



Board Report to the Community

November 2003

New Trier Township High School District 203

New Trier to begin strategic planning process

New Trier will embark on its second major foray into strategic planning, a one-year process that will identify the challenges ahead and establish priorities for the high school in the next five to ten years.

The initiative comes ten years after the school's first-ever strategic plan was launched, resulting in a 1995 final report that presented more than 100 recommended improvements, most of which have been implemented since then.

New Trier Superintendent Hank Bangser said, "We're now at a point where we have completed a significant amount of the internal upgrading that resulted from the first process. In addition, we've settled the two major issues that we needed to address before venturing into more formal planning. Those issues



were the assignment of students to the Northfield and Winnetka campuses through the 1-3 organization and the creation of a stable revenue flow for at least five years through passage of the April 2003 referendum."

Public to learn about strategic planning initiative at November 24 meeting

The strategic planning process, which will conclude by December 2004, will be described at a special open meeting of the Board of Education for the community and staff at 7:30 p.m., Monday, November 24, in the Board Room (C234), Building C, Second Floor, at the Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road.

Presenting an explanation of the process will be Dr. Howard Feddema, senior associate with The Cambridge Group, an international education strategic planning consulting firm that will facilitate New Trier strategic planning. Dr. Feddema will assist the initial strategic planning team of approximately 30 members representing New Trier staff, community, Board of Education, and the student body, as well as individual action teams that will be formed at a later date. Community



members who are interested in learning more about the process or serving on the initial Strategic Planning Team or the action teams are encouraged to attend the November 24 meeting. However, attendance at this meeting is not required to be chosen for participation. Dr. Bangser will work with the leaders of the staff organizations, the Parents Association and major

community groups to identify the participants for both stages of the process.

District will examine "best practices" in Secondary Education

In his comments to the District staff on the opening day of the 2003-2004 school year, Dr. Bangser stressed that the strategic planning process will be characterized by an examination of a broad array of "best practices" in secondary education throughout the nation and, where appropriate, internationally.

"Our strategic planning process in the 1990s led us to important introspection — an examination of ourselves as a school community," Dr. Bangser said. "Now it is the time to look beyond the boundaries of the District. New Trier receives an extraordinary number of visitors who come to learn about our programs and successes. In the upcoming months, we will see how other high-performing school districts have improved. We want to obtain a first-hand sense of 'best practices' that have been implemented by others in the last decade and learn from them."

The process will begin with a meeting of the Strategic Planning Team from December 11-13 that will develop a draft plan based on consensus of the members. The document will include the following items, among others, relating to New Trier:

- fundamental beliefs
- purpose and mission
- strategic parameters
- objectives that achieve specific, measurable results
- strategies to effect the objectives.

continued on page 5

Results of the 1995 Strategic Planning Effort – and a Look Ahead

The first strategic planning process in New Trier's history resulted in more than 100 recommendations for the superintendent, staff, and Board of Education to consider in the upcoming years. Approximately 80 percent of the improvements described in the 1995 final report have been implemented.

Below are some of the enhancements in the past eight years that resulted from the 1995 Strategic Plan. Also shown below are some of the issues that a staff committee last school year recommended for consideration during the upcoming strategic planning process:

COMMUNICATIONS

(including upgrades of the District management systems)

Enhancements

- Creation of the positions of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and Director of Information Technology
- Creation of the All-School Forum as a vehicle for communications among all constituencies in the District
- Establishment of a sincere and open dialogue among all District constituencies

Future Considerations

- Definition of shared goals throughout the New Trier community
- Closure of the gaps among the campuses, departments, and constituencies

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Enhancements

- The Curriculum Council, now in its fourth year, with both information-gathering and decision-making responsibilities concerning major instructional initiatives
- Characteristics of Professional Practice, a bedrock plan for classroom observations and evaluations
- Staff development program
- Mentor system, with a personal mentor for each new teacher
- New system of plus and minus grades, a revised system of weighted grades, and change in class rank from individual to decile ranking

Future Considerations

- Continued evaluation of the length and use of time in the present school day and year
- Challenge to make school more than the sum of its parts and underscore the ability of the learner to understand the experience as a coherent whole
- Curricular decisions more data-driven

