

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
September 18, 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 Monday, September 18, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Keith Dronen, President
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

Administrators Present

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

Participated via Phone

Ms. Courtney McDonough

Absent

Mr. Avik Das

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Jill Cervantes, Post High School Counseling Department Chair; Mr. Tom Shorrock, Post High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Carrie Sowa, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Mr. Brandon Stiller, Science Department Faculty; Ms. Alicia Landes, Art Department Chair; Mr. Gary Schubert, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. James Wright, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Sara Gries, English Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; 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 – 6:30 p.m. – C234

II. CLOSED SESSION – Cancelled

Closed session was cancelled for this meeting.

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

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of September 18, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 6:32 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Mr. Das. Ms. McDonough participated via phone.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of August 21, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 21, 2023 (open and closed session). There was one request for changes to the minutes from Ms. Hahn which was incorporated. Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 21, 2023 (open and closed session), as amended. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

B. 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:

- It has been a good start to the year with teachers and students settling into their routines.
- The Extracurriculars Assembly recently took place. Mr. Tim Hayes, Northfield Student Activities Coordinator, Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director, and Ms. Anne James-Noonan, Northfield Performing Arts Coordinator shared information about clubs, athletics, and performing arts respectively. All freshmen attended with their adviser rooms over two days.
- The Student Activities Fair also recently took place. Mr. Waechtler thanked those sponsors and students who provided the opportunity for freshman to learn about various clubs.
- Recently, parents attended Freshman Parent Adviser Nights, where they learned about New Trier and met their student's adviser and senior helper. It was also an opportunity for parents to begin to build a partnership with their student's adviser. Opening comments for the evening were made by Mr. Waechtler, Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal, Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal for the Class of 2027, and Ms. Sue Ellen Haak and Mr. Mark Howard, Adviser Chairs.
- Movie Night in the Courtyard took place last Thursday with around 150 students attending. Students enjoyed watching "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." Mr. Waechtler thanked student council and parent volunteers as well as Mr. Hayes for their work.
- Hispanic Heritage Month runs from September 15th to October 15th. Mr. Waechtler shared a calendar with daily activities.

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

- She began by sharing that spirit has been great at school so far this year.
- Mr. Dan Weidner, Associate Principal for Academics and Administrative Services, introduced the five foreign exchange students, four of whom were in attendance. The school works with AFS to place students who have met a variety of criteria. Each student introduced themselves and shared about their experience so far at New Trier. Students included: Begona Bugman Cartes (Chile), Matteo Savry Cavard (France), Pascal Reyes Heyder (Chile), Luisa (Lu) Matheis (Germany), and Jersey Zimmerman (Germany). Mr. Weidner also thanked the host families for their support of the students. He then thanked the Board for their support of the program.
- Next, Mrs. Dubravec welcomed a group from Lagniappe Potpourri. Lagniappe is in its 85th year at New Trier. Student producers Ella Bostrom and Jack Murray shared about the work they do for Lagniappe. This year's production is entitled "Fill in the Blank." Lagniappe is New Trier's student produced variety show and is students' take on current events happening in the community and at school. The show is student driven which includes all aspects such as the music, scenes, design, and the set. As producers, Ms. Bostrom and Mr. Murray oversee all of Lagniappe including scheduling, communications, band, cast and crew, which totals around 80 students. The students receive guidance from their mentor and head sponsor, Ms. Nina Lynn. This is a unique opportunity for students as it is the only type of leadership offered in Performing Arts. Ms. Bostrom shared that during the first week the group had a meeting regarding the Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud initiative which has been implemented through the rehearsal and build process. She noted that it has gone well and has improved their community. Mr. Murray described how the group shows support for other productions taking place such as the upcoming *Burial at Thebes*. Ms. Bostrom also shared about the ability to problem-solve and work on issues that arise together. Students then performed a scene from the show entitled "Chronically Absent." It was written by students and directed by Miles Davidson.
- Mrs. Dubravec thanked Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications, Ms. Laura Cravens, Communications Specialist, Mr. Fontanetta, Mr. Andy Butler, Kinetic Wellness Department Chair, Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Sally for their work on the East Side Academic and Athletic project dedication ceremony. She shared photos from the event.
- Ms. Dizon and her team compiled the Community Guide that was recently sent out. The guide shares what is happening at New Trier such as projects, service work, the Extension, and work with alumni.
- Class reunions recently took place for the classes of 1961 and 1983. Student Ambassadors provide tours for the reunion.
- The Fall Activities Fair recently took place.
- Post-High School Counseling (PHSC) recently presented for parents their Next Steps for Seniors as well as a webinar about financial planning.
- Ms. Jennifer Wallace, author of *Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic – And What We Can Do About It*, will present her book for a Family Action Network (FAN) event on Thursday.

