

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

July 14, 2025

**New Trier Township High School
7 Happ Road, Room C234
Northfield, IL 60093**

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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, July 14, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Avik Das
Ms. Jean Hahn, President
Mr. Joo Serk Lee
Ms. Courtney McDonough
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson, Vice President

Administrators Present

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

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Chief Communications Officer; Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; and members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Hahn called the Regular Meeting of July 14, 2025, of the Board of Education to order at 5:31 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present. Ms. Hahn 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; the placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students; and discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Hahn

NAY: none

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:30 p.m. – A201A

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

Ms. Hahn recalled the Regular Meeting of July 14, 2025 of the Board of Education to order at 6:37 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 May 19, 2025 (open and closed session) and Regular Meeting of June 2, 2025 (open and closed session)**

Ms. Hahn asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 19, 2025 (open and closed session) and Regular Meeting of June 2, 2025 (open and closed session), of which there were none. Ms. Alcantara moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 19, 2025 (open and closed session) and Regular Meeting of June 2, 2025 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

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 for both campuses as Mrs. Dubravec was not in attendance.

- He shared pictures from the last day of school.
- Summer school has begun and is primarily being held at Northfield this year while athletics uses a variety of fields.
- The replacement of the turf fields is underway with the stadium field mostly done aside from painting with work continuing on the side field. All will be ready for when school starts.
- Freshmen have been on campus to pick up their iPad and go through training. He thanked the technology department for their work on this.
- STEM Camp started this week for 8th graders only, while next week will host students in 5th through 8th grades. They will do team-based challenges in the Innovation Hub.
- Tomorrow a mailing will go out informing students who their adviser and Bridge Builder are, with a letter coming from both early next week.
- Mr. Waechtler welcomed Mr. Matt Koulentes, Class of 2029 Assistant Principal, and Mr. Dan Paustian, Associate Principal.
- Regarding the Winnetka Campus, Mr. Waechtler congratulated the Class of 2025.
- Girls Lacrosse won state while Boys Lacrosse placed second.
- Elle Kittikamron-Mora was named Chicago's 2025 Youth Poet Laureate and was honored at a ceremony at the end of May. She will represent the city of Chicago at various civic events. He then shared comments from her parents.
- There were two summer school trips abroad this year to Spain and France.
- Will Baxter and Jacob Wineman, along with the football and basketball teams, joined together in Lift for Life in the hopes of raising \$500,000 for the rare disease community.
- Mr. Waechtler then shared important upcoming dates.
- The Class of 1990 recently had their 35th reunion.

Dr. Chimille Tillery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, shared a couple of updates from that department. She shared about New Teacher Orientation, which will take place from August 13th – August 15th with 16 new teachers in attendance. The new Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Melissa Dudic, has been working with Dr. Aileen Heidkamp, Ms. Leslie Skizas, and Ms. Anne Twadell to ensure that new faculty experience an engaging orientation.

Looking ahead to the new school year, the Professional Development Council, has begun preliminary planning efforts focused on designing and implementing a professional development plan for the November and February Institute Days and will be aligned with the strategic plan.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report noting that there have been eight requests since the last Board meeting, all are closed. They included requests for information on the solar project, employee directory, two requests for bid tabulation and contracts for transportation, vending, employment and technology.

Ms. Hahn recognized Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer, for the lifetime achievement award he received from the Illinois Education Technology Leaders (IETL). She also welcomed Dr. Nashwa Mekky, the new Chief Human Resources Officer.

V. Communications

Ms. Hahn 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 Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications. There were no requests for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

***A. New Trier 2030 Annual Plan: 2025-2026 and District/Supt 2025-2026 Goals**

Dr. Tragos presented on the New Trier 2030 Annual Plan: 2025-2026 District/Supt 2025-2026 goals, which have evolved since the June 2nd Board meeting. This Annual Plan reflects a months-long, collaborative iterative process with faculty, administrative leaders, and the Board. Dr. Tragos provided background on the New Trier 2030 Strategic Plan. While the Strategic Plan serves as the roadmap for the direction of the District, the Annual Plan sets priorities to make progress toward the larger goals of the Strategic Plan. Great progress has been made, but there is much more to be accomplished. He shared a personal reflection, going on to note that the Annual Plan, while about goals, is also about continuity, clarity, alignment, and visibility.

