

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

August 12, 2020

**New Trier Township High School
7 Happ Road, Room C234
Northfield, IL 60093**

A **Special Meeting** of the Board of Education of New Trier Township High School District 203, Cook County, Illinois was held on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Cathy Albrecht, President
Ms. Carol Ducommun
Ms. Jean Hahn
Mr. Greg Robitaille

Administrators Present

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent
Mr. Christopher Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Winnetka Campus Principal
Dr. Tim Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education
Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Northfield Campus Principal
Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources

Members Present Remotely

Mr. Keith Dronen
Dr. Marc Glucksman, Vice President
Mr. Brad McLane

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Jen Karakosta, Applied Arts Faculty and New Trier Teachers' Association President; Ms. Rachel Rescorl, Speech/Language Pathologist; Mr. Dave Weston, Social Studies Department and Speech and Debate Department Faculty; Mr. Anthony Gudwien, English Department Faculty; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; other administrators, faculty and staff, members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:00 p.m. – C234

Ms. Albrecht called the Special Meeting of August 12, 2020 of the Board of Education to order at 5:00 p.m., virtually, via Zoom. Ms. Albrecht then stated that a full in-person meeting is not practical or prudent due to the Governor's declared disaster.

Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Mr. Dronen, Dr. Glucksman and Mr. McLane.

Ms. Albrecht asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Ms. Ducommun moved that the Board adjourn to closed session for the purpose of discussing collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees and security procedures and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Ducommun, Mr. Robitaille, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Dronen, Dr. Glucksman, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

II. Closed Session – 5:00 p.m. – A503 and Zoom

***III. Business Meeting Open Session – 6:00 p.m. – C234**

Ms. Albrecht called the Regular Meeting of August 12, 2020 of the Board of Education to order at 6:07 p.m. Roll call was taken, and all members were present. Mr. Dronen, Dr. Glucksman and Mr. McLane participated via telephone.

Dr. Sally took a moment to share a few comments. He acknowledged the many valid opinions and concerns that the District has heard from the community and staff regarding the reopening of schools amid the crisis. Dr. Sally emphasized that we are all in this together. No matter what one thinks about the type of teaching and learning the District should be offering this school year, every person expressing an opinion cares deeply about students, the school and the community. The narratives that currently dominate the national and local school reopening discussion on social media and in the press often present a false dichotomy of remote or hybrid. The reality is that if students are going to experience in-person learning this year that dichotomy must be discarded, and schools and communities must face the difficult challenges that need to be solved in order to bring students into school. These challenges are complex at a large, comprehensive high school like New Trier. The District has committed to finding a path to bringing students into school for in-person learning. It is important to a student's growth and mental health to have the connections that come with being in-school. The District also knows that it must provide the safest environment possible. The centerpiece of the reopening plan is a ladder that uses indicators, metrics and thresholds that determine the mode of operation best suited at a particular time of year. As many have pointed out, the thresholds for metrics are not yet in the plan, it has been Dr. Sally's hope that the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) will provide more specific guidance on metrics, but it has yet to emerge.

Similar to other parts of this process, the District must proceed on its own with the help from experts we engage to make its path forward. The District's decisions will be guided by science and established principles of public health. Many voices have been heard over the past month arguing one side or another and while Dr. Sally understands the tendency to paint this as a debate of absolutes because the solutions that are found in the middle ground require much more difficult decision making, it is the job of the District to work to find these solutions. Dr. Sally noted that he is proud of the work that his team has done to put forth this comprehensive plan. An important element will be missing from this evening's presentation and those are the specific thresholds as previously mentioned, which the District has received little or no guidance on. Dr. Sally is hopeful that experts at the state, county and departments of public health will provide that guidance. Local school districts have been forced to go this alone and forge this path and have done so in strong collaboration with one another. Dr. Sally thanked his superintendent colleagues, in New Trier Township specifically, but also at high schools across the North Shore for their ideas, innovations and questions. Dr. Sally, in his 25 years in education, has never faced a problem as challenging as this one, there are truly no good solutions and nothing that is done this evening will give students the school year they deserve. The District will continue to work toward the best possible solutions to help students connect, grow and thrive throughout the year.

Ms. Albrecht thanked Dr. Sally for his comments.

IV. Communications

Ms. Albrecht invited anyone from the audience who wished to address the Board to come forward and fill out a yellow communications request form and give it to Ms. Dizon, Director of Communications. She explained that public comments could have also been submitted, electronically, to the Board of Education secretary by 3:00 p.m. In-person commenters were permitted to go first, followed by Ms. Ruston reading email comments.

Ms. Anna Zhang, an alum, spoke on behalf of Trevs for Teachers. A group of alumni who supports the Teachers' Association in wanting to begin the year in remote learning. Ms. Zhang shared that 3,000 community members had signed the group's open letter. She went on to share additional thoughts.

Ms. Albrecht noted that comments will be kept to three minutes, whether in-person or read from email.

Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, took a moment to sanitize the screen in front of the microphone.

Mr. Eric Hungness, a father of two New Trier students, shared his questions and comments pertaining to several pieces of the reopening plan for school such as teacher professional development, quarantine procedures, the Reopening Advisory Board and finally, the science that supports step one of the ladder.