- New Trier has 35 National Merit Semifinalists. These students will find out in the spring if they are a finalist. There are several thousand scholarships that they can apply for. This is one of the larger groups that the school has had in a while.
- Transfer parents, along with parents from the New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA), will be able to participate on September 27th with Ms. Jen McDonough, Applied Arts Department Faculty, in an event called "Let's Cook." Ms. McDonough will demo a meal and then parents will be able to make it.
- Ms. Rachel Anderson has been working with her English Department chair, Mr. Ed Zwirner, and colleagues Mr. Brett Rubin and Ms. Adena Horwitz along with Ms. Kate Fassnacht, Special Education Department Faculty, to do something different this year in how they pick Peer Tutors. They interviewed over 100 students for positions and narrowed it down to 80 students who are now Peer Tutors. Students were then trained and given various scenarios as if they were tutoring students as practice. She commended Ms. Anderson and her team for this work.
- Mrs. Dubravec provided dates for upcoming performances, Homecoming events, and testing. Students are encouraged to attend Lagniappe on October 5th at 4:30 p.m. and then stick around for the Night Rally at 7:00 p.m. The Trevian Café will be open for food. It is a great way to bring performing arts and athletics together. She thanked staff and students for all their work on these upcoming events.

Mr. Dronen thanked Mrs. Dubravec for her report, noting it was good to see the students perform as well as meet the foreign exchange students.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there have been four requests since the last Board meeting. Three remain open, with one closed. They included records for taxi billing for student transportation, counts on English Language Learner students, as well as information on librarians and the transition program.

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 to Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. There was no request for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Profile of the Class of 2023

Mr. Tragos presented the profile of the Class of 2023. He welcomed Ms. Jill Cervantes, Post High School Counseling Department Chair and Mr. Tom Shorrock, Post High School Counseling Department Faculty, as they are key collaborators on the profile. This is the 14th consecutive year of this report, and it is being presented in September rather than December based on parent feedback and interest. Another note that Mr. Tragos shared was regarding the last table and addendum which has all schools that the class of 2023 are attending, a total of 236 schools. A late revision was also made in the report, as it was determined that some courses were not being accurately counted. Longitudinal data regarding the report has been delayed, to ensure its accuracy, and will be provided at a later date.

The class of 2023 were freshmen in the fall of 2019. They had five bell schedules throughout their high school career, with two in their freshmen year and then a different iteration the remaining three years. This class also took advantage of remote summer school during the summer of 2020 as many other opportunities were not occurring due to the pandemic. They also did hybrid learning in the 20-21 school year.

Mr. Tragos shared the four purposes of the profile. The data set includes 874 students who were at New Trier for four years while there were 932 graduates in this class. He went on to share course-taking patterns for core academics, noting it is recommended that students take four to five of these per year. Students will take anywhere from 16-20 courses over the span of their high school years, though there are some who may take more or less than this. About 72% of students took 19 or more core academic courses, which is a 2.3% decrease compared to 2022. A little over a quarter took more than 20 courses, which is a 1.7% decrease compared to last year. Some of these decreases are due to Covid when the school allowed students to drop classes that did not remain on their transcripts as a way to academically and social emotionally support students. The number of students taking fewer than 19 core academic courses increased by 2.3%. It is unclear if this will be a trend or not.