Dr. Tragos shared that this year's Annual Plan focuses on five strategic goals, fewer in number, deeper in focus, to build on six years of progress and ensure each goal is actionable, visible, and aligned with New Trier's mission and vision and the daily work of its staff and departments. This year's annual goals are centered on the following frameworks: Intellectual Growth, Engagement and Readiness; Student Personal Growth, Engagement and Wellbeing; and Culture, Climate and Belonging. Dr. Tragos spoke about the other three frameworks that do not have specific goals this year. He shared what has been accomplished in each of the following: Leadership Throughout the School; Community Engagement, Partnerships, and Governance; and Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources. He noted their importance and that they are operational now and in a place of continuous improvement and it is possible that new goals emerge in the coming years.

Dr. Tragos then shared details about each initiative, its goal and some of the key actions that will be taken. The five initiatives are Future Programming, Characteristics of a New Trier Graduate, Culture of Belonging, Culture of Wellness, and Access to Rigorous Coursework.

Next, Dr. Tragos shared how this work will be measured and progress monitored using the "How Do We Know?" evaluation method. He then shared the timeline for the key actions and milestones with Board presentations taking place starting sometime between October and December. Dr. Tragos then welcomed questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson applauded the focus for the year and noted the interconnectedness between the goals. She also noted that she loved that each of the goals has a measurement or monitoring component to it, particularly where soft skills are involved. She went on share thoughts on the goals and noted she is looking forward to next year.

Ms. Alcantara noted that Dr. Tragos, with a short and concise document, anticipated many of the Board's questions. He also synthesized things in a powerful and impactful way.

Ms. McDonough echoed what others have said, noting it is a cohesive plan. She inquired about goal three which mentioned that a new instrument would be introduced to measure student and staff belonging and if it would be in conjunction with the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) survey or in place of them. Dr. Tragos replied that the CSCI is mandated by the state and the YRBS is done every two years. He sees this additional instrument as a compliment. Dr. Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Ed and Student Services, shared that last year, the District moved from Panorama to the BESS screener (Behavioral and Emotional Screening System). Dr. Tragos noted they are nationally normed surveys, and the District is looking for something more home grown. Discussion ensued between the two.

Mr. Lee acknowledged the work that goes into distilling many conversations into a cohesive narrative and complimented Dr. Tragos and his team for their work.

Ms. Hahn noted that the District has seen the value of the Strategic Plan, especially as it manages unexpected change,

while keeping sight of its priorities. After sharing additional comments, Ms. Hahn noted that it allows Dr. Tragos, in his new role, to take the institution in this direction. She also shared that Dr. Tragos' approach was a very New Trier one as he focused on talking to many people, listening, gathering feedback, and leading.

She then mentioned the "How Do We Know" evaluation method and that there will be a uniform presentation about how the assessment is talked about, but how the assessments are done will vary based on the goal. Dr. Tragos confirmed that it will vary within the goal as it relates to the questions that are being asked. The method has a protocol that makes it uniform, but the data or instruments used to collect the data will vary depending on the goal.

Ms. Pofcher moved that the Board of Education approve the New Trier 2030 Annual Plan 2025-2026 and the associated Superintendent 2025-2026 goals as presented. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

The motion passed.

***B. FY 26 Tentative Budget Approval**

Dr. Johnson began the presentation on the FY 26 Tentative Budget Approval by outlining the budget process. He then introduced Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, to provide an overview of it. The final budget will be up for approval at the September meeting and typically there is not a drastic difference between the tentative budget and final one, the time between allows for the business office to finalize numbers that might currently be estimates. It is a balanced budget and before any transfers, there is a budgeted surplus of \$5.9 million. Mr. Spiwak noted that the transfers include those for debt payments made out of operations, therefore, the District needs a budgeted surplus of \$4.7 million to cover them. Mr. Spiwak shared details about budgeting for another transfer of \$1 million from operations to the capital projects fund. After these transfers, it leaves a \$208,000 surplus to add to the fund balance. Mr. Spiwak notes that the District budgets conservatively on the revenue side, while when budgeting for expenditures, it maximizes what it thinks it might spend and hopefully comes in under that. Part of the expenditure budget are contingency funds for education and transportation which totals \$660,000 that is typically never used, so the fund balance increase is anticipated to be around \$880,000. He went on to share some of the challenges that the District is facing as the budget was created such as a reduction in revenue from the CPPRT, outplacement costs in special education as well as the reduction in the amount that the state will reimburse the District for these placements, and expenses being higher than CPI.

The revenue budget is up 1.6% with the expenditure budget up 1.5%. Property taxes are 91% of the District's revenue budget, however, Cook County is running behind again this year meaning that property taxes will be sent out late leading to delayed distributions. The District does not know what its final tax extension will be, which includes new property. Despite the temporary revenue shortfalls caused by the tax receipt delays, the District has sufficient fund balances to cover expenditures through the end of the calendar year.

