

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
June 27, 2011  
New Trier Township High School  
7 Happ Road, Room A201A  
Northfield, IL 60093**

A **Special Meeting** of the Board of Education of New Trier Township High School District 203, Cook County, Illinois was held at New Trier High School – Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road, Room C234 on Monday, June 27, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Mr. John Myefski, President  
Ms. Carol F. Ducommun, Vice President  
Mr. Alan Dolinko  
Mr. Peter Fischer  
Ms. Lori Goldstein  
Mr. F. Malcolm Harris  
Mr. Patrick O'Donoghue

**Administrator Present**

Dr. Linda L. Yonke, Superintendent  
Mr. Donald Goers, Associate Superintendent  
Dr. Timothy Dohrer, Principal – Winnetka Campus  
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Assistant Principal –  
Northfield Campus  
Mr. Paul Sally, Assistant Superintendent for  
Curriculum & Instruction  
Mr. Timothy Hayes – Assistant Superintendent for  
Student Services

**Also Present**

Mr. George Sanders, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Ms. Laurel Burman, Director of Special Education; Ms. Katherine Schindler, Assistant Principal for Student Services; Ms. Denise Hibbard, Assistant Principal-Northfield Campus; Mr. Jim Burnside, President New Trier Education Association, Science Department; Mr. Marty Laffey, Mathematics Department; Mr. Ed Dunkleblau, Charmm'd Foundation; Mr. John Huston, Chicago Tribune-Trib Local; Ms. Vanessa Rachmaninoff, Ms. Gail McCormick and other members of the Community.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Myefski called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education to Order at 5:03 p.m. A roll call was taken. All members were present.

**II. ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION**

Mr. Myefski requested a motion to move to Closed Session. Mr. Dolinko moved and Mr. Fischer seconded the motion to move to Closed Session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the district, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity; and to discuss collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Ducommun, Mr. Fischer, Ms. Goldstein, Mr. Harris, Mr. O'Donoghue, Mr. Dolinko, Mr. Myefski

NAY: None

The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned to Room A201A for the Closed Session.

The Closed Session adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

**III. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION**

Mr. Myefski reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 6:02 p.m. in Room C234.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mr. Myefski noted the three items within the Consent Agenda and asked if any member wished to discuss any of the items separately. No further discussion occurred. Mr. Dolinko moved that the Board approve the Consent Agenda items, which include the Personnel Report and Addendum; the Grievance Finding, and the Fund Balance Resolution authorizing the Associate Superintendent/Treasurer to assign fund balances for specific purposes as presented. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Fischer, Ms. Goldstein, Mr. Harris, Mr. O'Donoghue, Mr. Dolinko, Ms. Ducommun, Mr. Myefski

NAY: None

The motion passed.

Mr. Myefski reviewed the agenda and noted that after the Board discussion on Strategic Planning the meeting would be opened up for Community comment.

## V. STRATEGIC PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Dr. Linda Yonke began by noting the different documents made available on BoardDocs, which included a History of Long Range Planning/Implications for the Future and a Strategic Planning Overview document that outlined the Strategic Planning Initiatives 2005-2010, their action plans and their progress. Dr. Yonke noted that each of the six areas would be addressed and evaluated in the reports that follow. She reviewed the evaluations and assessments that have occurred throughout New Trier's history, citing three different long range planning methods: the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, State and Federal School Improvement, and Strategic Planning. Dr. Yonke remarked that costs were also looked at in assessing the Strategic Plan, noting that only 6.4 FTEs have been added, contrary to the original estimate of 15.0 FTEs. In assessing the Strategic Planning method, the administration looked at its limitations as well as its strengths. Dr. Yonke pointed out that the plan was a collaborative process focusing on a commitment to the whole child; she also discussed the impact of the Strategic Plan during the past five years as well as its connection to the community. Dr. Yonke noted that discussion will follow the summaries of the strategies and action plans, and anticipated further conversation on the next steps to consider, such as which action steps or programs to continue, how to relate the Community Survey to the principles of the Strategic Plan, how the facilities fit into a long range plan, and how to match the budget to priorities identified in the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Tim Hayes reviewed the strategy **Climate of Exploration**, which sought to develop an educational climate and structure that enables students to explore their aspirations, talents and interests across their high school years in order to set meaningful goals and pursue their dreams. He cited some of the successes such as the Bridges Program, Student Assistance, and Social Work, which received additional staffing support. The pilot PEP program did not work as planned and has gone back into development. Mr. Hayes noted other successes in the area of interfacing with the community through the positions of the Transition Coordinator, the Community Resource Coordinator, and the Service Learning Coordinator. He pointed out that social and emotional well-being has become a familiar term to staff and parents and is a widely-accepted goal for all students. He stated the desire to continue to provide students with opportunities to explore while working on the areas that might conflict with other initiatives, such as Healthy Balanced Life. He also expressed the need to continue support of the areas of student services.

