

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 21, 2023
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 21, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Cathy Albrecht
Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Avik Das
Mr. Keith Dronen, President
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

Administrators Present

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent
Mr. Christopher Johnson, Associate Superintendent
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Asst. Supt. for Special Ed and Student Services
Mr. Peter Tragos, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus
Mr. Scott Williams, Assistant Principal for Student Services

Absent

Mr. Brad McLane

Also Present

Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Teri Rodgers, Social Studies Department Faculty and Education Association President; Mr. Dan Rogan, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Jill Cervantes, Post-High School Counseling Department Chair; Ms. Gretchen Stauder, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Bob Zigmund, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Heather Ecklund, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Kristen Graf, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Michael O'Connor, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Tom Shorrock, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Jen McDonough, Applied Arts Department Faculty; Ms. Dawn Sullivan, Applied Arts Department Faculty; Ms. Deb Kind, New Trier Learning Center Department Chair; Ms. Aileen Geary, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, Math Department Faculty; Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Sara Burnett, Business Education Department Faculty; Mr. Tom Lau, Art Department Faculty; Ms. Gail Gamrath, Northfield Campus Assistant Principal; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:00 p.m. – C234

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023 of the Board of Education to order at 5:02 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

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; security procedures, school building safety and security, and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property; 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. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

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

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

Mr. Dronen recalled the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023 of the Board of Education to order at 6:38 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Mr. McLane.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of January 23, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 23, 2023 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Albrecht seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 23, 2023 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

***B. Special Meeting of February 7, 2023 (open session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Special Meeting of February 7, 2023 (open session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of February 7, 2023 (open session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSTAIN: Ms. Albrecht

ABSENT: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

C. 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:

- Conferences have been conducted with incoming Freshman families at each sender school and New Trier will host one for students from private schools. Mr. Waechtler thanked the 100 faculty members who volunteered to be counselors along with Ms. Lori Worth, Eighth Grade Transition Coordinator and Ms. Gail Gamrath, Northfield Campus Assistant Principal for their work. Families are very appreciative, and a helpline is also open to talk to department coordinators.
- Mr. Waechtler and Mrs. Dubravec, as part of the Large High School consortium, visited Allen High School in Allen Texas, which has 7,000 students. He shared pictures of the spaces available to students. He then shared information about their career pathways program that includes banking (credit union), culinary (student run cafeteria), law enforcement (security), and health sciences (pre-med to pharmacy tech). He displayed pictures of the school's football stadium which seats 18,000 and a 600-person marching band. They also have a STEAM academy, and the space is shared with kindergartners to seniors. Mr. Waechtler even enjoyed a couple extra days in Dallas due to being stranded by an ice storm.
- Lurie Children's Hospital held a dance marathon fundraiser which involved many New Trier students as well as students from other high schools. They sent a note of thanks to the PPS department who were amazing with their support of the event. The event raised over \$100,000 for the hospital.

Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal for the Winnetka Campus, was unable to attend the meeting so Mr. Scott Williams, Assistant Principal for Student Services, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus on her behalf:

- Applied Arts classes, in observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, sketched the Yad Vashem memorial in Israel and also watched a clip about its architect, Mr. Moshe Safdie. The lesson centered on how emotions work into design.
- The English Department recently hosted eight guests for New Trier's Literary Festival with about 200 students participating. Ms. Leslie Birdwell and Mr. Carlo Trovato, English Department Faculty, hosted Mr. Jeffrey Brown, who has written several graphic novels.
- Gymnastics and the girls' junior varsity and varsity bowling team were CSL champions.
- The lower team for the Latin Club took first in their last Certamen as well as placed first for the season with the upper team placing second at that event and second for the season.
- 92 DECA students competed in the North Suburban Conference with several students receiving top honors.
- The girls fencing team placed third while the boys team placed second in a Midwest tournament.
- Boys swimming sectional winners are moving on to the state competition next weekend.
- Mr. Williams shared about a variety of parent programming events that have recently taken place or will in the near future.
- The 40th Annual Jazz Fest recently took place and Mr. Williams congratulated Mr. Nic Meyer, Music and Theatre Department Faculty, and his students as well as the New Trier Fine Arts Association on its success. Mr. Delfeayo Marsalis performed on Saturday evening with Mr. Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra on Sunday. A clip of a student's performance was shown.
- Ms. Monique Boyd's, Art Department Faculty, Glass Art class took a trip to Seattle to visit glass artists and studios.
- Kinesis recently had their dance show which was amazing with the choreography, dancing and lighting backdrops. He thanked the following dance faculty: Ms. Johannah Wininsky, Ms. Katie Kritek, Ms. Lucy Riner, and Ms. Laura Deutsch as well as auditorium manager Mr. Dave Ferguson.
- Ms. Jillian Giller made New Trier history by placing fourth, becoming the first girl from New Trier, to place at the IHSA girls wrestling sectional. She will go on to compete at state.
- This is the first time the girls cheerleading team has qualified for a state appearance.
- Mr. Williams shared information about community activities to bring the townships together. Examples included a children's choir for the production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* as well as the Winter Carnival.
- The Physical Plant Services (PPS) department were among the 490 Those Who Excel awardees announced by the Illinois State Board of Education. They will attend next month's Board Recognition Program.

