

**Executive Summary
of the
2005-2010 New Trier Township High School
District Strategic Plan
(adopted by the Board of Education on March 21, 2005)**

**prepared by Dr. Henry Bangser, Superintendent
September 15, 2005**

Excerpts from the Preface to the 2005-2010 District Strategic Plan

written by Ms. Onnie Scheyer, President, on behalf of the Board of Education

In May 1995, the first New Trier Strategic Plan Committee presented its final report to the New Trier community, the culmination of two years of a broad and far-reaching process. In the report, the authors spoke of charging themselves with the task of “articulating the high school’s new vision so that its future students will continue to aspire to be among the very best in a global community.” The report went on to identify its theme of “students at the center of learning” -- a theme which has been built upon since then through the implementation of recommendations from that 1995 plan and through continued innovation on the part of District leaders to provide an environment which supports the fulfillment of the school’s motto, “to commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of humanity.”

In the 10 years since 1995, much has happened at New Trier High School. Enrollment has continued to grow significantly, and with it has come a new campus model, implemented in 2001, with freshmen at the Northfield campus and sophomores, juniors, and seniors at the Winnetka campus. Financial security has been ensured for the District through the passage, in April, 2003, of a tax rate referendum, an act which reflected the community’s support of and confidence in the continued excellence of New Trier High School and a commitment from the Board of Education and staff to continue to act responsibly in its management of the District’s resources.

As enrollment has grown, so have opportunities for our students, due to a dedication on the part of the Board of Education and the staff leaders to ensure that each student can explore his or her interests while at New Trier. Indeed, opportunities for exploration and growth, academic, co-curricular, and personal, have never been greater.

We recognize, however, that with opportunity comes the responsibility to make good choices, to live a healthy and balanced life, to find the connections among one’s experiences, and to model ethical behavior.

Approval of the recommended Strategic Plan is, in this case, defined as the Board’s adoption of the objectives set forth in the Plan and the agreement to move into the stages of research, development, and, if appropriate, to implementation. To that effect, we recommend that each individual action plan be presented to the Board for approval prior to implementation. At the time of recommendation for implementation, each action plan must include a clear and reliable accounting of its projected costs, not only financial, but in terms of personnel, time, and space. Also included will be an outline for assessment, including a definition of that which will be assessed, the criteria by which it will be assessed, and a timeline for such an assessment.

To complement these added guidelines for implementation, the Board also recommends that there be formed a committee which would serve as an advisory body as action plans are being researched and analyzed prior to the recommendation to implement. This committee would be comprised of a membership consistent with what has been modeled throughout this Strategic Planning process -- that is, Superintendent, Board members, staff, students, and community members. This advisory committee would receive periodic reports of the individual committees as they do their research and analysis, assisting them in their mission to fully develop each action plan prior to presentation to the Board of Education.

Excerpts from the Strategic Plan

written by Dr. Henry Bangser, Superintendent

Strategic Planning 2003-05

We launched the second and present strategic planning process in October 2003. To structure our planning program, the Board of Education appointed Dr. Howard Feddema, a pre-eminent strategic planning facilitator for 17 years with The Cambridge Group. For 40 hours during a three-day session from December 11-13, 2003, Dr. Feddema met with our 30-person District Strategic Planning Team composed of community members, staff, two members of the Board of Education, and students. Collectively and unanimously, the Team wrote the Mission, Belief Statements, Parameters, Objectives and Strategies presented below.

MISSION (expression of the District's identity, purpose, and means of action)

The mission of New Trier Township High School is to inspire students "to commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of humanity" by working in partnership with the community to provide innovative programs for all students, nurture their unique abilities, and encourage them to pursue excellence in their endeavors.

BELIEF STATEMENTS (expression of the District's fundamental values, its ethical code, overriding convictions, and inviolable commitments)

We believe that . . .

- every human being is unique, has worth, and deserves respect.
- diversity enriches the individual, school, and community.
- each and every person can learn.
- individuals are responsible and accountable for their actions.
- education is a shared responsibility among the student, family, school, and community.
- emotional, physical, and social well-being enhance learning and life.
- integrity, civility, and fairness are vital to healthy human interaction.
- the pursuit of excellence in education justifies the investment of time, effort, and resources.
- each individual has the responsibility to contribute to others, society, and the environment.
- the courage to take risks and the willingness to learn from mistakes offer opportunities for growth.
- lifelong learning contributes to a meaningful life.

PARAMETERS (standards which the District will not compromise)

- we will maintain academic performance at the highest levels consistent with our tradition of excellence.
- we will maintain the 1-3 Enrollment Model: one school on two campuses.

- we will practice fiscal responsibility by honoring the commitment made to the community by the Board of Education in the construction of the April 1, 2003 referendum; specifically, the District will maintain fund balance reserves of at least four and one-half months for at least five years, and there will be no new tax rate referendum for at least five years.
- we will maintain a safe and respectful environment conducive to learning.
- we will balance our quest for innovation with respect for our tradition.

OBJECTIVES (commitments of the District to achieve specific, measurable results)

- All students will explore their individual aspirations, talents, and interests and set meaningful goals so they can confidently pursue their dreams.
- All students will demonstrate that they are making meaningful connections among their high school learning experiences: academic, social, and personal.
- All students will consistently demonstrate ethical conduct as responsible citizens.
- All students will make choices that will promote a healthy, balanced life.

STRATEGIES

(initiatives that constructed the basis of the six Action Teams and through which the District will deploy its resources toward the stated mission and objectives)

In partnership with the New Trier community . . .

Climate of Exploration

we will develop an educational climate and structure that enable students to explore aspirations, talents, and interests across their high school years in order to set meaningful goals and confidently pursue their dreams.

Connections among Experiences

we will design and implement structures that will allow students to make meaningful connections among academic, personal, social, and other life experiences.

Ethical Conduct and Global Citizenship

we will identify, communicate, model, and reinforce standards of ethical conduct and responsible global citizenship.

Healthy, Balanced Life

we will identify those factors that place excessive demands on time and energy in the pursuit of excellence and develop plans to encourage a healthy, balanced life.

Intrinsic Value of Learning

we will design academic leveling and grade weighting systems that foster the intrinsic value of learning and achieve our mission and objectives.

Optimal Use of Time

we will design a calendar and schedule for optimal use of time to help us achieve our mission and objectives.

Recommended Short-Term Action Plans (2005-07), Mid to Long-Term Action Plans (2007-10), and Action Plans Requiring Focused Research Prior to Potential Inclusion in the District Strategic Plan

The 2005-2010 Draft Strategic Plan affirms the excellent work of the six action teams--constructed to address the six strategies from the December 2003 session-- by including all 41 of the recommended action plans. For four initiatives (i.e., intersession, a mandated lunch period, the daily and weekly class schedule, and school-within-a-school), an action plan has been combined with a similar and/or complementary action plan from another action team. Each of the 41 original action plans is assigned to one of the following three categories for implementation in the 2005-2010 Draft Strategic Plan:

- **21 short-term action plans**, to be completed in two years or less - - March 2007 or earlier.
- **13 mid to long-term action plans**, to be completed between 2007 and 2010. Successful strategic planning processes provide for an annual review of what has been accomplished in that year and what is to be considered in the new, updated five-year agenda. When the first year of the Strategic Plan is evaluated in the summer of 2006, the items in this mid to long-term category should be reviewed, assigning them for completion within the 2007-10 period.
- **7 action plans for focused research**, to determine by December 2006, through conversations among staff, students, parents, and the community, whether the action plan should be placed in the Strategic Plan. When this research is completed, a recommendation should be made to the superintendent regarding the disposition of the action plan.

Two Connecting Themes

The implementation of the 2005-2010 Draft Strategic Plan will bring to the District significant, systemic change within the two connecting themes noted below that meld initiatives from the six action teams. All of the 21 short-term action plans will be placed in one of these themes to help the District Leadership Team and other staff, students, and parents develop synergies between and among the action plans.

- Students at the Center of Their Active Learning
- Parents and the Community at the Center of District Two-Way Communications

Conclusion

Finally, it is impossible to overstate the importance of the ongoing support from the New Trier community, not only financially as evidenced by the overwhelming passage of the April 1, 2003 Referendum, but in so many other ways. We feel the pride that our community members have in New Trier. The sole purpose of this Strategic Plan is to enhance our District through a greater mutual understanding of what we value together for New Trier students in the next five years. Your interest in us will be tapped consistently as we communicate with you about the issues in the action plans.

The results of this strategic planning process ensure a future in which parents, community members, and students will be consulted concerning many important issues at New Trier while they are being analyzed by the District staff. This is what the original (December

2003) 30-person District Strategic Planning Team underscored through a portion of the District Mission, “by working in partnership with the community,” and in one Belief Statement, “education is a shared responsibility among the student, family, school, and community.”

Whatever initiatives comprise the Strategic Plan ultimately adopted by the Board of Education, this planning process will have placed before the public a broad array of complex issues that have been debated for years in staff meetings and at the dinner tables of our students and parents. The District has provided relatively few forums or structures for those three constituencies to address many of these strongly held beliefs—in one room, all together. There is such a forum now.

I. Short-Term Action Plans¹

to be completed by March 2007

Note: The administrator(s) responsible for leading the implementation stage of the action plan is/are listed in parenthesis next to the action plan. Each administrator's title can be found at the end of the document.

A. **Students at the Center of Their Active Learning**

- Enhance our efforts to ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment for all students. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Develop a system to implement a Personal Exploration Plan (PEP) to support each student's academic growth and other personal development. (Tim Hayes and Jon White)
- Create smaller learning communities including an interdisciplinary school-within-a-school. (Linda Yonke)
- Include students in all-school committees that make decisions about curriculum and instruction. (Linda Yonke)
- Create a student-driven program to identify and articulate New Trier's core standards of ethical conduct and responsible global citizenship with appropriate follow-up activities, including communicating the standards and identifying curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programs that teach the standards. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Evaluate the recommendation to mandate a lunch period for each student. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of our present daily and weekly class schedule with several other daily and weekly class schedule models. (Hank Bangser) *Note: This combined action plan is projected to be completed by March 2006.*
- Develop institutional guidelines for homework and a departmental schedule for testing and deadlines. (Linda Yonke)
- Promote healthy eating habits among students and staff members. (Don Goers)
- Utilize the adviser system to dispel misperceptions about the high school experience at New Trier. (Tim Hayes and Jon White)
- Analyze options for use of time to maximize interactions among staff members, among students and staff, and among students. (Linda Yonke)

¹ Of the 21 short-term action plans, several were combined into one plan, thus reducing the total number to 17.

B. Parents and the Community at the Center of District Two-Way Communications

- Enhance family and community understanding of and involvement in the opportunities for student engagement and exploration within New Trier. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Increase the existing network of resources to provide students and staff with more experiential learning. (Laura Blair Bertani)
- Strengthen the partnership with families and teachers of students in sender schools in order to dispel misperceptions about the high school experience at New Trier that contribute to excessive stress and anxiety. (Hank Bangser)
- Affirm the present academic level system that flexibly addresses students' strengths and allows for movement and choice. (Matt Ottaviano)
- Educate the community, staff, students, and sender school districts about the need to relieve students of extrinsic pressures as they develop a love of learning. (Hank Bangser)
- Enhance the portrayal of our students' performance to colleges and universities by eliminating all ranking of students at New Trier, beginning with the Class of 2010. (Jon White)
- Adopt a comprehensive school-wide calendar process with web-based communication. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)

II. Mid to Long-Term Action Plans *to be completed by June 2010*

- Enhance student understanding of and involvement in the opportunities for their engagement and exploration within New Trier. (Tim Hayes and Jon White)
- Nurture a culture within New Trier that welcomes help and support from external sources. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Examine co-curricular, extracurricular, and leadership programs on campus and provide sufficient opportunities for participation. (Jim Bloch)
- Increase resources for the existing New Trier courses that provide integrated learning experiences and develop new courses and programs that support interdisciplinary learning. (Linda Yonke)
- Evaluate and coordinate existing programs where students reach beyond the New Trier community to promote responsible global citizenship. (Tim Hayes, Matt Ottaviano, and Jon White)

- Promote responsible global citizenship by creating additional opportunities for our students to have direct contact with peoples of diverse backgrounds. (Tim Hayes and Matt Ottaviano)
- Increase the recruitment and retention of diverse staff members. (Laura Blair Bertani)
- Require students to obtain departmental approval to register for an AP course. (Linda Yonke)
- Provide students, staff, and parents with the skills, strategies, and resources needed to manage stress and time more effectively. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Expand educational efforts that address substance abuse and prevention programs for students. Design ways to include parents and staff in these efforts. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)
- Reduce anxiety about the college admissions process by dispelling misconceptions. (Jon White)
- Continue to advocate for our students with colleges and universities, with special emphasis given to the positive impact of strategic changes on New Trier's strengths in academics, leadership, athletics, and performing arts. A similar program would be used to keep families and township residents informed. (Jon White)
- Coordinate scheduling of the departments to achieve a balanced workload among their experiences at the end of each semester. (Linda Yonke)

III. Action Plans for Focused Research²

research to be completed by March 2007 to determine if one or more should be implemented by June 2010

- Develop several voluntary extended studies opportunities and offer an intersession experience for all students that allows them to make personal connections among academic, personal, social, and other life experiences. (Linda Yonke)
- Identify and create a plan for each course in each department so that ethical conduct and global citizenship can be illustrated and reinforced. Create new staff development programs and a plan for each athletic program and extracurricular activity to support the core standards developed through this strategy. (Jan Borja and Debbie Stacey)

² Seven of the action plans for focused research were combined to create three action plans.

- Implement a timeline that eliminates our grade weighting system, a method that detracts from the intrinsic value of learning and emphasizes competitiveness and extrinsic forces that detract from learning. (Linda Yonke)

Administrators Leading Strategic Planning Research and Implementation Committees

Hank Bangser
Superintendent

Laura Blair Bertani
Director of Personnel and Communications

Jim Bloch
Athletic Director

Jan Borja
Principal, Northfield Campus

Don Goers
Assistant Superintendent for Business

Tim Hayes
Assistant Principal, Northfield Campus

Matt Ottaviano
Assistant Principal for Administrative Services, Winnetka Campus

Debbie Stacey
Principal, Winnetka Campus

Jon White, Assistant Principal for Student Services, Winnetka Campus

Linda Yonke
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction