

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Meeting

October 19, 2020

COVID-19 Saliva Screening Sign-Up and School Reopening

With COVID-19 cases expected to continue to rise and fall across the Township and region over time, New Trier is hoping a new weekly saliva screening program for students and staff will help the school better assess and mitigate risk, allowing for more consistent in-person instruction, Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board.

At a special meeting last week, the Board approved a contract with SafeGuard Screening, LLC to provide weekly RT-LAMP surveillance screening, which lets participants collect saliva samples at home and return them to school for lab screening each week. The school will offer the screening free to families and staff and has targeted mid-November to begin the program.

Results are returned the same day, and SafeGuard reports it has had no false positives to date. Presumptive positives must be confirmed by a PCR test at a doctor's office or state testing center. Samples are labeled with bar codes without names to protect privacy and are destroyed after screening.

New Trier will conduct webinars on the screening program this week for parents of students in ELS/Transition and other special programs (Tuesday, 10/20 - sent via email), and all parents (Thursday 10/22 - [register here](#)). Families must fill out [this form](#) to participate in screening; an FAQ is linked from the home page of New Trier's website or can be found [here](#).

The screening program has several goals, including:

- Reducing school closures and quarantines and allowing for more in-person instruction.
- Identifying potential cases of COVID-19 in the school population early, reducing transmission.
- Driving down overall rates in the community by alerting those who may need to quarantine before they show symptoms.
- Providing a family and personal benefit for participants of knowing their current COVID-19 status.

Sally noted that the screening must have high participation rates from students and staff to be effective, and he encouraged families to [sign up](#) now. He stressed that the screening does not take the place of school's health and safety measures such as mask

wearing, social distancing, and enhanced cleaning - all measures that already make the risk of school-based transmission very low.

The full Board presentation can be found [here](#).

Board Approves Annual Plan for Achieving *New Trier 2030* Goals

Despite the difficulties of operating school amid the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Trier remains committed to moving forward with the goals established in its *New Trier 2030* strategic plan, Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board.

The Board approved an Annual Plan for *New Trier 2030* that outlines steps the District will take this school year to move forward with goals in areas including equity, civil discourse and critical thinking, student leadership, the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, the block schedule, social emotional learning, technology, financial stewardship, and community engagement.

Sally noted that while the goals are aspirational given the unknowns of this school year, New Trier cannot let its work stall and must take steps, however modest, to continue its progress.

Under the framework of Culture, Climate, and Equity, New Trier has several goals for this school year. For example, the school will expand its existing recruitment program for diverse faculty at local colleges and universities and HBCU job fairs as well as collaborate with the New Teacher Orientation program on a mentorship program for faculty of color. In addition, the Professional Development subcommittee will move forward with its action plan for all New Trier staff to be engaged in ongoing equity professional development.

Student-centered equity goals include planning and implementing a series of X block seminars on issues related to race, religious belief, and sexual orientation and gender identity; building and training staff on a restorative justice approach to discipline that includes communication to students on how the school responds to bias incidents; and elevating student voice to broaden opportunities for input, particularly from marginalized groups.

New Trier also plans to implement and promote a Civil Discourse and Critical Thinking statement that emphasizes the school's commitment to cultivating an environment in which all students feel free to explore a wide range of ideas through civil discourse, respectful inquiry, and engaged listening. Part of this goal includes developing classroom norms and course expectations to facilitate civil discourse and foster critical thinking.

An additional goal for the year is to evaluate the block schedule implemented for the 2020-2021 school year and to investigate other options, including through surveys of students, parents, and staff. The school also will begin reviewing the strengths and

limitations of its 1:1 iPad program to prepare for an evaluation and possible recommendation in the 2021-2022 school year.

In other areas including the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, financial stewardship, facilities, communication with younger families, community partnerships, social-emotional learning, and curriculum, the District will complete or continue progress made during the 2019-2020 school year. The full Board memo can be found [here](#).

Other News from the October 19 Meeting:

- Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented new course proposals and revisions for the 2021-2022 school year. In Special Education, two new courses would expand the curriculum for students in culinary arts and skilled trades. Consumer Mathematics and Culinary Arts would give students hands-on experience in using functional mathematics skills in a culinary setting. Emerging Careers in Robotics and Manufacturing, set for a two-year implementation and launch in 2022-2023, would offer industry certifications in robotics, manufacturing, and automation. In English, students interested in yearbook production would first take a new introductory Yearbook Journalism course before moving on to creating the Trevia yearbook as juniors or seniors, similar to the Advanced Journalism course required before moving on to the New Trier News. In addition, the department has collaborated with Post-High School Counseling to offer a new summer writing workshop focusing on the college essay. The memo on new courses and course revisions can be found [here](#).
- Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson presented the District's tentative tax levy for 2020. The levy is the primary funding source for the District's 2021-2022 budget, and the revenue it generates funds New Trier's excellent faculty and staff, broad curriculum, student services, and extracurricular programs that are the cornerstone of New Trier's reputation for excellence. The District's ability to increase its tax extension is limited by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act to the Consumer Price Index or 5%, whichever is less. The 2019 CPI was 2.3% and was used in the calculation of the tax extension (exclusive of new property). Johnson reported that he expects the New Trier portion of the property tax bill to rise by 2.3% on average for property owners. The levy presentation can be found [here](#).

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/>