

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Regular Meeting

November 13, 2023

Student Attendance Shows Improvement Following Partnership Efforts

New Trier student attendance has improved significantly this school year compared to 2022-2023, following the school's strong effort to partner with parents and students to emphasize the importance of regular attendance.

Administrators from the District's new Graduating Class Teams told the Board that communication around a clear attendance policy and early intervention with students and families has helped reduce chronic absenteeism - defined as missing 10% or more of the school year. Following the first 50 days of school, the number of chronically absent students was 8.47%, compared to 24.14% during the same period last school year.

Administrators credited both communication efforts and a tiered approach to attendance for the improvement. The Graduating Class Teams worked over the summer on an Attendance Handbook distributed to all families that outlines the expectations, policies, supports, and consequences around attendance. In addition, the school has increased its outreach to advisers, students, and parents as students approach critical absence levels.

The teams also work behind the scenes each week to review attendance data and discuss strategies and supports to improve attendance. Students at risk of or at chronic absence levels may receive Attendance Success Plans, which are individualized agreements between the student, parent, adviser, and adviser chair to outline goals, actions, and consequences regarding attendance.

The attendance policy includes both supportive and preventive measures for students who struggle to maintain regular attendance. Supports include referring students to academic and social-emotional resources in school to help them stay on track with attendance. Preventive measures may include restricting participation in extracurricular activities, setting clear attendance expectations for students in leadership positions, changing a student's academic load, or requiring check in/check out procedures.

Informal feedback from groups of parents, students, and teachers demonstrated appreciation for the clarity of the new procedures. Parents have said the clear policy makes it easier for them to set expectations about attendance at home. Students reported feeling a greater sense of connection with fuller classrooms. They noted that they would like to see more communication around expectations including the sign in/sign out procedure for partial day absences and more consistency around make up work.

Teachers have reported higher attendance in general and on test days, allowing them to maximize their instructional time in the classroom. Advisers said they feel more supported in their role connecting with students and families. Click for the [attendance presentation](#).

Board Approves 2025-2026 School Year Holidays, Start and End Dates

Responding to feedback requesting school calendar dates more than one year in advance, the Board approved a basic school year calendar for 2025-2026 that includes the school year's start and end dates, school holidays including winter break and spring break, and graduation.

Superintendent Paul Sally said it was important to give families and staff these significant dates now for planning summer and holiday travel and activities. The Board will consider a full 2025-2026 calendar at a later date that will include more details such as institute days, other non-attendance days, parent-teacher conferences, and early dismissal/late start days.

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 [2025-2026 school year calendar](#).

Other News from the November 13 Meeting

- Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos updated the Board on the Illinois State Report Card, which was released last month. New Trier continues to be one of the state's highest-performing schools academically. Students' performance improved in both mathematics and English language arts after a post-COVID dip. New Trier had the highest English language arts scores in the state and the third-highest mathematics scores among non-selective enrollment high schools. Like almost all area peer high schools, New Trier was rated "commendable," which means there are no areas of deficiency. One major factor that prevented New Trier from being rated "exemplary" as it had been in the past was its high chronic absence rate of 31% during the 2022-2023 school year, which accounts for 10% of a district's rating. Tragos noted that New Trier has taken measurable steps this year to improve that rate in the future.
- The Board approved the District's 2023 tax levy, which supports the fiscal year 2023-24 and 2024-25 budgets. The levy is the primary funding source for the District, and the revenue it generates funds New Trier's hiring and retention of high quality faculty and staff, broad and deep curriculum, expansive student services, and extracurricular programs. The levy also helps fund needed facility improvements at both campuses. The District's ability to increase its tax extension is limited by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 5%, whichever is less. The 2022 CPI was 6.5%, which means the levy is capped at 5% and the New Trier portion of property tax bills should rise by 5% on average for property owners. Click for the [levy presentation](#).
- New Trier received a [clean audit from an independent auditing firm](#), which noted that New Trier goes above and beyond what is expected from regulatory bodies in its comprehensive financial reporting and meets a "gold standard" of transparency and detail. The district's report received awards from two different school business associations. Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson said that the report shows that the financial health of the District is strong, with revenues exceeding the budget and expenditures coming in under budget. Johnson will give more long-term budget specifics during a report to the Board in January.

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>