Regarding elective course-taking patterns, enrollment has increased for the second consecutive year. About 65% of students took between two and four elective courses. There was, however, a slight decrease in the percentage of freshmen taking at least one course, dropping from 92.4% with the class of 2022 to 91.1% for the class of 2023. Mr. Tragos also shared that more than one-quarter of the class took more than one elective per year, which is remarkable

and shows students' commitment to them. Mr. Tragos displayed a course taking patterns chart and shared details about it. The level system is flexible and fluid. He explained that the number of students only taking level four, three, or two courses for all eight semesters is a relatively small percentage. It is important to note that about 90% of students take a mixture of course levels. The percentage of students taking courses at levels 2, 3, and 4 was 14.6%, which has been trending up over the last several years.

Mr. Tragos noted that there are five college matriculation tables, on a variety of factors, which are included. He went on to share some of the trends in college applications and admissions, noting that the trend of increased number of applications per student continues. At the national level, there was a 13% increase. The average number of applications per student at New Trier was 8.9 in 2023 compared to 8.2 in 2022. Going back to 2020, that number was 7.0. Regarding test-optional applications, 53% of students submitted at least one. While a student may select test-optional for one college application, they may decide to send their test scores along with an application to a different school. Across the board, college acceptance rates and matriculation rates are similar to previous years. The post-high school counseling department is relied upon for their knowledge, expertise, and experience of the college landscape. Counselors stay current with trends and continue to build relationships with colleges. Ms. Pofcher asked a clarifying question about what the calculation is for college acceptance rates. She went on to ask if New Trier knows how many students apply to a given school versus where they decide to go. Dr. Johnson replied that that information is tracked in Naviance. She then inquired about the metric regarding the college acceptance rate, noting that often the question is if students are getting into a specific school at the same rate. Ms. Cervantes and Mr. Shorrock joined the conversation with Ms. Pofcher clarifying that a common question in the community is whether students are getting into schools as well as they used to. After further conversation, Ms. Pofcher wanted to understand the correct way to reframe this dialogue and what metrics are used to do so. Ms. Cervantes replied that this speaks to the changing landscape of admissions as the number of applications and unique applicants has increased nationally and the average number of applications per student has increased. She went on to share that in terms of admit rates and how New Trier students compare to the national admit rates for any institution is available in Naviance for families. Ms. Cervantes also included that there is further deciphering of the data as there are many ways to look at it. Ms. Hahn added that in Ms. Pofcher's question, she heard the inquiry about how today's New Trier students compare to those New Trier students of the past. After further conversation, Ms. Cervantes shared that admissions have gotten increasingly competitive for New Trier students, but overall, compared to the increasing competitiveness across the nation, New Trier students are fairing very well. Dr. Sally added that it is a difficult comparison to go back 15-20 years. Students, parents, and PHSC are working with the current reality that there are two more applications per student than in the past, while recognizing that students feel they need to spread their wings and look at more options. Regarding the college matriculation charts, Dr. Sally shared that often people look for the college they want to attend and go across looking at the level profile and other data. The best way to use this chart is to go down the column and look for those schools of students who have a similar profile to one's own. This widens the point-of-view that it is not just about one school, but there are a lot of options and New Trier students have gone to many different colleges. Ms. Cervantes added the caveat that the average number of applications per student is self-reported and shared further details around this.

Ms. Hahn referencing the post-high school counseling role and noting the changing landscape and tests having less of a priority for schools shared that there is more of an emphasis on the personal essay. She inquired if the school is doing more to support students on the essay portion of the application. Ms. Cervantes referenced page six of the report where the trends are addressed. She went on to share additional comments, but specifically addressing the essay portion, Ms. Cervantes noted that the department hosts summer essay seminars to help guide students through the essay writing process. Post-high school counselors spend many hours throughout the fall reviewing students' essays. Ms. Cervantes also shared that there is a partnership with the English department as well. MaiaLearning will also have enhanced essay support for students. Mr. Shorrock added that students also work individually with their post-high school counselor. Ms. Cervantes also shared that half of the department is currently at the national conference networking with college representatives. Mr. Tragos commented that looking at the college matriculation tables are one dimension of a student's experience. Recognizing the individual stories behind the numbers in the report is important.

