

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

August 17, 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, August 17, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Avik Das
Ms. Jean Hahn
Mr. Joo Serk Lee
Ms. Courtney McDonough, Vice President
Mr. Brad McLane
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson, President

Administrators Present

Dr. Peter Tragos, Superintendent
Dr. Christopher Johnson, Deputy Superintendent
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Asst. Supt./Winnetka Campus Principal
Dr. Chimille Tillery, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Northfield Campus Principal
Ms. Megan Zajac, Executive Director for Special Education

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Chief Communications Officer; Dr. Nashwa Mekky, Chief Human Resources Officer; Ms. Lauren Owens, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Meg Garton, English Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Hazel Bernal, Special Education Department Faculty; Mr. Jack Bolz, English Department Faculty; Mr. Brad Boresi, Assistant Athletic Director; Mr. Noah Charters, English Department Faculty; Ms. Elena Clemmensen, Psychologist; Ms. Lindsey Craig, English Department Faculty; Mr. Adam Dickson, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Lauren Frick, District Services Coordinator; Mr. William Keeling, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Eve Light, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Shannon Mahoney, Social Studies Department Faculty; Mr. Ethan Masters, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Bina Rexhepi, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Rollins, Music and Theatre Department Faculty; Mr. Tony Valdez, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Laura Wesslund, Music and Theatre Department Faculty; Mr. Tim Yee, Math Department Faculty; Dr. Melissa Dudic, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; and members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Tomlinson called the Regular Meeting of August 17, 2026 of the Board of Education to order at 5:30 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Mr. Das 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. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Mr. McLane, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY: none

ABSENT: Mr. Das, Mr. Lee

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:30 p.m. – A201A

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

Ms. Tomlinson called the Regular Meeting of August 17, 2026 of the Board of Education to order at 6:33 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open and closed sessions) and the Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open session)**

The first order of business was to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open and closed sessions) and the Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open and closed session) and Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 13, 2026 (open session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. McLane, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY:

The motion passed.

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

The reports from the campus principals and assistant superintendents will be included in the School Kickoff presentation during the Special Orders of Business.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report noting that there have been five requests since the last Board meeting related to: energy contract, job posting, radio station records, and purchasing records are all closed. One, regarding the District's boundaries, remains open.

Dr. Johnson provided information on the Northfield TIF as the Village continues to contemplate a Tax Increment Financing district covering much of their downtown area. As previously mentioned, the Village and New Trier both have a shared interest in a vibrant downtown area, but the two differ on the best way to achieve this. The TIF would have a significant financial impact on the school districts, with \$169 million diverted from the schools to the TIF over a 23-year life according to estimates, including \$60 million from New Trier alone. It also impacts residents and business owners, who will pay a larger portion of New Trier taxes. Last week, the Joint Review Board (JRB) had their second and final meeting. The JRB is comprised of residents from other taxing bodies. The JRB was attended by approximately 70 people, and had significant public comments, none of which supported the TIF. The school districts' financial consultant and the Village also presented at the meeting. Ultimately, the JRB did not vote to support the TIF and that recommendation has been advanced to the Village board. The next step is a public hearing that the Village board will host on August 25th. New Trier continues to meet with the Village and other school districts to discuss an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), so that if the TIF does move forward, New Trier can protect its interests to the greatest extent possible. Dr. Johnson also shared that there has been continued good conversation and respect for Mr. Patrick Brennan, the Village Manager, his staff and the Village Trustees in this process. Although the District and the Village do not see this issue the same way, the District's appreciates the partnership, continued discussion and engagement as the process continues. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn inquired if the media reporting was accurate, that now that the JRB has not recommended it, the Village board needs more votes for approval. Dr. Johnson confirmed and noted that the Village board needs 5 out of 7 votes to move forward. Discussion continued between the two.

Ms. McDonough noted that there seems to be some uncertainty about how much the TIF could raise. The Village has said about \$175 million, while a consultant working on the schools' behalf has put the figure at \$450 million or more. Ms. McDonough inquired what would happen to the District's IGA if the TIF raised significantly more funds than anticipated. Dr. Johnson clarified that the Village identified \$175 million in needs, not that the TIF would raise that much. The District's consultant did a low, medium, and high estimate with the medium estimate being around \$450 million. After additional comments, Dr. Johnson shared that the District met with the consultant who is advising the Village with the TIF and the consultant agreed with the methodology that the District was using for its numbers. The consultant also seemed to agree in concept to what the cost estimates were in terms of the revenue that could be raised in 23 years, which he shared further details on. Dr. Johnson said that these numbers will be part of

the discussion related to the IGA. Regarding the IGA, there are different approaches, one is to ensure that the District is paid for new students who enroll from the TIF zone as well as asking for a share of the TIF revenue for the other taxing bodies.