There were 50 public comments submitted. Ms. Ruston read 15 of them into the record as Ms. Albrecht exercised her authority as Board of Education President to limit reading of comments to thirty minutes. All public comments will be

sent to Board Members and will be available once the Board approves the minutes from this meeting on August 24th.

Comments focused on the reopening of school, particularly sharing whether one thought the school should begin the year in the planned hybrid model or remotely, while some also focused on describing the positive learning experience with one member of our English Department faculty.

Dr. Sally then categorized the written comments, noting that there were 50 comment submitted. Some were difficult to categorize, but 20 were in support of full remote, ten supported the plan as presented, six would like more in-person and fourteen were either unable to be categorized or along the continuum of a little more remote or start in-person sooner. Dr. Sally confirmed that they will all be available and placed into the public record.

Ms. Albrecht noted that comments were read in the order in which they were received. They will also be placed into the public record and sent to all Board members.

V. Special Orders of Business

A. Report on Fall Reopening*

Dr. Sally presented on New Trier's Reopening and Operational Plan. Dr. Sally thanked those who submitted public comments either in-person or in writing. The presentation will be based off the Reopening and Operational Plan and Dr. Sally then stepped through some of the most important pieces. The first is understanding the nature of comprehensive high schools and the difficulty these high schools have operating in some of the conditions that are needed to stay safe. Next, the Ladder to Reopening will be discussed in terms of metrics and the Advisory Board. Safety in the building will be shared as well as teaching and learning. The presentation will conclude with information pertaining to Special Education.

Dr. Sally noted that large, comprehensive schools face unique challenges such as the number of classes that students take, social distancing, the capacity limit of 50 people in an area, efficient contact tracing and complex student schedules. He then shared pictures of what a typical school year looks like in the buildings. The challenges are significant to put a plan together for in-person learning. The details are in the plan, but Dr. Sally mentioned a few issues such as classroom capacity needs to be cut in half, areas such as the cafeteria, theatres and gyms may only have 50 people in them, efficient contact tracing as students move from class to class, the rules on quarantining and finally, student schedules. Dr. Sally noted a great deal of success this summer with athletics and other student activities. He shared a variety of pictures from the strength and conditioning program, cross country, Lagniappe-Potpourri and a summer school class. Dr. Sally noted that students were happy to be back on campus in a safe way. There is capacity limit signage as one enters a classroom. He also shared a photo of what social distancing will look like in the classroom with signs instructing students to avoid particular seats. Plexiglass barriers have been placed on teacher desks in classrooms, which is a safety recommendation that has been put in place. This is not the year that anyone expected, but these are some of the pieces and challenges the District has taken to try and get to in-person learning.

Next, Mr. Tragos shared about teaching and learning. He began with what the school aspires to with in-person learning despite not starting that way at the beginning of the year. The shared goal of many is returning safely to school. Educators play a critical role in the lives of students and schools play a critical role in the community. Mr. Tragos noted that learning is as much a social exercise as it is a cognitive one. Part of the reason that the school is aspiring to in-person instruction is because of the relationships that students have with peers, teachers, coaches, directors, and sponsors. The support provided at school is another important piece and includes academic, social-emotional and mental health supports. As the District moves closer to in-person instruction, it increases the opportunities for engagement in clubs, activities, performing arts, athletics and leadership. Another component is socialization as there is an important social element to the school's work and students' learning. Finally, there are academic and social-emotional skills that come with learning in-person.

Mr. Tragos gave an overview of the Ladder to Reopening, which is the path to in-person instruction. The six steps of the ladder fall into three phases with steps one and two in a remote phase, steps three, four and five in a hybrid phase and step six being the final phase of everyone back on campus learning safely together. Right now, the District is focused on the first two phases. The ladder outlines the continuum of the modes of operations that the District will follow during the pandemic. The newly established Reopening Advisory Board will make recommendations to the superintendent based on specific metrics. Steps one through five, some students will learn 100% remotely, while some teachers teach 100% remotely. This means when the school is in some form of hybrid or in-person instruction, there will be a substitute in the classroom with students while the teacher teaches remotely from home. A principle of the

ladder is to move up slow, down fast. The school wants to move up the ladder deliberately, thoughtfully and in accordance with health guidelines and metrics.

Mr. Tragos shared five benefits of the ladder, which is a measured approach that keeps the path open to in-person instruction: it is a metrics-based approach, it provides a path to in-person instruction, it is transparent to school and community, it establishes teaching and learning routines and extracurricular opportunities.

Dr. Sally then spoke about metrics, noting it is a piece that he, as well as, other schools are looking for. He stated clearly that he hopes the state and county weigh in on in a more significant way than they have. Lacking that, there is good information out there and people who will assist the District in evaluating these metrics. Dr. Sally then stepped through the metrics, first is local and regional cases in the community along with the region and areas where families may travel to as well as areas where staff members live and interact. Next are operational metrics and making sure the facility is compliant in terms of social distancing, masking, bathrooms, and the lunchroom. Supplies and facilities is another metric area. Current scientific research and new developments is another metric as information about the virus, its spread, and its mitigation is constantly changing. Finally, staffing accommodations and those who need to work remotely impact the overall plan.