FACILITIES

Enhancements

- Implementation of more than 50 improvements, including: complete modernization of the North Building, Tower Building and Music Building at the Winnetka Campus, renovation of the fields at the Winnetka and Northfield campuses with the installation of an all-weather track, total modernization of the Northfield Campus
- Improvements in all academic departments, including the renovation and/or creation of 19 science labs in the District

Future Considerations

- Renovation and expansion of the locker rooms in Gates Gymnasium, renovation of the 1957 library, and improvements to the existing infrastructure at the Winnetka Campus
- Ten-year capital upgrade plan at the Northfield Campus to address work on the internal building infrastructure components that was not part of the renovation

FINANCE

Enhancements

- Passage of the first tax rate referendum in 25 years by a 61 percent positive vote
- Formation of the New Trier Township High School District 203 Educational Foundation

Future Considerations

- Containment of expenditures while maintaining the excellence of the District program is among the highest priorities

PERSONNEL

Enhancements

- Conception of present hiring process, giving candidates an opportunity to meet their potential colleagues in a professional conversation
- Earlier access to the merit scales in the faculty salary schedule
- Insistence on the "flattest" possible leadership structure among faculty, support staff, administration and physical plant services (i.e., the best idea is far more important than the title of the initiator)

Future Considerations

- Improved recruiting of all staff with a particular focus on an enhancement of the District diversity program
- Development of formalized staff recognition efforts

STUDENT SERVICES

Enhancements

- Improvements to the adviser system, especially the elimination of parental requests for advisers, thus creating far greater equity
- Additional improvements for students, including an expanded Senior Project and many other programs

Future Considerations

- Delivery of a coherent adviser system and student services program across four year groups
- The impact of technology – voice mail, personal phones and e-mail – on the number of messages from parents to teachers

TECHNOLOGY

Enhancements

- Creation of a District technology program which earned a reputation among the best in the northern suburbs
- Increase in the number of computers from under 400 in 1995 to more than 1,500 today

Future Considerations

- Infusion of technology into the daily pedagogy for faculty members across the continuum of departments

Board of Education approves 2003-04 Budget

The Board of Education approved the 2003-04 Budget on September 15, 2003. The Operating Fund expenditures are projected at nearly \$65.8 million. The total expenditures in all funds are projected at approximately \$75.2 million. This represents a 7.1% growth in operating fund expenditures, compared to fiscal year 2002-03 actual.

3.6% growth in student enrollment

Expenditures are based on enrollment growth of roughly 3.6% and inflation of 2.4%. Meeting the needs of the growing enrollment and the continuation of existing programs required an increase of 10.8 faculty members. Employee benefits related to the staffing increase as well as a substantial increase in premiums (in excess of 12%) contributed to this budget growth.

The District also is faced with a rather significant one-time medical insurance claim cost as a result of making a change in the District's medical insurance program, which will result in savings in excess of 15% in premiums. This is a "one time" cost required to obtain lower premiums as a result of this change.

Purchased services reflect a fairly significant increase compared to the prior year actual expenditures. This includes increases to property and liability insurance, transportation and food services. Additional revenues offset the transportation and food service increases. In addition, because of the financial uncertainties facing the District during the 2002-03 school year, efforts were made to control costs by utilizing inventory and curtailing expenditures related to staff development, maintenance and other services pending the outcome of the referendum. The 2003-04 budget restores a portion of these cutbacks.

In the area of supplies, the District has projected a small increase, primarily related to utility expenses. Finally, a rather substantial increase is projected in the area of tuition, based on both increases in cost and the number of students requiring special services.

In non-operating funds, the District is projecting nearly \$5.8 million in capital expenditures related to anticipated building capital improvement fund expenditures and proposed life safety modifications and improvements. This includes

the final phase of the science lab renovations at the Winnetka Campus, the Winnetka Campus library renovation project and infrastructure repairs and improvements at both campuses.

