

# BOARD BRIEFS

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

*Board of Education Regular Meeting*

*April 15, 2024*

## Student Voice: Sophomores Talk Transitions, Planning for Future

Sophomores must navigate a series of transitions as they move from junior high to life at New Trier. First, they come together as a 9th grade class at the Northfield Campus, joining students from six different sender schools as well as transfer and private school students. Next, they transition again to the Winnetka Campus, where they share classes with upperclassmen, get a new adviser, and have more opportunities for extracurricular activities.

As part of the District's ongoing series on student voice, five sophomores shared their experiences with these transitions and told the Board how they have found their interests while planning for their future in high school and beyond. While the students have a wide range of interests, they all have found ways to connect at New Trier.

For Yejin Yang, the transition to New Trier was one of many after she moved from public school in Korea to private school in Las Vegas before coming to this area. She met fellow students at Transfer Family Day and dived into the Club Finder tool, joining Sports Medicine Club and volunteering with the Special Olympics. Yang says she had to adapt to the rigor of New Trier courses and has found her way by reaching out to teachers for help.

Zain Mian also adapted to different schools, coming to Marie Murphy in 8th grade and navigating being the new student in a small school. He said New Trier is where he finally began to find his passions but also faced obstacles as he had to miss a large amount of school due to illness. He credits his Winnetka Campus adviser, Molly Lombardi, for helping him grow and take advantage of his talents. He is very involved in Sports Medicine Club and is starting a nonprofit to offer free CPR classes in lower income areas.

Max Drees saw New Trier as an opportunity to discover himself and expand his interests. He joined the chess club freshman year and found a great community there as well as on the fencing team. As a sophomore, he realized he was the only sophomore and one of only two boys in his ceramics class, but he found the upperclassmen very accepting and the class is now his favorite. As he moves to junior year, his main concern is balancing his activities with planning for college and the academic rigor of the coming years.

Catherine Ji shares those concerns, telling the Board that she is grateful for all of the academic and extracurricular opportunities at the Winnetka Campus, but also finds that the choices can be

overwhelming. She took on a rigorous class load while joining the tennis, math, and science olympiad teams freshman year. Balancing that packed schedule became more challenging during sophomore year, as she also took on leadership in Student Council and joined symphony orchestra. She said she has become better at asking for help from both older students and her teachers so she can continue to pursue her interests while finding balance.

Finally, William Schellenberg is also thinking about finding balance between his passion for performing arts and focusing on academics as he moves from sophomore to junior year. Schellenberg was excited to take advantage of New Trier's Music and Theatre program, coming from a smaller school in Glencoe with more limited performing arts opportunities. He performed in the fall play and frosh/soph play freshman year and plans to pursue more leadership in the arts as he moves through New Trier.

The Board thanked the students for sharing their stories, which will help guide the school's work on supporting students through the many transitions from middle school to sophomore year.

## Update on Culture, Climate, Equity, and Belonging

When the Board adopted New Trier's strategic plan, [New Trier 2030](#), in 2019, one of six frameworks for goal-setting was Culture, Climate, and Equity. Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board how that work has progressed in the last five years, noting that another word captures what the District aspires to achieve for all students, staff, and families: belonging.

Sally said that two objectives guide the District's work in this area. First, all students should feel like they belong at New Trier. Second, all students should learn about perspectives different from their own.

To achieve those objectives, Sally said the District must listen to students, staff, and families, especially when they are hurting or feel that they don't belong. Most recently, he met with Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian parents and community members, who shared stories of students experiencing fear of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate, feeling silenced at school, and worrying for family members amid the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel. The school has committed to continuing to meet to share ideas on how best to support these students and families.

Meeting, listening, and seeking representation from everyone is part of the ongoing work the school has done with many different groups and is incorporated into the District's goal-setting for the future, Sally said. In these meetings, the goal is the same: to ensure that all students feel welcomed, safe, celebrated, and can thrive at New Trier.

Many foundational documents guide the District's work in belonging, including the mission and vision statements in *New Trier 2030*; the district's core values and beliefs as stated in the Culture, Climate, and Equity framework; the Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud initiative; the District's Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse statement; and the Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate, particularly helping students become Engaged Compassionate Global Citizens.

Sally and Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, shared the initiatives that have advanced the District's work over the past five years. Some important initiatives include

departments setting equity goals, monthly observances to make different identities visible in the school, professional development, student affinity groups, hiring an exceptional and diverse staff, connecting with sender schools to create a K-12 curriculum on belonging, working on restorative practices, and other initiatives such as mixed gender adviser rooms and sharing a religious and cultural calendar with teachers.

Moving forward, Sally said the District is committed to the importance of this work and emphasized that it will continue and be broadened in future years. New areas of focus will include expanding representation and viewpoints on committees and leadership in this area, expanding student voice, updating curriculum, and creating specific initiatives for the freshman campus, where students from demographically different sender districts come together for the first time as a large group.

Sally thanked the Equity Liaisons, Pat Savage-Williams, Kiran Subhani, and Tim Hayes as well as Tillery for their work in leading these efforts and also acknowledged the significant work that the faculty has done to incorporate this work into their classrooms. Click for the [Culture, Climate, Equity and Belonging presentation](#).

## Other News from the April 15 Meeting

- The Board elected Jean Hahn as President and Sally Tomlinson as Vice President for the period starting April 15, 2024 through the April 2025 Board of Education meeting. Superintendent Paul Sally thanked outgoing President Keith Dronen for his service and leadership of the Board over the past two years.

*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 <https://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation>