

# BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203  
Board of Education Regular Meeting  
June 7, 2021*

## District Presents *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*

What skills, characteristics, competencies, and dispositions should a New Trier graduate possess to thrive in a rapidly changing world? Who are New Trier graduates *becoming* as they enter the world beyond high school?

Those are the central questions behind the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, a set of future-oriented narratives and desired student outcomes that will help guide the District's teaching and learning into the future.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented the Board with the work of the *Characteristics* design committee, a District-wide group charged with defining the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate* as part of the *New Trier 2030* strategic plan. The group began its work in May 2019 and, after a pandemic-related postponement, re-engaged on a final product this spring.

"Becoming" is a key concept in the *Characteristics*, reflecting that students are in a constant state of development, discovery, and reinvention and that growth is a part of measuring individual progress. The five characteristics that New Trier students are becoming on their path to leading meaningful and impactful lives are:

- **Engaged Compassionate Global Citizens:** *New Trier graduates strive to be informed about historical and contemporary issues, embracing diversity and taking responsibility for improving their local and global communities. They develop the capacity to show respect, acceptance, and empathy for all people so they can optimistically pursue positive change.*
- **Creative Critical Thinkers:** *New Trier graduates learn to ask important questions, and they seek multiple perspectives with open-mindedness. They rigorously analyze and evaluate information to draw reasoned conclusions in pursuit of knowledge and understanding of complex ideas.*
- **Resilient Healthy Individuals:** *New Trier graduates learn to take ownership over their physical and mental wellness. As they work to develop a healthy sense of self, they adapt to challenges and changes with resilience, flexibility, and perseverance. They demonstrate responsibility for themselves and care for others.*
- **Effective Courageous Communicators:** *New Trier graduates communicate clearly and confidently in multiple modes of expression including nonverbal, creative and artistic, to inform and inspire others. They navigate communication technology ethically and responsibly. Our graduates listen to understand, and courageously engage in matters important to them and to the world.*
- **Innovative Collaborative Problem Solvers:** *New Trier graduates mature as agents of their own learning, motivated by curiosity and independent thought to know more about themselves and the world. They recognize the power of collaboration and feedback as they take intellectual risks to solve problems, imagine creative solutions and invent a better future.*

The Board is scheduled to adopt the *Characteristics* at their July meeting. Tragos said that next steps include finalizing the descriptions for each characteristic, defining how to measure progress, developing professional development around the characteristics, engaging students in planning and implementation, and developing an implementation plan, with a focus in 2021-2022 on two characteristics: Resilient Healthy Individuals and Engaged Compassionate Global Citizens. Click for the full [Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate](#) memo.

## [New Trier 2030 Strategic Plan: Annual Plan for 2021-2022](#)

Superintendent Paul Sally presented the Board with a draft Annual Plan for working toward goals outlined in the *New Trier 2030* strategic plan in areas including academics, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), social-emotional learning (SEL), equity, and the adviser program.

The District continues to work toward goals in six framework areas: 1- Intellectual Engagement, Growth, and Readiness; 2 - Personal Engagement, Growth, and Well-being; 3 - Culture, Climate, and Equity; 4 - Leadership Throughout the School; 5 - Community Engagement, Partnerships, and Governance; and 6 - Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources. Sally noted that while the District has moved forward with its goals since the Board adopted *New Trier 2030* in 2019, this will be the first Annual Plan not interrupted by the pandemic. In addition to working on specific goals and strategies, administrators, faculty, and staff will need to spend 2021-2022 reconnecting with one another and with students, reclaiming the unique parts of New Trier lost during the pandemic, and reinventing around new practices that served students well.

Academic goals include professional development around teaching and learning in a block schedule, defining and implementing the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, and looking at how the District's commitment to civil discourse and critical thinking integrates into curriculum. Two specific academic projects include development of course syllabi and course pathways for a new interdisciplinary Innovation Hub that will be partially funded by the New Trier Educational Foundation and starting a two-year pilot and evaluation program for student technology.

Professional development will continue around supporting the specific needs of each student individually and in the classroom. At the Northfield Campus, teachers and staff will work with all freshmen students early in the year to teach and develop their executive functioning skills such as studying and organization. The District also will use functions within PowerSchool to more effectively and consistently identify students who are potentially struggling.

In the area of social-emotional learning (SEL), the District will continue its work toward teaching and integrating these skills in and outside of the classroom, with a particular focus on student self-awareness and self-management. The school also will pilot the Panorama technology tool to identify individual and group SEL needs and to plan universal, small group, and individual supports.

