

## BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203  
Board of Education Regular Meeting  
April 19, 2021*

### District Plans for Full In-Person Learning for 2021-2022

New Trier is planning for full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, with processes underway to help transition students back to campus, especially those who have been fully or mostly remote this school year.

Superintendent Paul Sally acknowledged that there are still many unknowns for next school year, but with the availability of vaccinations, New Trier expects that students and teachers will be back on campus full-time. There may be limited exceptions for students with approved medical accommodations, and those will be addressed on an individual basis. Sally also said he is hopeful that the Pfizer vaccine will soon be approved for students ages 12-15, giving all New Trier students the opportunity to be vaccinated before next school year.

New Trier's principals are working with school leaders to plan relationship-building activities and other transition plans to help support students with the return to full in-person instruction. They are focusing on incoming freshmen and rising sophomores, as well as those students who chose to learn remotely this school year. All students will receive a survey later this month to help the District learn more about their concerns about the return to a full in-person schedule and how to best support them next year.

### 2021-2022 Calendar and Schedule

As previously announced, New Trier will move to a rotating Blue/Green block schedule for the 2021-2022 school year in which students will attend individual classes for longer periods every other day.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, said an early run of the master schedule against all student course requests has produced promising results for minimizing student conflicts and supporting students with IEPs. Work on the scheduling process continues and is on track for schedule conflict resolutions in early May.

The new block schedule will help the school continue smooth operations in the event of a need for hybrid or remote learning next year. Its other goals include increasing time in class for deeper engagement with coursework, reducing student stress with fewer transitions in the day and fewer classes with homework each night, reclaiming instructional time lost during the 2020-2021 school year, and engaging in a full study of the schedule during the year.

The block schedule also adapts easily to New Trier's paired early dismissal/late arrival days and includes about one each month for staff professional development. During these days, the block schedule will shift to substantive 55-minute classes. Families traditionally have taken advantage of these days for extended weekends and college visits.

Sally noted that the District is still working through a few items in the 2021-2022 schedule, including adding Freshman Go-to-School Night, determining which breaks are "no homework"

breaks, and establishing a Test Day Policy that works with the block schedule. The Board approved the initial [2021-2022 calendar](#).

The full 2021-2022 planning presentation can be found [here](#).

## Update on School Reopening: Attendance, Quarantines, Vaccinations

Following the issuance of new state guidelines on social distancing requirements in schools, New Trier was able to open both campuses for full in-person learning 4 days a week for any student requesting the in-person option. District administrators updated the Board about in-person attendance, student quarantines, and New Trier's ongoing vaccination efforts.

### Student Attendance

For the week of April 13, the first week that all parent requests for 4th quarter in person learning were granted, more than 60% of all students attended in person at the Northfield Campus and more than 40% of all students attended in person at the Winnetka Campus.

There was about a 20-25% difference between the in-person track selected by families and actual attendance, consistent with attendance patterns throughout the year. The actual numbers reflect students choosing not to attend some or all classes in person, illnesses, quarantines, and travel.

### Student Quarantines

With New Trier spring athletics in full swing and reduced distance in Northfield Campus classrooms, the District has told parents to expect more quarantines because of the COVID-19 exposure quarantine requirements issued by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Under those guidelines, a close contact requiring quarantine is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before getting tested) regardless of mask wearing or other mitigation factors.

Classroom distancing currently remains at 6 feet at the Winnetka Campus to reduce quarantine possibilities. The Northfield Campus has reduced classroom distancing to accommodate in-person student attendance. The District will continue to closely monitor both quarantine numbers and students who need to Zoom into class after classrooms reach capacity.

As of April 16, 51 students were under quarantine - six from classroom exposure at the Northfield Campus, and most of the rest from athletics. There remain no reported cases of transmission from exposure at New Trier. Superintendent Paul Sally stressed the importance of continued cooperation from families and students for contact tracing of exposure and for staying home when they do not feel well or have participated in activities that put them at risk of COVID-19.

### Vaccinations and Mitigation Efforts

Through its partnership with MABAS-3 (local fire departments and Cook County) and retail pharmacy partners, New Trier has vaccinated approximately 10,000 people from New Trier Township and more than 70 surrounding communities at its Northfield Campus vaccination site in the Main Gym.

Approximately 86% of New Trier staff have reported they have been vaccinated. In addition, more than 500 students ages 16 and older have been vaccinated at the New Trier site, with many more finding vaccinations independently. New Trier will continue to offer on-site opportunities for families and residents of surrounding communities as they become available.

The Illinois State Board of Education has not yet released guidance for school mitigation requirements based on potentially high vaccination rates. Sally said potential requirements next year may include masks, some form of distancing, and cleaning measures. Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson explained that the District is determining the next steps for the COVID-19 saliva screener after the conclusion of the school year. He said he expects that all students and staff will have the opportunity to be vaccinated by the time students return in the fall, which will likely make the use of weekly screening unnecessary.

A link to the full reopening presentation can be found [here](#).

## Planning Continues for Winnetka Campus Academic and Athletic Project

Preparations for the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project are in full swing as the District continues to refine the project design, pick materials, consult with experts, and meet with key stakeholders in advance of a planned December groundbreaking.

Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson updated the Board on the ongoing work and presented new drawings of the exterior of the campus, which are available in the presentation linked below. The District met with Winnetka Campus neighbors on April 14 and received positive feedback on the design as part of New Trier's commitment to two-way communication with the neighborhood throughout the project.

As design work continues, next steps include meetings with Village of Winnetka boards and commissions to review and approve the project. Johnson said that some preliminary work will occur this summer to prepare for the start of construction in the winter.

The project will replace the 1928 Gates Gymnasium and 1925 Boiler Plant with a multipurpose facility within the boundaries of Essex Road and Trevian Way. The project includes a dozen new classroom spaces, a new competition gym and indoor track, strength and conditioning facilities, and other new facilities to benefit New Trier's academic, Kinetic Wellness, and Athletics programs.

The \$75 million project is being funded through existing taxpayer resources without the need for a referendum. The majority of the project will be funded by alternate revenue bond proceeds.

Johnson reported that Moody's reaffirmed the District's Aaa bond rating earlier this month, the highest possible rating, making New Trier one of a small number of school districts with this rating thanks to the resources the community provides to the District and the District's strong financial management.

As a result, the District had a very competitive bid environment for its bond sale of two series of bonds and secured lower than estimated all-in true interest costs. The costs are 1.75% for one bond series totaling \$50.5 million to provide a portion of the funding for the Winnetka Campus Project. The District had estimated \$3.1 million annual payments for these bonds; the actual amount will be about \$2.9 million annually. The District also had a second smaller bond sale

with rates of 0.72% totaling \$4.2 million to fund capital improvements on both campuses this summer.

The full presentation can be found [here](#).

*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* <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation/>