

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

October 18, 2021

Overview of Student Support Systems at New Trier

New Trier teachers, staff, and administrators are using an “everyone, everywhere” approach to providing systems of support to students, with different tiers of interventions and help available depending on each individual student’s needs.

Assistant Superintendent Joanne Panopoulos and faculty leaders told the Board about some of the ways in which New Trier employs Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and how the approach has been a focus for all staff in successfully transitioning students back to full in-person instruction this year. During staff institute days, staff meetings, and departmental professional development time, faculty and staff have discussed strategies for using MTSS in their classrooms or areas.

At New Trier, MTSS follows a three-tiered model for students who can benefit from academic and social-emotional support. For example, the vast majority of students (80-90%) thrive with Tier 1 or universal interventions such as high-quality differentiated instruction in their classrooms, tutoring help at the Academic Assistance Centers on both campuses, study skills/executive functioning strategies for all freshmen, and the adviser program setting the foundation for social-emotional learning with a trusted adult.

At Tier 2 (5-15% of students), staff may identify students who could benefit from small group strategies to address academic or social-emotional concerns. Some Tier 2 supports include the Math Resource or Reading and Writing Centers, the Guided Assistance Program, social work and student affinity groups, or programs targeted to students who have encountered extended school absences, substance abuse or social-emotional issues.

For a very small group of students (1-5%), more high-intensity individual support may be recommended through Tier 3 interventions. These include the Strategic Reading and Strategic Studies program, individual social work support, and other programs.

Faculty leaders stressed that MTSS is not a Special Education program, although students with identified Special Education needs may access some of the same supports through their Individualized Education Plans. Instead, MTSS is a framework for all faculty and staff to work together to provide both universal supports that can benefit every student and individualized interventions for any student who may need them. Director of Special Education Megan Zajac said next steps include developing more targeted supports in some academic and social-emotional areas, enhancing data collection, and providing more professional development to help staff identify and provide students access to appropriate supports more quickly. Click for the [New Trier MTSS presentation](#).

Monthly Observances Promote Culture of Belonging at New Trier

As part of the New Trier's commitment to promoting a culture of belonging, students, faculty, and staff have developed monthly programs this school year to recognize, honor, and provide educational opportunities around different identities reflected in the school community.

Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, told the Board that the monthly recognition programs are one part of the District's annual goals within the Culture, Climate, and Equity framework of its strategic plan, [New Trier 2030](#). The District is committed to making sure students of all identities feel that they belong at New Trier as well as preparing students for success in colleges, careers, and communities that may look different than New Trier.

Schoolwide committees helped create the monthly programs with student and staff input and developed toolkits and other ideas to promote the programming. These have included hallway posters and digital displays highlighting important people and events, curricular connections teachers can adapt for their classrooms, library displays and online resources, and lunch-and-learn sessions.

Students and staff told the Board about the materials, displays, and lessons they helped create for the first two recognition months: Hispanic Heritage (September), and LGBTQ+ History (October).

The Dance Division, for example, incorporated Hispanic Heritage Month into its curriculum by sharing videos and dances that originated in Hispanic/Latinx communities. The Division regularly connects students to different cultures through music and dance, including through guest artist workshops funded by New Trier Fine Arts Association grants, Coordinator Katie Kritek said. Senior Cris Cruz told the Board that the school's visible recognition of Hispanic/Latinx culture and history made him feel more welcome and proud to celebrate his own heritage at New Trier.

In October, "making the invisible visible" is a theme of LGBTQ+ History Month. An interactive toolkit for staff includes videos and articles about the evolution of language, definitions, and symbols around the LGBTQ+ community. Displays and library resources highlight important LGBTQ+ individuals in history, a lunch and learn opportunity featured leaders from Glenview Youth Pride, and the Japanese Culture and GSA clubs partnered to create origami pride displays at both campuses, among a number of other displays and events.

New Trier will observe Native American Heritage Month in November and then use the months of December and January to survey staff and students about the monthly resources and impact on the school community before resuming observances with Black History Month in February. Click for the [Promoting a Culture of Belonging presentation](#).

[Eight New Courses Proposed for 2022-2023 School Year](#)

Courses for students interested in zoology, fashion, music production, beginning or returning to a musical instrument, and glass blowing are among the new offerings proposed for the 2022-2023 school year.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos presented eight new course proposals that have been vetted by the Curriculum Council, department leaders, and administrators. The Board will vote next month on whether to endorse the proposed courses.

In Applied Arts, the department has proposed an Advanced Fashion Construction and Design course in response to the popularity of the current Introduction to Fashion Construction. The new course would give students interested in the fashion industry another opportunity to explore the many dimensions of the career field. Applied Arts and Special Education also have proposed an advanced co-taught course in Skilled Trades and Emerging Careers (STEC), providing students with a way to build upon the technical, trade, and leadership skills offered in the current introductory STEC class.

The Music & Theatre Department has proposed two new school-year courses. Beginning and Returning Instrumental Music would offer freshmen a chance to try an instrument for the first time or to reconnect with an instrument they once played. This new course recognizes that many students gave up playing an instrument during remote or hybrid learning and offers them a chance to move into New Trier's traditional four-year sequence of band, jazz, or orchestra. Music Production and Technology, a non-performance course, would engage students interested in the booming industry of music production.

The Science Department has proposed two new one-semester elective courses: Zoology and Applied Human Anatomy. The courses, offered at Level 2, would help meet the needs of students who want to take a third or fourth year of science or who want to explore a variety of interests rather than committing to a full-year course.

Finally, two proposed Summer School classes would offer new enrichment opportunities for students. In Art, Hot Shop Glass Blowing would allow students to take a class they might not otherwise be able to take during the school year or to prepare for full-year Glass Art classes. In Mathematics, a proposed Mathematical Mindset class for incoming 9th grade students would give students the opportunity to learn creative problem-solving skills that can apply to any math course. Click for the [New Course Proposal memo](#).

Other News from the October 18 Meeting:

- An independent audit of the District's finances and financial management had no findings, with the District remaining in a strong financial position due to prudent fiscal management. The audit is part of the [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report](#), which includes a detailed accounting of District funds and financial statements. The District also received recognition from the Association of School Business Officials International and the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial reporting.
- New Trier's average class size has remained stable at about 22 students per class for the past five years, Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos told the Board. The District creates a staffing and sectioning plan each year with a goal of maintaining or lowering average class sizes, meeting budget targets, and making strategic allocations in student services, supports, and Special Education, particularly following the pandemic disruptions of the past two years. The average class size is 22.1 this year, down slightly from 22.4 last year.
- Assistant Superintendent Joanne Panopoulos announced that the special education cooperative formerly known as Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSD) officially changed its name to [TrueNorth Educational Cooperative](#) this summer. As a member of TrueNorth, New Trier shares resources with 17 other school districts in the region to help provide every student with the opportunity to learn and reach their full potential. Through TrueNorth, New Trier students can access academic and behavioral

support, and New Trier staff can engage in high-quality professional learning that impacts student growth.

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>