New Trier will continue its work on equity in the 2021-2022 school year, with students in affinity groups and their sponsors using national recognition months to create toolkits, displays, and other special activities to highlight their identity and what it is like to have that identity at New Trier. The school will also engage an outside consultant to conduct an equity audit to look at areas of success and areas of need in terms of ensuring all students feel like they belong at New Trier and are ready to engage thoughtfully and effectively in a world that is much more

diverse than New Trier. Finally, departments will keep moving forward with their equity goals, which have continued to develop in spite of COVID-19.

Several goals in the Annual Plan look at how to strengthen and adapt the adviser program, New Trier's model for home-school connection and student support. The adviser chairs and a new strategic liaison will look at the gender structure of the program, which does not meet the needs of every student, to develop a proposal to present to the Board in early 2022. The District will also look at how the program can support adolescent development and curriculum mapping as well as restorative practices to address conflict and disciplinary issues.

Work also will continue in other strategic frameworks, including a focus on the East Side Athletic and Academic Project, continued effective stewardship of the resources that taxpayers provide to the District, a review of District hiring practices, increased engagement with New Trier alumni, and development of student leadership.

The Board will vote on the Annual Plan for 2021-2022 at its July meeting. Click to see the full [New Trier 2030 presentation](#).

## Update on Planning for the 2021-2022 School Year

New Trier is focusing on a successful transition back to school for students and staff as it plans for full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board.

The District continues to monitor guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Illinois Department of Public Health, and Cook County Department of Public Health in determining what, if any, mitigation requirements will be in place next school year. Mitigation guidelines may be dependent on vaccinations, and the District is encouraging all parents to send their students' COVID-19 vaccination records to [healthservices@nth.net](mailto:healthservices@nth.net).

As conveyed to parents, the District is ending its saliva screening program on June 15. Saliva screening served an important purpose to keep New Trier open and safe for in-person learning while the community saw surges of COVID-19. However, with the vast majority of New Trier staff and many students vaccinated -- and with COVID-19 rates declining -- New Trier is confident that its school buildings can remain safe without this additional measure.

New Trier also will discontinue its COVID-19 dashboard this summer, since local data can be found on other websites, including the [Cook County Department of Public Health](#) and [Northwestern University](#).

This summer, faculty and staff will continue professional development and complete curricular work around the new block schedule. A [block schedule web page](#) includes frequently asked questions about the schedule.

Communications that families should expect over the summer include a form requesting a medical exemption for remote learning based on specific, limited state guidelines (July); Northfield Campus adviser assignments, schedules, and tour information (July); Winnetka Campus schedules and information on self-guided tours on Mondays (July/August); guided tours for sophomores and new families (early August); and COVID-19 mitigation plans (mid-August).

## Other News from the June 7 Meeting:

- During the public comment portion of the meeting, several community members, students, alumni, and staff members spoke about the selection of English Department reading materials. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, explained that course materials go through a rigorous process of selection and approval by teachers, departments, and the District. In English class reading selections, primary learning objectives include development of critical thinking and reading skills, analytical skills, and exploration of experiences that may be different from students' own using both classic and contemporary texts. Teachers are thoughtful in their lesson planning and careful and deliberate in leading class discussions that focus on books or chapters in their entirety, not scenes or words taken out of context from the arc of a story. Challenging themes, acts of violence, sexual content, and/or coarse language appear in many high school-level books, from *The Odyssey* to *The Catcher in the Rye* to *Two Boys Kissing*, an award-winning young adult novel with LGBTQ themes that was the subject of much of the public comment. Board members affirmed their support for the excellent teachers of the English Department in choosing and teaching literature at New Trier.
- Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson updated the Board on the [Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project](#), which is set to break ground in December. The project is currently in the design development phase, which includes a review of program requirements, a light analysis, and mechanical, HVAC, and structural design. Johnson said independent security consultants are helping the District review security systems and features in the planned facility. In the next six weeks, the District will go before several Village of Winnetka boards and commissions for approval, which is typical of large construction projects. Both Pepper Construction and an independent consulting firm are preparing cost estimates to assure the project stays within budget, with their reports expected by the end of June.
- The Board approved the [tentative amended budget](#) for Fiscal Year 2021, reflecting unanticipated revenues and expenses incurred after the current fiscal year budget was approved, including COVID-19 related revenues and expenditures. The amended budget for the year is balanced.

*The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.*

Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nths.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>

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