

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 20, 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 Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Avik Das
Mr. Keith Dronen, President
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President
Ms. Courtney McDonough
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.
Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield Campus

Member Absent

Ms. Sally Pofcher

Also Present

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Ms. Molly Lombardi, Social Studies Department Faculty; 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; Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Dr. Aileen Heidkamp, Professional Learning Coordinator; Mr. Brian Lowery, Instructional Coach and Special Education Department Faculty; Mr. Alex Zilka, Instructional Coach and Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Meg Garton, Instructional Coach and English Department Faculty; Ms. Kerry Smith, Instructional Coach and Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Kathleen Tallmadge, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Dawn Sullivan, Applied Arts Department Faculty; Ms. Mercedes Lopez, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Ana Del Rey, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Catrina Matos, Math Department Faculty; 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 – 4:30 p.m. – C234

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of February 20, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 4:31 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. Mr. Dronen asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Mr. Das 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; student disciplinary cases; the placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students; and 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. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 4:30 p.m. – A201A

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

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of February 20, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 6:37 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Pofcher.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of January 22, 2024 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 22, 2024 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. McDonough moved, and Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 22, 2024 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSTAIN: Mr. Das

ABSENT: Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

B. Report from Campus Principals and FOIA Report

Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus in Mr. Paul Waechtler's, Principal for the Northfield Campus, absence:

- The Library department had their retreat in the Innovation Hub which focused on Human Centered Design and the future of the library. There was hands-on experience allowing for better understanding of Human Centered Design, especially the research component of how the library could support these projects. Ms. Gamrath thanked Mr. Jason Boumstein, Applied Arts Department Chair, and Mr. Andrew Russell, a New Trier grad and adjunct faculty at UIC, who facilitated much of the day.
- An NTPA Coffee took place on February 7th. Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal for the class of 2027 moderated while Ms. Danah Ouimette, Student Support Coordinator, spoke about study skills and executive functioning.
- All About the Electives recently took place over two evenings for the incoming class of 2028.
- Freshman registration counselor training recently took place with over 110 faculty members. They then volunteered their time to meet with incoming freshman families for 15-minute conferences at the sender schools.
- Girls Club made blankets for Project Linus which sends them to area hospitals.
- Adviser Olympics continues with this month's Knockout competition followed by next month's Trivia contest.
- Mr. Don Kim, Math Department Coordinator, is stepping down to return to the classroom for his final year before retirement. Ms. Gamrath thanked him for all he has done for students, staff, and the community. Ms. Laura Smith, Math Department Faculty, was named the new Math Department Coordinator. She started at New Trier in 2012 after teaching for eight years in California and Connecticut. She was department chair during her time in Connecticut. Ms. Smith is an alum whose children also attended New Trier.
- Student volunteers were able to participate in providing feedback to Quest Food Service by sampling various items.
- The New Trier Childcare Center had a week devoted to providing as many acts of kindness as possible. Children visited the Physical Plant Services department with a card of gratitude.

