

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

February 21, 2023

NT Post-High School Counseling Adapts amid Admissions Changes

New Trier is uniquely positioned to help students navigate a rapidly changing college admissions landscape, led by a team of counselors with over 175 years of collective experience in high school and college counseling, including two decades of work in college admissions.

The Post-High School Counseling (PHSC) Department told the Board about the many services their eight dedicated counselors offer students and families throughout high school. They also outlined how they are adapting to support students amid trends such as skyrocketing applications and a move to test-optional admissions.

Department Chair Jill Cervantes said the goal of the PHSC Department is to help students find a successful path to their post-graduate plans, including college, a gap year, military, trades, or employment. Since most New Trier students enroll in college directly after graduation, one focus is on college applications and admissions, following the department's motto that "college is a match to be made, not a prize to be won."

New Trier is one of the country's few high schools with a counseling team that specializes only in post-high school planning and college admissions. Services include individual personalized counseling, group counseling, help with applications, essays, and financial aid, adviser room visits, parent programming, and extensive grade-specific newsletters and online resources.

Counselors said the college admissions process has become more complex in recent years. In 2018, the average number of applications submitted per New Trier student was 7.68; by 2022, that number grew to 9.54. At the same time, the requirement for SAT or ACT scores has dropped from 64.7% of schools before the pandemic to only 3.8% of schools today.

All of these factors have led to a jump in applications, meaning acceptance rates have plummeted, particularly at selective and highly selective schools. Between 2002 and 2022, acceptance rates fell from 63% to 45% at the University of Illinois, from 49% to 18% at the University of Michigan, and from 33% to 7% at Northwestern University, for example.

New Trier continues to ensure that colleges and universities understand the value and rigor of a New Trier education. Counselors engage with admissions staff across the country and bring more than 200 colleges to visit New Trier each year, where they meet with students to discuss their school and they meet with members of the department to discuss trends in admissions and new developments at New Trier. The school has made changes in response to discussions with admissions officers, such as reformatting transcripts to clarify honors designations and shifting finals to before winter break to expedite mid-year grades to schools.

In the coming year, the department will also add a counselor to support the state's new law emphasizing career expectations and college and career pathway endorsements. Click for the [Post-High School Counseling presentation](#).

Attendance Matters: Supporting Student Attendance

Research makes it clear that school attendance is an important factor in student achievement, learning, and development of skills required for college and career. Yet the number of New Trier students deemed chronically absent is on the rise, and the school, students, and families must partner to address this growing issue.

Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services, told the Board that New Trier, like schools across the country, has seen an increase in chronic absenteeism in recent years. The Illinois State Board of Education defines chronic absence as missing more than 10% of school days, regardless of whether the absences are excused. Chronically absent students miss almost a month of school by the end of the school year.

As of February 10, more than a quarter of all New Trier students had reached chronic absence levels - with more than a third of the senior class missing 10% or more of the school year so far.

While New Trier wants students to stay home if they are ill, continual absences for other reasons including finishing homework, non-urgent appointments, or wanting extra sleep impact both individual students and their teachers. When students are in school, they benefit from uninterrupted learning and growth; classroom discussions that build relationships with teachers and peers; developing a sense of personal responsibility and resilience; and building good attendance habits so they can succeed in college and beyond.

If 25% of students are chronically absent, the average teacher rarely has all students in class for discussions and explanations of concepts. As a result, they and the students are caught in a constant cycle of falling behind and catching up that makes it difficult to move learning forward.

New Trier plans to spend the next month convening key internal stakeholders in an Attendance Committee to propose solutions to improve attendance. These could include more clear absence information for parents, personalized outreach, support plans, and resources to help parents more effectively intervene when students have difficulty attending school regularly. The Administration will also meet with groups of parents and students to gather feedback. The Board will hear about the committee's findings and next steps during their March meeting. Click for the [Attendance Matters presentation](#).

Other News from the February 21 Meeting

- Dr. Daniel Weidner was approved by the Board of Education to be Associate Principal for Academic and Administrative Services beginning July 1, 2023. Weidner currently serves as associate principal at Wheeling High School, where he previously was director of academic programs and pathways and taught physics and engineering. Weidner received his doctorate degree from National Louis University, a master's degree from Northeastern Illinois University, a master's degree from University of Virginia, and his bachelor's degree from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

- Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson updated the Board on the East Side Academic and Athletic Project and planned summer facilities work. Interior work is underway on the East Side project, including painting, tile work, elevator installation, carpentry, and mechanical system installation. Planned summer work includes the second phase of renovation at the Glencoe Transition Center, classroom modernization and cement work at the Northfield Campus, and substantial renovation at Duke Childs Field after New Trier's baseball season concludes.

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 <https://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation>