

## **School Culture**

By Paul Waechtler and Denise Hibbard

As we met over the summer, we noticed a recurring theme in our discussions: culture. Whether discussing a book we both read, pondering how best to help students and staff grow, or considering the impact of New Trier on the community, we frequently ended up talking about the importance and influence of culture.

We are fortunate to be educators in an institution with a culture that promotes and supports intellectual discourse, values hard work and reflection, and encourages respect for institutions and traditions. While we celebrate our traditions, we also value progress and innovation and are always striving to improve. One of the phrases we use often is: "New Trier is a relationship-based institution, not a rule-based institution." We have guidelines and frameworks for making decisions, but we also promote evaluating each situation individually. We promote the building of healthy relationships as a way to succeed in life, get support when it's needed, and navigate the complex institutions and systems that we all encounter during our lives. We hope and expect that our students will learn to build healthy, positive relationships with adults and peers so they are well prepared for life beyond New Trier.

Students also grow into the intellectual life around them. At New Trier students and adults routinely contemplate big, important questions. We expect students to focus on learning, not just task completion, and to think deeply about issues and context. Walking through department offices throughout the year, we have noticed how many of our teachers work individually with students on both thinking and relationship-building. It is our sincere pleasure to be able to work with such amazing students, staff, parents, and community members. We look forward to partnering with you in making decisions that respect the important culture of New Trier while moving the school ever forward.