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

- The Class of 2027 was recently welcomed at the Winnetka campus. This occurred during registration and provided incoming sophomores with an opportunity to talk with staff and students about their elective options in those classes' spaces.
- The 41st Annual Jazz Fest recently took place, and she thanked Mr. Nic Meyer, Music & Theatre Department Faculty, and the New Trier Fine Arts Association for their work on the event. During the day, workshops took place for students.
- The Social Studies Department nominated student, Mr. Michael Dolan, who was one of five students in the region who received the D.A.R. Good Citizens Award at the Skokie Library hosted by the Skokie Valley Chapter. Mr. Dolan submitted an essay and was selected. He also received a monetary award.
- Mr. Jim Davis, Athletic Coordinator for Strength and Conditioning, is a painter and artist who currently has a display in the Brierly Gallery.
- Several groups helped to honor International Holocaust Remembrance Day by using #weremember. The day began at both campuses with a PA announcement about the importance and ongoing lessons of honoring Holocaust victims and survivors. Mrs. Dubravec showed one of the large bulletin board displays created by students. The day was also posted about on the school's Instagram and student activities accounts. She mentioned that there has been conversation about how the school honored this day, noting that Dr. Sally would share more during his Superintendent report.
- The Trevian Debate team were co-champions in the Spartan Debate hosted by Michigan State. She noted that some events, including this one, are still virtual.
- Mrs. Dubravec recognized the New Trier News and the journalists who won awards from SNO (Student News Organization). Students were selected out of thousands of submissions. Mrs. Dubravec noted appreciation for the type of articles and research that the students do. She thanked students for spending the time and their attention to detail to make sure they represent New Trier well.
- The Chess Club went to state and placed 16th.
- The Kinesis Dance Show took place last week. It was a collaboration between students in stage crew, lighting, and choreography.
- The Athletic Department honored the Athletic Hall of Fame for 2024. There were eight honorees who represented and embodied the athletic department's mission to provide an experience that fosters the emotional, physical, and intellectual foundation for growth and well-being. Mrs. Dubravec noted there were pioneers in the group such as those who started the lacrosse program across the United States or those who started girls' tennis across Illinois.
- Max Preps recently named New Trier the best in the nation for fall 2023. They look at various programs across the country and how the teams finish. There are honors in the fall, winter, and spring.
- National Girls and Women in Sports Day was celebrated on each campus with breakfast and t-shirts.
- Mr. Tagg Miller, student wrestler, is headed to state this weekend.
- The girls wrestling team won the first regional championship. About five wrestlers went on to wrestle at sectionals, with two of them advancing to state – Ms. Jillian Giller and Ms. Nina Aceves.
- The boys and girls fencing teams finished second and third respectively at the Great Lakes High School Fencing Conference Championship. Both teams finished the season with a record of 12 and 2.
- Ms. Teri Rodgers, Social Studies department faculty and girls' basketball coach, recently had her 600th win. Girls' basketball won their regional competition and are competing this evening in the sectional one. Boys' basketball start their regional games tomorrow.
- Girls' gymnastics went on to state, placing 7th with one individual placing as well.
- Boys' swimming and diving won their sectional and are on to state this weekend.

Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services, shared about Friday's Institute Day. She thanked and recognized those who put the day together – the professional development committee and the equity professional development committee. The focus of the day for faculty was the District's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Tier One strategies to support all learners. Students with learning differences and the special education department paired up and worked with the 12 different departments by providing a presentation on which strategies to use in the classroom. Staff then had an opportunity to plan with these strategies. In the afternoon, learning collaboratives took place.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there have been seven requests since the last Board meeting. Five are closed, including one for Special Education residential placements, one for grants, one for beverage contracts, and

two regarding Holocaust Remembrance Day. An additional two remain open pertaining to Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Dr. Sally shared the following comments during his Superintendent's Report:

I wanted to begin by giving the Board and our community an update on our culture, climate, and equity work at New Trier that is part of our Strategic Plan as well as some important conversations taking place in our community. The goal of this work is to ensure that every student feels like they belong and matter at New Trier. At this critical time, we know that we have more to learn and to do before every student feels they can thrive at our school.

Specifically, we have heard from Jewish families and staff members asking us to reflect on what we are doing to educate students and combat the antisemitism that has increased dramatically in the last few years and particularly amid the ongoing war. I want you to know that we are listening, and that we are taking measurable steps to honor our Jewish students, families, and staff in the fullness of their humanity and their Jewish identity as they define themselves.

We have put in place several groups and programs specific to Jewish identity over the past several years, both in student support and staff professional development. For example, last school year we began our Jewish student affinity groups on each campus. These groups offer a regular space where Jewish students can meet together and discuss common issues and concerns, facilitated by faculty who are also Jewish. These groups have been so important to supporting our students during this difficult time, and I thank our faculty sponsors for providing this opportunity.

We also celebrate Jewish identities during Jewish American Heritage Month, one of the monthly recognitions we have instituted to make different students' identities feel visible in our school. You also heard in the principal's report about the ways we honored International Holocaust Remembrance Day last month, an effort led by our German club and German classes over the past three years.

For our staff, we have brought in national experts to provide professional development in recent years around topics including antisemitism and teaching about the Holocaust, both at staff institute days and department retreats. Classes also have hosted speakers and taken field trips to the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

I want to acknowledge that many of these opportunities for students and staff are the result of conversations with and work by a number of Jewish staff members who have encouraged us to broaden our equity work in recent years to ensure that Jewish staff and students were more fully included. While the work we have done has been a support for our students and staff, we need to engage in educating about and combating antisemitism more comprehensively.

