

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
March 20, 2023  
New Trier Township High School  
7 Happ Road, Room C234  
Northfield, IL 60093**

A **Regular Meeting** of the Board of Education of New Trier Township High School District 203, Cook County, Illinois was held at New Trier High School – Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road, in Room C234 on Monday, March 20, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

**Members Present**

Ms. Cathy Albrecht  
Ms. Kimberly Alcantara  
Mr. Avik Das  
Mr. Keith Dronen, President  
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President  
Mr. Brad McLane  
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

**Administrators Present**

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent  
Dr. Christopher Johnson, Associate Superintendent  
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Asst. Supt. for Special Ed and Student Services  
Mr. Peter Tragos, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction  
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal – Winnetka Campus  
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

**Also Present**

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Teri Rodgers, Social Studies Department Faculty and Education Association President; Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Liz Mayer, New Trier Educational Foundation Executive Director; Mr. Pete Gutierrez, Instructional Technology Specialist; Mr. Jon Lespeska, Math Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Lead Support Specialist; Mr. Chris Van Den Berg, Social Studies Department Faculty; Mr. Mark Hines, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Gardiner O’Kain, Art Department Faculty; Ms. Sara Chao, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Maria Barraza, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Matt Goode, Science Department Faculty; Ms. Angela Burns, Library Department Faculty; Mr. Dave Weston, Social Studies and Speech and Debate Department Faculty; Dr. Tim Hayes, English Department Faculty; Ms. Kiran Subhani, English Department Faculty; Ms. Pat Savage-Williams, Equity Liaison; Ms. Vicki Murphy, Speech Language Pathologist; Ms. Lucy Riner, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Steph Moretta, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Ms. Rebekah Adelman, Science Department Faculty; Ms. Melissa Barabasz, Science Department Faculty; Ms. Steph Gamauf, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**I. CALL TO ORDER – 4:45 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of March 20, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 4:46 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

Mr. Dronen asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education adjourn to closed session for the purpose of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor, or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity; collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; and litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. Ms. Albrecht seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

The motion passed.

**II. CLOSED SESSION – 4:45 p.m. – A201A**

### **III. BUSINESS MEETING – Open Session – 6:30 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen recalled the Regular Meeting of March 20, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 6:51 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

### **IV. Minutes and Reports**

#### **\*A. Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2023 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSTAIN: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

#### **B. Report from Campus Principals and FOIA Report**

Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal for the Northfield Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- The Frosh/Soph play, *Lost Girl*, recently took place. It was double cast, so there were 30 students in the play and eight students in crew and/or leadership positions. Many thanks to Ms. Hilerre Kirsch, Director, and Mr. Dave Ferguson, Technical Director, for their work.
- He shared pictures of students watching the boys' basketball game at Northfield as well as participating in Go-Baby-Go. There was also a staff ping pong ball tournament, the campus' version of March Madness, with the final game between Mr. Don Kim, Math Department Coordinator and Ms. Pam Beavin, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty.
- About 30 Girls Club members participated in their Shamrock Shake Fundraiser with the money donated to Lurie Children Hospital and CPS Care Closet. They also collected items to donate to each as well.
- The Identity Project recently took place which is a social emotional learning project developed to build empathy and community on the campus. It starts with a session in Cornog with upper classmen panelists and student leaders sharing their stories, then each adviser room completed three activities together. Thanks to Ms. Rachel Anderson, English Department Faculty; Mr. Jason Dane, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Vanessa Nomura, English Department Faculty; and Ms. Steph Moretta, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty for developing and implementing the project as well as all the advisers who participated.
- Mr. Waechtler announced Ms. Gail Gamrath as the Associate Principal at Northfield next year. Ms. Gamrath has many strengths including being highly collaborative, student-centered and a creative problem solver. She has been both the junior and freshman adviser chairs and for the past six years she has been the assistant principal at Northfield.

Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal for the Winnetka Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- Mrs. Dubravec shared hiring updates that have taken place for the Winnetka campus. They include the hiring of Mr. Chris Mitchell as Associate Principal of Student Services, Mr. Daniel Weidner as Associate Principal of Academic and Administrative Services, and Mr. Dan Paustian as an Assistant Principal of Graduating Class Teams. She provided details on each new hire.
- The Senior Scholarship Exhibit is currently in the Brierly Gallery until April 21<sup>st</sup>. Winners were selected by outside judges as well as the North Shore Art League.
- Students recently performed in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. The performance even included live music along with 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders from the township's children's choir.
- Next, she shared details about the Go-Baby-Go project which is an example of Human Centered Design (HCD). Students are presented with an authentic problem and use HCD to create solutions. New Trier's Introduction to Engineering students participated at both campuses with fitting the kids to their cars. The project was a collaboration among industry individuals, community, families, children with disabilities, students, and faculty. Mrs. Dubravec thanked Mr. Jason Boumstein, Applied Arts Department Chair, and his department for their work.

- Science Olympiad competed at the open college regional over the weekend with one varsity team and two junior varsity teams. New Trier won first place in the varsity category with the junior varsity teams placing first and second.
- The Debate team competed at the IHSA state tournament and brought home multiple awards.
- The Deca team recently competed and did well with students moving on to the next round. Ms. Melissa Duffy and Mr. Bob Bollweg, both Business Education Department Faculty, are sponsors.
- The Girl Up club celebrated International Women’s Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>.
- The Quiz Bowl competitors won the Central Suburban League conference championship.
- The Winter Carnival took place on February 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Boys Basketball placed third in the state.
- The Boys Varsity Track and Field team won a 30-team invitational.

Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services and Special Education, shared an update on attendance which was presented at the February Board meeting. Since then, a representative committee has met a couple of times to determine short-and long-range plans. During meetings with parent groups, concerns were heard about the school’s data reporting and structures and the way the school reports attendance. After hearing these concerns and reviewing current procedures, the decision was made to take a deeper look into these areas. The school will conduct an audit of its logistics and the goal is to have an action plan by the end of May. After Spring Break, however, the school will still send communication to families with messaging that promotes a partnership to improve student attendance.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there were no requests since the last Board meeting.

#### **V. Communications**

Mr. Dronen invited anyone from the audience who wished to address the Board to come forward and fill out a yellow communications request form and give it to Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. There were four requests for public comment. Mr. Dronen shared a couple of reminders for speakers asking them to keep their comments to three minutes or less per Board Policy 2-230 and that they refrain from clapping or a response of any kind in regard to other’s comments.

1. Ms. Amanda Nugent, resident, thanked the Board and Administration for working to create an environment and curriculum that challenges students to be ready to be diverse and critical thinkers. She also shared comments as the parent of a transgender, nonbinary child, saying how essential it is to continue to learn and listen.
2. Mr. Joo Lee, resident, spoke on the topic of equity and a culture of inclusion and thanked the Board and Administration for making the school a great system and a safe place for students.
3. Ms. Jacqui Koch, resident, also thanked the Board and Administration for their work on equity and inclusion. She shared further comments around these topics.
4. Ms. Cindy Fey, resident and member of HEROS, spoke to an anonymous letter that was sent to some families and grads with Asian sounding last names.

#### **VI. Special Orders of Business**

##### **\*A. 2023-2024 School Year Calendar**

Dr. Sally presented the 2023-2024 school year calendar. The Board approved the major dates, religious holidays and breaks last October. The school listened to feedback regarding its current school year calendar and made some changes. Dr. Sally highlighted that end of semester experiences/final exams will remain before winter break for first semester and the school is returning to its traditional three-day schedule of these as well. There is also approximately 60 hours of professional development time for teachers, similar to this year, and includes five pairs of late start and/or early dismissal days throughout the year. The 2023-2024 Board calendar is on the consent agenda for approval as well.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the 2023-2024 school year calendar, as presented. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

The motion passed.

Dr. Sally noted that the calendar will be posted tomorrow on the website.

## **B. ChatGPT Update**

Mr. Tragos introduced the presentation on ChatGPT, noting that the District has taken a learning stance on it and trying not to over or under react. The goal is to build understanding about what it is, what it can do and what it cannot do and ultimately teach students how to live and learn in a world where this technology exists while also knowing that this technology will grow smarter in a short amount of time.