Dr. Sally then shared about the Reopening Advisory Board, noting that it is an advisory board and not a voting one. The superintendent and Board of Education will determine when the school moves up or down the ladder. The Advisory Board will have representation on it from parents, students, medical personnel, association members, Board of Education members and administrators. This board will also help the school to establish the metrics, along with, hopefully, more specific guidance from the departments of public health. The metrics will be transparent and available to everyone. Dr. Sally noted that the metrics and thresholds must be defined very carefully, so everyone understands exactly what is being talked about. There are issues that need to be defined, and they will be, so the District has metrics that it can work with. Transparency is very important with this as misinformation is out there. The superintendent and this board will rely on good data and science to create the metrics and it will be clear where they are coming from. The Reopening Advisory Board will meet the week of August 17th.

Dr. Sally displayed a target eight-week calendar and spoke of the dichotomy of it, where some may be disappointed that remote is not longer and others who say it is too long given the original plan. That being said, it is a careful approach to bringing students and adults back into school. This plan allows for employees and students to transition into this new environment and let them get used to the new protocols. Dr. Sally shared additional thoughts on this topic. If schools are going to have a chance at in-person learning at all this year, this approach is needed. It cannot be put off; decisions need to be made and metrics established. If the metrics are not met, there is no in-person school. The target calendar is contingent on the virus and what is happening in the area along with how many students have the virus or how many are at home in quarantine.

Dr. Hayes focused on health and safety, as there are multiple approaches to this complex virus. The District's source of guidance is the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Cook County Department of Public Health. The school's health services team is in near daily communication with both departments. Daily Health Screens is a recommendation that comes from ISBE and IDPH which include taking one's temperature every morning and examining any symptoms a person may have. The school is also working to centralize attendance taking, as it will be important to know when and why a student is missing school. If a student is sick, it is crucial to know the symptoms that they are experiencing. Masks will be required for any person, student or staff, who is inside the building. Two cloth masks will be provided to everyone. Social distancing of six feet will need to be practiced, especially when outside or in a place where one may not have to wear a mask. There will be a lot of signage which will help to manage traffic flow and remind students to social distance. New Trier has ordered goggles, face shields and protective equipment for all staff. IDPH's recommendation for these items is on a continuum and dependent on what role one has within the school. Most faculty and staff will use a face mask and will have the option to protect their eyes with goggles or a face shield. Others will have to wear gloves, gowns and a face shield with a mask due to the work they do with students. The school is also going to tackle the cultural piece of this, that when a person or family member feels ill, they need to stay home to either take care of themselves or their family member. The Trevian Pledge is being worked on and will be the cornerstone of the work with the school community. Finally, this information will be further discussed at an upcoming parent webinar.

Dr. Hayes went on to discuss contact tracing and quarantine which is conducted in conjunction with CCDPH. There are a few layers that he detailed such as travel, close contact and if there is a confirmed case. Dr. Sally shared that guidance from the health departments is unclear and fluid with quarantining and contact tracing. The CCDPH, in

conjunction with the school's health services team, and the rule of close contact defined as within six feet of a person for more than fifteen minutes, has determined that an entire classroom of students and the teacher will need to be quarantined. More guidance has been requested from CCDPH so it is clear on how the school can operate. Dr. Hayes mentioned that IDPH has shared more information just this afternoon, but it was not any clearer now than before for classrooms. IDPH is relying on local public health departments to guide schools. There is also a range for determining quarantine, dependent on if a person is asymptomatic or presenting with symptoms. Dr. Hayes outlined the impact that one positive student or teacher case may have on the number of students and teachers who may need to quarantine.

Mr. Tragos presented on teaching and learning and adapting to a new model of instruction. Remote learning this fall will look significantly different than it did in the spring. He termed remote learning in the spring as emergency remote learning. Since the end of May and throughout the summer, the school has been preparing and planning to deliver high quality teaching and learning daily. Teachers are prepared to deliver this as well and they have made a commitment to professional development and curriculum work. The faculty takes pride in their work and this is what will make teaching and learning in a remote setting at the beginning of the year successful. There was a full catalog of professional development over the summer at the department level, along with a high level of engagement in the District Planning Days in June and throughout the summer. Professional development will continue through August and into the school year and will be ongoing. Mr. Tragos then highlighted several categories and share the differences in each category between remote learning that took place in the spring and what will take place this fall. Categories included curriculum, assessments, grades, online courses, preparation, teachers/adviser-student contact and instructional mode. All of these are important elements that have been created together to make the fall of 2020 different than the spring of 2020.

Next, Mr. Tragos discussed hybrid learning which blends online learning and classroom learning with some students at school and others at home. Hybrid learning is a bridge from all remote instruction to all in-person learning. The school cannot go directly from remote learning to all in-person learning, it must be a phased approach, and that is what hybrid learning and the ladder offer. The benefits of hybrid learning include relationships and connections with peers and adults, it is efficient as teachers do not need to plan different lessons, it is effective, and equitable so students can access the same curriculum whether in-person or remote.

The block schedule was shared, and Mr. Tragos noted that it has many more benefits than the old schedule of early bird, adviser room and periods one through nine every day. More information on how to read the new schedule will be forthcoming in the parent webinar. It is important to note that the Trevian Day/Blue Day/Green Day schedule is adaptable to the different learning modes along the ladder. Minimizing changes that are made to schedules for staff and students is crucial and this block schedule provides a much-needed constant. At the end of a Green Day will be X block which will allow for teacher professional development, time for students to meet with teachers, along with helping students manages their busy lives as well as provide time for student programming.

Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education, shared about providing support to students with unique needs. State guidelines have been clear that schools should be placing a high priority on certain populations of students. New Trier has committed to prioritizing these students which include special education students and general education students. These areas include transition services and programming, students who are participating in the school's Educational Life Skills (ELS) system, the New Trier Learning Center (NTLC) and students who receive specialized services in co-taught and/or resource classes.

The District is also paying attention to those students who receive accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act, known as a 504 Plan, to ensure those accommodations are carried through to students regardless of the scenario the school is in. Finally, this area also includes students who did not respond well to the spring remote learning environment. Touch points were increased during this time to connect and support students and used various staff members to do so. It continues to challenge the school, but a common thread that emerged was that parents and students realized for those who struggled that in-person time would be more valuable. The commitment continues to support special education and general education students through the student services department and the special education department. There is a special education committee who has been focusing on specific plans for special education. The thought is to allow students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), students with a 504 or who are struggling emotionally and with academic needs to attend up to four days of in-person instruction. Not everyone who may want this option will be able to get it, the school is looking closely at individual student needs and how it can maximize capacity in classrooms, so there is a balance. It is being carefully considered that those students in Transition, NTLC and ELS may have a half day option of programming available to them. The safety aspect of this

is being thought of as well as all the components in a student's IEP and matching those minutes. The special education committee is continuing to put this plan in place and will closely monitor how students are responding to their environments and will adjust as needed.

Ms. Albrecht then asked for questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn shared the following statement:

Thank you, Dr. Sally and your team for your relentless efforts to craft this comprehensive plan in the face of what has been and promises to continue be an ever-shifting landscape. Not only does it represent an exhaustive collaboration by our entire District, it puts our students firmly on a path to return safely to the classroom. Your unselfish and unwavering dedication to your students as well as your compassion for our entire New Trier community are reflected in this plan and serve as a model for us all as we start down this path.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all of you in the community – parents, grandparents, students, alumni, teachers – who have so graciously – and at times perhaps less graciously – shared your perspectives, concerns, expertise, and ideas with the Board. Your engagement in the process and commitment to our school community, are truly what make New Trier exceptional.

As a mother of two current New Trier students, I recognize in your words my own deep frustration and profound sorrow for the impact this crisis is having on our children. And while disappointment doesn't begin to capture how all of us are feeling about the prospect of starting the year remotely, I want to urge us all to resist the temptation to cast blame on one another. Please don't get me wrong, there is plenty of blame to go around for why our students will not be in their classrooms on August 26th, but I want to be perfectly clear that none of the blame belongs on the doorstep of our teachers, our administrators, or our neighbors.

What's more, to seek to assign blame at this point would not only be unhelpful but counterproductive as well. Because while I am confident that this ladder approach embodied in this plan offers the best path to returning our students safely to the classroom, this will not be a smooth road and our progress along it will not be linear. This is going to be hard – hard on our teachers, hard on parents, and most painfully, hard on our children.

But I am also confident that our best chance of navigating this path successfully lies in our willingness to set aside our differences and work together as a community – by showing compassion for those who are struggling, empathy for those with whom we might disagree, and flexibility when we need to alter our course. And if we can do this, I am also confident that when we get through this crisis, our students will be more resilient, more compassionate and better prepared for their future.

Ms. Hahn then had one question in terms quarantine as so much of it relies on people getting a doctor's note to return, she inquired if the school is providing resources either in terms of direction, help or actual assistance to those who may not have access to a primary healthcare doctor. Dr. Hayes responded that it is something that the school will need to keep a close eye on. Right now, it has not been an issue over the summer when a student was diagnosed, and others were quarantined. If there started to be high demand in the community, it may become more difficult. It has also been diagnosed about the possibility of having a relationship with NorthShore University to try and facilitate getting those kinds of documentation for students if they were struggling to do that on their own.

Ms. Ducommun wanted to talk more about the Advisory Board as she thought it is of great interest to the community. She would like to know how it is going to function, noting that it is a non-voting board that will help establish metrics. Ms. Ducommun went on to share the potential make-up of the group and noted that the group would be meeting soon, to which Dr. Sally agreed. He went on to share that the associations are determining who will serve as well as the Board of Education has started to have conversations as well. Feelers have been put out to medical experts and there are prospects. He went on to share additional details, noting that it is possible that the DuPage County of Public Health may put more guidance out and IDPH put some out today, but theirs was not at the level the school needs. There are a lot of metrics out there in many places that are worth looking at to determine what is right for the District. First, will be to define those metrics. Tracking will be done by using township zip codes as well as a larger region around that, such as where staff live and where people travel. The regional metrics that the state has are important as that can push the school into remote learning because of the ones that they have set. Right now, with the extended time for remote learning, there will be time to get the metrics set and start to track the data. Ms. Ducommun noted that 19 people will be on the committee, which is a bit unwieldy for one committee, she inquired if Dr. Sally anticipates breaking up into smaller committees. She noted the Board has received letters from both ends of the spectrum and

everywhere in between, she inquired if Dr. Sally is going to make sure the different views are represented and how differences may be resolved going forward. Dr. Sally noted that it is a good question and is not meant to be one viewpoint or the other. There will be data to look at, discussion will determine if there is any reason to look at other data as well as if there is new information that is available. Once the metrics are set, and the Board approves them, it will be determined how they will be used. The Advisory Board will continue to watch and discuss if these are the metrics the school needs. Operational data will also be gathered internally. Meetings will be on Zoom. The committee will consist of people who are open-minded, who can look at data and can also bring their perspective. Ms. Ducommun then inquired if there were enough medical professionals, as only having two out of nineteen on the committee seemed light to her. Dr. Sally answered that he would think about how that could be expanded and appreciated the suggestion.

