

BOARD BRIEFS

News from the New Trier Township High School District 203

Board of Education Meeting

May 18, 2020

New Trier Committees Planning for Fall Reopening Options

New Trier has created several committees to consider all options and precautions the school will need to take under different reopening scenarios for the fall, Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board as he outlined the work underway.

Planning for the 2020-2021 school year is difficult because it is still not clear what state health and education guidelines will allow, particularly for a large high school like New Trier that has thousands of students, staff, and visitors on campus each day. It is essential, however, to plan now so the District has time to implement its plans over the summer and clearly communicate those plans to parents, students, staff, and the community, Sally said.

The committee work includes: the daily schedule, curriculum and instruction, logistics, managing and tracking in-school health and screening, staff health and wellness programs, student mental health, adviser room and support services, extracurricular options, and communications. Committees are considering reopening scenarios that include:

1. Everyone allowed back to school (with some students and staff remaining home for health reasons or quarantine)
2. Some limitations on numbers allowed in the buildings (based on state guidelines)
3. All remote learning
4. Switching between the first three scenarios depending on state guidance and the prevalence of COVID-19 outbreaks in the community

Any scenario that would bring students and staff back to school must take into consideration the health and well-being of all students and potential precautions such as entry screening, social distancing, masks and other protective equipment, and enhanced cleaning procedures, Sally said. All scenarios, including remote learning, must prioritize effective teaching and learning.

Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, said the daily schedule committee is looking at options that would use the same schedule all year, no matter the scenario. This would make overall planning easier for teachers and students, create predictability, and reduce stress if the school must transition between options during the year.

As a result, the schedule committee is developing solutions around a block schedule - one in which class periods meet on alternating days for a longer time than the typical 40-minute period. Remote learning has taught the school that having 9 periods every day is not sustainable in that environment, and teachers and students quickly adapted to the Blue/Green/Grey block schedule. For next school year, the committee is working to further develop that type of schedule in a way that would work in or out of school and that would keep all curriculum choices intact for students, meet the needs of students with IEPs, ensure that commuting can happen if in-person instruction resumes, and adapt curriculum and instruction to the new schedule. Tragos said that many area districts already use block schedules when they are in school, and the trade-off of a loss of days of contact and possible breadth of curriculum is balanced by reduced student stress and an increased depth of curriculum with longer meeting periods. Professional development and standards for the use of the Canvas learning management system will be key to the success of any block schedule, Tragos noted.

Another committee is focusing on logistical issues such as safety standards and precautions for student transportation, food service, cleaning protocols, and how to manage social distancing on campus. A separate health and wellness committee is looking at issues such as health screening and managing students and staff who are vulnerable or may be quarantined for certain periods. Additional committees are exploring how to offer extracurricular activities, sports, and performing arts under the different scenarios; how to support student and staff mental health in and out of school; and how to communicate plans effectively. A link to the entire presentation can be found [here](#).

New Trier to Honor Graduates on May 31; In Person Plans Delayed by Pandemic

Winnetka Campus Principal Denise Dubravec updated the Board on plans to honor New Trier graduates on their original graduation date, May 31, with a virtual ceremony, personalized signs delivered by advisers and staff, and an option to Walk the Stage on Trevian Way that day. Dubravec stressed that New Trier has committed to bringing the class back together in person in the future when it is safe to do so, but cannot yet predict when that may be.

New Trier had hoped to hold its traditional commencement ceremony at the Sears Centre on July 12 after postponing the original date due to Illinois' stay-at-home order. After Governor Pritzker laid out his plans on May 5 for conditions the state must meet before allowing large gatherings again, it became clear that almost any type of graduation ceremony - even smaller ones outdoors on campus - would not be allowed by July.

At around the same time, the Illinois State Board of Education sent out guidance encouraging schools to hold virtual ceremonies, with drive-by options allowed only with strict social distancing. Typical graduations will be permitted only when large-scale in-person events are allowed by the state's plan. Specifically, the next phase of Illinois'

reopening will allow gatherings of only up to 10 people, and the phase after that will limit gatherings to 50. New Trier will abide by those rules, which means even the smallest of commencement gatherings such as adviser rooms would not be allowed once parents or siblings were taken into account.

With this information, New Trier decided that students should not have to wait until July for a virtual or drive-by ceremony. In the last two weeks, the school quickly made plans in collaboration with the NTPA to give students some sense of closure and normalcy on the original graduation date. School administrators are working with Winnetka Police on traffic and other logistics so students who wish to do so can experience some of the tradition of graduation by receiving their diploma cover and getting their photo taken “walking the stage” at one of the stages the school will set up along Trevian Way. Students can wear whatever clothing they have at home fitting to the occasion; while the school is encouraging students to dress nicely, they are not expected to wear tuxes or white dresses as they normally would. Seniors and their parents have been notified of these plans, and the school will be following up with more details about the virtual and drive-up ceremonies.

Dubravec said that while these opportunities cannot take the place of New Trier’s traditional graduation, they will close out the school year while the school makes plans for a larger celebration for the class whenever such a gathering is allowed.

Other News from the May 18 Meeting:

- Sally updated the Board on the end of the 2019-2020 school year and summer school plans. Teachers have completed plans for their classes through the end of the year and will close out those classes on June 2 (Blue Day classes) and June 3 (Green Day classes). Teachers will schedule individual conferences on June 5 with students who need them to discuss plans for incomplete grades and to give other feedback to close the school year. New Trier’s [Summer School](#) begins on June 15 and will be all remote as established by the Illinois State Board of Education. The Special Education Department is communicating with families whose students qualify for Extended School Year services to come up with remote plans for those services. Athletics will start with a two-week remote session for several sports and will wait for state guidance on whether in-person camps may take place later in the summer.
- The Board approved a contract extension with the firm Wight and Company to continue design work on an exploratory analysis of improvements to the east side of the Winnetka Campus. The Facilities and Finance Committees have been exploring plans that would allow the District to renovate or replace the 1928 Gates Gymnasium and little-used 1925 Boiler Plant as well as adjacent spaces without the need for a bond referendum. The plans would provide needed improvements to District facilities for Athletics and Kinetic Wellness as well as create additional classrooms for core academics that meet modern standards within the boundaries defined by Essex Ave, Trevian Way, and the existing tennis courts. The District’s 15-year Facilities Plan identifies these areas as a high priority. The contract extension allows Wight and Company to further develop options and has provisions to suspend design work before a potential Board discussion in February 2021 and for up to 24 months after that date. During a typical school year, the

east side of the Winnetka Campus is one of the most vibrant places on campus, with thousands of students, teachers, coaches and visitors using the spaces each day.

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. Remote meeting information will be posted on the Board calendar item and Board page of the New Trier website before each meeting.

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/>