

# BOARD BRIEFS

## *News from the New Trier Township High School District 203*

### *Board of Education Meeting*

*August 24, 2020*

#### New Trier Provides Update on Reopening Plan

New Trier administrators updated the Board on the opening of the 2020-2021 school year and ongoing planning to bring students back to campus for in-person instruction.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, said teachers have been planning and training during the summer to begin the school year with a strong start to remote learning. Remote learning is an important part of all of the District's steps toward full reopening, and the District's [Remote Learning Standards of Practice](#) include providing consistency on the Canvas learning management system, providing academic and social-emotional support for students, building community, establishing routines, and being flexible and understanding.

Superintendent Paul Sally noted that the District already has been testing its health and safety procedures and protocols as groups of students have returned to New Trier's campuses for athletics, performing arts, and extracurricular activities. More than 800 students are participating in fall sports, and groups of students have been coming to campus to rehearse, direct, perform, and film sketches for a reimaged Lagniappe-Potpourri, the school's annual student-written and student-led comedy show. Some clubs such as Student Council also have held meetings in outdoor spaces on campus. Sally said the District plans to have optional on-site orientations in the coming weeks for freshmen and sophomores.

These successful activities are part of the District's commitment to a path to in-person learning, outlined in the [2020-2021 Reopening and Operational Plan](#). As of the beginning of the school year, 12 percent of families had opted for 100 percent remote learning. The District has established a [Reopening Advisory Board \(RAB\)](#) with parent, student, medical, faculty, staff, administrative, and Board representation. The RAB held its first meeting on August 27 and has committed to meeting weekly at least through September to recommend potential movement on steps on the Reopening Ladder. The RAB is not a voting board; ultimately reopening decisions will be made by the Superintendent and Board of Education.

State and local health agencies continue to provide additional health guidance to schools. This guidance is fluid and could affect potential quarantine and exclusion from school as in-person instruction begins, according to Tim Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. Right now, health officials say students who suffer from allergies or other symptoms that also are symptoms of COVID-19 must be

excluded until they produce a doctor's note. In addition, quarantining decisions from Cook County officials have been more conservative than the guidance of being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes. New Trier must abide by their decisions, which means families should expect some periods of quarantine throughout the year.

Sally noted that other neighboring schools that reopened or had planned in-person activities have already returned to remote learning because of multiple positive cases. In these cases, COVID-19 was contracted outside of school and traced to parties or other social gatherings where teens were not using safe practices such as mask wearing and social distancing. New Trier students will be required to take a Canvas course on safety precautions before returning to in-person learning and will sign a Trevian Pledge to abide by safe practices. The ability to hold in-person classes, Sally said, depends heavily on the actions of students outside of school, and the experiences of other schools will help inform and support New Trier's gradual ramp-up to in-person instruction.

You can see the full Board presentation on reopening [here](#).

### [New Trier's Strategic Plan, New Trier 2030, Moving Forward](#)

Despite having to push back some deadlines due to the switch to remote learning in the spring and planning for the 2020-2021 school year, New Trier remains committed to moving forward with the strategic plan it launched last school year, [New Trier 2030](#).

Superintendent Paul Sally gave the Board an overview of the areas of focus for the 2020-2021 Annual Plan, which will be presented to the Board at its next meeting in September. He noted that the work of New Trier's Equity Subcommittees will help form many goals for the coming year, while the District continues to adjust its short- and long-term planning within the constraints of a unique school year.

*New Trier 2030* sets broad goals within each of six frameworks that cover the work of the school: Intellectual Engagement, Growth, and Readiness; Student Personal Growth, Engagement, and Well-being; Culture, Climate, and Equity; Leadership Throughout the School; Community Engagement, Partnerships, and Governance; and Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources. Each Annual Plan contains specific, measurable action steps the District will take each year toward the broad goals outlined in the strategic plan.

Work will continue in all frameworks, building on the achievements of the first year of the strategic plan. For example, the committee working on developing a document outlining the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate* will aim to present that document by the end of the school year, helping define work the school needs to do in all other areas. In student personal growth, the District will make it a priority to provide more avenues for connection in extracurricular activities, some of which must be reimagined for the remote or hybrid environment.

One area of significant work has been in the Culture, Climate, and Equity framework. Sally said the Equity Subcommittees all have prioritized some main goals and outcomes from their summer meetings, and the larger equity group now must break those many goals into a manageable one-year plan and an associated 3-5 year plan.

Some examples of subcommittee recommendations for the District to consider: conducting and analyzing an outside equity audit to understand New Trier's culture and climate; organizing a student advisory council to plan equitable curriculum and instruction with staff; developing an annual report on each graduating class focused on an equity lens; developing a pilot of mixed-gender adviser rooms; providing tiered levels of professional development around equity; developing a philosophical approach to discipline through restorative practices; creating student programming for the entire student body on issues such as race, religious bias, and the LGBTQ+ community; and expanding the current affinity group structure to provide more entry points for students to engage in equity work.

The full presentation on the District's work toward a 2020-2021 Annual Plan can be found [here](#).

### Other News from the August 24 Meeting:

- The Board saw a presentation on new teachers and leaders in the District this school year. They are:

Christopher Anderson - Science

Susan Antonini - Student Assistance Program

Sean Clemenz - Special Education Department Chair

Hanna Cohen - Science

Eugenia Kim - Science

Colleen Koulentes - ELS Coordinator

Katie Lynch - Special Education

Catrina Matos - Mathematics

Irene Morell - Psychologist

Anne Marie Ricchio - Health Services Coordinator

Lauren Schaefer - Applied Arts

Maggie Schmieder - Special Education

Megan Zajac - Special Education Director

- The Board appointed Chris Johnson as Associate Superintendent, acknowledging his role and contributions in all parts of the District's operations. Superintendent Paul Sally noted that Johnson has a deep understanding of New Trier's core mission of educating students and has played an important role in assisting him in all aspects of leading the school district. He said Johnson combines invaluable skills in managing the district's finances and operations with an understanding of teaching and learning. Johnson came to New Trier from Evanston Township High School in 2006 as Chief Technology Officer. He was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations in 2015, overseeing the district's finance, facilities, technology, legal, risk management, collective bargaining, and benefit functions. He will also continue these duties in his new role. He received a bachelor's degree in Human Computer Interaction and master's degree in Business Information Technology at DePaul University and a master's degree in Educational Leadership as well his Chief School Business Official and Superintendent endorsements at Northern Illinois University, where he is also completing his doctorate in Educational Leadership.

*The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 7 p.m.*

*Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nthsmediaspace.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/>*