Mr. Robitaille noted that he would like to make a statement ahead of the vote, but first wanted to start with his questions. He inquired, in regard to the Reopening Advisory Board, that the word advisory is in the title and while the weight of their collective view is going to weigh heavily in the Board's decision, the ultimate decision is with the superintendent and the Board in terms of the movement up and down the ladder, to which Dr. Sally replied yes.

Mr. Robitaille then noted if this plan of the ladder, which in his view is a pathway to in-person learning. Not that it is meant to create obfuscation around continuing remote learning into the distant future or unforeseeable future. Mr. Robitaille wanted to know if it is accurate that the plan is meant to create a clear path to in-person learning, to which Dr. Sally replied yes. He then added that he does not see another way to operate within a pandemic other than to keep assessing the data in the region and local community as well as the operations of the District to decide how many students can be in school or if they can even be in school. It is to come up with a path to in-person learning otherwise one is just kicking the can down the road without a plan.

Dr. Glucksman spoke and noted that we are all New Trier. Just as we do in our homes and communities, we all want a safe environment in school encompassing both physical and mental health for all as well as the best learning and growth experience possible for students. Simply what is being considered is this ladder plan that is a continuum from zero to one hundred percent, which represents going from remote to full attendance. Moving up and down the ladder, which is dictated by the virus and the science. Tonight, the Board is not considering the question which everybody is asking of when the school will open or what day students will return in-person. It cannot be predicted today what will occur next week or the week after. The path, along with continuing to consult with public health experts, who really have the operational knowledge and experience of what is safe and what is not. Hopefully, the school will get better guidance from the local, county and state departments of public health. Endorsing this plan is not about bolting the door shut or throwing the doors wide open. Obviously there have been thousands of hours of effort and the plan provides the framework and commits resources along with a checklist for readiness along with the ability to pivot dynamically in or out depending on the prevailing pandemic conditions. Dr. Glucksman has had the privilege of reading the hundreds of communications from the passionate and involved stakeholders inside the school as well as outside the school. With the background of one of the current pandemics today, it will hopefully be mitigated by a vaccine and the adjunct pharmacopeia along with the rancor within our microenvironment in the greater community, we just need to respect each other and we all the same objective, which is the highest quality learning and growth experiences and all that that entails. Tonight, there is a flexible plan that covers the entire spectrum from zero percent, which is remote, to one hundred percent, which is full attendance with lots of gradation in between. Dr. Glucksman concluded that we should not forget that we are all New Trier.

Mr. McLane shared the following statement:

Thank you for the thoughtful and comprehensive work which included so many contributors. You, Paul, the staff, and the committees have created a range of options that can be situationally activated over the next few weeks. I truly appreciate the collective passion for in-person education. "Start Smart", from a month ago, and the "ladders" seem to be an appropriate way to pressure test the system later this month and into the Fall. After talking to friends in comparable roles in other school districts we seem to be leading the way with a well thought out approach, yet we are different right now. That is the wonder of New Trier High School, and the extraordinariness we, collectively, want to preserve through this decision process.

With that said, I feel like I am learning to fly a jet with the best user's manual ever published, but no dashboard to tell me where I am going and whether I am going to crash. I struggle with supporting this plan as presented for two reasons – the incredible executional complexity and wide gaps in critical information, specifically: a community COVID Dashboard, Testing, Metrics, Contact Tracing, and Extracurriculars. For me, this Venn Diagram of current constraints quickly gets to the null set, which means it triggers remote only. Yet there is a path to an in-person

outcome that can solve for the range of issues and concerns discussed tonight. We are close, but not close enough yet. Let me explain further.

As I said at our July meeting, I see this as a complex, and terrifying, math problem that can be assessed along three axes: Space, Time, and Load. The first two are more or less in our control. Indoor vs. outdoor classes, size of room, distancing, staggered schedules, bag lunches, Pods vs Passing, HVAC filtering (>MERV13), opening windows (or not, given new West wing), duration of classes, two-layer face masks, shields, etc. The Load axis, how many are carrying the virus and in what concentration, is a bit murkier.

Without Load insights, I struggle with the notion of 750 to 1,500 students (plus commensurate, and older, staff) in one building for prolonged periods (current Step 4 and Step 5 parameters of 25% to 50% student population, focus here is on the Winnetka campus/building). Self-certification, wearing masks, distancing in class, and one-way halls do not provide much comfort to me. Taking temperatures is simply too little too late given asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic contagiousness. Additionally, enforcing behavioral rules in school may be possible (hall rules, masks), but challenging after 3:30 PM each day.