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer, began by noting that ChatGPT technology is already being used in everyday life. Mr. Pete Gutierrez, Instructional Technology Specialist, shared about OpenAI, a research company that has received funding from hedge funds, venture capitalist firms and Microsoft. While one may not directly use a product from OpenAI, more than likely, they are using one of their services such as Microsoft Office. He then described what Artificial Intelligence is currently by stating that the program could be given a data set and is asked to find the relationship with each piece of data. Once that model is trained, it can be tested and the AI will try to predict, based on the rules created, the answer. The AI does not actually know if the answer it provided is correct. AI is predictive, not logical, and is limited to the data set it has been provided.

Mr. Eric Johnson, Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS), then shared the realities of this technology. As mentioned, AI is already part of everyday life such as autocomplete on one's phone. It is not smart, but rather predictive and provides an answer based on the prompts one gives it. The answers are stated confidently even though they do not know if the answer is correct, and in many cases, the answers are wrong. It can also hallucinate, which is a term used when AI simply makes up information. These services are not free and while they do not cost anything monetarily right now, it is learning from the user and gathering data to improve itself. As improvements are incorporated into products, one will have to pay for those. There is also a capacity limit to using ChatGPT. Mr. Johnson shared that educators will need to adapt to account for this new technology.

Mr. Gutierrez stated that ChatGPT does provide opportunities such as streamlining rote activities or even more specifically creating prompts for a specific set of students. Future opportunities might include becoming a prompt engineer where a person writes questions or prompts in the AI system.

The ITS team has taken several steps so far such as ongoing discovery on this topic through professional learning cohorts and networking contacts as well as attending workshops, so they are current on these AI tools. Dr. Torrey Trust, Associate Professor of Learning Technology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, provided professional development for faculty first in mid-January, but due to demand joined them for a second time.

Concerns include how fast the technology is evolving along with issues of plagiarism, data privacy and accuracy of the content. These concerns are considered when the technology department thinks about its next steps regarding AI.

Mr. Tragos thanked Dr. Marassa and the ITS team for bringing their understanding to faculty in a way that distills this information into what is most important for teachers to know. The ITS team has also provided professional development to faculty in a short amount of time.

Ms. Alcantara inquired if the District needs to update its policies and guidelines specifically regarding students using ChatGPT to write their essays. In her review of policies, it seems that what the District has in place more than adequately covers any concerns. Mr. Tragos agreed, noting that current New Trier policies sufficiently address this issue. While this is considered a new form of plagiarism, it is similar to older forms as it is submitting work that is not one's own. Current policy does not specify the ways in which students could cheat or plagiarize as that list could be very long. In the English department, for instance, they share their own academic integrity policy with students at the start of the year. That policy is being reviewed on how it pertains to AI technology.

After sharing further comments about an article she had read, Ms. Alcantara inquired if there have been instances at New Trier where it seems that an assignment was written with ChatGPT and if there is a way to confirm this. While there are AI or plagiarism detectors, those are not being used. Mr. Tragos noted the way to detect this comes from teachers knowing their students and their writing style along with having a process of writing which includes meeting for one-on-one conferences. On the other side, what has been learned from Dr. Trust, is that ChatGPT can be used for sentence starters with students who may struggle with the writing process.

Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Tragos for putting her mind at ease that many of the practices that teachers have in place are

conducive to working with ChatGPT or confirming it is not being used. Ms. Hahn then inquired what other schools are doing and if New Trier is alone in taking this learning stance as opposed to a prohibitive ban. Her second question was, at what point, if any, does the school plan to bring students into the process. Mr. Tragos replied that the school is not yet at that point as it tries to build its own understanding, however, these conversations are happening in several classrooms. In response to Ms. Hahn's first question, other schools such as New York Public Schools and Los Angeles Unified blocked all of it within their networks. This does not, however, limit students from accessing it in other ways. Schools in the area have shut it down or were considering doing so. He added that regarding the teaching piece, the District has the right approach, particularly around writing instruction. In referencing the opportunities slide and moving closer to the top of Bloom's Taxonomy, he noted that ChatGPT is good at rote task and recall, however these simplified questions are not being asked at the assessment level. Teachers instead are asking more challenging questions along with authentic based assessments. Ms. Hahn thanked the presenters for their explanation.

Mr. McLane shared his appreciation for the department's work as well as his experience with ChatGPT. He thanked the team for embracing the challenge and tapping into various resources such as checking to see what other schools are doing.

Ms. Albrecht noted that the pace of change continues to accelerate and inquired how the school keeps momentum with professional development. She also inquired how the District might work with the sender schools to build a consistent approach so as students come to New Trier there is common sense to using this technology. Dr. Marassa replied that there are monthly meetings with the sender schools, and this is an agenda item. Regarding the professional development piece, the department provides that on-going to teachers. Mr. Gutierrez also shared that there is a professional learning cohort with instructional coaches from New Trier and its sender schools where ChatGPT and AI technologies are being discussed. Mr. Johnson also shared additional comments.

Mr. Dronen noted it was a great presentation and thanked the group for their work.

### **C. Culture, Climate, and Equity/Culture of Belonging Update**

Dr. Sally introduced the update on Culture, Climate, and Equity/Culture of Belonging, noting all the work is guided by the District's Strategic Plan. This was driven by listening to students, alumni and community about its importance in a student's development in high school as well as once they graduate. The focus of this work has been through belonging and if a student does not feel as though they belong, they will not reach their academic potential, nor will they participate in extracurriculars as much as they might otherwise. When discussing belonging and equity, regardless of one's race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, amongst others, the goal is to ensure high expectations and availability of opportunities for all students. The District is looking to break down barriers that are hindering it from achieving this. It is also working to understand and meet individual needs of students in order to help them reach their academic potential and take advantage of academic and extracurricular opportunities, while being prepared for life after New Trier.

Dr. Tim Hayes, Equity Liaison and English Department Faculty, shared that over the years, he has heard from students that when they feel they are seen and accepted in their classrooms and school as whole people, they look forward to coming to school and are engaged in their work while also knowing that they have adults who will support them when needed. Dr. Hayes then introduced students from Student Council to share why this work is important as well as about the Monthly Observances. Ms. Shali Das, junior, noted that Student Council strives to advocate on behalf of all student voices by acknowledging who is and is not represented on the board. Visibility is important as it allows one to learn about narratives that can be overlooked in the community. Ms. Das shared that equity work is essential, so graduates are ready to interact with those who are different from them while maintaining compassion and sensitivity. Ms. Das concluded that the New Trier community is strengthened when a conscious effort to create a culture of inclusivity and acknowledgement which starts with equity work with students. Mr. Nathan Heftman, sophomore, spoke about the Monthly Observances, which celebrates a different group in the school each month. There have been many different projects and presentations with media displays, discussions and posters. He shared examples of the various activities and toolkits available for the observances. Mr. Heftman noted that they help to foster a community of inclusivity.

Ms. Pat Savage-Williams, Equity Team Co-Chair, shared one way for students to feel connected is through racial affinity groups. However, racial affinity groups are not the only affinity groups that are at New Trier as they are meant to be safe spaces for students who share an identity. New Trier also has groups for students with a certain gender or sexual identity as well as religious identities. After additional comments, Ms. Savage-Williams noted that

affinity spaces allow students of color time to share their experiences, build community and foster healing and joy. Next, Ms. Savage-Williams introduced Ms. Kealani Mayernik, Mr. Patricio Gilchrist, and Ms. Ava King, who shared their experiences in their racial affinity groups. Ms. Mayernik, a senior, is part of the Racial Affinity Coalition, Mixed Affinity as well as the Latinx group. She shared these groups give students the essential opportunity to be heard. They frequently discuss issues and micro aggressions commonly experienced by students of color at New Trier. Ms. Mayernik, who identifies as an Indigenous Latina, shared that in a school that is not racially diverse can be isolating at times for students, so being around people of the same or similar cultural experiences is grounding. She went on to say that having the chance to analyze how the world around their group affects their communities in a specific way is of the utmost importance. This essential, critical education is not incorporated into numerous aspects of school, so to Ms. Mayernik, having a time specifically dedicated to discussing topics that impact them as well as current events related to their communities and learning more about their history bonds their group.

Mr. Patricio Gilchrist, a senior who was born in Mexico, is part of the Racial Affinity Coalition as well as the Latinx group. He shared that affinity groups provide a community of students and adults who will listen and support each other. After other comments, he noted it means a lot to him to hear the perspectives of others who share similar experiences and backgrounds. Mr. Gilchrist went on to say that racial affinity groups matter as they allow for discussion of issues that do not get discussed at New Trier such as current events. He noted it is important to him to see diversity throughout his week as there are not many people of color at New Trier and the affinity groups allows him to connect with his peers. Mr. Gilchrist noted that his groups have impacted him, and he cannot thank his mentors enough because he feels part of a community and is valued and heard more than in other areas of New Trier.

Ms. Ava King, senior, is part of the Racial Affinity Coalition and the Mixed Race group. These groups offer opportunities for students to feel connected at New Trier. The affinity groups provide safe spaces to share hardships that most New Trier students would not understand. It is crucial for all students of color and is essential for them to feel safe, understood and included. Ms. King noted that this is what affinity groups have done for her and her peers. They offer a place to connect with others who share similar experiences and backgrounds. After sharing other comments, she noted the importance of showing that people of color are present especially for other people of color. They also foster a close-knit, safe community that is a haven and provides comfort for students.

Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, tied all of this into the strategic plan and the *Characteristics of a New Trier Grad* and shared portions from each document on Culture, Climate and Equity. Both of these documents are driving factors when departments create their annual equity goal. She went on to share additional details around this, noting the work is done because students should not have to fit into the system of the school to belong, rather the school should assure that students feel a sense of belonging by making certain that students see themselves in the curricula of their classes.

Ms. Savage-Williams shared that equity work is also being done with the Township's elementary school districts. They, too, have their own goals, strategies, and ways to implement their work. All districts want to have a community where their teachers, staff, students, and families feel they belong. A Township Equity Summit is being planned for the summer to share best practices, strategies, and resources. The purpose is to have attendees learn together and create more equitable systems, inclusive environments and foster a sense of belonging. Dr. Sally noted this is exciting and just like academics, this is K-12 work and needs to be worked on in collaboration with the District's sender schools.

Dr. Sally shared other equity work that is taking place as well as next steps, which includes continuing the District's hiring initiatives. In addition, the Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud initiative is trying to set the culture of the school as one that is open to and understanding of all students. These initiatives will continue as planning gets underway for the 2023-24 school year. Dr. Sally thanked the students for their presentations. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn thanked the group for their presentation, particularly the students. She also thanked Dr. Sally for the reminder of the formation of this work through cultivating a culture of belonging through dignity but also the strategic plan in which it is rooted. She went on to share additional comments, noting that this work was articulated loudly and clearly by the community as a priority. Ms. Hahn noted how she supports and applauds this work, and after further comments, stated it is essential so students may fully access their education and for the adults in the school to thrive professionally. She shared that the students did a wonderful job of explaining why affinity groups are important.

Ms. Hahn inquired of the students if they thought the monthly observances are reaching a wide enough portion of the student body, and if not, if they had ideas on how to expand their reach. Ms. Mayernik replied that it is a good step to reaching a wider audience of her peers. She noted there is always room for improvement to achieve full inclusion and diversity. She suggested that one way to improve this would be to offer more diversified curriculum in specifically the history programs and expanded on this. Ms. Mayernik noted that initiating more conversations through adviser room as well as presentations.

Ms. Hahn then inquired if the school has quantitative or qualitative systemic approaches to assessing whether the work that is being done is having the desired impact. Dr. Hayes replied that much of the evidence the school has is anecdotal. He hears from students that they feel good about what is being done. Regarding quantitative data, the CSCI survey is currently underway. This survey does provide insight into what different groups of students are experiencing at New Trier. It has been given for many years so trends can be seen with it. Dr. Hayes also said that the school could review its discipline and attendance data as well.

Ms. Hahn inquired if the school recognizes or considers immigrants and recently arrived immigrants. To her, it is a population that is particularly vulnerable to feeling excluded. Ms. Hahn wanted to know if it was part of the programming or something that would be considered. Ms. Savage-Williams replied that it has not been done regarding the monthly observances. She noted that Disabilities Awareness Month and Women's History Month were added this year. After further comments, Ms. Savage-Williams said it would be explored for the future.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that Ms. Hahn did a nice job of thanking everyone for sharing their thoughts. After further comments, Ms. Tomlinson echoed that if there was any way that numbers could be put behind the experiences that would be helpful.

Mr. Das thanked the students for demonstrating what it means to be brave, kind, and proud. After a few comments, Mr. Das shared that the students' presentations gave him, along with others, a great deal of hope and pride. He then shared thoughts about how critical and timely those that created the strategic plan were by leaving room for prioritizing culture, climate, and equity and pursuing cultural belonging through dignity as a key way of bringing people together across their identities. He went on to note that based on the previous presentation he was sitting with the thought of artificial intelligence or ChatGPT and that the brave human work the students are doing is combating some inherited or artificial intelligence of generations that have created structures about how people think about each other. Mr. Das continued that what these students are doing is rejecting and holding space against this artificial intelligence which distorts the way people as humans relate to one another. He then suggested that the school has a strong and vibrant response and framework to reply to ChatGPT because brave work is being done to challenge ancient wisdoms that would trick one into believing that the color of one's skin, religion, language, and citizenship are reasons why one should have access to certain experiences or not. He went on to say that one's life expectations and successes should be in some sort of hierarchy based on some artificial intelligence that is no longer relevant. Therefore, people are in the process of becoming critical thinkers, which is being seen in the student body thanks to these student presenters.

Ms. Albrecht inquired how the monthly observances could be used to teach the sender school districts. Ms. Savage-Williams shared that she has been talking with them, noting this is one of advantages of the summer equity summit as it will provide an opportunity to share what New Trier is doing. The sender schools are interested in hearing more and the curriculum has only been shared in-house, however, the school is very willing to share it with them and assist in modifying it for them. Ms. Albrecht then inquired how the monthly observances are reaching the broader campus. Ms. Savage-Williams replied that all staff receive an email regarding the specific month that includes the activities and other resources for the month. She further explained some of these. Ms. Kiran Subhani, English Department Faculty and Equity Liaison, provided a broader picture of what each month looks like. Aside from the email, there is also outreach across all different parts of the school community. Ms. Subhani provided the library as an example who provides book discussions based on the monthly observance. Participants in these discussions have been growing over the past few months. This began as a staff-driven initiative, however, recently has changed to a student driven one with students suggesting the books they would like to read and discuss. Different student groups offer a lunch 'n learn, presentation or activity each month as well as different departments who take the lead on each month. Ms. Subhani shared her experience when she first began at New Trier 20 years ago and how much has changed in that time. She noted it is reaching students as she hears it as an affinity group sponsor as well as in the classroom.

Mr. McLane shared that this has been one of the most important items in the strategic plan he has worked on during his board service. He noted it has been remarkable to see it brought to life. As Mr. McLane retires from board

service, he shared a message to the future board to encourage the ongoing strategic elements of this as they will face ongoing pressures and pushback. He encouraged continued courage to move this forward and meet that pressure head-on and to not give in to it. After sharing further comments, Mr. McLane noted that another challenge is at home in the messaging and learning in a student's household. He then inquired how this is taken not just to the sender schools, but to the parents. Ms. Savage-Williams shared that there has been occasional pushback and is one item discussed with sender schools as to how to respond. She agreed that working with students is the best way to get to families. The goal is to normalize this and make it another part of New Trier which then becomes part of the larger community.

Mr. Dronen shared it was great presentation and insightful, and the Board learns a lot especially when they hear from students about their experiences.

#### **D. Facilities Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic**

Dr. Johnson provided an update on the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (ESAA), noting significant progress thanks to the facilities and construction teams. He shared pictures and details of the construction progress. From a schedule perspective, the project is running at or slightly ahead of schedule. Final equipment that is needed is being tracked such as the rooftop air handling units that are scheduled to ship in late June. There will be temporary measures in place to climatize the building in order to install flooring which will begin in April. Budget change orders this month total \$17,000 with future change orders being monitored carefully to make sure the project is staying within its budgetary parameters. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Albrecht inquired about the LEED status, to which Dr. Johnson replied that it is tracking where it should be, and that he would bring additional information to the April meeting. Discussion continued between Ms. Albrecht and Dr. Johnson on this topic.

