

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

December 11, 2023

Seniors Discuss Unique Journeys through New Trier

New Trier offers innumerable opportunities for students to find their unique paths, interests, and connections throughout high school. Five current seniors discussed their journeys with the Board, offering insight into how students can learn and grow at New Trier and suggestions for the school to support students in the future.

One of the goals of the District's strategic plan, *New Trier 2030*, is to offer more opportunities for student leadership and student voice in decision making. Winnetka Campus Principal and Assistant Superintendent Denise Dubravec said these students' journeys exemplify some of the many ways students can be engaged and connect to the New Trier community. The presentation was one of four planned this year by different grade levels of students.

All of the students discussed how their views on school, their goals, and themselves changed from freshman to senior year. They advised New Trier to help new students not get overwhelmed by the opportunities presented to them and to emphasize balance from the time they enter the Northfield Campus, especially because of the competitive pressure students feel.

Duke Baur, for example, said he wanted to "do everything" when he came to New Trier, trying to play sports, join every club, and practice music. It was only when he felt burnt out and started to let things go that he could focus on his true passion - jazz performance. Now he is applying to music schools and recently was named a national YoungArts award recipient for jazz.

Other students talked about changing their opinions of who they were once they entered high school. Ignacio Hampton thought his identity was being a soccer player but realized varsity was not likely in his future. He began to rethink that identity and explored other opportunities, eventually focusing on business and leadership extracurriculars. He said he took pride this year in receiving an award from the University of Illinois that focused not just on academics, but on his engagement in the community.

Zoe Kozina also changed her perspective of who she was when she came to high school. Like all of her classmates, she experienced difficulty spending freshman year in hybrid classes due to the COVID pandemic. Kozina has a learning disability and has long accessed special education resources at school. Without the same type of access, she worked toward independence in her academics and challenged herself, eventually learning she did not need the same resources she had in the past. Kozina recently published a children's book, "Your Beautiful Mind," encouraging children with learning disabilities to not see them as limiting.

For Grace Hester, the pandemic also was challenging, affecting her mental health. She struggled upon returning to New Trier sophomore year and said the school could have provided

more resources. In her junior year, she joined the Integrated Global Studies School, where a focus on experiential learning helped her find a community of like-minded students and supportive teachers. She will pursue her passion for acting at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

Asher Alcantara saw COVID delay his pursuit of his passion, as challenges with online classes freshman year forced him to drop electives, including choir. Once he could take music and theatre classes again sophomore year, he also became a better student and thrived. He has taken numerous arts classes at New Trier, gone to state for the Illinois Music Education Association, starred in musicals, and is auditioning for performing arts schools.

The Board thanked the students for their vulnerability in sharing their stories and said their lessons and advice will be important in shaping District goals and helping the school better support student growth in the future.

Update on *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate* and Future Programs

New Trier is moving forward with several important initiatives built around student growth as defined by the *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate*, Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos told the Board.

A major goal of the District's strategic plan, *New Trier 2030*, was to define a unique set of skills and dispositions students are developing during their time at New Trier. These *Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate* help guide the work of the District in developing programming and individual goal-setting for all students. The *Characteristics* include students becoming:

- Creative Critical Thinkers
- Innovative Collaborative Problem Solvers
- Resilient Healthy Individuals
- Effective Courageous Communicators
- Engaged Compassionate Global Citizens

Tragos said that this school year, the *Characteristics* are helping define the work of a new Future Programming Committee tasked with exploring new programs, opportunities, and scheduling innovations to help students design an individualized four-year plan at New Trier. In addition, students will be able to create a digital portfolio as part of their work with Post-High School Counseling in which they show progress within the *Characteristics*. This will help them understand their skills, talents, and interests as they differentiate themselves in preparation for career and college pursuits.

The *Characteristics* also help define New Trier's work in complying with a new state law focused on developing career-ready skills in high school. The law requires high schools to offer at least one College and Career Pathway Endorsement area by July 2025, with additional endorsement pathways in future years. The new law does not require students complete an endorsement pathway to graduate; rather, it is an opportunity available to all students who wish to pursue this path. These endorsements attest that a student has completed at least 60 hours of work-based learning experiences/internships in a particular career path, among other requirements.

At New Trier, Tragos said, those endorsements could take advantage of existing and new experiential learning opportunities such as Senior Project, the Integrated Global Studies School, Human Centered Design, and individual and business partnerships developed with the New Trier Educational Foundation. The Future Programming Committee will consider ways to develop more pathways and opportunities in coming years.

As the District moves forward with initiatives around the *Characteristics*, it also will make this work visible and accessible through a communications campaign. The Communications Department worked with Curriculum and Instruction and design partner HOK to develop visual cues that will help the District easily convey how the *Characteristics* differentiate New Trier students in a competitive post-high school environment.

Communications Director Niki Dizon told the Board that the District envisions a storytelling campaign that includes posters, fliers, a website, social media campaigns, and more. Click for the [*Characteristics presentation*](#) and new [*Characteristics logo and descriptions*](#).

Other News from the December 11 Meeting

- Each month, New Trier partners with the Red Cross to host blood drives at the Northfield Campus during non-school days. [Click here to](#) register for the December 28th and January 4th drives.

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>