Class of 2020

A look at the course-taking patterns and post-high school plans of New Trier's Class of 2020 shows the many paths students can take after leaving New Trier and the ways the school prepares them well for their post-graduate choices.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented the Board with the academic profile for the Class of 2020. The report counters some misconceptions about New Trier's level system and shows how New Trier helps every student chart an individualized pathway after graduation.

The vast majority of students in the Class of 2020 – more than 88 percent – took academic courses at a combination of different levels during their time at New Trier. Tragos noted that this statistic speaks to the flexibility of the level system in meeting the needs of each student within each discipline.

New Trier recommends that students take 4 to 5 core academic courses each year. For the Class of 2020, 65% of students took 19 or more core academic courses, and 12.8% took more than 20 of these courses. In addition, 61.6% of students took between 2 and 4 elective courses, while 24.4% took between 4.5 and 8 electives, more than one a year.

The vast majority of the Class of 2020 planned to attend college immediately after graduation, enrolling in 217 different colleges and universities. The report includes the course levels and number of core academic courses taken for students at the 53 colleges and universities that enrolled at least five New Trier graduates, reflecting a diverse pathway to those institutions. The full Class of 2020 Profile Report can be found [here](#).

Other News from the December 14 Meeting:

- Tim Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, provided an update on progress toward the District's equity goals that were outlined in the 2020-2021 Annual Plan approved this fall. One goal was to create X Block seminars for the entire student body this year, which posed challenges because of the adjustments faculty and staff have already made for hybrid learning. Instead, the Equity Steering Committee has suggested focusing on grade level-specific lessons on the power of discriminatory and hateful language. Other areas of progress include exploration of more leadership opportunities for students in equity, continued examination of departmental equity goals, work on restorative practices for bias, harassment, and bullying incidents, and expanded staff professional development around equity. The full update can be found [here](#).

- Assistant Principals Scott Williams and Mike Lee presented the Summer School 2020 report. Summer School 2020 was unique because of the challenges and opportunities presented by the ongoing pandemic. With other options such as work and travel limited, students took advantage of the flexibility of New Trier's summer school academic, enrichment, and athletic courses to enroll in greater than usual numbers. Total enrollment, which reflects students who took more than one class, was 2,991 compared to 2,070 in 2019. The number of students enrolled in Summer School in 2020 was 1,948, or 49.1% of all students, compared to 1,647, or 39.6% of the student body in 2019. Williams and Lee said New Trier continues to look at remote and hybrid options for this year's Summer School, given the uncertainty of the summer landscape.

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/>

Information about Board of Education members, upcoming meetings, agendas, minutes, and other documents are available at <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation/>