

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

April 20, 2026

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

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A **Regular 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, in Room C234 on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Avik Das
Ms. Courtney McDonough
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson, Vice President

Administrators Present

Dr. Peter Tragos, Superintendent
Dr. Christopher Johnson, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Asst. Supt. for Special Ed and Student Services
Dr. Chimille Tillery, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal – Winnetka Campus/Asst. Supt.
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

Absent

Ms. Jean Hahn, President
Mr. Joo Serk Lee

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Chief Communications Officer; Dr. Nashwa Mekky, Chief Human Resources Officer; Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Angie Woodul, Extension Department Assistant and Educational Support Professionals President; Mr. Alex Zilka, Social Studies Department Faculty and Equity Liaison; Ms. Kristan Kenney, English Department Faculty and Equity Liaison; Ms. Megan Zajac, Director of Special Education; Ms. Kari Nakayama, Special Education Department Faculty and Transitions Coordinator; Ms. Annie Kirschbaum, Special Education Department Faculty and ELS Coordinator; Mr. Steven Spellman, Special Education Department Faculty; Ms. Anna Dowling, Special Education Department Faculty; Ms. Kim Hafron, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; and Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; and members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:00 p.m. – C234

Ms. Tomlinson called the Regular Meeting of April 20, 2026 of the Board of Education to order at 5:32 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, and Mr. Lee. Ms. Tomlinson asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Ms. McDonough moved that the Board of Education adjourn to closed session for the purpose of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor, or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity and collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:00 p.m. – A201A

III. BUSINESS MEETING – Open Session – 6:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Tomlinson called the Regular Meeting of April 20, 2026 of the Board of Education to order at 6:31 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Hahn and Mr. Lee.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of March 23, 2026 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of April 14, 2026 (open and closed session)**

The first order of business was to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 23, 2026 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of April 14, 2026 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Mr. Das moved, and Ms. McDonough seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting of March 23, 2026 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of April 14, 2026 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Das, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY:

ABSTAIN: Ms. Pofcher

ABSENT: Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee

The motion passed.

B. Report from Campus Principals, Assistant Superintendents, and FOIA Report

Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal for the Northfield Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- The New Trier Parents Association hosted New Trier 101, which was well attended. Mr. Waechtler facilitated a Q&A with panelists from athletics, performing arts, activities, and a parent representative for incoming freshman parents.
- About 50 students performed two one-act plays, *Fools* and *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing*, for their Theatre 1 Culminating Project. Aside from acting, students incorporate costumes, light and sound.
- Lunch and Learns were offered to staff so they could better understand the goals of Design Your New Trier Experience (DYNTE) and the way this program benefits students. Mr. Waechtler introduced the presentation and Mr. Jason Boumstein, Applied Arts Department Chair, went through the program's schedule, led attendees through an activity and answered questions.
- Thanks to a grant from the New Trier Fine Arts Association, sketch comedienne, improviser, and former New Trier staff member, Ms. McKenzie Morrell, worked with Theatre 1 students. She introduced them to new improv games and led activities that allowed students to advance their skills as actors.
- Freshman State Testing took place last Wednesday. Mr. Waechtler thanked Ms. Erin Torrisi, Testing Manager, and Dr. Melissa Dudic, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, for their work, noting the day went well.

Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal for the Winnetka Campus/Assistant Superintendent, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- The Math Team placed tenth overall at state.
- Science Olympiad, for the third year in a row, are state champions and off to nationals.
- National Prevention Week for Mental Health recently took place. Mr. Stephen Blood, Kinetic Wellness Faculty, hosted lunchtime yoga for students. This was one of many sessions offered to students so they could take a break.
- The New Trier News attended the Northern Illinois Scholastic Press Association Conference and won many awards. The print publication earned a designated silver overall, which is the second highest publication honor awarded by the conference. The NT News website earned a Golden Eagle trophy which is awarded to the top third of websites entered.
- Twenty students were recognized at the NCAA Spring Signing Day. Also recognized during this time are students who may not be part of a New Trier sport but are outside of school and will be continuing it in college.
- Transition held their annual alumni luncheon at the Takiff Center.
- Last week was the Piano Legacy recital which was part of the Day of Giving Piano Legacy Campaign. Students and faculty were able to play the piano during an open house.

- The Class of 2028, for their service project, has been working with Grace Network. They raised \$1,100 by hosting a car wash.
- Prom 2026 took place over the weekend, and students enjoyed a wonderful evening. Mrs. Dubravec thanked the Class of 2026 who organized the event along with the advisers who attended as chaperones.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared a variety of upcoming events.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report noting that there have been four requests since the last Board meeting for information on provisions for religious holidays, purchasing records, emails referencing a particular individual, and information about the CLEAR residency technology. All are closed.

V. Communications

Ms. Tomlinson 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. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications. There were no requests for public comment.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Glencoe Campus: Transition Services Update

Dr. Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services and Special Education, introduced the Glencoe Campus: Transition Services Update. Transition Services provides supports for young adults between the ages of 18 to 22 and helps them to develop the skills necessary to lead independent, productive lives. The Transition Center moved to a community-based location in downtown Glencoe four years ago, which significantly expanded partnerships and real-world vocational opportunities. This allowed for the shift from a school-based model to one of comprehensive and individualized services.

Ms. Megan Zajac, current Director of Special Education, and soon-to-be Executive Director of Special Education introduced Transition Services teachers: Ms. Kari Nakayama, Ms. Anna Dowling, and Mr. Steven Spellman along with Ms. Annie Kirschbaum, who will be the ELS and Transition Services Coordinator beginning next school year. She also introduced Vincent Lysaught-Lim and Matty Schulz, two young adults who attend the Transition Center. Ms. Zajac also extended gratitude to the Village of Glencoe for being so welcoming and supportive. Ms. Zajac then went on to share that over the past several years, the team has reflected on the purpose of Transition Services, ultimately developing a guiding principle that shapes this work.

Ms. Nakayama shared the history of Transition Services with it beginning in 2009 at the Winnetka Campus and moving to Glencoe in 2022. As of 2025, 129 young adults have participated with an average of 35 young adults participating annually. Ms. Dowling shared that Transition Services encompasses person-centered planning in the areas of employment, independent living skills, education, and socialization. Vincent and Matty each provided an example of their daily schedules. Vincent spends part of his week at the Transition Center and part working at Jewel-Osco. Matty shared that he works at the Winnetka-Northfield Public Library daily.

Ms. Nakayama shared pictures of the first year that the Transition Center was open in Glencoe. Mr. Spellman then went on to share the features of the space now which include the One Stop Trev Shop, learning spaces, leisure space, kitchen, as well as a modified living space that is set up like an apartment. Ms. Dowling then shared pictures of authentic or hands-on learning. Vincent shared a favorite experience that he had in the Transition Center. Ms. Dowling then shared the various access to the community that the young adults have such as public transportation, library, restaurants, and grocery shopping. Matty then shared his favorite community outing. Mr. Spellman shared about the various community partnerships the Transition Center has, such as with the Glencoe Park District, particularly the Takiff Center. Ms. Dowling shared other partnerships such as with the Writers Theatre in Glencoe, School District 35, and the Renaissance Hotel. Ms. Nakayama spoke to the support and partnership provided by the Village of Glencoe.

Ms. Kirschbaum looks forward to helping to create continuity in the curriculum and programming models along with continuity in the messaging about the goal and purpose of Transition Services. Ms. Nakayama noted that Transition Services will continue to expand its community and post-secondary connections. Vincent invited questions from the Board.

Ms. Pofcher inquired what the hardest part about starting a job was, to which Vincent replied.

Ms. McDonough thanked both young adults for sharing their experiences, noting that the Board enjoys hearing from students. Ms. McDonough shared with Matty that she often sees him at the library doing great work and will look for Vincent the next time she is at Jewel. To the staff, Ms. McDonough shared her appreciation for their student-centered approach, noting that what they do is aligned to individual student goals, the school's mission, and the Strategic Plan. She also thought it is incredible to see how the program has expanded since it has moved off campus.

Ms. Alcantara shared her appreciation with the students for their time and enthusiasm in sharing their experiences. She went on to say that the Board learns the most when students present and it helps the Board to assess the progress of the program. Ms. Alcantara also shared her gratitude with the staff.

Mr. Das noted the enthusiasm and the amazing adults that are positively supporting the young adults. In hearing the stories and seeing the pictures, Mr. Das shared that what guides much of his professional work is the belief that successful childhoods lead to successful neighborhoods. He thanked Glencoe for providing a home for this success and it is more than just a transition from children to young adulthood; it is also a transition to a stronger community.

Dr. Tragos thanked Vincent and Matty for sharing their experiences. Speaking to the staff and leaders, he noted that the move off-site has been transformative for New Trier's young adults. He thanked them for their vision of moving from a program to a service and also providing meaningful and fulfilling experiences so young adults can utilize and showcase their talents and skills.

Ms. Tomlinson thanked the presenters for sharing their experiences. Much gratitude was expressed for the Village of Glencoe, and Ms. Tomlinson did not want to minimize that, but went on to say that this is a win-win given what the Transition Center brings to the neighborhood.

B. Annual Plan Goal 3: Staff and Student Belonging Council Update

Dr. Chimille Tillery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, introduced the update on Annual Plan Goal 3: Staff and Student Belonging Council. Those presenting included Equity Liaisons Ms. Kristan Kenney and Mr. Alex Zilka, Staff Belonging Council members, Ms. Kim Hafron, and Student Belonging Council members, Juliana Ben-David, sophomore, and Siri Lebakken, senior. Ms. Kenney spoke to the 25-26 Annual Plan 3 which was to enhance and expand school-wide belonging initiatives. Then both students spoke about what the Student Belonging Council does and what it means to them. There are about 35 students on the Council who are nominated by a teacher to participate. Meetings focus on belonging and discussing issues that are going on at New Trier. Siri described the experience on the Council as transformative because of taking on a leadership role. Juliana noted that, despite participation in many extracurriculars, nothing compares with the Student Belonging Council. Siri then shared about the Belonging Art Project created by senior, Lily Dale that will be a permanent art installation at the Winnetka campus. Siri then shared details about the experience at the Students Organized Against Racism (SOAR) Conference hosted at Northwestern by Evanston Township High School, while Juliana went on to share about the Upstander Workshops. These workshops help students build the skills to become upstanders when they encounter bullying or biased language. The Student Belonging Council created a video, which was played, where students shared what makes them feel like they belong at New Trier and what they do to make others feel like they belong. Finally, Mr. Zilka shared that Avery Gable, a senior on the Council and also a leader of the Enriching Lives through Service (ELS) Club, brought concerns of discrimination and prejudice against people with disabilities. From this came a social media campaign that promoted kindness as well as educating about the harmfulness around the R-word. He shared concluding comments including how rewarding it is to work with the students on the belonging council.

Ms. Kim Hafron, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, shared about the Staff Belonging Council, which meets monthly and focuses on how to best support students of all backgrounds at New Trier. The Council has also been central to creating the monthly observances activities. The group will also present two sessions at the November 2026 Institute Day which will focus on the Characteristic of a New Trier Graduate: Engaged, Compassionate, Global Citizens.

Mr. Zilka and Ms. Kenney oversee the fourth-year new teacher induction program which focuses on equity and belonging. Mr. Zilka shared further details about their work this year while Ms. Hafron went on to share how the Staff Belonging Council was able to support those teachers. Mr. Zilka then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Pofcher shared introductory comments, mentioning that several efforts were started this year, and she inquired about what has been learned this year or those things that have promise and which ones are working less well. Ms. Kenney shared an anecdote from earlier in the day regarding accessibility with Canvas. She also spoke to all the different places that students mentioned in the video where they feel comfortable in the school. Ms. Kenney went on to share additional comments. Siri then shared that in this age of social media, nothing is sincere anymore. With the adviser room presentations, Siri shared that presenters were able to give students space to be sincere. Siri also shared that these presentations work best peer-to-peer as they can relate to one another. Ms. Pofcher asked for clarification that what Siri was referring to was the Upstander presentations and if they would continue in the coming years, which Siri confirmed and shared that this year was an experiment that was well received by students. Ms. Hafron shared that the Councils are trying to slowly change the culture by stating it is about belonging not what a person should not do. Ms. Hafron also shared an anecdote about her time working with the Kinetic Wellness Department on their equity goals. Juliana added that it has been hard to celebrate her culture this year but being a part of the Council and sharing with others has been a good experience. Juliana noted that the Councils are making progress one step at a time.

Mr. Das commented that he is sitting with the discussion around how a student will find spaces of belonging in different contexts. He heard in the presentation that with the Student Belonging Council there are a set of young people that are consciously seeking out a space of fellowship to practice the art of belonging. He gave an example of this within the context of the 10-year Facilities Steering Committee work, noting that if five more Science labs are needed, he thinks of it as needing five more belonging labs and creating spaces of sincerity that Siri spoke to. After sharing additional comments, Mr. Das shared that the bridges to connect people require conscious work. He commended the students for their pioneering work in the Student Belonging Council and for sharing with the Board what necessary skills need to continue to be fed into this space. He then shared concluding comments. Siri responded by highlighting involvement with the 10-year Facilities Steering Committee. Siri then went on to share about the importance of the Integrated Global Studies School (IGSS) program and the civil-rights oriented trip that IGSS took to Alabama as well as how the space is set up at Winnetka for the program. Conversation continued between Mr. Das and Siri.

Ms. Alcantara shared that people will ask her when talking about the Strategic Plan what the goal of belonging is about. Staff provide the concept, the ideas, and the framework with which the Board tries to make that concept relatable, but it is not until they hear the students' voices that it becomes accessible. She shared her appreciation for the presentation as well as the video that she can direct people to.

Ms. McDonough thanked Siri and Juliana for their tremendous work on the belonging council. She noted that the belonging goal is one of the most important goals that the school has because without this strong foundation learning does not happen in the way that it should. Ms. McDonough shared that the students are changing the fabric of New Trier and that impact will be felt for a long time to come.

Dr. Tragos thanked Siri and Juliana for attending the meeting, noting that they brought to life the action of the words that the school talks about. He noted that they showed that the goals and frameworks have a tangible and practical application. He also shared that they both have a wonderful gift of speaking to a room full of adults, are able to think on their feet and share insightful thoughts. He thanked Ms. Hafron for her work on the Staff Belonging Council. Dr. Tragos also acknowledged the leadership of Ms. Kenney and Mr. Zilka along with their deep understanding of belonging and equity. He then shared comments about how belonging is the precondition to learning.

Ms. Tomlinson, in speaking to Juliana's earlier comment about having a thousand students in the sophomore class, shared that parents often encourage their children to make their experience like a mirror, guiding them to find others who reflect who they are and what they like to do. Ms. Tomlinson went to say that the work that the students are doing creates a window into others' experiences. She noted that this is equally important for students to acknowledge that there is a group of people out there who are different from them and who they can learn from. Ms. Tomlinson then spoke to seasoned staff such as Ms. Hafron who are taking on newer staff and helping them figure out a way to enhance the school's culture of belonging.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for March 2026

Dr. Johnson provided the Treasurer's Report for March 2026, noting there is continued disbursement of tax revenue, although the District is still behind last year, the expectation is that it will catch up in April. Unfortunately, Dr. Johnson has learned that second installment bills, typically issued on July 1st and due August 1st, will be late. He

shared his appreciation for the notice of this given by Cook County so the District can plan. The Treasurer's Office is working outside the system to distribute money, but long-term the system needs to be working so that the District can accurately categorize and book the funds as the fiscal year closes. Ms. Tomlinson inquired if this would impact the end of the District's fiscal year. Dr. Johnson replied that the District is receiving what is expected this fiscal year, however, in terms of processing refunds, there could be less this year, but more next year. In terms of the money that has been received, the District is awaiting additional information on how to book them in its financial system. He went to share that the District will work with its auditors to classify them in a way that is appropriate should it not receive the accounting information from the County by June 30th.

Some short-term investments continue such as a weighted portfolio yield at PMA at 3.59%, while the long-term portfolio at Fifth Third is 4.19%. The cash balance for all accounts is \$144,274,795.

B. Financial Report for March 2026

Dr. Johnson then provided the Financial Report for March 2026. Operating revenue for the first nine months of the fiscal year was \$95,854,000, or 28% lower compared to last year. The District anticipates it will catch up as it posts the April revenue. Revenue is also lower in Other Local Sources as expected due to the change in allocation of CPPRT receipts. The adopted budget for operating revenue is only slightly higher than last year.

Operating expenditures through March were \$95,463,000 or slightly lower than last year. The District has been diligent with controlling expenses and finding possible savings wherever it can. The adopted budget for operating expenses is 1.52% higher than last year.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, March 1 - 31, 2026
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirement, Stipends - Appointment and Stipends - Separation and Retirement Agreement)
- Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Construction Report #9
- Approval of Lease Extension with Connor-Max LLC - 640 Vernon
- Contract Awards for Door Lockdown Hardware (Winnetka Campus)

Ms. Tomlinson inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Pofcher moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, March 1 - 31, 2026; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirement, Stipends - Appointment and Stipends - Separation and Retirement Agreement); Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Construction Report #9; Authorize the renewal of the lease with Connor-Max LLC, and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the extension; and Approve the contract awards as presented and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the agreements. Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Alcantara, Ms. Pofcher, Mr. Das, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY:

ABSENT: Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. Pofcher shared that upcoming meetings include the **Community Engagement Committee** and the **Neighborhood Traffic and Parking Committee**, both on April 22nd.

Mr. Das thanked Ms. Hahn for attending the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** meeting on April 8th in his absence. The general plan to reorganize TrueNorth continues. He also thanked Ms. Pofcher for attending the May 6th meeting in his absence.

Ms. McDonough was unable to attend the **New Trier Parents Association (NTPA)** last month but will be in attendance at the May 5th meeting.

Ms. Alcantara was unable to attend the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** meeting or the **Facilities Steering Committee**, both of which were on April 15th. The next NTFAA meeting will be on May 20th.

IX. Calendar of Events & Board Members' Requests for Staff Research and Future Agenda Items

Dr. Tragos highlighted the following events:

- Wednesday, April 22nd is State Testing at the Winnetka Campus. Seniors will have no school with a regular day at Northfield.
- Also on April 22nd, the Neighborhood Traffic and Parking Meeting will be hosted by Mrs. Dubravec. Dr. Tragos shared that at another meeting he was attending with parents, the topic of traffic came up at his table, and each parent noted that traffic around the campuses is going well.
- Next Monday, the 27th and Tuesday, the 28th are late arrival days for students, while teachers participate in professional development.
- Also on Monday, author of *Dream School*, Mr. Jeff Selingo, will spend the day at the Winnetka Campus with students and faculty and participate in a parent event that evening.
- Wednesday, April 29th is Take Your Kid to Work Day. He thanked staff who have put the day together for the children of faculty and staff.
- The next Board meeting is Monday, May 18th.

Ms. Tomlinson then inquired whether there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none. Mr. Das requested the link to the video that was shown during the Student and Staff Belonging Council update.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. McDonough seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Jean Hahn, President