This year for Holocaust Remembrance Day, and what has led many of you to be here tonight, a group of students and staff wanted to do a new activity, distributing stickers in adviser rooms, in addition to the PA announcement, bulletin boards, and other activities Denise mentioned earlier. The Administration was first informed of their interest on Monday of the week of our Friday Remembrance Day events. After discussions amongst the administration and based on the short timeline to communicate and prepare advisers for this activity, I made the decision that we would not run the new activity at this time. I want to make it clear that no one else, not the equity liaisons, not campus leaders - made this decision. It was mine alone, and it was based on the short timeline to communicate to and prepare advisers.

In making that decision, here is what I understood and what I did not understand. What I understood was that our Jewish students and others have been navigating difficult terrain in social media, in our hallways, and in other parts of life, so proper planning was essential and there was not enough time to do so. With 160 different Advisers and their Adviser Rooms, it was not the important commemoration of the victims and honoring of the survivors of the Holocaust that was at issue, but current events that are adjacent in many of our students' minds. We know that teens will often tell us what is on their mind, and we would have wanted advisers to think about how to handle non-Holocaust Remembrance Day related discussions that could have arisen. My goal was to assure that we honored this important day for Jewish students -- and all students -- while not creating a situation where it could cause them harm.

What I did not understand was the level of enthusiasm that our Jewish students and staff had for the new sticker distribution activity. For them, it was a very positive way to be seen more fully at New Trier, and represented a way

they could put their imprint on a set of activities that take place each year. What they felt after the decision was conveyed to them was deep disappointment in New Trier. It's easy for me to get bogged down in institutional reasons and precedents when I make a decision of this sort, but without a full explanation from me, I understand now why they were so hurt. What I know from all this is that our efforts, my efforts, to help our Jewish students feel like they belong, to feel like they matter at New Trier, have fallen short and of course that matters deeply to them and to me. We have met with them to apologize for how we communicated this decision and to ensure that their voices are heard in the future.

While we have done work on educating and preventing antisemitism, no comprehensive thread is visible in our strategic plan. Moving forward, one of our annual strategic plan goals in our Culture, Climate, and Equity area for the coming year will center on educating our students and combating antisemitism. Along with conversations with our departments, staff members, students, and parents, we are meeting with representatives from the Jewish United Fund and local Jewish leaders as we look to build a better understanding of how we should think about our curriculum, staff training, and equity work.

I have focused tonight on our equity work involving our Jewish students, families, and staff because that community has come to us as a school at this moment to ask for our support and ask us to do better when so many of our students and community members are experiencing antisemitism. When a community is hurting is a time when our commitment to being a safe, welcoming school for everyone matters most.

We also know that we must continue with our work to make sure all of our students, families and staff feel welcome at New Trier and celebrated for their own faith, race, background, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability. All of our students must have the opportunity to thrive at our school.

I cannot think of a more urgent time than now to make sure that we are living up to our commitment to combat hate and create a culture of dignity and belonging at New Trier. Our teens are caught in a culture where the loudest and sometimes most extreme and divisive voices are amplified in hurtful ways. Our focus on civil discourse and critical thinking is key in helping our students navigate these difficult times. But more than that, we must commit to being a place where all students, faculty, staff, and families feel safe, welcome, seen, and supported.

Our equity work is an important part of living up to that commitment. My team along with the equity liaisons have made great progress over the last few years in working toward our strategic plan goals by helping students and staff see themselves in the hallways, in the curriculum, and in our programming. When students and staff see themselves in the school they feel more like they matter. Let me be clear: This work is hard work. We strive to emphasize belonging, multiple and balanced perspectives, critical thinking, and civil discourse. Have we always done this perfectly? No. We must continue to think about how the perspectives we share represent all identities in a way that leads to reflection and understanding through a culture of dignity. Now more than ever the biggest mistake we could make would be to not try to do our best to recognize the identity and humanity of all our students.

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. Mr. Dronen shared the following guidelines: Comments should be limited to three minutes per policy 2-230. If a comment requires a response, either Mr. Dronen or an administrator would reach out in the days following the meeting. Questions and comments should address the Board of Education as a whole only. No comments should be directed to an individual Board member, audience, principals, or other staff members. No complaints against individual employees are allowed during a Board of Education Meeting. He also asked that attendees refrain from clapping or a response of any kind regarding people's comments. Mr. Dronen shared that typically public comments are limited to 30 minutes, but he would extend the time if needed. There were 12 requests for public comment.

1. Ms. Amanda Nugent, parent of alum, shared her appreciation for the District's equity work.
2. Ms. Cindy Fey shared a statement on behalf of the League of Women Voters – Wilmette co-presidents Ms. Laurie Leibowitz and Ms. Kirsten Stadheim. They expressed their appreciation for the Board's commitment to equity and creating space for students that is welcoming, inclusive, and safe.
3. Ms. Dorothy Elfring shared her appreciation for the work that the District does in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

4. Ms. Lauren Ostroff, senior, proposed implementing mandatory service hours to graduate. She shared the benefits of volunteering as well as her plan for implementing this. Mr. Dronen shared that someone from the administration would follow up with Ms. Ostroff.
5. Mr. Beau McBride, student, shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day and his disappointment in the decision made about an activity for the day.
6. Ms. Tracy Wolfe, parent, shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day and her disappointment in the decision made about an activity for the day.
7. Ms. Nicki Perchik shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day and the difficulty that Jewish families are facing.
8. Ms. Joy Schwartz, parent, shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day and provided context as to how Jewish parents are feeling right now.
9. Mr. Billy Stromberg, student, shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day his disappointment in the decision made about an activity for the day.
10. Ms. Jen Marzouk, parent, shared comments about Holocaust Remembrance Day and shared her appreciation of the Board's willingness to engage with the community on this topic.
11. Mr. Jonathan Wolfe, parent, shared comments about diversity, equity, and inclusion.
12. Ms. Laurie Goldstein, parent of alums, shared her support and appreciation for the learning opportunities now provided to New Trier students about the history and culture of historically marginalized groups.

Mr. Dronen shared the following comments:

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank all of you in attendance for your comments regarding culture, climate, and equity work at New Trier. The Board hears you and takes your comments seriously. You heard from Dr. Sally earlier this evening regarding the steps the Administration has already taken and will take to address your concerns. You heard Dr. Sally talk about that moving forward one of our annual Strategic Plan goals in the Culture, Climate, and Equity area for the coming year will center on educating our students regarding combating antisemitism. The Board will continue to encourage the Administration to reach out to the community for your perspective. The Board will have oversight over this process and will continue its work to make sure that all students, families, and staff feel welcome at New Trier. Again, it is good to hear from the community and the Board really does listen and we're going to try and address all your concerns.

Ms. Hahn shared the following comments:

Thank you for coming here this evening to share your perspective. It takes courage and conviction to contribute your voice to the conversation, courage and conviction borne from the trust that your voice matters.

I'd like to take a moment to address the foundational role that trust plays in the work of New Trier – the work of preparing our children for the future. As each of us has experienced in our own lives, trust is an essential element to any productive, fulfilling relationship – whether personal or professional, individual, or institutional. And it is axiomatic that while trust is hard earned, it is easily squandered. But because of its centrality to the important work in which we are all engaged, it is precisely when our trust has been shaken that we need to embrace what feels like the painful, impossible, terrifying, frustrating challenge of reestablishing trust.

I'm not asking for nor am I offering the blind faith associated with divinity, but rather the arduous, dynamic, and continuous process familiar to any parent of a teenager we frequently refer to as "trust but verify."

