

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Meeting

April 20, 2020

New Trier Provides Update on Remote Learning, Remainder of Year

New Trier continues to refine and improve its remote learning experience as the school looks for ways to celebrate students, provide individualized instruction and connection, and bring hope to our community in these difficult times, administrators told the Board of Education on Monday.

The Board held its first remote meeting via a live video conference just days after Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker announced that all Illinois schools would stay closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of this school year.

School Closure and Class of 2020 Recognition

Superintendent Paul Sally acknowledged how difficult that news was to share with New Trier families, students, faculty, and staff - particularly students in the Class of 2020. He and Winnetka Campus Principal Denise Dubravec assured the Board that the school will find a way to gather this year's seniors together to celebrate when the time is appropriate - the District hopes on July 12 at the Sears Centre - and that the school will offer virtual celebrations and other recognition in the meantime. His April 17 message to the New Trier community is [here](#).

Communications

Communications Director Niki Dizon told the Board that an effective communication plan is more important now than ever, as the New Trier community is eager to understand the quickly changing information about the school year. While that plan includes informational updates shared via email, Canvas, and posted on the [COVID-19 web page](#), the District also continues to share uplifting news on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). Dubravec noted the campuses are now bedecked in banners and signs of support for all students, for teachers and staff from the NTPA, and for senior athletes - with more to come.

Trevian Remote Learning

Beginning immediately after spring break, New Trier moved to a Blue/Green/Grey schedule for [Trevian Remote Learning](#), creating a more manageable environment with more opportunity for connections between students and teachers. In recent surveys, students, teachers, and parents agreed that this schedule creates better

communication, more authentic learning opportunities, and less stress for students and faculty. Students and parents did raise questions about the student workload, frequency of Zoom video conferencing, and ability for students to stay connected. New Trier is incorporating this feedback into ongoing professional development with faculty and staff.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, told the Board that teachers have adjusted 4th quarter curricula to focus on essential content, concepts, and skills - in general by removing about the equivalent of one unit. Given that it is not possible or advisable to replicate the classroom experience in a remote environment, teachers are also working together in departments and with sender schools to align next year's 1st quarter content in sequential courses to assure students' learning stays on track. He noted that the main goal of remote learning is to keep students engaged and learning moving forward, with grades and assessments mainly serving the role of helping teachers check for understanding. In that spirit, teachers will look for a way to bring closure to a class with a summative reflective experience rather than holding traditional finals, and New Trier will follow state guidance in its [Remote Learning Grading Processes](#).

Special Education

New Trier has been in regular contact with the parents of students with Individualized Education Plans to assure that they receive services and stay on track with goals in the remote environment. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education, said teachers and case managers are providing additional supports, structures, and check-ins with those students and are developing plans for each student specific to remote learning.

Student Well-being

Student well-being continues to be a priority during these times, and New Trier is using its strong adviser system and student services to reach out to students who may be struggling. Tim Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, said advisers have daily check-ins and contact families if students are not engaging in remote learning, and the school continues to provide support through Health Services and programs like Bridges and GAP. Social workers are working with students whose IEPs identify a need for those services, and community agencies are providing remote [mental health resources](#) as well.

Incoming Freshmen

Northfield Campus Principal Paul Waechtler told the Board that planning continues for the Class of 2024. Even though some parent and student events such as After the Academics must be reimagined or postponed until the fall, the District is still working to get all the normal information from and to incoming families so that New Trier is prepared to welcome them in the fall.

End of Year and Summer School

The Board approved moving the end of student instruction to June 5, allowing the District to use the elimination of final exams and four planning days the following week to prepare for [Summer School](#) and the 2020-2021 year.

New Trier is committed to running a full Summer School academic program to support students' four-year plan, credit recovery, subject advancement, and a more flexible school-year schedule. Summer School is likely to begin in a remote learning environment, with a possible blended approach later in the summer if possible. It is still unclear if or when Summer Athletics courses and camps may be allowed, and New Trier will follow state health guidelines in that decision.

Planning for 2020-2021 School Year

Sally told the Board that planning for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year must include many considerations, including the risk of new local outbreaks and the availability of testing and contact tracing. It is possible that students and staff will be required to wear masks for some period of time when in-person instruction resumes, and that the school will need to provide a blended remote/in-person approach for vulnerable populations and those under quarantine.

Financial Implications

New Trier is assessing the impact of current events on the District's budget and looking for ways to support families who face their own financial difficulties, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Chris Johnson told the Board.

To support families, New Trier is providing lunch and breakfast for pickup for students who qualify for financial assistance during the closure period. The District will also freeze student fees in fiscal year 2021 as well as reduce the subsidized iPad purchase cost for incoming students to \$200. Johnson said the District anticipates an increase in financial aid applications.

For the current budget year, the District is reconciling some reductions in revenue (such as food services and facility rentals) with reduced expenditures for items like travel and conferences. Staff and some vendor payments must continue under the state's directive. For the next school year, Johnson said the District is monitoring potential changes to state and local funding and interest earnings and will reduce some planned expenditures as well as take other cost-cutting measures as necessary.

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

Other News from the April 20 Meeting:

- The Board approved the [2021-2022 school year calendar](#), which includes days off, homework-free breaks, and alignment with sender school calendars typical of New Trier's past several school years.
- The Board approved the appointment of Megan Zajac as the District's new Director of Special Education. Zajac, the current Special Education Department Chair, brings a wealth of experience in special education to the role. Prior to becoming department chair, she served as 504 Coordinator, RtI Coach, Assistive Technology Coordinator, Bridges Program teacher, and teacher in the Special Education Department. In her new position, which begins July 1, Zajac will work collaboratively with the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education to oversee designated special education programs and personnel within the full continuum of special education services offered by New Trier and to ensure that all students have comprehensive curricular, extracurricular, and support programs to meet their needs.
- The Board approved the appointment of Anne Marie Ricchio to be New Trier's next Health Services Coordinator beginning August 17, 2020. Ricchio comes to New Trier after serving as head nurse at Niles Township High School District 219. She previously worked as a registered nurse at Lurie Children's Hospital and Rush Medical Center in Chicago. Ricchio succeeds current Health Services Coordinator Colleen Sheridan, who is retiring after 25 years in education and 15 years at New Trier.
- The Board held officer elections for the period through April 2021. Cathy Albrecht will serve another term as Board President, and Marc Glucksman will serve another term as Board Vice President.

The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 7 p.m. in Room C234 on the Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road.

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/>