Budget reflects 2002 Tax Levy

With respect to revenues, the 2003-04 Budget reflects the 2002 Tax Levy, which was increased by \$13.25 million beyond the tax cap increase as a result of the tax rate referendum approved April 1, 2003. Due to the Cook County tax distribution system, this will actually result in higher tax revenues than projected during the referendum presentations. This resulted in the Board of Education approving a \$6.73 million one-time reduction to the estimated 2003 Tax Levy, which will reduce taxpayers' October 2004 tax bill for New Trier by approximately \$275 per \$10,000 of property taxes paid.

Successful Referendum changed District's financial outlook

"Thanks to the successful tax rate referendum, the financial outlook of the District has changed radically," said Superintendent Hank Banger. "The referendum will allow the District to eliminate the structural deficit of the past two years. It also will permit the District to increase the District's fund balance to minimum levels recommended by our auditors."

The District will continue to be faced with growing enrollment over the next four years and will still face a limitation as a result of the tax cap and the uncertainties associated with both state and federal sources of revenues. "We must continue to implement cost containment measures, stay within our limited available financial resources, and sustain an adequate reserve level into the foreseeable future," said Don Goers, Assistant Superintendent for Business. ●

	2002-03 Actual Expenses	2003-04 Approved Budget	Percent of Change
Operating Funds:			
Salaries	\$39,903,796	\$42,408,420	6.28%
Benefits	6,242,175	6,859,385	9.89%
Purchased Services	6,224,723	6,976,454	12.08%
Supplies	3,190,760	3,311,880	3.80%
Equipment	2,853,189	2,900,038	1.64%
Other Objects	990,205	991,670	0.15%
Tuition	2,033,584	2,346,000	15.36%
Sub-Total	\$61,438,432	\$65,793,847	7.09%
Other Funds:			
Bldg. Capital Improv	301,174	2,500,000	730.08%
Bond & Interest	3,682,801	3,664,998	-0.48%
Life Safety	0	3,250,000	n/a
Sub-Total	\$3,983,975	\$9,414,998	136.32%
Grand Total	\$65,422,407	\$75,208,845	14.96%

Summer trips take students around the world

New Trier students immersed themselves in different countries and culture this past summer, broadening their horizons far beyond the shores of Lake Michigan. School-sponsored trips to France, Spain and Japan exposed students to a language they had studied at New Trier but, for the most part, had not yet spoken on native soil. Other trips to Italy and Costa Rica had equal but different academically-intense themes.

Living the French Culture

“The students gained a total insight into the French family and mindset. We lived the French culture,” said French teacher Richard Koerner, describing his nine students’ experience in France. French students spent two weeks in Strasbourg, the Alsatian city with a long association with New Trier. Students lived with families, staying with pen pals from New Trier’s sister institution Scolaire Lucie Berger who had visited Winnetka during the spring. That portion of the trip included excursions into the area surrounding Strasbourg, with picnics and participation in the national celebration of la F^{te} de la Musique.

The trip also included one week in Paris, with side trips to Giverny, home of Claude Monet, and Auvres-sur-Oise, closely associated with Vincent van Gogh. In Paris, the group toured what Mr. Koerner called the “must-sees,” with each student explaining a particular attraction or monument that he or she had studied in detail in advance. French teacher Dori Rosenbloom and mathematics teacher Jennifer Wexler also accompanied the group.

Bonding in Spain

A total of 29 students headed to Spain with Spanish teachers Stephanie Gamauf, Mercedes Lopez and Eduardo Rodriguez. Their two-week home stay in Córdoba proved to be the highlight of their trip, which included travels to Seville, Madrid, and Grenada.

“The highlight was socializing and bonding with our students’ brothers, sisters and other teens in the host families,” Mr. Rodriguez said.



When in Rome

Another 17 students toured Italy with New Trier Latin teachers John Kirkpatrick and Linda Knier. The student travelers were Latin students, so prior to their trip they spent a week at the Winnetka Campus taking a crash course in Italian, a language not taught at New Trier, and researching a particular site on which they would report.

The group spent ten days in Rome, staying at Loyola University’s Rome Center and spending four hours a day with a professor lecturing on site. Then it was on to Florence and Sorrento, visiting such sites as Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Capri, where everyone hiked to the top of Mount Tiberio to study the villa of Emperor Tiberius.

“This trip was an opportunity for students to see places we talk about in class first-hand,” Mrs. Knier said, “to see the spot, for example, where Marc Antony delivered his famous oration at Caesar’s funeral.”

Science in Costa Rica

The five-week Costa Rica course combined history with science, with 20 students first spending two weeks at the Winnetka Campus preparing for a journey to San Jose, Tortuguero, Volcán Arenal, Monteverde, and Manuel Antonio. Central to the trip were individual research projects designed and carried out on-site by students working together with experts in the particular field. “What the students were doing was real hands-on research — something that a lot of college students don’t even get to do,”

commented New Trier Special Education teacher Ted Kouleentes, who led the trip with science teachers Mike Clough and Tracy Siebert.

On the Sea of Japan

Half a world away, eight students were spending three weeks in Japan with New Trier Japanese teacher Kimiko Nakayama and Spanish teacher Matt Stuczynski. The city of Niigata on the Sea of Japan was their base, with students staying in homes and attending high school.

“The students’ exposure to daily Japanese life at a home and at high school gave them a wonderful experience,” said Mrs. Nakayama. “Japanese people are eager to host New Trier students, and they are always extremely kind and thoughtful.” New Trier’s association with Niigata began in 1997 with the same school.

Classes planned for students in calligraphy, cooking, and the art of the Japanese tea ceremony were especially novel for the New Trier visitors. “Japan was a completely distinct culture,” said Charlie Hoffman, New Trier senior who is in his fourth year of studying the language. “It was amazing to speak Japanese and to learn new words and phrases.” He benefited, too, he said, from the group’s trips to the ancient city of Kyoto, the bustle of Tokyo, and Hiroshima, “which gave me a whole new perspective on World War II.” Charlie, who was inspired to learn Japanese by an association his grandfather had with the country, said the trip inspired him to continue learning the language in college. ●

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Dr. Bangser will share the draft plan throughout the District and will invite school and community volunteers to serve on the various action teams that emanate from the strategies.

Relevant Action Plans

The action teams work through the school year and, where necessary, in the summer, to develop action plans characterized by the following characteristics, among others:

- uncompromising dedication to the best interest of students
- full involvement by staff as well as the community
- consensus-based decisions
- emphasis on measurable, demonstrable results
- accountability for performance effectiveness
- continuous evaluation.

The Cambridge Group emphasizes that the intent is to develop plans “that are not only relevant to their strategy, but also positive in terms of return on investment. All plans must be implementable – not merely plans to plan. And each must be accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis.”

After the action plans have been drafted, probably in the fall of 2004, the initial (December 2003) Strategic Planning Team will reconvene for a two-day session to hear formal presentations by the action team leaders. Once the final draft of the action plans is written and an implementation schedule is constructed, the document will be submitted to the Board of Education for approval. The intent is to secure Board approval at or before its December 2004 meeting, in time to have the 2005-06 school year budget reflect the priorities from the 2004 strategic plan.

The 1995 first strategic plan addressed issues in seven domains – communications, curriculum and instruction, facilities, finance, personnel, student services, and technology (see page 2). “We are in a very different place in the life of our District than a decade ago,” Dr. Bangser added, “with an opportunity now to ask some challenging and exciting questions about how New Trier will continue to offer students’ programs which are pre-eminent in the nation and the world.” ●

Students from New Trier and DuSable High Schools renew their partnership to improve a garden sanctuary

New Trier and Chicago’s DuSable High School have renewed a partnership that most likely will result in New Trier students building park benches and a gazebo for DuSable’s garden sanctuary — the result of the first joint project six years ago.

In 1997, the two schools worked together to raise funds for the courtyard garden. Student musicians from both schools performed a benefit concert, “We Will Grow a Garden,” at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, with proceeds funding the work. In preparation for the concert, the students had rehearsed together, traveling to the other school.

