

## **BOARD BRIEFS**

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

*Board of Education Regular Meeting*

*March 18, 2024*

### **Student Voice: Juniors Discuss Focusing on Interests at New Trier**

Junior year at New Trier is seen as a defining moment: the time when students begin to take concrete steps toward their future after high school. While the narrative around standardized testing and junior theme can emphasize the stress of this year, four juniors told the Board about how they are using what they've learned about themselves each year at New Trier to focus on their interests and passions.

The juniors' discussion with the Board is part of a series of presentations emphasizing student voice and opportunities for leadership at New Trier. Winnetka Campus Principal and Assistant Superintendent Denise Dubravec said the students' stories provide valuable insight to the Board and administration that will help develop future District goals and initiatives.

Each student shared feeling a sense of trepidation coming to New Trier after middle school. While the many opportunities and the large school could feel overwhelming, the students said they eventually found and focused on particular interests. They also shared how they honed in on those interests, sometimes setting others aside to manage their time effectively.

Mabel Ciske came to New Trier with a love of playing in the orchestra and performing with the dance team. However, she found her focus turned to the orchestra as she played in the pit and took up leadership as a concertmaster. While she did not make symphony orchestra when she initially auditioned, that only made her more determined, and she was accepted when she tried the next year. She decided to leave the dance team but still is involved in dance in other ways.

Thomas Rossman shared a similar story of casting a wide net of interests in freshman year, only to focus on a passion by junior year. Rossman was a swimmer since childhood and made varsity after coming to the Winnetka Campus. However, he found his passion for politics captured by his involvement in Model UN. He decided to no longer swim on a team and instead is focusing on leadership in Model UN and exploring research in political methodology.

Honor Dold also stressed the importance of time management amid many opportunities in junior year. Dold said she was nervous about how to stand out in a big school when she entered freshman year. By sophomore year, she found herself immersed in numerous extracurriculars including Student Council, the DECA business club, and service work with Lurie Children's Hospital. She

uses her Trevian Tracker, early bird classes, and her free periods to keep up with school while pursuing her interests.

Finally, William Karr's presentation offered a full circle moment for the Board. Karr always knew he wanted to pursue writing in high school and has pushed himself each year to grow as a writer and editor for the New Trier News. It was in his sophomore year when assigned to write an editorial - outside of his comfort zone - that he really realized his passion. His piece advocating for more student voice at the Board of Education helped spark the Board's speaker series this year with student year groups.

The Board told the students that their varied stories were important for giving them more perspective on how to support students' growth and interests at New Trier.

## Board Approves Full 24-25 Calendar; District to Seek Future Input

The Board approved a full school year calendar for 2024-2025 that moves virtual parent-teacher conferences to the week of Thanksgiving, providing a full week off for students and aligning that break with the District's sender schools.

In October, the Board approved a basic calendar with the school year's start and end dates, school holidays including winter break and spring break, and graduation. The full calendar includes institute days, other non-attendance days, final exams/assessments, and late start days that allow for staff professional development.

Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board that in addition to the Thanksgiving break change, the full calendar keeps first semester final exams/assessments before winter break and provides 60 hours of professional development time for teachers. This time comes mostly through paired late starts that let students sleep in and give teachers focused time before school to collaborate and learn from each other in a manner that is compliant with state regulations about the number of hours in a school day and days of school in a year.

Sally said that next school year the District will gather feedback from students, staff, and families about calendar issues including parent-teacher conferences, final exams/assessments, and late start/early dismissal days. That feedback will help the District develop the 2025-2026 calendar.

New Trier creates its school calendar each year in collaboration with an internal committee and in consultation with all of the District's sender school superintendents. Click for the [2024-2025 school year calendar](#).

## Other News from the March 18 Meeting

- The Board approved a 5-year agreement with the Physical Plant Services Association, which represents the 65 employees who clean and maintain the District's campuses and grounds. Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson said the contract raises starting wages and provides cost-of-living and experience increases tied to the consumer price index, allowing the District to recruit and retain a highly qualified staff amid a tight labor market and increasingly complex skill sets required to run mechanical and electrical systems. The

contract also shifts to a new salary schedule model, providing predictability for the District and employees. Johnson said the contract represents the value the District places on the work of this employee group, and he recognized them for their role in supporting students and the community. He noted that all three of the District's bargaining units are now in 5-year agreements, representing the strong relationship between these groups and the District and the care taken in the negotiating process.

*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>*