Mr. Tragos shared three updates from Curriculum and Instruction. His first update was regarding AP African American Studies, which was brought to the November Board Meeting as New Trier was selected for the second-year pilot of the College Board's course. The District's excitement to bring this course to students has not waned despite the political attacks on the course and its curriculum over recent weeks. The College Board released its official framework, different from the pilot framework, on the first day of Black History Month, February 1st. The new course outline was a natural part of the pilot evaluation process. New Trier is actively developing the curriculum based on the course framework. Mr. Tragos also noted that while AP course teachers adhere to the College Board's framework, they are not constrained by it. Teachers use their professional judgement to include topics and instructional materials relevant to the topic of the course, student learning and the District's values to offer a full rendering of the complexity of the topics of AP courses. Mr. Tragos added that this is not the first time that New Trier has offered an African American studies course as the West Campus did so from 1970-1975 which was entitled Black Studies. In 1976, the course morphed into Ethnic Studies, which was taught until the two campuses merged in 1981. New Trier was one of the few high schools in the country offering such a course in the 1970s and New Trier continues to lead the way to bring important and relevant scholarship to students in this new AP course. Mr. Tragos then introduced Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, who went on to share about the framework and went into details regarding its content. Topics include early African kingdoms as well as ongoing contemporary challenges and achievements. The course foregrounds the study of the diversity of black communities in the United States within the broader context of Africa and the African diaspora. Dr. Tillery went on to provide further details about the AP course. The dialogue around the course moved from healthy debate to misinformation, so the College Board hosted a webinar on February 7th to provide facts about the course and answer questions, which Dr. Tillery attended. She then shared a statement made by the College Board on February 11th. Dr. Tillery shared her

excitement that New Trier continues to be a lighthouse that provides its students with opportunities to take courses like AP African American Studies. Mr. Tragos thanked Dr. Tillery for her work with the College Board on this.

Second, at the January Board meeting, there was a request to learn more about how New Trier is responding to ChatGPT, which is the latest artificial intelligence tool. Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer, and Mr. Tragos, in collaboration with the instructional technology team and department leaders approached it from a learning stance such as what it is and what it means for teaching and learning today. After sharing additional details, Mr. Tragos noted that he and Mr. Marassa will bring a more comprehensive presentation to the March Board meeting.

Lastly, Mr. Tragos provided information on instructional coaches. Four current faculty members have been hired for these two-fifths positions or part-time assignments. This has been in development for some time and is now ready to launch. It is a peer-to-peer professional learning model where teachers learn from each other in a non-evaluative relationship and is separate from the formal supervision and evaluation process. This approach has been adopted for many reasons, one of which is the transition from a veteran faculty to a much younger and less experienced one. The District has also revised its four-year new teacher induction program to meet the needs of a new and changing demographics in its faculty and instructional coaching is a key part. The primary purpose is to improve teachers' skills and support instructional innovation as well as support the implementation of strategic initiatives across the school. Mr. Tragos noted that this coaching is for teachers across the entire arc of their career. More information will be shared at the April Board meeting.

Ms. Hahn inquired if the District is able to gauge how it is doing regarding potential enrollment for the AP African American Studies course and how it is determined who will teach it. Mr. Tragos replied that there was great interest amongst Social Studies faculty to teach it with one teacher identified to do so. He shared that enrollment is strong and the school is prepared to offer one section of the course. She thanked Mr. Tragos for bringing this to students and the community.

Mr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there were six requests since the last Board meeting. One regarding student information, two regarding staff information, one regarding use of a software product and two regarding construction bids. All but one is closed.

V. 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 Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. There was one request for public comment. Mr. Ted Wynnchenko, parent, shared comments about how the administration has lost sight of students, parents and the community in making its decisions and he referenced the block schedule and automatic tardiness system as examples. He also shared comments regarding the amount of time for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Post High School Counseling Program Update

Mr. Tragos introduced the update on the post-high school counseling (PHSC) program. Ms. Jill Cervantes, Post High School Counseling Department Chair, began by introducing the department which included Ms. Heather Ecklund, Ms. Gretchen Stauder, Ms. Kristen Graf, Mr. Tom Shorrock, Mr. Mike O'Connor, Mr. Bob Zigmund, and Mr. Dan Rogan. The department has, collectively, over 175 years' worth of high school and college counseling experience and over two decades, specifically in college admissions. She shared additional details about the faculty in the department. The department serves all students, and although over 90% of students will matriculate to a college or university, they recognize that this may not be the path for everyone. The PHSC department takes a student-centered approach and works within a team of parents, teachers, adviser, case managers, and social workers to help students in meeting their goals for the future.

Mr. Rogan shared that the department often talks about finding the right fit for a student in looking at their individual interests and preferences regarding academic strengths, financial parameters, and social interests. The Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate are in line with what colleges are looking for and the department helps to guide the development of them. Mr. Rogan shared some of the goals for each school quarter as well as the summer.

Mr. O'Connor noted that the department had to pivot during the pandemic in how it offered its services. There are many resources available anytime online. He also shared details about personalized supports that are provided for students. Mr. O'Connor shared some key observations about the admissions landscape, such as an increase in

applications, which is being seen not only at New Trier, but nationwide. Some of this increase is due to test-optional admissions practices and has contributed to the shifting decision release, which is also due in part to a shortage of admissions counselors to review the many applications.

Mr. Zigmund then presented more details pertaining to the admissions landscape. He shared an analogy that the PHSC department is like the navigation system of a car which is data driven and a resource, but it is the student that drives the car. There are more high school students in the U.S. than there has been in the past 40 years. There is also a rise in high school students going to college compared to twenty years ago. Mr. Zigmund then described the Common Application, which is a centralized application system that has been around since the mid-1970s. It started with 15 schools and now has over 900 member schools, with a 67% increase since 2014 alone. This was due to the Common App removing certain parameters. There is a cost associated with being a member and it is up to colleges and universities if they want to participate. It makes it easier to apply to more schools as it is a one-stop place where students can input their information and essay, however there are nuanced addendums specific to each college and university. Overall, when looking at national data, regardless of how selective a school is, an increase in applications by students is the trend. Locally, this is also being seen among students at New Trier. The Common App has seen a 35% increase in the number of applications per student since their 2014 cycle.

Mr. Zigmund then spent time sharing about pre-pandemic test policies, noting that 64.7% of schools required the SAT/ACT, yet there were many colleges and universities who were test optional or test flexible in their admissions policies. The pandemic sped up moving to test optional or test free as students could not test in-person. Mr. Zigmund noted that while some schools may reverse their current test optional policies in the future, the majority will not. In fact, the University of California system and the California State system have decided to go test-blind and will not take test scores. California high school students represent 11% of all high school students in the country. Usually, if a college draws students nationally, California is in the top five places that that school pulls from. Therefore, these colleges need to be flexible with their testing. With these test optional policies, it is one less barrier to entry, and is one reason these colleges are seeing an increase in applications. Next, Mr. Zigmund addressed common myths and misconceptions about admissions for New Trier students. He then provided a quote from a 1985 *Chicago Tribune* article to demonstrate how long some of these tense feelings around college admissions have been going on. By taking a student-centered approach, the department can unpack some of the concerns that students and families come to them with. Mr. Zigmund then referenced a case study that was done on the University of Michigan. In 2002, 25,000 students applied, in 2022 that number was almost 85,000. The pressure of this shift for them and their peer institutions is enormous. He then displayed a graphic that compared and contrasted admission rate shifts across several universities. Conversations with students and families include discussions of all the different colleges options that are out there for students to attend.

Ms. Cervantes highlighted a few of the proactive measures the department has taken to better serve students. The department is focused on relationships, not only with admissions offices, but with local peer high schools. A member of the department meets with each college who visits New Trier, and all members meet with those colleges where the District sends the highest volume of applications to. Ms. Cervantes shared further details about partnering with college admissions offices.

Mr. Shorrock shared about a new initiative, a New Trier High School College Advisory Board, that he and Ms. Ecklund are working on. Specific college deans and enrollment managers would be invited to sit on this board for a year or two. They would have an opportunity to meet students and the community as well as understand the curriculum and then provide feedback to New Trier.

Ms. Cervantes then shared that with the increase in the number of applications, it can often mean that there is less time for admissions to read them. Usually, they spend six to eight minutes, or at the most, 15 minutes on an application. Admissions offices have also hired part-time readers to keep up with the volume. This can mean longer wait times for students to receive decisions. The department has been proactive in helping colleges with their application review by reformatting the transcript and condensing the profile of New Trier. Ms. Cervantes also shared about moving finals prior to Winter Break and how that has helped get senior year first semester grades to colleges. The department is also always working on its collaboration with parents and faculty on how to best support students. She shared further details around how this is done with parents. Regarding faculty, support is provided for writing recommendation letters with each PHSC member being a liaison to a department to help with this. Finally, the department has evolved from paper-centered to online.

Ms. Cervantes provided details about three items that are on the horizon for the department, they include the graduating class teams, the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework, and software systems review. Ms. Cervantes then shared concluding thoughts.

Ms. Alcantara thanked the department for their presentation. She shared an impression she has heard that students should apply based on the characterization of their GPA and test scores and whether a school they are applying to is a likely admit, target, or reach school. Regarding Naviance, her understanding is that the data points are not broken down by college within a large university and is not broken down by whether the school is in or out of state. She inquired if this breakdown occurs with the other platforms the department is looking at. Ms. Cervantes replied that there is the option to create application flags in Naviance based on what students self-report. The department does try to track and run that data. It also depends on the university as some admit by college, while others admit to the university. Ms. Cervantes noted this is something that the department is considering with all of the potential platforms.

Ms. Tomlinson shared initial comments, then referenced the national trends of applications quadrupling while the number of available spots is fairly stagnant. She inquired if that implies that a student's ability to get into those same schools has been trending down because of the increases or if the District is still competitive and sending, on average, the same number of students to the large universities. Ms. Cervantes replied that the answer is not necessarily true across the board as part of it might be the philosophy behind the admission practices. At the same time, it is a somewhat safe assumption, that collectively, across the board, it is a selective process. She also noted that it is important for students to keep an open mind about all their options, while the department works proactively to still make those viable options for them. Ms. Tomlinson noted she loves that the department is marketing what it means to be a New Trier graduate and what these institutions get when they accept a student. She was also supportive of having colleges come to New Trier to see what it is about and to continue to build those relationships.

Ms. Hahn thanked the whole department as well as Mr. Shorrock and Ms. Stauder for their work with her children and went on to share additional details. Ms. Hahn also noted her appreciation for the article from the 1980s and it is a good reminder that this has always been a stressful process. She then referenced that students are dealing with mental health challenges and anxiety and inquired how the department is working with traditional counselors and social workers to help students and families manage this stress. Ms. Hahn's second question was about her observation about early decision (ED) or early action, where it used to be students knew exactly what school they wanted to attend and has now turned into gaming the system, which could be feeding anxiety. She is hearing of more and more students who are ED 1 or 2 at a school they have never even visited, and inquired how the department is dealing with this specific piece. Ms. Cervantes replied that it is very common to be in meetings with the adviser, social worker, and case manager along with a student and their family to collectively work through a student's anxieties. These conversations also include what supports and services may be needed at the college level. Conversation continued between the two with Mr. O'Connor addressing the second part of Ms. Hahn's question. Mr. O'Connor noted that over the past 15 years, it is about a quarter to a third of students who select early decision. He shared there are conversations around what early decision would mean as well as what the second round looks like. To him, there are more conversations around early decision than students actually choosing that route.

Ms. Cervantes circled back to Ms. Tomlinson's question and Mr. Zigmund's display of the percent of admit rate change at the University of Illinois. She said, that collectively, on the whole, New Trier is doing very well in the admissions process and outpace the national statistics in many situations. Ms. Alcantara added that it seems there can be huge fluctuations year-to-year, which happened even pre-pandemic, of where students decided to attend. After further conversation, Dr. Sally added that the profile report, which started in 2010, shows some of those fluctuations, but also displays consistency. Mr. Zigmund shared that, regarding the data, it also depends on which set of students apply to which set of schools which year and shared additional details around this.

Ms. Albrecht noted it is an anxious time for parents and students and shared that the department's mantra of "college is a match to be made and not a prize to be won" is a great way to think about it. She shared her experience of both of her children applying to college. Ms. Albrecht inquired about the graduating class teams, with Dr. Sally noting there will be a PHSC liaison on the team. When talking about the social emotional piece, Dr. Sally noted these teams will help these conversations as they will know the students. Ms. Albrecht then inquired if the department starts its work at the freshmen level. Ms. Cervantes replied that there are liaisons at each grade level and the graduating class teams will be an enhancement of the department's current roles. Ms. Albrecht also noted that moving exams before winter break and having transcripts available was another big plus.

Mr. Das, referencing the slide showing exponential increase in participation in the Common App, inquired if this trend is continuing with more and more colleges joining. Ms. Cervantes noted that every year there are new colleges coming on board, with about 30 joining annually over the past few years. She noted that the greatest rise has been from the public institutions that have joined. Mr. Das observed that the Common App, from the applicant's perspective, is convenient. Ms. Cervantes said initially that is the perception, but once in it, each college can tailor pieces of the application to fit their needs. Mr. Das then inquired why an institution may hesitate to join, with Ms. Cervantes replying that there is a cost involved, though usually colleges are able to make that up with the increase in applications. A second reason is a college may not like the questions being asked as they must agree to use a certain set of questions. Mr. Das then inquired if by participating in the Common App it somehow challenges a college's brand or there is something less individual about that institution. Ms. Tomlinson added that by receiving more applications it makes them more highly selective.

Mr. Das asked Ms. Cervantes to expand on the other post high school options available besides college and what role the department plays in supporting them. Ms. Cervantes replied that they assist students to directly enlist into the military, two-year programs, GAP year options, post grad year, which is another year of academic preparation, as well as secure apprenticeship options in the trades. Mr. Das then inquired if they have a standard of practice for supporting these options. Ms. Cervantes replied that the department participates in professional development and continually meets with various providers to expand their knowledge on these options. Mr. Das added that he appreciated the concept of driver assist and GPS, and if a child is on the path to one of these options, is the GPS calibrated to support this. Ms. Cervantes replied that she tries to encourage students to also focus on their long-term goal and the different avenues or non-standard paths available to get to the same destination.

Mr. Das noted that the presentation conveyed a level of confidence, competence, and pride as to the great work being done, he then inquired if the department has some sort of wish list or if something was a little better in a certain way, they could get to another level in terms of their vision, for example. Ms. Cervantes shared that the department is never at a shortage of how to improve upon its work. The department has to prioritize its resources and in thinking about the PaCE framework and the three threads, the one that they want to focus on more is helping students to identify their strengths, interests, and talents and how that impacts their road through New Trier as well as what their goals are for the future. They would like to increase their efforts on helping students make thoughtful decisions earlier on to better inform their choices and options for the future. After additional comments, Mr. Das replied that he saw a strong link between the school's movement toward graduating class teams and what would be the experience of the department and the readiness of the student and family. He went on to share additional details.

Mr. Dronen noted it was an excellent report and went back to Ms. Albrecht's comment about there being a college for everybody. He also noted the importance of those opportunities that are not a four-year college. Referencing the focus on test optional, Mr. Dronen noted that the relationships the department is building with the various schools is more important than ever as New Trier students typically score very high on the ACT and SAT and may not be able to rely on those. Ms. Cervantes noted that test optional reinforces the relationship between the student and their counselor. Although test optional felt as if it simplified things, it actually complicated them and a side effect of that was adding more anxiety onto students. She noted it can be as nuanced within a major within a university where for one major, the test score should be shared, but for another major, it should not. Ms. Cervantes shared additional details. Mr. Dronen, acknowledging that the data is not there yet, asked Ms. Cervantes' opinion on New Trier students being admitted to selective colleges. Ms. Cervantes said it is fairly neutral and there can be an impression that the increase in applications have made it harder for students, however, it has also opened up opportunities for students as they may apply to a school that in the past they might not have. Ms. Cervantes noted that they are gathering data, which is self-reported by students, and it is something the department is keeping a close eye on.

B. Attendance Matters: Supporting Student Attendance

Dr. Joanne Panopoulos introduced the presentation on Attendance Matters: Supporting Student Attendance, who include her co-presenters, Mr. Waechtler, Ms. Gail Gamrath, Northfield Campus Assistant Principal, and Mr. Williams. Dr. Panopoulos outlined the presentation noting that it will focus on the current attendance situation, both nationally and New Trier trends, guiding principles, the impact on New Trier, parent partnership and next steps. Nationally, high schools, in particular, have the highest rate of chronic absences. Those are defined as a student having 10% or more absences during the school year. New Trier is also noticing a rise in student absences and is not alone with this as local high schools are reporting a similar trend. Dr. Panopoulos shared guiding principles that are researched based and align with the District's Strategic Plan. Attendance is approached from a behavioral standpoint, and when students are in school, it improves learning, students engage with their peers and collaboration takes place. The school supports students in a multi-tiered approach and plans are developed based on the student. Behavior is

multi-dimensional, and the school sees students are missing school for a variety of reasons. The school also wants to make sure it is instilling and balancing accountability as it works with students on this issue. Dr. Panopoulos noted that families and the school need to partner to address attendance concerns. Attendance can improve by employing consistent policies and procedures.

Mr. Williams defined chronic absenteeism as a student missing 10% or more of a given school year. Schools recognize absences in two categories, the first are excused absences and these have been communicated to the school by a parent. They include illness, medical conditions, appointments, religious observances, family emergencies or mental health reasons. Unexcused absences are when students miss school without a valid reason such as finishing homework prior to school. In a school year, which has 180 days, a 10% absence rate equals 18 days of school. There is a state standard for calculating absences so an absence of three to four periods, counts as a half day absence while missing five to ten periods counts as a full day. In New Trier's block system, these are counted by half blocks. Mr. Williams displayed a chart of chronic absenteeism with 25.6% of students missing 10% or more school days. Missing 10% of the school year equates to missing once every two weeks or approximately one month of class over the course of the year.

Mr. Williams then shared why attendance is important for students. They learn best when they engage in regular and consistent schoolwork, collaboration with their peers, and guidance from their teachers. When students miss tests or other work, it can set up an unhealthy pattern of avoidance which can start a cycle of missing out and having to catch up. Classrooms are a community of learners and when present, students have an opportunity to build positive relationships with teachers and peers. There are also the growth and development of social skills that students learn when at school. Students develop a sense of personal responsibility, resiliency, and self-efficacy. A recent conversation that the PHSC department had with colleges noted that students are struggling to understand the value and importance of attendance and are not able to navigate those expectations. By developing good habits during high school, they should easily transfer once a student graduates.

Mr. Waechtler presented on the importance of attendance for teachers and the classroom. Teachers value building strong, positive relationships with students, along with spending time developing lessons and community in the classroom, which is made more difficult if students are not regularly in class. Teachers are also able to focus on students who are sick to make sure they are caught up. Next, Mr. Waechtler shared the implications on the average teacher. He shared that if 25% of students are chronically absent, then over two weeks, the teacher has to manage rarely having all students in class for discussions, explanations and other important experiences. They would have about 30 students in that two-week span that they would have to provide support for outside of class time. Teachers must also manage assessments, projects, or labs that need to be made up. This adds more stress to the system, the teacher, and students.

Ms. Gamrath shared some of the work currently being done to address this issue as well as work for the future. She displayed a graphic of Tiers of Intervention and walked through each of the tiers, which began with foundational supports and promotes conditions for learning. Tier 1 is universal prevention, which means that all students and families know the school's attendance policies and procedures. Tier 2 is early intervention, where students are missing 10-19% and includes further communication with the family by the adviser to better understand why students may be absent, problem-solve around it, and monitor the situation. Tier 3 is intensive intervention, and the school has a lot of this going on at all grade levels. A parent meeting takes place with the student and their school support system. At this point, a school refusal assessment is taken by the parents and student. This is currently being piloted at Northfield to gather data. An attendance plan is then put into place working with outside providers such as a student's doctor. The plan is monitored, and meetings occur every six weeks to check progress.

The school wants to work with families and acknowledges that students and families lead busy lives. Parents need to be fully informed of their child's attendance status. The school also needs to help students navigate their use of mental health days, which Ms. Gamrath furthered explained. The school also wants to work with the New Trier Parents' Association for greater awareness. Ms. Gamrath noted there are many resources in the community and providers who want to partner with the school. Last week there was a Family Action Network presentation by Compass that provided advice for students who refuse or avoid school. There is an uptick in anxiety, not only at New Trier, but across the nation and it needs to be addressed why avoidance goes along with anxiety and how to be proactive about it. The school will also partner with Dr. Lisa Damour for an April 10th event. Ultimately, families, the school and outside providers need to come together and be honest about what is going on with students so healthier and non-avoidant patterns can be developed.

Dr. Panopoulos shared concluding comments noting that an attendance committee will convene. She went on to share various items of focus for the committee such as defining the tiers and supports, developing personalized outreach, identifying barriers and planning for continued partnership with parents. Dr. Panopoulos then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn noted her appreciation for the student-centered focus as well as the impetus of partnering with families on this topic. She then inquired at what point, other than with individualized students who are having issues, is the school gathering feedback from parents on where they are finding challenges or what would be helpful to them. Ms. Hahn, referencing the data, noted that the numbers seem alarming and inquired if there was any longitudinal data available. Mr. Waechtler spoke to the parent piece noting that while he does not have direct data, the plan is to speak with each year group of the NTPA about what kind of parent programming might be beneficial. Mr. Waechtler noted that part of this issue is pandemic related though, nationwide, attendance has been more of a concern.

Ms. Albrecht looks forward to the March report to understand where the data is coming from and if the issue starts with covid. She also inquired if peer schools are seeing the same thing during this period. Ms. Albrecht noted excused versus unexcused absences is another level such as how much is excused and what exactly that means. Dr. Sally and Ms. Albrecht then discussed how the day is broken into ten periods with a half day missing three to four periods and how this works with the block schedule. Referencing what she has heard from some parents that their student may have a lighter day of classes one day versus another, she noted it would be interesting to process that data. She also would like to understand the data about seniors.

Ms. Alcantara agreed with Ms. Gamrath's statement that sometimes parents do not realize what the cumulative number of absences looks like for their student. She inquired if there was a way to automate a monthly email to parents about how many days their student has missed that month. Mr. Waechtler replied that that is one of the Tier 1 supports or interventions that has been discussed. Discussion ensued between the two.

Ms. Alcantara then inquired how field trips and class related activities that occur during the school day for which a student may miss part of or the whole day are captured. Mr. Williams replied that a field trip excused absence does not count toward the absence rates. She then inquired if these types of absences are captured simply as an informational piece for a student and their family and if there needs to be some thought given to pulling students for in-school activities. Mr. Williams replied that this information is tracked as every adviser gets a daily report about their students' absences as well as a weekly report. Mr. Williams also noted that the school could be more purposeful about these types of absences. Extracurricular participation is another item that is in discussion. Dr. Sally added that the chart in the presentation does not include field trips, but when looking at what students miss and what makes it difficult for teachers it is worse than the table in terms of the number of kids. This was Ms. Alcantara's point along with a parents' ability to gage how much school their student may actually be missing. Dr. Sally noted that the school will work on getting this integrated into some of what is being thought about.

Ms. Alcantara then inquired what percentage of students were chronically absent pre-covid and within that percentage, has there always been a trend of increasing as a student moves from a freshman to senior, which Ms. Gamrath confirmed. Dr. Sally shared that the school was in the mid-upper teens percentage of absences pre-covid and there has been a significant increase. He went on to share additional details. Ms. Alcantara noted that the school has 14.2% chronic absenteeism as freshman and 37.9% as a senior and inquired if the difference between the two was always this disparate. Mr. Waechtler replied that the numbers have always gone up but did not think that seniors were always 40% chronically absent. Discussion continued with Ms. Alcantara inquiring if there might be something to the fact that these juniors and seniors were freshmen and sophomores respectively during covid. She wondered if these cohorts of students may lack a certain amount of resiliency and perseverance that students pre-covid did not and current freshmen and sophomores will hopefully not increase at this rate. Mr. Waechtler anticipates that with some interventions, changes in behavior will be seen. He also noted that the current upperclassmen had a different flexibility about going to school in the early part of high school, which may have continued. Dr. Panopoulos noted that another piece to look at would be the level of engagement in various formats such as in class versus online. Ms. Hahn noted that it would be important to communicate why it is important for students as many adults are no longer required to be at their desk a set amount of time. She noted that this can be challenging for parents to explain why a student does. There are good reasons as to why students need to be in attendance and parents may need help communicating the value of it. She noted that at some point in a student's life they may have more advocacy over when they show up or do not as long as the work is getting done, however, high school, for a variety of reasons, is not that place.

Ms. Tomlinson echoed the data questions already posed and shared her curiosity for the root causes of the absenteeism and whether there are systemic barriers.

Mr. Das also noted his interest in the baseline of what makes this alarming at scale. He highlighted the grid of chronically absent students and its relationship with the pyramid of tiered interventions. Mr. Das is interested in how the pyramid evolves and what tools are needed at each tier. He then inquired what the “healthy school mix” might be for each tier. Mr. Das noted that there are 952 students at tiers 2 and 3 and if in two years, when this is reported again, that number is cut in half, for instance. Dr. Panopoulos shared that it might be similar to what the school looks at for academic interventions and supports, which she further explained. Mr. Das replied that whatever the tiered system is of supporting student attendance, the school will need to frame out the resources, supports and strategies that are needed to maintain that there are no more than a given percentage of students in the top. After further comments, Mr. Das shared that the attendance support system is something that needs to be invested in to make sure that whatever strategies are in place, it is because the school is going to keep a certain percentage or less at the top tier.

C. Facilities Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project and 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Construction

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (ESAA) and the 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Construction. Mr. Johnson noted that significant progress continues to be made and shared highlights of that work such as masonry, window installment and carpentry. On a typical day, there are about 100 tradespeople working on the site under the direction of Pepper Construction and the District’s facilities staff. Mr. Johnson provided pictures and details of the work taking place. Mr. Johnson then showed a comparison video, created by Ms. Lia Fahs, Communications Coordinator, of the renderings versus the progress that has been made-to-date at the site. From a scheduling perspective, completion is still expected around late June – early July. Some critical items are being monitored such as the three remaining air handlers, which are scheduled to ship in late April. The air handlers were wanted earlier so flooring could be installed; however, temporary air handling will be placed in the interim so that flooring can be installed on time. Glass and glazing is an in-demand trade and supply so the District is working to make sure it receives everything that is needed for this piece. Regarding the budget, change orders totaled \$657,000, slightly higher than normal as ones were processed that the District had been in negotiations with. Projected future change orders decreased from \$1.2 million to \$836,000 as some of those came off the future list and were processed. From a total budget standpoint, the District is still projecting that it is within its budgetary parameters, which is monitored carefully.

Ms. Hahn shared her appreciation for the video that synced up the renderings to the actual construction site. Mr. Johnson thanked Ms. Fahs and Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications, for their work. Conversation continued amongst Board members. Ms. Tomlinson inquired if the video was on social media, which Ms. Dizon confirmed.

Next, Mr. Johnson presented on the 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Construction providing details on the work that will be done such as at the Transition Center, and Duke Childs Field, as well as modernizing classrooms at the C and E buildings at the Northfield campus. The District will begin its work at Duke Childs immediately after baseball season concludes. The Board approved bids in the fall for this work as well as at a Special Board meeting held on February 7th. By approving this work at a special meeting, it allowed for supplies to be ordered, so the projects can be completed in a timely manner. There were 17 trade packages in Bid Package 2 with 60 total bids. There was strong interest and bid coverage and scope meetings were held with each trade. A total of \$12,191,566 in total bids were presented and approved at the special meeting. Construction will begin in full force once the school year ends.

Ms. Hahn inquired when the Village of Winnetka work will be turned over to the baseball team. Mr. Johnson replied that it should be soon and there are no anticipated issues with the start of baseball season.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer’s Report for January 2023

Mr. Johnson presented the Treasurer’s Report for January 2023 with significant tax distributions continuing. Interest rates and earnings are increasing. Funds were not able to be invested as they needed to remain liquid in order to meet operational requirements. The District is seeing 4.62% in short term investments as well as observing a continued rise in rates in long term investments. Some investments were sold early and reinvested; this was discussed with the Finance Committee last fall. Mr. Johnson noted that although there were short term losses, but there will be long term interest on them. The balance for all accounts \$121,988,172.

B. Financial Report for January 2023

Mr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for January 2023. Operating revenue was \$60,595,000 for the first seven months of the fiscal year, or 1.69% higher compared to last year. Property taxes have caught up to where the District was last year, and other local revenue will likely maintain a year-long positive variance, driven primarily by CPPRT receipts and interest rate income. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 1.13% lower than last fiscal year due to the back out of one-time Covid funds.

Expenditures were \$71,141,000 through January, or 13% higher than last year, but exclusive of interfund transfers, the expenses are 4.22% higher than last year. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 3.52% higher than last fiscal year. Right now, expenditures are 0.7% higher than budget, while last month they were 1.5%, so the District is moving in a positive direction with how expenditures are trending to budget. The District will monitor this closely. Fund book balances for all accounts were \$121,748,247.

C. Policy Revisions First Reading – Policy 5:120

Dr. Sally presented the first reading for revision of Policy 5:120. Last month, the Board conducted a first reading on most of the policies from PRESS 110. They are in the consent agenda for a second reading at this meeting. One policy was not ready for the January Board meeting but is now and that is Policy 5:120 – Employee Ethics; Code of Professional Conduct; and Conflict of Interest. This was a full rewrite by IASB and PRESS services, so time was needed for attorney review and edits. The changes were due to a number of Illinois law updates about maintaining appropriate boundaries between staff and students as well as outlining employee expectations around that. This policy will be brought to the March meeting for a second reading.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for the Period, January 1 - 31, 2023
- Personnel Report (Appointment, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Termination, Administrator Contracts and Contract Amendment)
- Policy Revisions Second Reading - PRESS 110
- Wight Contract Amendment #003
- New Trier Scholarship Trust Fund Allocation Approval
- Student Fee Approval (2023-24)
- Contract with Pepper Construction for 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Construction Management Services
- Computer Hardware and Network Security Annual Purchases (FY 24)
- Alltown Transportation Renewal - Regular Service (2023-24)
- Alltown Transportation Renewal - Special Education (2023-24)
- Safeway Transportation Renewal - Special Education (2023-24)
- Contract with Skyward for 3-Year Renewal of School Business Suite Software