Ms. Albrecht then inquired about the air handlers and if there were on track. Dr. Johnson replied that at the cost of the mechanical vendor, they have installed a temporary air handling unit that allows the inside of the building to be at the correct temperature and humidity for the flooring installation. Dr. Johnson noted that nothing is creating a work stoppage. He did note that the high ropes course in the gym may be delayed until sometime in the fall.

Ms. Hahn inquired if the building can be opened if it still has the temporary air handler, to which Dr. Johnson replied he believes it can, noting that Pepper Construction is working diligently to make sure the equipment is received.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if there were any student groups involved with fundraising similar to what was done for the West Side project's Green Roof. Dr. Johnson replied that there is nothing currently being worked on. Ms. Albrecht inquired about concessions, which Dr. Johnson shared details of. Mr. Dronen inquired if the school would consider having Transition students manage this as a vocational job. Dr. Johnson noted that he discussed this with Quest Food Services today and there are currently three Transition young adults working for Quest and there is a possibility for more to join in a variety of different roles.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there will be a surplus regarding the owner's contingency. Dr. Johnson replied that it will be down to the wire with the contingency. Mr. Dronen, referencing the projected balance on the construction contingency is showing \$461,000 and may be a little bit over on both contingencies. Dr. Johnson explained that the construction contingency shows a negative \$461,000 when factoring in the projected, but the project is under in the owner's contingency, projecting a net of \$995,000. Dr. Johnson noted that the final change orders are being watched carefully.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if furniture has been selected, which Dr. Johnson confirmed. After sharing further details, Dr. Johnson shared that everything is in stock, and prices are locked in. Dr. Johnson noted that the project is on track to open this summer.

## **VII. Administrative Items**

### **A. Treasurer's Report for February 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for February 2023. Revenue was up the prior month due to tax distributions, but flat in February, so that month is again tracking lower. Tax bills are due April 3<sup>rd</sup> and those distributions are expected over the next two months. The weighted portfolio yield continues to rise, 4.62% in short term investments, so the District is able to capture interest income. Regarding the longer-term ladder, the rates are increasing as well as the District has liquidated some long-term investments at lower rates and replaced them with



higher earning investments. As some investments have matured, they have been replaced with higher interest ones. Fund balances for all accounts are \$109,465,299.

## **B. Financial Report for February 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for February 2023. Operating revenue was \$62,438,145 for the first eight months of the fiscal year, or about 22% lower compared to last year. This is a timing issue related to property taxes and the District expects to catch up in the next two months. Other local revenue is maintaining a positive variance, due to CPPRT from the state and interest income which has exceeded the District's annual budget already and is at \$1.2 million in operating funds for interest. The budget for that was just under a million dollars. The District is also seeing interest income from the East Side project as it has been investing those funds. There is about \$500,000 in interest income for the remaining bond proceeds which will help to offset some contingency usage.

Operating expenditures were \$81,780,000 through February. Exclusive of interfund transfers, expenses are tracking about 4.90% higher than last year. Expenditures tend to slow down during the last quarter of the year, but the District remains cognizant of inflationary impacts and is watching the budget closely. The adopted budget is 3.52% higher and the District is hoping to see a drop as it gets to the final four months of the year. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Dronen inquired how the last week has been with the District's financial advisers and Treasury bonds. Mr. Johnson shared it has been a wild ride and that he has met with the District's financial adviser, Ms. Liz Hennessey. Anytime a crisis impacts the banking system, it is monitored carefully. The District does not have any exposure to what is going on in the larger banking system with its investment policy and investments.

Ms. Hahn noted that it has been mentioned that it is anticipated that there will be a delay in tax receipts again, which Dr. Johnson confirmed, though it may not be as late as last year. This is due to a major computer system update that will lead to more accurate assessments for everyone in Cook County. Unofficially, it could be November. Ms. Hahn then inquired if the District is taking any measures to prepare for this. Dr. Johnson stated that the District is keeping more funds liquid to meet expenses. After sharing further information, Dr. Johnson stated that although the District remains more liquid than typical and is benefiting from some of the short-term interest rates. The District is losing the opportunity to lock in longer-term investments. Once there is more certainty, the District will resume those investments. Ms. Hahn inquired if the dip in February is related to the last delay, to which Dr. Johnson replied only tangentially. The second installment of tax bills is usually released in January and due February 1<sup>st</sup>. Those bills are based on 55% of the prior year and are unrelated to the system update as the county can calculate and issue those bills easily. The county board decided to put a break in between the bills so taxpayers were not paying in December only to do so again by February 1<sup>st</sup>. The bills are out now and due April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **VIII. Consent Agenda**