*The type of trust that asks us to believe in the purity of the intentions of others, that empowers us to feel that we belong and our voice matters, that humbles us to consider that while we may disagree on how to get there and even what it will look like when we arrive, that nonetheless we all are working to provide an educational experience that equips our students with the skills and dispositions they will need to make sense of the world in all of its beautiful, awful complexities. As the adults in our children's lives, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, we need to find a way to trust each other. Because when they leave New Trier, our students will need to trust in their ability to seek and find for themselves **what** brings them joy, **who** to love, **how** to recognize and right injustice, **how** to bear witness to and alleviate human suffering.*

So I'm hoping we can all find a way to regain that trust in ourselves so that we can keep doing the really important work and I appreciate you all coming to speak with us and to listen to Dr. Sally, our administrators, and take the time.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Professional Learning

Mr. Tragos began the presentation on professional learning noting that it would focus on new programs and provide insight into what the professional lives of faculty are like. Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction introduced fellow presenters: Dr. Aileen Heidkamp, Professional Learning Coordinator and Instructional Coach; Mr. Brian Lowery, Instructional Coach and Special Education Department Faculty; and Mr. Alex Zilka, Instructional Coach and Social Studies Department Faculty. Two additional instructional coaches Ms. Meg Garton, English Department Faculty and Ms. Kerry Smith, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, were also in attendance. Together they provided an overview of the new Trevian Professional Learning Collaborative (TPLC). This demonstrates the District's commitment to continuous professional learning and educational excellence. Dr. Heidkamp provided an explanation of the TPLC and an overview of the new teacher induction program. Mr. Zilka shared about the new instructional coaching program. Mr. Lowery reviewed the learning collaboratives with Dr. Tillery concluding with the use of time.

Dr. Heidkamp explained where the TPLC name came from, noting the words were chosen carefully. Trevian was selected as it is uniquely who the school is, professional was chosen as faculty engage in continuous learning, learning is the focal point as the school wants teachers to learn new things that impact their practice, and finally collaborative as the school values professionalism and professional relationships and in partnership with other people an individual can do something they would not or could not do on their own.

Dr. Heidkamp shared that the school has been trying to align its professional learning with many things that it cares about such as *Characteristics of Professional Practice*, New Trier 2030, and *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*. There are four key areas of professional learning: new teacher induction, instructional coaching, learning collaboratives, as well as the professional learning catalog which offers a wide variety of topic-specific workshops.

New teacher induction is a four-year program that all teachers new to the school engage in. It is designed to support entry into the school's professional culture. Through programming, these teachers get to know veteran teachers and administrators. Each teacher also receives a mentor who stays with them for two years, first year teachers have the same mentor for years one and two and receive a different mentor for years three and four. Years one and two, induction focuses on the classroom and support services whereas years three and four are on strategic initiatives. Currently, there are 52 teachers in the induction program with an additional 52 mentors, so about a quarter of the faculty are part of the program.

Mr. Zilka shared about the instructional coaching program, noting that it is teachers working with teachers to develop their practice to help student learning. To prepare to become instructional coaches, the team, along with Mr. Tragos and Dr. Tillery, attended Jim Knight's Intensive Instructional Coaching Institute over the summer. Mr. Knight has over two decades of experience and leadership researching and developing instructional coaching programs. Mr. Zilka shared further details about the institute. The program started in August and has been successful. The coaches have worked with 49 teachers so far with teachers coming from ten departments and from all three campus locations. Part of the philosophy of professional learning is that all teachers are constantly working to grow, learn, and improve their practice. More than 20 veteran teachers have participated who have been at New Trier for 12 or more years. There have been 15 teachers that have been at New Trier for five years or fewer who have participated. Next, Mr. Zilka shared the type of work that is done with teachers such as creating classroom community, increasing student engagement, and developing higher level thinking skills, among others.

Mr. Lowery shared about learning collaboratives, a whole school initiative. They are researched based on best practices for professional learning with a focus of being an entry point for all faculty. Each learning collaborative pursues a specific line of inquiry over the course of a year. There is also focus on peer-to-peer collaboration regarding passions faculty may have or professional learning they have done. Mr. Lowery also shared additional comments on what learning collaboratives are designed to do. There are 17 different collaboratives such as responding to student feedback and using data to inform instruction. Mr. Lowery shared a graphic about how professional learning spreads throughout the school.