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, Ms. Albrecht asked to pull student fee approval for the 2023-2024 school year. Ms. Alcantara moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for the Period, January 1 - 31, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointment, Changes of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Termination, Administrator Contract for the Director of Special Education, Administrator Contract for the Principal – Northfield Campus, Administrator Contract for the Athletic Director, Administrator Contract for the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Administrator Contract for the Associate Principal – Academics and Administrative Services, Administrator Contract for the Chief Technology Officer, and Contract Amendment to Northfield Campus – Assistant Principal); Policy Revisions Second Reading - PRESS 110; the Contract Amendment 003 with Wight & Co as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement pending final legal approval; A maximum allocation of \$263,645 for scholarships for the 2023 graduating class; Construction management services contract for Pepper Construction and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the contract subject to final attorney review; the contract with Connection Inc. for equipment as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; the contract with CDWG for equipment and services as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; extend the Alltown Bus Service transportation agreement for the 2023-24 school years and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; extend the Alltown Bus Service and Safeway transportation agreements for the 2023-24 school year and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreements; and the contract with Skyward for 3-Year Renewal of School Business Suite Software. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

Mr. Johnson shared details on student fees as each year the school charges several fees that make up a small, but important part of the budget. They fund student activities and expenditures for items like lab equipment and other consumables students use. These fees undergo a review every year. It was determined that it would be prudent to keep the general fee flat in acknowledgment of the inflation that families and the community are facing. During budget planning it was determined that the District could make it work if the fee remained flat. Although it is a small relief, the District wanted to demonstrate that it knows an increase could be difficult for some.

Ms. Albrecht asked Mr. Johnson to go through some of the other items that make up student fees such as activity, transportation, and student parking fees. Mr. Johnson shared details on each as well as drivers' education and marine biology. Mr. Johnson noted that with all fees, financial aid is available, and the District is working to improve the process by making it electronic and publicizing it, so people are aware that it is available.

Ms. Alcantara inquired about the transportation fees, noting it is a subsidized amount, and the District pays for a significant portion. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the District pays for approximately 50% of transportation costs, adding that the District's portion is increasing by 9% as is the family portion. Mr. Johnson noted that about a one-fourth of students who ride the bus qualify for free or reduced bus service. Ms. Alcantara inquired if the student parking fee is 100% pass-through, which Mr. Johnson confirmed. Discussion continued on student parking as well as on bus service.

Ms. Albrecht motioned that the student fees for the 2023-24 school year be approved as presented. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Tomlinson, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. Tomlinson attended the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** on February 8th. A NTFAA grant sponsored Mr. Dylan Cooper, a class of 2011 alum and also known as Verlo in the street art world, who is working with students on a mural around the theme of *Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud*. NTFAA also held a Zoom seminar called Pursuing Your Passion. New Trier graduates who are currently in arts programs at college hosted breakout rooms for students who are interested in pursuing their own art interests in college. The group also heard from Mr. Duke Bauer who received an NTFAA scholarship to attend Birch Creek summer camp where he honed his saxophone skills. On Tuesday, March 21st, NTFAA will host a spotlight fundraiser focusing on Wilmette with Torino, Central Coffee, and Hero Heroine who will all donate a portion of their proceeds to the NTFAA.

Ms. Alcantara noted that the **Community Engagement Committee** met on February 1st. She and Mr. McLane attended, and Ms. Dizon presented updates on the communications survey that is underway. All parents and staff received the survey via email, while a postcard was sent to all households in the District. It was publicized in a variety of ways and has led to a solid response rate from parents, the community and staff. A report with the survey results will be compiled by the end of February. After that, ten focus groups will gather in mid-March with participants from a variety of constituencies. The final report will be presented at the May meeting with a slight chance it may be ready for the April meeting.

Ms. Alcantara attended the **New Trier Parents Association (NTPA)** executive annual meeting on February 2nd, followed by their monthly meeting. During the annual meeting, each chairperson delivered a brief report. At the

regular meeting, each class co-chairs shared reports about issues, events and plans applicable to their class. Mrs. Dubravec also provided a report to the group.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **Finance Committee** met on February 14th. Mr. Richard Drake, certified financial advisor, who manages the District's portfolio for the scholarship trust fund joined the meeting. Mr. Drake offers his services free of charge to the District. He shared his plans for the future of the fund which is done in conjunction with the Finance Committee. Mr. Johnson also shared about financial aide at the meeting, noting that the District is doing work to increase messaging to parents. She applauded this work.

Ms. Albrecht shared that Mr. Johnson provided information earlier in the meeting pertaining to the **Facilities Steering Committee** which met on February 9th. The tour of the East Side Academic and Athletic facility took place on January 30th.

Mr. Das noted that the **Booster Club** is meeting this evening.

Mr. Das shared that the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** met on February 8th. Highlights included the approval of the five-year strategic plan with more to come in future meetings. There is also the potential that some member districts will move out of the collective which would have implications for financing and subsequent construction.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- Third quarter ends on March 10th.
- *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* runs from March 8th – 11th.
- The Frosh Soph play will take place on March 17th and 18th.
- He encouraged everyone to view the Performing Arts calendar for other events.
- The next Board meeting will be on March 20th with the Board Recognition Program occurring just prior to it.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Keith Dronen, President