- Bill List for the Period, February 1 - 28, 2023
- Personnel Report (Scale IV Movement, Scale IV Review, Tenure, Appointments, Changes of Status, Dismissals, Leaves of Absence, Resignation, Retirement, Stipends - Appointments, Administrator Contracts and Addendum)
- MOU with University of Illinois Siebel Center for Design
- PowerSchool Contracts for Data Analytics Software
- Resolution Authorizing Partial Settlement of Vaping Litigation
- Policy Revisions Second Reading - Policy 5:120
- Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2023-2024
- IHSA Renewal 2023-2024
- Capital Expenditures (FY 24)

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Alcantara moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for the Period, February 1 - 28, 2023; Personnel Report (Scale IV Movement, Scale IV Review, Tenure, Appointments, Changes of Status, Dismissals, Leave of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointments, Administrator Contracts and Addendum); MOU with University of Illinois Siebel Center for Design; The agreement with PowerSchool for Connected Intelligence and Unified Insights for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; Resolution Authorizing Partial Settlement of Vaping Litigation; Policy Revisions Second Reading - Policy 5:120; Board of Education Meeting Calendar: 2023-2024; IHSA Renewal 2023-2024; and Capital Expenditures (FY 24) over \$50,000 as presented. Ms. Albrecht seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Albrecht, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

The motion passed.

#### **IX. Board Member Reports**

Mr. Das did not have a report for the **Booster Club**.

Mr. Das then thanked Mr. Dronen for attending the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** which met on March 8<sup>th</sup> in his absence.

Ms. Albrecht reported that the **Environmental Committee** and **Facilities Steering Committee** did not meet.

Mr. Dronen provided an update for the **TrueNorth Leadership Council**. Discussion items included their strategic plan, a review of the cost of phase one improvements, as well as a review and adoption of numerous board policies. They also reviewed a facilities assessment looking forward eleven years with projected costs. Mr. Das is also the new vice president for the leadership council.

Mr. McLane shared that the **Community Engagement Committee** met and operated as a focus group as part of the ongoing communications audit. The group met with Mr. Bob Noyed, vice president of CESO Communications, who moderated. He and Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications, have been working on the audit.

Ms. Alcantara attended the **New Trier Parents Association (NTPA)** meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Several seniors on the Habitat for Humanity board presented on the winter carnival, ongoing raffle and the upcoming spring silent auction. TrevFest will take place on May 13<sup>th</sup> at Gilson Park in Wilmette. Several bands will be playing including one featuring Mr. McLane. Class co-presidents gave reports. Discussions also included Post High School Counseling as well as absenteeism.

Ms. Tomlinson attended the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** on March 8<sup>th</sup>. She noted that it was great to see the dance team recognized at the board program earlier as one of the dancers received an NTFAA summer scholarship last year to pursue a class on dance techniques. She also shared how the NTFAA is contributing to the District's strategic plan and mission by broadening student engagement. Ms. Alicia Landes, Art Department Chair, updated the group that the Dylan Cooper mural was finished, which was done by a collaboration of art classes. It can be seen near the IT department. Discussion also included potential opportunities for students who may not be able to commit to an entire art class such as through clubs or the Anchor Art experience during lunch on Wednesdays. Ms. Tomlinson attended *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and shared how wonderful it was to see 28 young children involved in the performance. Ms. Tomlinson shared that a student's family is from Turkey and when other students found this out, it inspired them to get together and perform on a similar, but smaller scale than Jazz Fest to help raise money. They raised \$10,000 in relief money that was sent to Turkey. She also noted that tomorrow is the Spotlight Wilmette fundraising event for NTFAA.

#### **X. Calendar of Events & Board Members' Requests for Staff Research and Future Agenda Items**

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- March 25<sup>th</sup> is the first day of Spring Break with classes resuming on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- State testing will take place on both campuses.
- The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

#### **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

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Keith Dronen, President