

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

August 23, 2021

Update on Opening of 2021-2022 School Year

New Trier had a successful opening of school this week with a return to more typical learning, extracurricular, and social activities, balanced with the strong COVID-19 safety measures both campuses have in place.

The district's two main goals for the school year are to protect student and staff safety and to sustain full in-person learning throughout the year. Mitigation measures include the state's mask mandate indoors for all students, staff, and visitors; enhanced ventilation and cleaning; COVID-19 testing; and hand hygiene and social distancing awareness.

COVID Response and Community Wellness Team (CRCWT)

The District will continue to consult with the CRCWT, a group of students, parents, staff members, medical experts, and others to assess how mitigation measures are working and how they may be tightened or relaxed based on health guidance and local conditions. New Trier's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) shows local and regional trends. Approximately 92 percent of New Trier staff and 90 percent of students are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

COVID-19 Testing at School

New Trier encourages all students and staff to take advantage of free weekly PCR COVID-19 testing at school through the University of Illinois/Shield program. Weekly testing is required for unvaccinated students participating in extracurricular activities, unvaccinated staff, and any students participating in school-sponsored overnight travel. The [Shield Testing Program web page](#) includes more information about the program, including testing times and locations.

Learning Support During COVID Quarantines

With New Trier's strong mitigation measures, high vaccination rates, and testing program, the District expects a low rate of student quarantines this school year. However, some students will get COVID-19 and have to stay home from school for at least 10 days. In these cases, Health Services will coordinate a return to school with families, and teachers will help students keep pace with their learning. While there is no remote option this year, teachers, advisers, and case managers will maintain a high level of communication with students. Canvas is a key part of communicating and supporting students during their absence. Each class will have a quarantine checklist to keep students on track with learning, and teachers will communicate about assignments that should be completed at home if the student is well enough to do so.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Given the success of last year's virtual parent-teacher conferences, New Trier began looking into continuing the practice this year. Parent focus groups thought the benefits of virtual conferences (easier for working parents, no traffic/parking problems, more on time) outweighed the disadvantages (not meeting teachers in person, not getting a chance to be in the school). New Trier decided to keep the virtual format this year, especially given continued uncertainty with the pandemic and needed advance planning time for these conferences. The school will re-evaluate the format after this year.

Lockers and Off-Campus Privileges at Winnetka Campus

Winnetka Campus Principal Denise Dubravec updated the Board on two changes at the Winnetka Campus this year. First, students are no longer assigned lockers automatically. Instead, students who would like a locker will request one by going to Room 213 during the first two weeks of school. Dubravec noted that many students do not use lockers, and this system will give those who do use lockers better locations and more consistency from year to year.

Parents of juniors and seniors will receive a communication soon about allowing off-campus privileges during lunch periods. Juniors and seniors can go to lunch off campus on foot (no cars) with parent permission. Sophomores must remain on campus. This is a return to New Trier's longstanding practice after an appropriate COVID-related change last year. Parents of juniors and seniors will be able to fill out a form in PowerSchool to allow their student this privilege if they wish.

Click for the [Board presentation on the 2021-2022 operational plan](#).

Campuses Reopen with Renovations, New Classrooms

Students at both New Trier campuses were greeted with modernized classrooms and other improvements as the district continued renovations to older buildings that are part of its 15-Year Facility Framework.

Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson told the Board that the entire 3rd floor of the Winnetka Campus now has updated classrooms that make the renovated portions of the older North and Tower Buildings almost indistinguishable from the new West Building. The work completed this summer is part of the District's phased approach to renovating classrooms built in the 1930s and 1950s to meet modern learning standards. The changes include a new Academic Assistance Center that puts student tutoring and academic support in a central location.

At the Northfield Campus, the district upgraded classrooms in the D Building to outfit them with modern technology and furniture. Other work completed this summer includes the replacement of concrete at the Northfield Campus and of the Tower Building roof at the Winnetka Campus.

The Board approved plans for Year 3 work next summer as part of the 15-Year Facility Framework, including the replacement of the Winnetka Campus North Building roof, concrete, tuckpointing, and other structural work at both campuses, and new energy efficient lights and basketball backstops in the Winnetka Campus Bickert Gyms, which are remaining and are not part of the East Side Academic and Athletic Project.

Johnson also gave an update on that project, which is due to break ground in December and includes a new multipurpose competition gym, a 6-lane indoor track, a dozen new classroom spaces, new auxiliary gyms, new strength and conditioning facilities, and a new climbing wall and high ropes course. Design work continues for the project, including light analyses and integration of mechanical systems.

To see photos of the recent renovations on both campuses, click on the [15-Year Plan update to the Board](#).

[New Trier 2030 Annual Plan Update](#)

New Trier is planning a series of presentations to the Board in the coming months to update the community on the District's Annual Plan for working toward its [New Trier 2030](#) strategic goals, including discussions about the block schedule, the adviser program, critical thinking and civil discourse, and culture, climate, and equity.

Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board that work is ongoing in these areas, with many different stakeholders involved in moving the strategic goals forward.

Teachers have already engaged in a number of summer professional development opportunities around the new [block schedule](#), including sessions specific to math teachers and general sessions about curriculum planning, effective instructional methods, and experiences in other districts. The Board will receive a progress report in September.

Several goals are moving forward involving New Trier's Adviser Program. Two extended adviser periods are planned this year focusing on mental health and equity. Adviser Chairs also have been looking at restorative practices in discipline and mapping a curriculum in adviser rooms tied to adolescent development and the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*. A presentation about work examining the Adviser Program's gender structure is planned for November.

The district plans a series of reports about critical thinking and civil discourse, including discussions about creating open, civic-minded classrooms with civil engagement. The Social Studies Department will give the first report at the September 20 Board of Education meeting.

Also in September, the Board will hear a presentation about the work of Dr. Floyd Cobb and Dr. John Krownapple, authors of *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity*, which will help inform the District's work in culture, climate, and equity this year. Dr. Cobb will present to the Board of Education in open session on September 8, in advance of a closed session workshop with the Illinois Association of School Boards.

Click for the [2021-2022 Annual Plan update](#).

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://nth.s.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/>