I think that NTHS should hold itself to the highest standard and be the exemplar for other schools and institutions to follow. To that end, we still need to address the following, and now skate around these points, and again, I think we're getting there:

- *New Trier Township+ Dashboard. These protocols make sense to me only if we know the greater community virus-incidence is at or near zero. We need to develop and share an NTT+ dashboard (the "+" to include teacher/admin zip code data). ETHS has one. Other districts that have opted to go remote have them. We don't, yet we must. And we can, it is an expression of frustration. I know we are making some progress there. That visibility needs to be apparent to all and if it is, I think the nervousness can go down and the discomfort goes down because the facts will start to speak. Without this, we simply do not know who or where infected people are.*
- *Frequent Rapid Testing. To deepen our understanding of where the virus is, we need to augment the dashboard data with our own frequent rapid diagnostic testing, and not rely on self-reported daily health screening. All students and staff should take a weekly test (or more frequent). Even better if it triggers an app that then activates go/no go admission to school. Why shouldn't this be our standard? This can happen, nearby universities are doing this, let's borrow from them. es, it is expensive, but it can be done (perhaps pool/cohort test per block schedule) and we should do this. And again, if we do, the facts will speak, blood pressure will go down.*
- *Metrics. We touch on this a lot. We skirted it. We're not getting the guidance we need. With the Dashboard in place, and the extra data from testing, we need to know what we are looking at, and what the actions are. Again, we've touched on this, in the absence of guidance, we need to take a stand. Other school districts have established these. Without state or CCDPH guidelines we need to take a stand. Examples include but are not limited to -- Positivity rate, daily new cases (absolute and per 100,000), hospitalizations.*
 - *What are the key criteria and go/no go measures that other districts are using?*
 - *Two week rolling positivity rate below 5%*
 - *<10 new cases per 100,000 on a rolling two-week basis*
 - *Rolling two-week measure of hospital visits with COVID-like symptoms <10%*
 - *Another key metric -- how many teachers and staff do we need (including bus drivers and food service workers), and can rely on, day to day.*

We need to define and hold ourselves to measures so that we can all see, and understand, the key decision points.

- *Contact Tracing. I recognize that the school health services will handle this. We need to consider augmenting their capacity and capabilities. Pushing "privacy" out the window, as a public school I think we should be able to ask what everyone (students and staff) is up to outside of school so we are better informed, and prepared. How do we augment our emergency phone app to better understand student and staff movement? We can do this, and again, it will greatly enhance our ability to manage COVID in the school.*
- *Athletics and Extracurriculars. We seem to be getting this right at the IHSA and NTHS level. I am not quite as sure about some of the club sports and extracurricular programs. Actual sports will be played whether Big 10 or the Ivy's. We need to really better understand how we can manage and be informed of what our kids are up to after 3:30 p.m. and then figure out what steps we need to take if they are taking behaviors that could risk and infect the entire school body.*

Until these are in place, I believe we should perfect the remote learning experience.

Next, Mr. Dronen thanked the many community members who sent emails to the Board. At the July Board Meeting, Mr. Dronen stated that he supported the hybrid plan and specifically stated that he viewed it as a blueprint and as an evolving plan based on the information available at that time. Since the July meeting, the Illinois State Board of Education has continued to provide guidelines and directives as well as the Cook County Department of Health as Dr. Sally pointed out in his report. Complying with these continually updated directives affects New Trier's opening plans. He believes it is very important for students to be in school, there is the goal to chart a path toward on-site learning. To Mr. Dronen, important issues are, first, what are the steps to get on-site learning for students, second, what is the timing of moving from step to step and third, what metrics will be used to determine the timing. Earlier in the summer, the hope was that the COVID-19 infection rate would be declining by now and unfortunately that is not the case. Moving on-site too quickly could backfire, the school needs to move forward cautiously to protect the health of students, staff and families. Make no mistake, the school needs continue pressing to get all students on-site. No matter how the school moves forward, some will be happy, and some will not, the job is to balance the need for on-site learning with the safety of students, staff and families.

Mr. Dronen had a few questions about the special education piece. He noted that Dr. Panopoulos mentioned that students did not do so well in the spring with remote learning. He has spoken with a number of parents of students with unique needs, and he is really concerned about this, that students are not in the classroom as some do not adapt well to remote learning, so anything that the District can do to speed up the process to get these students into class would be extremely helpful. He agreed with Dr. Panopoulos that in-person touch points are very valuable. On page thirty of the report, he chose an example about step five for ELS students and asked Dr. Panopoulos to explain the process further, first stating what his understanding is with this group of students. Dr. Panopoulos confirmed that students would be divided into two learning groups with 50% of the students. She went on to share additional details and conversation continued between the two. Mr. Dronen then asked Dr. Sally how that would compare to step five with general education students, to which he replied. Mr. Dronen then inquired how the school will take care of students who have regressed significantly because of remote learning. Dr. Panopoulos noted that the department will be really looking at the individual needs of each student, what is impacting them and then finding unique ways to support them. She went on to share additional thoughts and Mr. Dronen thanked her for those.

Ms. Ducommun shared the following statement:

As the longest serving Board member, tonight I'd like to take on the role of New Trier historian.

After working day and night for over two months with a co-chair to pass the operating rate referendum in 2003, which by the way was our last tax rate referendum to date over the last 17 years. Then-superintendent Hank Bangser asked me to talk about an aspect of the Characteristics of Professional Practice, a guidebook of underlying principles for our teachers, at an Institute Day somewhere around the 2005-2006 timeframe. Hank felt that it would be particularly relevant to talk about one of the principles – In Partnership with the Community – given the community's recent and significant support for the 2003 Referendum.

I spent hours researching this topic, through books that have been written about New Trier, old newspaper articles, newsletters, and anything that I could find in the New Trier archives. It feels relevant at this juncture to revisit some of the points that I made that day to all staff.

The phrase – in partnership with the community – as I noted that day, figured prominently in the 2004-2005 strategic plan by introducing each action plan with the phrase “in partnership with the community...” and underscoring the value that this school and our community place on this partnership.

This partnership, I said at that Institute Day, begins with, first, a mutual commitment to excellence. When the school opened in 1901, NT quickly became synonymous with excellence due to the vision of some early leaders, an excellent staff and the support of a community that valued education.

I then went on to say that our advisor system, founded in 1923, also reflects New Trier's partnership with the community in a couple ways. First, is the financial support to run that very expensive program, it was then and continues to be now. Second, is that the essence of the adviser program is based on a partnership with the adviser, the student and the student's parents, as a “new” at-that-time advisor brochure did a great job clarifying what everyone – students, staff, parents – could expect from that relationship.

The third way that we demonstrate partnership in the community is a mutual commitment to excellence and support for the adviser system, is the community's commitment to New Trier both in terms of volunteer efforts and financial

support. The community's unparalleled financial support for the school, as I noted, includes the early votes to fund the building of the Winnetka campus; buying tax warrants to keep the school afloat during the depression; operating tax increases passed in the 60's and the 70's, and then again in 2003. I cited a quote from Michael Ebner, a history professor at Lake Forest College, in his 1988 book *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, said that "from the beginning, New Trier High School set the standard for public support of secondary education along the North Shore."

As I noted to the staff that Day, I had the opportunity to witness this commitment firsthand as my co-chair and I as we led the successful referendum effort throughout the Township with over 250 volunteers and 61% of the citizens' vote. In the process, we heard what the school has meant to people over the years, we heard endorsements of the excellent education that our students receive, and ultimately, we heard that the community was willing to support this tax increase. We also heard from people who were unhappy with New Trier and understood that a referendum is not just an opportunity to support the school's vision for the future but is also a score card of sorts for how we have done in the past.

At the Institute Day, I went on to say that what ultimately makes possible the level of financial commitment evidenced here is the community's deep-seated trust in the school. As the 1950 *Life Magazine* article on New Trier pointed out, "New Trier exemplifies the US public high school at its best," and that "New Trier's real lesson is that it is well to pay adequate taxes and to use them intelligently."

The fourth aspect of partnership with the community I discussed is listening to the community and engaging the community in significant decisions about the school's future. From the archives, I learned that, after a stunning defeat for a referendum in 1961 to build a second, high school in Northfield, the School Board formed the Citizen's Study Committee to find a more acceptable solution. The committee of 26 worked throughout the year and ultimately recommended what the school had planned to do in the first place, even as the price for the land, by then, had nearly doubled. Achieving consensus, I noted, can be costly but at New Trier we do recognize that it has value.

The last aspect of partnership that I referenced is the school's dedication to serving the community, as stated in our motto, which continues to be an important in the daily lives of our student and staff through a variety of programs including our Social Service organization, Habitat for Humanity, and many other groups.

So where does that leave us today?

I have often noted, as I carry out my service to the community, whether it's in my three terms elected to the New Trier school board or my one term as an elected Trustee for the Village of Wilmette, that our job on elected Boards can often be thought of as one of balance – working on behalf of the community's interests to delivering the best education or, in the case of the Village, the Village services. Delivering the best education possible in a fiscally responsible manner. In making those decisions we represent the community as a whole – those who elected us and have charged us with these responsibilities – and the various segments of that community, including students, staff, parents and residents, in the case of the school, those without school-aged children.

Now, I reflect on the discussions and the options that we have going forward to open the school year, established by many committees of administrators, teachers and other staff members working over the spring and summer, as well as our arbitration with representatives of the teacher's association. It feels, for the first time in my 20 years of at New Trier as a volunteer, parent and Board member, that the community and the staff are on vastly different courses, that the long-established and much-valued partnership with the community in providing the best education that we can for our students, is no longer evident in the communications that we are receiving.

One only needs to read the strident, Friday night email the Board received from the Faculty Senate to be reminded that our discussions appear to be influenced, perhaps, by the leadership of national labor organizations. This has led me to wonder whether our deliberations are about the best interests of our students or, instead, the platforms supported by these powerful national interests.

I am saddened – crushed - to feel this way, after all that we have achieved through consensus decision making through the years. I am sympathetic to those who caution that we are going to see long term impacts of how this is handled. My perspective as someone who has taken great pains to communicate effectively with the community, again for the better part of 20 years, is that ship has already sailed. Based on the hundreds of letters and petitions mailed to the Board, we already have incurred significant damage to the school's future relationships with its tax

payers and its teachers. I know for the Board and the administration; this challenge will confront us in a myriad of ways for years to come.

We still have an opportunity to salvage a solution that will satisfy the interests of all the affected parties – first and foremost the students, as well as the teachers and the community. There is no perfect solution that will satisfy everyone’s interests completely, but we need to work to move through this hybrid plan, by finding common ground that fairly balances all of these competing interests. There shouldn’t be winners and losers. We all need to work together to make the best of this time in which we find ourselves. We have done so in the past and we must do so again today.

Mr. Robitaille shared the following statement:

How we re-open New Trier hasn’t been and never will be about teachers versus students...this has always been about teachers and students. I’m distressed that in these polarizing times this issue has caused further division in our community of parents, staff and students...and that many loud voices have run to the extreme ends of this discussion. In my view this time more than ever calls for compromise and understanding. I embrace Paul Sally’s notion that “we’re all in this together” – one school, one community, one path together. To those who say “re-open immediately” I submit it is irresponsible, impractical and not fair to the teachers, staff and students who are entitled to a measured approach to a safe re-opening. To those who say “stay remote indefinitely” I say that is not a reasonable position and is not in the best interests of our families and students. The answer is a middle path. Our care and our solution for students and teachers must be equal and balanced. Our community has repeatedly told us both formally and informally that teachers are the #1 priority and singular point of differentiation for New Trier – we must protect them. Equally, our students...our kids, our friends’ kids, our community’s kids...are suffering intellectually, developmentally, socially, emotionally and physically from not being in school. This is real, is undisputed and is our challenge to address in the context of safety. I and most of our community consider teachers essential much the same way doctors, nurses, first responders, police officers, grocery store workers, and bike shop employees are considered essential. I don’t think reasonable people would disagree that teachers are essential and essential workers must do their jobs...I am not an essential worker but have had to take a business trip and be in the office to fulfill my job responsibilities. We have shared interests but we have competing considerations in how to achieve them get there...staying fully home until we have low or no risk of transmission would be ideal if no other considerations were required...but there are other significant considerations – the education and health of our students. This moment calls for a middle path that balances interests and achieves the minimum risk to all while meeting the needs of students, families and staff. Most reasonable people would agree that a full return to school on day 1 is not practical or safe. They would also agree that an indeterminate period of remote learning is also not tenable. The answer is to have a plan and an intention to carefully phase into in-person learning in a measured, responsible way. Let’s be clear...this is a plan to re-open but it’s also an acknowledgement of the requests of our teachers and staff to be more measured in our approach. I’ve read many letters suggesting this isn’t a re-opening plan and that we’ve “caved” to the teachers. Why are some saying this? We have dates to be back in the building and a measured plan to resume in-person teaching. These dates might be a few weeks longer than initially thought but we intend to get kids and teachers back into school. This is in the spirit of compromise and approaching it in a measured way. Parents and students have asked us to embrace a hybrid model of re-opening...this plan does that. The Trevs for Teachers organization in their letter said, and I quote, “they wish us to suspend in-person instruction for the beginning of this school year” that’s what this plan does. We HAVE to compromise to do this in a safe, effective way. The path we are voting on tonight is a thoughtful, balanced approach to a very difficult set of factors and considerations. It is careful, considered and provides tremendous flexibility to react to conditions as they evolve. There is no perfect solution...there is only a shared effort to navigate in an unprecedented environment. In my view the hybrid model that we are voting on tonight permits adaptability to changing conditions and is the right path. I trust the NT community to understand the difficult set of circumstances we are navigating here, and I ask everyone, in the spirit of compromise and the spirit of being in this together to find the middle path together.

Ms. Albrecht wanted to acknowledge a couple of items. First, she wanted to acknowledge, over the last two and a half to three weeks, all the emails that have been received. They were mainly from parents concerned about the start of school and mainly supporting the hybrid plan. This is in addition to all the public comments that were submitted. Yesterday, Dr. Sally sent out his email to parents with the plan at 9:12 p.m. There were some people who wrote today who were disappointed to see the extended dates for starting hybrid learning as well as receive it late last night when the Board was meeting today. Ms. Albrecht wanted to confirm for everyone out there that the superintendent and his senior team have worked literally day and night since March 13th when school was closed, collaborating and planning how best to educate students during a pandemic and all will continue to do so. Ms. Albrecht recognizes that extending

the hybrid plan is giving the school a bit more time, in a compromise, to work out the kinks. If the school starts at ten percent of students being in-person, in an average class size, that would be two to three students. The school goes slowly up the ladder and continues to learn and reinforce all the rules that will be required for in-person learning at school like masks, social distancing, hand washing and sanitizing, among others. She shared the number of students in each class as the school moves up the ladder from 25% to 50% of students in-person and the number of days per week students would be at school. She noted that the school goes up slowly, learns and continues to refine. This year will be a hard year requiring patience from everyone as the school reworks education as it was known. This reopening plan sets the school on a course but is flexible enough to adjust to current conditions as they present. It is the school's start, there are target dates, which are needed, to make sure the District is reassessing on a regular basis. With this plan, there is a path to in-person learning that will use science, metrics, caution and determination. Yet that will not relieve anyone from making the difficult decisions during the year, as parents, students, faculty, staff, the superintendent, administrators and the Board, all in the best interests of excellence in New Trier's education community and for one's physical and mental well-being.

Mr. Robitaille motioned, and Ms. Hahn seconded, that the Board of Education approve the plan for New Trier Reopening and Operational Plan for 2020-2021, as presented.

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

***VI. Consent Agenda**

- Approve the contract with Comcast Business as presented and authorize the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations to execute the agreement
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Resignation, Retirements and Stipends)

Mr. Robitaille moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Approve the contract with Comcast Business as presented and authorize the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations to execute the agreement and Personnel Report (Appointments, Resignation, Retirements and Stipends). Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Ducommun moved, and Mr. Robitaille seconded, the motion to adjourn. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Cathleen Albrecht, President