Ms. Hahn mentioned a gap year as well as other non-college paths such as the military or trade schools. She noted that 20 students decided to take a gap year and inquired if that was an increase or decrease or remained steady from what has been seen in the past. She also inquired about data regarding non-traditional post-high school paths. Mr. Tragos noted that 11 students took a gap year from the class of 2022. A few are doing a post-graduate year, while most are taking the year to pursue a sport or other activity. Regarding non-traditional, non-college bound include those who went into the military and are doing apprenticeships. Ms. Hahn shared that receiving more information on

this would be interesting given the state mandate on career paths. It is important for families to hear these are a path and may become increasingly popular in the years to come. Mr. Tragos shared that the District is working on the PACE framework, which is the college and career pathways, so some shifts may be seen. This will meet one of the District's strategic goals of having multiple post-high school options for students. Ms. Cervantes added that MaiaLearning offers support that will help students identify career options along with two- or four-year colleges that can assist them along that path. It also is a robust resource for international colleges.

Ms. Hahn inquired about how the AP courses are counted if a student takes a course where they take two tests. Mr. Tragos replied that it is counted as taking one AP course. Referencing the increase in students taking AP courses, Ms. Hahn inquired if the school has what it needs to meet the demand. Mr. Tragos replied that staffing around courses is driven by student interest so as long as there are enrollments that justify a section, the school will continue to offer the course. Mr. Tragos is currently working with department leaders to see if there are any AP courses that are not offered but should be. Ms. Hahn asked Mr. Tragos to articulate New Trier's position that it only allows juniors and seniors to take AP courses, which she believes is a good policy. Ms. Hahn shared additional comments around this, noting she hears about this out in the community. Mr. Tragos replied that New Trier has the belief that only juniors and seniors should be the only ones to take AP courses because these are college courses. The integrity of a college course meets the need of an eleventh or twelfth grader. He then spoke to the school's rigorous level four curriculum or high honors. These courses are in preparation for New Trier students that are not necessarily in place at other schools. These other schools also do not have the range of options to meet students at various levels. Mr. Tragos understands the question about whether the school's policy disadvantages students and is something the school is working on. He shared it is important to know that students are assessed by college on the rigor of the curriculum offered at their school. The school is looking at practices especially to give students greater access and opportunity.

Ms. Tomlinson thanked Mr. Tragos for providing the report now instead of later in the year. She remembers a parent coming in front of the Board and asking if the report could be shared earlier as it helps students and parents make college decisions. She noted her appreciation for the juggling of schedules to make the report available. Ms. Tomlinson noted that Mr. Tragos was working on adding more semester-long electives. She shared that sometimes students would like to try something new without committing to it for the entire year or have the option to try two different kinds of electives within one year. She encouraged the school to continue to look for opportunities for students to get their feet wet without having to commit to a whole year. She noted that this dovetails when talking about students taking 19 or more core courses and perhaps by having electives that are not a full year commitment might enable students to continue to take a more rigorous schedule of core courses.

Ms. Tomlinson then inquired how the school is communicating the process and timing of making level changes to students and families. Mr. Tragos noted it is communicated to students through the adviser system and other school channels. There are likely periods within the school year such as at the quarter and semester. However, it is suggested that students complete the year in the current level and at course selection time select the next level. If a student is struggling, students are supported, and changes are made when necessary. Dr. Sally added that teacher-student conversations around this are important.

Next, Ms. Tomlinson inquired about matriculation and if it is fair to say that academic rigor, in terms of the number of core courses taken, can be just as important as the level that students are taking. If so, she asked how the school was following up with those students who took below 18 core courses. Mr. Tragos clarified that the question is if the number of courses and the level of courses are equivalent in terms of rigor. Ms. Tomlinson shared additional comments. Ms. Cervantes replied that it is all about balance, whether it is a question of level or volume, either way students are counseled to take a balance of classes that they feel they have a good chance for success in.

Ms. Tomlinson shared her excitement for the post-high school counselors who are attending the national conference. She noted there are about 45 schools where New Trier sends about 550 students. She encouraged them to market New Trier and *Characteristics of a New Trier Grad*. Ms. Cervantes noted the department's appreciation for the support of the Board and administration for this work. Mr. Shorrock added that conversations with colleges validate the department's work when they say to a counselor that they know New Trier students will be successful at their institution.

Ms. Alcantara inquired how the PHSC department knows what or how many colleges students applied to. Ms. Cervantes replied that students self-report where they are applying through the transcript request process and there are other platforms that colleges use to share data with counselors. Ms. Alcantara then inquired if the department

would know if a student requested a transcript, but then did not apply, to which Ms. Cervantes replied that they would. Ms. Alcantara then went on to share about early decision and how that seems to be more popular. Ms. Cervantes noted about 30% of the class applied early decision. Ms. Alcantara inquired how it is recorded if a student gets in early decision and withdraws their other applications. Ms. Cervantes replied that if the application is withdrawn before an admission decision was rendered then it is a withdrawal and not a denial. This information can be found in Naviance. It was noted that the school is moving from Naviance to MaiaLearning in November for the classes of 2025, 2026, and 2027. Ms. Alcantara shared her appreciation for tables 2.5 and 2.6 as they provide helpful information regarding all the institutions that students attend. She then went on to inquire if it is possible to know which school a student applied to within an institution. Ms. Cervantes noted that this can be difficult as through the transcript request process students self-report this information. She also noted that some colleges do provide this information to the department. Ms. Cervantes encouraged parents to talk to their student's counselor as this information is not part of the public facing parent connection in Naviance. Ms. Alcantara inquired if the school applied to could be gleaned from the Common App to which Ms. Cervantes said this is not possible. Conversation continued around this topic with Mr. Dronen. Ms. Cervantes clarified that the University of Illinois does provide information as to which of its schools within the university students have been admitted or not. On the other hand, Ms. Cervantes said there are some schools who share no application data.

Mr. Dronen then inquired about how a New Trier student who is interested in engineering or sciences is being prepared to compete not only against U.S. students, but also international students who may have more of a background in science and math. Ms. Cervantes replied that it is the curriculum and experiences that New Trier offers both inside and outside the classroom. She also said that much depends on the institutions and variables specific to them.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there was enough data regarding test optional and if it is impacting positively, negatively, or neutral for students. Mr. Shorrock replied that there is flexibility for a student to tailor make their application around the score. He noted that there was more of a positive impact overall, anecdotally, as there is more flexibility in the choice of whether to represent themselves through testing. Ms. Cervantes added that the change to test optional has also influenced application numbers across the country. This is one of the main contributing factors to selectivity across the board. Students, free from the obligation of submitting tests, may be applying to a broader range of schools that they otherwise would have felt might have been too competitive. Ms. Hahn inquired if the department feels increasingly confident in their ability to counsel individual students on when or when not to submit test scores as well as which program to apply to based on their profile. Ms. Cervantes shared that one of the priorities of the department is the continual networking that is done with colleges. The department hosts over 200 colleges every fall and each rep that visits speaks with a post-high school counselor. Ms. Tomlinson inquired if there were any student ombudsmen that would accompany the department with any of this or could give tours. Ms. Cervantes shared that often reps are on a very tight schedule.

Ms. Alcantara noted that she looked at the September 15th report versus the September 18th one, specifically table 1A.2. She anticipated that all the numbers would have gone up, but some went down, and she inquired if that was because some summer school classes were missing. Mr. Tragos noted that some students who did not have a course counted would have increased their number of courses so some would have moved up. Dr. Sally added that the numbers in the last column should have gone up, but those in the middle columns could go either way.

B. Facilities Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic and 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Projects

Dr. Johnson provided a brief update on the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (ESAA) and the 15 Year Plan Summer 2023 Projects. He noted it is an exciting time as the school transitions from construction to seeing students and families in the new spaces that better support student needs. Dr. Johnson provided pictures from the dedication ceremony. He shared that around 1,000 people attended, and it was great to see a variety of people from future New Trier students to graduates enjoying the space.

The District continues to process its backlog of change orders, totaling about \$306,000. The project continues to be within budget. The future change order number is decreasing as some of the backlog is processed with each item given the time and diligence they require to make final decisions. A final budget report will be available in early 2024.

The Transition Center hosted an open house last week. Dr. Johnson shared pictures and briefly described the newly constructed spaces. State Senator Laura Fine, who is a supporter of the District, also stopped by. He thanked Dr.

Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Ed and Student Services, Ms. Megan Zajac, Director of Special Education, and Ms. Kari Nakayama, Transition Center Coordinator, for their work on the event.

Much work has been done at Duke Childs Field with the field outlines now visible. The project is on schedule and on budget and should be completed in November. There continues to be strong collaboration with the Village of Winnetka on the project as well.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for August 2023

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for August 2023, the second month of the fiscal year. Fund balances for all accounts total \$87,901,614. The weighted portfolio yield for PMA, which is the bulk of the District's funds, is 4.83%. Some of the District's longer-term investments are still locked in at lower rates (2.11%) and as those mature will earn higher yields of cash. Cash balances are entering an atypical low point as the District awaits property tax disbursements and begins the school year. The school is in a time of high spending while awaiting property tax payments that it would have received in August. Tax bills are expected to be issued November 1st with a December 1st deadline. This is being monitored closely. Ms. Tomlinson inquired if the District could cover these four months. Dr. Johnson noted that while this is longer than the District would like, it is a month earlier than last year. The project that the county is doing to improve the systems to accurately assess properties will pay dividends in the long run in terms of property tax appeals and having an efficient system for this process. Mr. Dronen inquired if these computer issues will be completed by next year. Dr. Johnson replied that it may take a third year as reassessments are done in triennials, so the county needs to get through three cycles of implementing the system. Hopefully, next year it will be a shorter delay. The District does not have official word from the county so the District cannot commit to long-term investments when cash comes in as it needs to be kept liquid. Ms. Tomlinson noted that the District is losing 4%, with Dr. Johnson sharing that the District's cash earns over 5% now but is losing the opportunity to commit to one or multi-year investments to maintain the ladder. This is due to the uncertainty about when the revenue will come in next year.

B. Financial Report for August 2023

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for August 2023. Operating revenue was \$7,300,000 for the first two months of the fiscal year, or 51% higher compared to the prior year. Dr. Johnson noted that the District received over \$2 million in property tax distributions in August, which will be recorded in this report, but through the audit will be adjusted back to last year as they were part of the first installment of tax bills issued in the spring. The tentative budget for operating revenue is 6.51% higher than last fiscal year.

Operating expenditures were \$8,900,000 through August, or 2.2% higher than last year. Year to year comparisons for the first several months of the fiscal year do not offer much value due to the timing of purchases, reversing journal entries, and revenue receipts varying significantly from one year to the next.

The tentative budget for operating expenditures is 5.61% higher than last year. Book balances for all accounts were \$90,116,948. The audit is going well and has moved on to the audit fieldwork piece of the process. The final report will be presented at the October Board meeting.

***C. Public Hearing: 2023-2024 Final Budget**

Mr. Dronen called the public hearing regarding the 2023-2024 final budget to order at 7:33 p.m. Dr. Johnson welcomed Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, to present the final budget. Dr. Johnson shared initial comments noting that the District has worked diligently with its administration and staff to align resources to support students. The budget is balanced and accomplishes three key goals: supporting students with a new graduating class team structure, supporting teachers in the first full year of the new faculty agreement, allowing the District to recruit and retain a top-notch faculty and continuing to invest in its campuses for the benefit of students, staff, and community through its facilities.