Dr. Tillery spoke about trying to create a professional learning schedule that benefits students, parents, and staff while working within the calendar structure. There are five late start paired days as teachers are less distracted and able to be more focused at the beginning of the day versus the end of the day. This is because teachers are prioritizing the needs of their students and if students see them at the end of the day, it could lead to teachers being distracted or missing their learning collaborative. Late starts also benefit students as they can get more sleep. It is

also better for after-school activities as students can begin them right after school instead of waiting three hours like they would do on an early release day. Attendance has improved by six percent overall with late starts compared to early release days. Professional learning also takes place on Institute Days, of which the District has already had two this year. Teachers also participate in lunch and learns, half or full day workshops, as well as professional learning either before or after school. Dr. Tillery invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Das thanked the group for their presentation, noting it is exciting to see the craft and how it is shaped. He shared he is very impressed, always, with the level of compassion, dedication, and pride in the craft of teaching at New Trier. He noted that breaking down the structure of the TPLC makes him feel empowered to be able to speak highly of what the experiences are for students and how to support the decisions of those who are considering sending their children to New Trier. Mr. Das then went on to ask how a person who would like to join the faculty at New Trier would know that this is something valuable for their career. Dr. Tillery replied that many research New Trier online. She also shared that they do receive questions in interviews about what is offered as well as what faculty are allowed to do and, in every interview, people are pleasantly surprised, and it makes them even more eager to want to work at New Trier. Mr. Das, referencing the four-year new teacher induction program, said it felt like teachers are here building a long-term relationship. He then inquired if people routinely get past the four years, which Dr. Tiller and Dr. Sally confirmed.

Ms. Hahn noted it was great work and report, noting it is fascinating to get a peek behind the curtain. She then inquired if professional development is an external state requirement or an internal New Trier requirement or an expectation that one hopes teachers take advantage of. Dr. Tillery replied that there are certain hours that need to be completed depending on one's license they are renewing. Teachers are required to complete 120 hours every five years and for administrators, it is 100 hours, plus completing an annual administrator academy. Dr. Tillery went on to say that at New Trier, when referencing *The Characteristics of Professional Practice*, the fourth domain within that is about professional growth and continuing to learn and grow. While it is not a hardline expectation, in a way it is, and it is something that teachers also expect of themselves. Ms. Hahn noted it is excellent modeling for students who the school hopes to instill lifelong learning. Ms. Hahn then inquired if it is seen as a benefit to have professional learning offered in-house. She also asked if there are opportunities for teachers to pursue external professional development. Dr. Tillery added that faculty members love to learn from one another and there is a lot of expertise in-house. For some topics, faculty do need to attend an outside conference, such as attending Jim Knight's institute. Mr. Tragos added that there is uniqueness in the merit pay scale system. As teachers work towards scale IV and V, this system is part of the motivation, and it is also a built-in expectation that teachers are continuously improving. He also shared that teachers not only attend conferences, but are presenting at local, regional, and national ones.

Ms. Tomlinson shared that everything that is done is intentional from when professional learning takes place to the make-up of the cohorts to the acronyms. She would also argue that as much as the District is investing in its bricks and mortar, the most important investment the community can make is in its teachers. She wants to ensure that the school has the best and the brightest and that they stay on until retirement and believes it is programs like this that will get the school there. Ms. Tomlinson shared her appreciation for the group's efforts.

Mr. Dronen noted that it was an excellent presentation.

Ms. Alcantara left the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

***B. Public Hearing: E-Learning**

Mr. Dronen called the public hearing on e-learning to order at 8:05 p.m. Mr. Tragos stated that the purpose of the hearing is to consider the District's e-learning plan. The proposed plan does not represent a change from the e-learning procedures and protocols currently in place but must be verified by the state board. The District is looking for approval for the latest e-learning plan to be affirmed. The school code allows districts to utilize e-learning days in lieu of emergency days if approved by the Board. Mr. Tragos explained that if the District calls a snow day, it will use one of its grading days as an instructional day and there will not be a need to change the calendar. For subsequent days, if a grading day no longer remains, the District will use an e-learning day to continue the continuity of learning in school and so the District does not need to make up a day. For example, the District used one snow day and used the semester grading day for that. If there were to be a second emergency day or snow day, the District does not have an extra grading day in this semester so an e-learning day would be used.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education moves to adjourn the public hearing on E-Learning. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed. The public hearing was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for January 2024

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for January 2024. The balance for all accounts is \$91,747,864. Interest income is just under \$3 million for the year, exceeding the budget by \$1 million. The weighted portfolio yield continues to increase at about 5.2% and tax revenue has allowed the District to invest in cash flow investments under one year. The District is still holding a significant amount of cash, but it is earning 5.3% in the Illinois School District Liquid Asset Fund. The District has also started to place some limited investments on its 3-year ladder, which was discussed with the Finance Committee. The District did not have to tap the money in that pool as it was awaiting tax receipts over the past two years, so it was safe to invest some of that in its 3-year ladder, which is being done on a limited basis. The District continues to be concerned about consistency of tax distributions in future years as the computer system upgrade continues at the Assessor's Office. It was pleased to see everything move up one month this year and will take a cautious approach until it gets to next year – the third year of the triennial cycle.