A gazebo and park benches are the likely “next phase”

Now six years later, plans for enhancing the garden blossomed when three New Trier representatives attended a ceremony to view and formally dedicate the garden. Cynthia Kobel, New Trier alumna and Executive Director of the Kenneth F. and Harle G. Montgomery Foundation, which also generously supported the project, had invited New Trier’s Winnetka Campus Principal Debbie Stacey to speak at the ceremony. Also attending were New Trier’s Bob Spagnoli, Practical Arts Department Chair, and David Bachmann, this year’s choral music coordinator.

After speaking with Ms. Kobel and DuSable High School Principal Carol Briggs, Dr. Stacey said they decided to continue the schools’ relationship and joint projects. Thoughts of having New Trier

students build a gazebo and some benches “seem likely,” Dr. Stacey said, as no seating exists in the garden and the idea of a gazebo supports the philosophy of the ecology sanctuary. She quoted Timuel Black, Chicago educator, community leader and DuSable alumnus, who wrote, “the purpose and goal of the sanctuary is to provide a noiseless, peaceful retreat for students, parents, faculty and friends to study and to confer with each other about issues, problems, and possible solutions in their lives.”

Mr. Spagnoli has specific thoughts about how his students can get involved. Although planning is still in the early stages, he envisions that sophomores from his engineering lab class and students in the drafting classes would draw and design the gazebo. New Trier student drawings could be displayed with drawings contributed by DuSable students. Funds for materials to build the gazebo may come from fundraising efforts by various New Trier departments.

“Time, energy, and hard work”

“It was great to see so many community members at DuSable get so excited about this project,” Mr. Spagnoli said. “I can only imagine the time, energy and hard work so many people have put into this project. It is exciting to be asked to participate.” Dr. Stacey is equally enthusiastic. “Continuing our relationship with DuSable would help us once again bring students together from different communities for a common purpose,” she said. “This project would give our students with another opportunity to live the New Trier motto, — To commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of mankind.” ●



Brazilian musicians dazzle students

One of Brazil's most famous instrumental music groups — choro group N6 Em Pingo D'Água — spread its magic at New Trier earlier this fall while on a U.S. tour. Other gigs included the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Chicago's World Music Festival, and campus venues at Notre Dame, Princeton and DePaul University. Choro is a century-old form of Brazilian instrumental music with roots ranging from classical European salon music to Afro-Brazilian rhythms. Choro groups traditionally consist of percussion, guitar, a string instrument called the bandolim, flute, saxophone and bass. A sample of the group's music can be heard online at www.cantaloupeproductions.com/pingotour.

"N6," as the group is known in Brazil, has won numerous awards and is credited with awakening enthusiasm among young Brazilians for choro music. The concert in Gaffney Auditorium gave New Trier students a unique musical and cultural experience. "It's rare for our students to have the opportunity to hear authentic performances from another musical culture such as Brazil," said Jim Warrick, music teacher and jazz program director. "The group was exciting to hear."

New Trier alumna Julie Koidin, who also is a private flute instructor and professional choro performer, was instrumental in organizing the group's U.S. tour, including the concert at New Trier. "The students were blown away," she said, describing audience members' responses. "Many of them had never heard such music before." Ms. Koidin became acquainted with the group when she was in Brazil on a Fulbright lecture and research grant in 2002. To help arrange the musicians' U.S. tour, she met with the Brazilian counsel general in Chicago and worked with a fellow choro aficionado at Notre Dame, who spoke with Gilberto Gil, Brazilian musician who is now the country's Minister of Culture. Mr. Gil arranged for a grant for the group to travel to Notre Dame and other U.S. cities. ●



**New Trier to begin
strategic planning process**

**Special Open Meeting
of Board of Education
7:30 p.m.**

**November 24, 2003
Board Room (C234)
Building C
Northfield Campus**

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New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education
385 Winnetka Avenue
Winnetka, IL 60093-4295

New Trier Township High School District 203 serves Chicago's North Shore suburban communities of Glencoe, Kenilworth, Wilmette and Winnetka, most of Northfield and parts of Glenview and Northbrook.

Board Report to the Community

Produced by the New Trier Township High School District
Personnel and Communications office. Laura Blair Bertani, Director

Board of Education

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