On the expenditures side, salaries are budgeted at 3.2%. The health insurance renewal increase was the lowest it's been in six years at 2.1%. Purchase services is exceeding CPI with a budgeted increase of 5.6%, however from FY24 to FY 25, that increase was 9%. Capital outlay will be decreased by \$700,000, which Mr. Spiwak further explained. The fund balances as a percentage of expenditures are 62.4% which means that just over seven months of expenditures can be covered.

Dr. Johnson thanked Mr. Spiwak for his work on putting the budget together as well as the work of the administrative team. He went on to share additional comments on the tentative budget. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Lee thanked them for the work as a balanced budget is difficult to achieve. He observed that there are a lot of headwinds without a lot of contingencies, so he inquired what levers the District will have at its disposal for the year. Dr. Johnson replied that there is a \$600,000 contingency, which is less than one percent of the total budget, but within the budget there are other areas that can be reallocated or reprioritized. He noted that the District also takes a conservative approach in expenditures and revenues. Dr. Johnson also noted the importance of the fund balance or months of expenditures that the District could cover. For FY 25, it is about seven months, and the hope is for a bit higher for FY 26. Ms. Tomlinson added for perspective, that 91% of the revenue is coming through property taxes

which the District knows, and close to 80% of its expenses are salary and benefits which are known and set. Dr. Johnson concurred, noting that these items are fixed for the next year.

Ms. Hahn noted it is excellent work budgeting in an environment that makes planning ahead more challenging than usual. Ms. Hahn's takeaway is that the District is in healthy shape, but it is flying closer to the trees than it has been in recent years, and it is hyper aware of what needs to be monitored and watched, which Dr. Johnson agreed with.

Ms. McDonough moved that the Board of Education approve the Fiscal Year 2026 Tentative Budget and that a Public Hearing date be set for September 15, 2025. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

The motion passed.

***C. 2026-2027 School Year Calendar**

Dr. Tragos presented the 2026-2027 School Year Calendar. It is a "skeleton" calendar as it only includes the main dates such as the start and end dates as well as holidays breaks. It is important for the District to approve the most significant dates for next school year to facilitate planning for families and staff. Creating the calendar is a collaborative process which is led by Mr. Waechtler who oversees the calendar review committee. It is also created in consultation with the sender school superintendents. Dr. Tragos will present a full calendar at a future Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Hahn confirmed that it will be posted to the website tomorrow.

Ms. McDonough asked that the District advertise that graduation is moved up by two weeks, so people are aware for planning purposes.

Ms. Hahn inquired if parent-teacher conferences will take place on the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving break. While likely and that matches the sender schools, this will not be official until the full calendar is approved.

Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education approve the 2026-2027 School Year calendar as presented. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

The motion passed.

VII. Administrative Items

Treasurer's Report for June 2025

Dr. Johnson provided the Treasurer's Report for June 2025, the twelfth month of the year. He noted that the District operates on an accrual basis, meaning that the District is still posting revenues and expenditures related to last year, so this is not final information on the year. The audit will occur over the next three months. The fund balances for all accounts was \$137,940,790. Interest earnings are at 4.11% at PMA and 4.28% at Fifth Third bank. The District continues to have significant investment earnings, however, as they roll over, they are replaced with earnings at the current rate, and there is a bit of a dip over time that is seen as those investments are replaced.

Financial Report for June 2025

Dr. Johnson then provided the Financial Report for June 2025. He noted that revenue and expenses will both change as the business office makes year-end adjustments. The audit typically provides adjusting entries as well, which will come to the Board in either November or December.

Operating revenue for the twelve months of Fiscal Year 2025 was \$143,536,00, or about one percent higher compared to last year. The District should end the year at or above the adopted budget for operating revenue. Any funds attributable to last year that are received by August 31, 2025 will be recognized in that year.

Operating expenditures (exclusive of transfers) through June were \$132,742,000 or 3.94% higher than last year's \$127,712,000. The expenditures total will increase as payments for FY25 goods and services are processed in July and August. Final results for the fiscal year will be included in the audit. Fund book balances for all accounts were \$129,281,000 as of June 30th.

Mr. Lee inquired if the faculty salaries are amortized over the course of the year, to which Dr. Johnson replied that teachers are paid from the first day of school to the last, but many choose to be paid out on a 12-month basis. The business office runs the four summer checks before June ends for them and distributes them throughout the summer. Dr. Johnson shared additional information pertaining to the accounting practice of this.

***C. Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation Bid Package 3**

Dr. Johnson presented on the Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation Bid Package 3. The project was approved by the Board at the August 2024 meeting. This project, which will span the next three years, will renovate and construct 10 science labs, an increase of three and will create a more secure, welcoming, centralized space for the graduating class teams, post high school counseling, and other frequently visited functions by the entrance to the Winnetka campus.

The Board is asked to approve four of the remaining construction bids and contracts for this project. The initial bids were approved in March, 16 bids were presented for approval in June, while four, presented at this meeting, remained to be either rebid or had their bid deadline extended. The District is pleased with the amount of coverage with two bids for each of these smaller trades. For each winning bid, a scope review was conducted, and references were checked.

The only remaining bid next year will be for the second phase of asbestos abatement, which cannot be bid until work is completed this summer to determine the scope of the abatement required. Overall, the project budget is higher than the initial August estimate, but lower than the estimate from last month. As the District engaged fully with the design work, it had opportunities to address related work that was in its best interest from a cost and functionality standpoint, including renovating an additional hallway and creating a new handicapped accessible entrance. There have also been significant inflationary costs since that time. Dr. Johnson will have a more comprehensive report on the budget in August. There are also some Health Life Safety (HLS) amendments for the project up for approval that will allow the District to access HLS funds, which Dr. Johnson explained further.

Ms. Hahn confirmed that once this is approved, that 99% of the costs are locked in, which Dr. Johnson confirmed. Ms. Hahn reiterated that rebidding work is not the easy way to do things, but it is the careful and financially prudent way and shows how Dr. Johnson is able to bring in a balanced budget.

Ms. Pofcher moved that the Board of Education approve the bids and related costs as presented by Pepper Construction and assign these contracts to Pepper Construction. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Periods, May 1 - 31, 2025 and June 1 - 30, 2025
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Stipends - Appointments, Stipends - Separation, Termination)
- Resolution regarding change orders for the Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Project
- Policy Revisions Second Reading - PRESS 118
- Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 30 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804
- Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 106 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804
- Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 109 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804

- Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 27 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804
- Closed Session Records Review
- ED-RED Membership Renewal
- Infinity Transportation Contract Extension Coach Buses
- Quest Contract Renewal
- Vending Contract Renewal - Canteen (Formerly Mark Vend)
- NTEF Resolution
- Resolution Authorizing the Prompt Payment of Bills
- 2nd Amendment to Contract with Performance Services for Solar at the Winnetka Campus
- HLS Amendments

Ms. Hahn inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Pofcher moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Periods, May 1 - 31, 2025 and June 1 - 30, 2025; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Stipends - Appointments, Stipends - Separation, and Termination); Resolution regarding approval of change orders for the 2025-2028 Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Project; Policy Revisions Second Reading - PRESS 118; Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 30 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804; Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 106 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804; Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 109 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804; Resolution Regarding the Proposed Withdrawal of School District No. 27 from TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804; The destruction of the Closed Session Meeting tapes of July 2023 through December 2023; ED-RED Membership Renewal; Extend the contract with Infinity Transportation through June 30, 2026 and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the agreement; Extend of the current Quest Food Services Management contract and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute it pending legal review; Approval of a three-year vending agreement with Canteen for the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 school years and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the agreement subject to attorney review; Resolution Providing Operational Resources for the New Trier Township High School District 203 Educational Foundation as presented; Resolution Authorizing the Prompt Payment of Bills; Approve the contract price amendment as presented, and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the agreement; The Health Life Safety Amendment 13 (Northfield Campus) and 25 (Winnetka Campus) be approved as presented. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Das, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Mr. Lee mentioned that he will attend a forum in his home country (Korea) in the fall and if there are any items that the Board would like Mr. Lee to discuss, to let him know.

The **TrueNorth Leadership Council** has met a few times over the last month. Mr. Das noted that their focus is have an interim superintendent put in place at the start of the school year, TrueNorth does have an acting superintendent currently. Ongoing planning continues in regard to member districts who declared intentions to withdraw and what the state of TrueNorth will be in the future. Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Das for all the work he is doing on this.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation's (NTEF)** gala will be March 6, 2026. She encouraged Board members to attend, noting that NTEF honors their Alumni Achievement Award winners.

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

Dr. Tragos highlighted the following events:

- July 25th is the last day of summer school.
- Leaders return on Monday, August 11th.
- Opening Institute Day is Monday, August 18th.
- The first day of student attendance is Wednesday, August 20th.
- The next Board meeting is Monday, August 18th.

Ms. Hahn then inquired whether there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Pofcher seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Jean Hahn, President