Dr. Tim Dohrer chaired the original team considering plans for increasing students' **Connections Among Experiences**. He reported that the goals were to encourage students to take a more active role in designing school programs and increase the resources that would lead to more integrated and experiential learning. He noted there has been increased student inclusion on many school committees, there is more support for experiential learning in programs such as SILC and Senior Project and that Service Learning Programs have expanded. Interdisciplinary programs too have grown to include new initiatives such as IGSS, the school-within-a-school. Dr. Dohrer would like to continue to see increased student participation on committees as well as a strengthening of interdisciplinary studies.

Mr. Tim Hayes worked along with Ms. Jan Borja on the Strategic Planning Strategy: **Ethical Conduct & Global Citizenship (ECGC)**, which sought to identify, communicate, model, and reinforce standards of ethical conduct and responsible global citizenship. The work of this strategy fell into two groups. The first, the ECGC initiative sought to identify core values such as responsibility, respect, compassion, and integrity and engaged groups of students, parents, and staff in the work of Ethical Conduct and Social and Emotional Learning. The Equity Initiative saw the formation of the Equity Team and the VOICES Project, the formation of a partnership with the Mosaic Experiences, and implementation of the Beyond Diversity workshops and Cultural Exchange Service Opportunities. Mr. Hayes noted the tremendous amount of work spent on this Strategy and the desire of the participants to see the committee continue. More work needs to be done on teaching and learning of social and emotional learning skills, building more cultural exchange opportunities, reaching out to the entire student body, and continuing to hire and retain a diverse staff.

Mr. Paul Waechtler reported for the **Healthy Balanced Life** Strategy, which sought to identify those factors that place excessive demands on time and energy in the pursuit of excellence and develop plans to encourage a healthy, balanced life. The accomplishments in this area include the work of the Homework Committee which improved communication within departments and between teachers and students, and resulted in the development of a Homework philosophy. A test day schedule was also developed. Stress Management has moved beyond the pilot unit of the freshman year to be a focus within the Kinetic Wellness curriculum four times a year. Additional staff for the Bridges Program, the Student Assistance Program and Social Work was put in place. The focus on healthy eating effected change with the food service offerings. The addition of a Transition Coordinator assisted students and parents from the sender schools in their move to high school. A new Post High School Counselor was added in order to facilitate the process of college admissions and to improve communication with students and parents. Enhanced Advisor Room communications with parents and students helped to reduce anxiety and dispel misperceptions about New Trier. Paul noted that "Healthy Balanced Life" has become a part of the lexicon around the school. Areas for further development are for the Homework Committee to continue to examine homework practices and end-of-semester experiences, and to find additional ways to help students manage stress.

Mr. Paul Sally described the work of the **Intrinsic Value of Learning** Strategy, which sought to design academic leveling and grade weighting systems that would foster the intrinsic value of learning and achieve the school's mission and objectives. He noted that while some of these strategies can conflict with each other, the focus became one of removing the extrinsic factors that hinder the student learning experience. Increasing staff in the Social Work Department has allowed more opportunities to talk and work with students who are struggling. The additional staff member in Post High School Counseling has increased the communication with advisers, staff, and community about the college matching process. Examination of the leveling system to find the best way to serve the students produced the elimination of Level 1 and Level 5. To broaden the scope of how our students are represented to colleges, class rank and deciles were also eliminated. IGSS has narrative assessments and the term "minor" has been eliminated from courses. Additional terminology changes were made to Level 3, now known as "Honors" and Level 4 as "High Honors". Discussion for further changes to grade weighting was tabled for a later time to allow for examination of the impact other changes have already made.

Mr. Sally also reported on the Strategy Initiative of **Optimal Use of Time, which** looked at designing a calendar and schedule for optimal use of time to help achieve our mission and objectives. The main accomplishment was to create and implement a master web calendar, which has greatly assisted in coordinating and planning across the District. There has also been an increase in professional collaboration time for the faculty. Managing student schedules has proved to be more challenging, especially in the areas of mandatory lunch and alternate daily schedules. The academic departments have adopted a testing schedule to ensure that students never have more than two tests in one day. The Curriculum Council focused on the end-of-semester experiences for students and will continue that work next year.

Mr. Don Goers reviewed the costs incurred over the course of the Strategic Planning years. He noted the bulk of the expense is for staff salaries; however, the anticipated addition of 15 FTEs never materialized, with less than half of the projected number of teachers (6.4) being added since 2005. Mr. Goers commented that a tremendous amount of the Strategic Plan was accomplished with volunteer time and that some of the costs (some staff positions) may likely have been added even without the Strategic Plan; however, the addition of staff during these years was more purposeful and was directly related to District-identified priorities. The Administrative reorganization in 2009-10 directed a number of tasks to one or two administrators to be more efficient.

Dr. Yonke opened the discussion to Board members for questions and comments. She noted that this was a visionary plan that did not focus on test scores, yet student's scores went up over the course of the Strategic Planning period. The overall themes of exploration, experience, balance and health supported students in their learning, study skills, and personal development. There was much Board discussion that followed, which included praise for the work completed and for the positive changes made in the learning environment. The efforts for collaboration and connections with students, parent groups, and sender school leaders were noted. Concerns prevailed on the most effective means of communication with the community and to continue with the focus on fewer initiatives. Board members articulated the need for a vision to pull the overlapping themes together and move forward. Dr. Yonke noted that the Administrative Team will be meeting in July and will put forth a proposal of next steps for Strategic Planning. The Board would like to coordinate the Strategic Plan with the Community Survey and Facilities planning discussion.

Discussion moved to defining academic excellence in the school and in relation to the Community Survey responses. Board feedback on the *Connections Among Experiences Strategy* were positive for IGSS and encouraged closer reflection on the SILC and Service Learning programs in determining their benefits versus cost. The challenge of more student involvement included both the search for volunteers and the enrollment and inclusion of students on adult committees.

Mr. Ed Dunkleblau of the Chamm'd Foundation spoke to the Board regarding social and emotional learning as envisioned with the *Ethical Conduct and Global Citizenship* initiative. He noted that addressing these areas of social and emotional learning automatically brings about the positive benefits such as improved grades and improved test scores that the Board is seeking. He also noted that sustainable growth in this area could more easily come about by working with parent groups and the community. Mrs. Linda Sharpe addressed the Board as well, reporting on the activities and focus of the parent group for ECGC.

Dr. Dohrer noted for the *Healthy Balanced Life* initiative that many of its strategies are already actively in place and implemented by the All School Wellness Team and he encouraged continued support to their important work in the school. Institutional homework guidelines were discussed and it was noted that each department varies its guidelines to meet the requirements of its content area. Dr. Yonke noted that this area's work is not completed nor is the year-end experience finished, and that the best part of the discussion is on the purpose of homework. It was noted that there is a more conscious effort on the part of the teachers to consider carefully how much homework is being assigned. Mr. Sally noted the last two items to be evaluated for the end-of-year experiences are the emphasis on the projects in place of the final exams and the role of final exams themselves.

Discussion on the *Intrinsic Value of Learning* initiative highlighted the "clashes of values" over issues of grade weighting and level systems. Ms. Ducommun noted that, having been on that committee, there was no consensus of thought by the committee at any time during their work. Board members expressed a need to understand our level system in order to better explain it to the Community. Discussion added more questions on is the meaning of "intrinsic value of learning," the definition of good teaching and student motivation.

The discussion in the area of *Optimal Use of Time* included consideration of mandatory lunch, the need to understand the driving forces of class scheduling (parents or college), and the need to evaluate the current Strategic Plan before starting any new ones. Ms. Goldstein attested to the difficulty in assessing this plan in a quantitative way, but that the reports do attempt a subjective evaluation. Mr. Sally noted that some initiatives were dropped because it became obvious that they were not working. Dr. Yonke remarked that the Administrative Team was meeting and would address what the next steps would be to move forward with the Strategic Plan and would present ideas to the Board at the July 18 Regular meeting. The July meeting will also hear from the other research committees on the 1:3 model and land, building and field use.

Mr. Myefski invited any members of the audience to come forward to share their thoughts and comments. Ms. Vanessa Rachmaninoff and Ms. Gail McCormick spoke on academic excellence and addressing stress and its origins.

## **VI. ADJOURN**

Ms. Ducommun moved to adjourn the special meeting. Mr. Dolinko seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, all Board members voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lou Anne Kelly, Secretary

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John Myefski, President