B. Financial Report for January 2024

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for January 2024. Operating revenue was \$66,671,000 for the first seven months of the fiscal year, or 7.20% higher compared to last year due to interest income and tax receipts arriving a little earlier. The District no longer has large variances due to property tax distributions. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 6.51% higher than last year. Operating expenditures were \$75,000,000 through January, or 10% higher than last year. Exclusive of transfers, expenses are 4.95% higher than last year. If typical expenditures occur over the rest of the fiscal year, the District is hopeful that it will stay very close to the approved budget. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 5.61% higher than the prior year or 65 basis points lower than last year at this time.

***C. New Trier Scholarship Trust Fund Allocation Approval**

Dr. Johnson presented the New Trier Scholarship Trust Fund Allocation which was up for approval. It was formed in 1947 to provide scholarships for students. There have been strong investment returns for the year at 19%. Each year the Board acts on a recommendation from Dr. Johnson and Mr. Spiwak, Director of Business Services, to set a maximum amount for scholarships. It uses a formula taking six percent of average assets for the past four years, which allows the District to have even distributions every year. This year the amount being recommended is \$269,626. Dr. Johnson thanked the community members who have supported this work. He also thanked Mr. Rick Drake, a retired volunteer investment advisor, who advises Dr. Johnson and Mr. Spiwak on the investments. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that the trust fund outperformed a comparable balanced index fund this year.

Mr. Dronen asked that Dr. Johnson thank Mr. Drake on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves a maximum allocation of \$269,626 for scholarships for the 2024 graduation class. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSTAIN: Mr. Dronen

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, January 1 - 31, 2024
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends – Appointments, Stipends – Separation, and Termination)

- Policy Revision Second Reading - PRESS 113
- Capital Expenditures Projects for FY25
- E-Learning Approval
- Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2024-2025
- Board action on Uniform Grievance Appeal

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Tomlinson moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, December 1 – 31, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends – Appointments, Stipends – Separation, and Termination); Policy Revision Second Reading - PRESS 113; Capital Expenditures Projects for FY25 over \$50,000 as presented; E-Learning Approval; Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2024-2025; Based upon and after the Board's consideration of the written appeal filed on January 25, 2024 pursuant to Board Policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, as well as the information submitted by the Administration related to its Uniform Grievance investigation and the additional information shared by the Complainants, that the Board of Education affirm the Superintendent's Uniform Grievance decision dated January 19, 2024. Dr. Johnson noted that the Bill List was for January 1 – 31, 2024, not December 1 – 31, 2023. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

IX. **Board Member Reports**

Ms. McDonough shared that the **Booster Club** meeting was taking place this evening and would get a full report.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** met. The Debate Team is doing well, the top varsity team is ranked fifth in the country. Jazz Fest was a huge success with great energy from parents, students, and the community. Signing Day will take place on May 30th.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **Safety Committee** meeting was rescheduled for later in the spring.

Ms. McDonough shared that the **Community Outreach Committee** will meet on March 13th.

Mr. Das shared that **TrueNorth Leadership Council** met on January 24th with the next meeting on March 13th. A key feature of the meeting was a historic discussion of the origins of TrueNorth and how the membership structure has evolved over time. It is reflected in the strategic plans that are available on TrueNorth's website.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- He noted there are not many meetings for Board members towards the end of February.
- Choir Opera shows will take place on March 6th, 7th, and 8th.
- The next Board meeting is March 18th.
- The New Trier Educational Foundation's Gala honoring the Alumni Hall of Honor will take place on March 8th at the Renaissance Chicago North Shore.

Mr. Dronen 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. Tomlinson seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Keith Dronen, President