Mr. Spiwak provided a timeline of the budget process. The Illinois State Board of Education code requires the Board to approve a budget no later than September 30th. The budget is the District's spending plan and is used to maximize the financial support that can be directed towards educational and other programs for students. The budget supports a deep and broad curriculum, including providing resources and staffing for electives where 89% of students pursue two or more electives over their four years. The budget also supports a robust extracurricular program via student activities, performing arts, and athletics. There are about 150 clubs available to students covering a wide variety of themes. Mr. Spiwak shared that while there are try-outs for many sports, athletics also has no cut opportunities for

students. He also shared that new this fall is a girls' flag football team as the school is always open to supporting new activities if students are interested. The budget also allocates funds for programs that support the individual needs of learners. This includes the adviser program, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and graduating class teams.

Next, Mr. Spiwak provided a summary of the operating budget which is comprised of the four funds that are the day-to-day operations of the District. It excludes capital projects and debt service. For FY 2024, there is a revenue budget of just under \$134 million or a 6.5% increase over last year. The expenditure budget is just over \$127 million, which is a 5.6% increase. This is considered a balanced budget. It is important to have a surplus because the East Side Athletic and Academic (ESAA) project was funded primarily by a bond issuance with the understanding that the bond payments would be made from operating funds rather than through referendum. A surplus budget of at least \$3.5 million is needed to cover the debt payments. Prior to that payment, there is around a \$7 million surplus, once that payment is made, it will leave the District with a surplus of just under \$4 million.

Mr. Spiwak then shared about fund balance transfers and for FY24, the plan is to transfer \$15 million to the capital projects fund. These transfers utilize resources from prior years that were not expended. These fund capital projects and work that would not get done otherwise. The money will help to finish payments on the ESAA project, the remaining summer work from this year as well as next year's summer work. After that transfer, the District ends up using fund balances of almost \$11 million. Mr. Spiwak pointed out that that is based off of ending FY23 with the budgeted surplus of \$2.3 million with \$8 million of fund balanced used. Although the audit is not done yet, Mr. Spiwak and Dr. Johnson are confident that the District will end FY23 considerably better than budgeted. That will go into the fund balance and shrink the amount that will be used for FY24. While \$11 million is budgeted for use, realistically, the hope is that the amount is closer to \$5-6 million of fund balance used. Once the audit is complete, the exact numbers will be known.

Mr. Spiwak shared revenue highlights, noting that about 90% of the District's income comes from property taxes. He thanked the community for the financial support, noting the District strives to have a fiscally responsible budget each year while utilizing the funds to the best of its ability. The District last asked for an operating referendum in 2003 and made a five year no referendum commitment, which has been extended 20 years. State revenue remains consistent. Other Local revenue is quite a bit higher and is due to interest revenue.

On the expenditures side, salaries are the largest component of the budget at 66%. Together with benefits, it is 80% of the budget. Mr. Spiwak shared additional details around this. Regarding benefits, health insurance costs have increased 14% for FY24. Several factors are influencing this, and it is a national trend. New Trier is part of an area cooperative, but part of the insurance premium is based on what employees are experiencing and FY23 was not a particularly healthy year. The District is working to manage these costs such as by offering a wellness program. Purchase services are increasing by 12%, some of which is due to inflation, and are expenses that the District did not have in FY23 or are significantly higher in FY24. Supplies and materials are expected to decrease by 2.6%. Capital outlay in operating funds, which is primarily equipment and maintenance around the campuses, is expected to decrease slightly. Another capital outlay, which is not part of the operating budget, is a significant portion of it at \$35 million. This is where the \$15 million in transfer funds come from to support capital projects. After additional comments, Mr. Spiwak shared that these transfers, and making sure the District has a surplus budget every year, allows it to keep funding projects without going to referendum. Mr. Spiwak shared there is a Board policy on fund balances and that the District must retain at least 50% to cover expenses. Even with the transfer, the District is still within the policy guidelines. After a better-than-expected FY23, the District anticipates it will be somewhere between 50-60%. Ms. Tomlinson noted that this is in the operating fund, which Mr. Spiwak confirmed. The Other category mostly includes Special Education, which is a strong program serving over 650 students. Mr. Spiwak noted there was a one percent decrease in their expenses, which he further explained.

Dr. Johnson shared that the District has been recognized by several different organizations for its financial stewardship. One is the *Certificate of Excellence Award in Financial Reporting* from ASBO International for the 18th consecutive year. The *Certificate of Achievement Award in Financial Reporting* from the Government Finance Officers Association has been awarded for the 17th consecutive year. The *Certificate of Financial Recognition* from ISBE notes that the District meets several metrics in terms of finances. These awards are testaments to the Board's leadership, the work of the administration along with the work of Mr. Spiwak and his team in managing the budget effectively for the benefit of the students and community.

Dr. Johnson thanked the administration and business office for their work in developing the budget. He also thanked the community for their support. The budget demonstrates the community's commitment to the educational program offered by the District and the District's commitment to strong fiscal stewardship.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there were any public comments, of which there were none. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn thanked Dr. Johnson and Mr. Spiwak for a comprehensive report. She noted that the budget was characterized as a spending plan though she stated that an institution's budget is a reflection of its core values. Continuing, she stated that Dr. Johnson, Mr. Spiwak, and the business office have prepared and presented a budget for the Board's approval that balances its obligation to invest the community's generous resources with its commitment to provide an exceptional educational experience for students. She shared further comments, noting that developing a budget that meets these objectives would be difficult in a vacuum let alone under the pressures that have been brought to bear on this process over the last few years such as disruptions to supply chains, historic inflation, and labor shortages. Ms. Hahn commended the District for the care and diligence that was brought to this process. She thanked the District for presenting a balanced budget that ensures the school can uphold the community's expectations of delivering excellence to students. Dr. Johnson replied to Ms. Hahn's comments about a student-centered budget with the example of the girls' flag football team. When interest arose about it and the decision was made to move forward, the District knew it had the resources to allocate to the program. The team started with 20 students and two coaches, but quickly doubled and the District was able to hire additional coaches.

Ms. Alcantara shared her appreciation for the report and requested that the presentation be posted to BoardDocs.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education move to Adjourn the Public Hearing on the 2023-2024 Final Budget. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

The public hearing was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

***D. 2023-2024 Final Budget Approval**

Ms. Alcantara moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the Resolution to Adopt the Annual Budget for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year and the School District Budget, as presented. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, August 1 - 31, 2023
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends – Appointments, Stipends – Separation, Termination, and Administrative Contract Amendment)
- Policy Revisions Second Reading – PRESS 112
- ISBE Compensation Report
- Resolution Authorizing the Prompt Payment of Bills

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Alcantara moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, August 1 – 31, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Stipends - Separation, Termination, and Administrative Contract Amendment); Policy Revisions

Second Reading – PRESS 112; ISBE Compensation Report; and the Resolution Authorizing the Prompt Payment of Bills. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. Alcantara noted that the **Policy Committee** as well as the **Facilities Steering Committee** did not meet since the last Board meeting.

Ms. Alcantara shared that the **New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA)** met on September 5th, which she was unable to attend. There was also an NTPA executive committee mixer at Elder Lane Park on September 13th which was an opportunity for everyone to gather and introduce themselves.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF)** will meet on Thursday. They have launched, for the first time, the School Spirit Showdown between the NTEF and the Evanston Educational Foundation. It is a race to see who has the most actual donors, not donation amounts, between September 12th and 29th. The winner will be announced at the New Trier vs. Evanston football game on September 29th.

Ms. Pofcher shared that the **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)** will meet on Wednesday.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- Ms. Jennifer Wallace will be interviewed by Mrs. Dubravec for a FAN event.
- The fall play, *The Burial at Thebes*, will be performed September 27th – 29th.
- Laginappe will take place October 4th – 6th.
- Dr. Sally mentioned the Community Guide, noting it was an invitation for the community to come to New Trier to see all the wonderful things that students are doing.
- Homecoming will be on Friday, October 6th.
- The next Board meeting is Monday, October 16th.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Keith Dronen, President