Ms. Tomlinson shared the following comments on the TIF:

“First, I want to thank you Chris for your leadership throughout this process. You have carefully and wisely navigated this very challenging situation and earned the respect of leaders from many of the governing bodies being impacted, ultimately being elected to chair the Joint Review Board. As I have expressed in the past, if the Village of Northfield moves forward with this TIF, against the recommendation of the Joint Review Board representing those governing bodies, New Trier stands to lose millions in tax revenue over the next 23 years. And that lost revenue is critical to how we balance our operating budget year over year.

90 % of our revenue comes from property taxes. And each year, PTELL limits how much incremental funding we can request. There are times when certain costs far outstrip that incremental adjustment (health care expenses would be an example). New construction is an exception to this limit: we are allowed to collect extra revenue from new buildings and developments within our district above and beyond our levy. And, in many cases, that extra revenue bridges a critical financial gap in covering operational expenses. We have not had to ask for an operating rate referendum since 2003 in part because of this additional tax revenue. So this is a big deal.

Is a TIF critical to Northfield’s success? The Village currently operates with an annual budget around \$15 million. By their estimates, they need \$175 million for redevelopment costs, without which, the area will continue to languish. And yet, Northfield is already seeing revitalization of its downtown area with the development of a 92-unit luxury apartment building and a 12-unit condo building. This was accomplished, in part, with a zoning change. Moreover, two different consultants familiar with the TIF proposal believe incremental tax revenue could be upwards of \$450 million ...30 times the village’s annual budget and 2.5 times higher than their projected needs.

What does New Trier stand to lose? Based on projections from the TIF consultant, we stand to lose \$60-70 million in tax revenue over the next 23 years.

We are all in agreement that strong and vibrant downtowns are important to the health of our township. But we do not agree that a TIF is the only way, or even the best way to accomplish this. This disagreement has manifested itself in the large number of citizens that have shown up to village meetings in opposition of a TIF. It has been expressed to me in phone calls I have received from residents concerned and confused over the impact on their schools. It is apparent in conversations I have had with other elected officials. It is on display in “NO TIF” yard signs, hats and car stickers.

When there is this level of disconnect between citizens and what their elected officials are proposing, it seems like there is an opportunity to revisit the mission, the methods and the timing. At this point, that is all we can ask of the Village is to reconsider the mission, the methods, and the timing.”

Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Tomlinson for acknowledging his work and also noted that Dr. Tragos has been a great partner in this as well. He also thanked Ms. Tomlinson and Ms. McDonough for their partnership.

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. School Kickoff 2026-2027

Dr. Tragos began School Kickoff 2026-2027 presentation by thanking Ms. Tomlinson for attending Opening Institute Day as well as presenting to staff. He also thanked Ms. McDonough for attending.

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

- He welcomed the Board to the beginning of another school year.

- The Parents Association, along with Mr. Waechtler, hosted a meeting for Transfer families. It was well attended with 20 incoming freshmen participating. Former transfer students, who are Student Ambassadors, gave tours and led activities.
- The Northfield Campus Leadership Team came back last Monday, and their meeting focused on gratitude, excellence, and the joy of learning.
- Bridge Builder training was conducted by the Class of 2030 adviser chairs Mr. Mark Howard and Ms. Sue Ellen Haak last week. They did teambuilding activities and focused on welcoming, inclusion, and the first days of school for freshmen.
- Mr. Howard and Ms. Haak also conducted training for new advisers.
- For the first day of student attendance, there will be a drumline welcoming them along with t-shirts provided by the NTPA.

Dr. Johnson shared the construction that has taken place at the Northfield Campus. A small portion of the cafeteria has been renovated to create another student serving area, which is similar to two serving areas over at the Winnetka campus. The District worked closely with Quest Food Services and Pepper Construction over the summer. He shared highlights from the second phase of the Northfield Athletic Project.

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

- She noted the great energy on campus today and thanked Ms. Meg Garton, English Department Faculty and Education Association President, for her Opening Day speech this morning.
- Mr. Matt Temple, Director of Bands, is the new president of the National Band Association. This is a great example of New Trier faculty being out there representing the school while bringing back the best for students too.
- Mrs. Dubravec also shared about the focus of the Winnetka Campus Leadership Team meeting. Topics included succession planning, professional growth, and who will not only take on leadership roles, but committee roles as well.
- The Winnetka campus also had a Transfer Day welcoming new Trevians to that campus. Transfer families attended along with a student from the incoming student's adviser room as well as a student from the New Trier Newbies. Meetings also take place for transfer students throughout the year.
- Next, Mrs. Dubravec shared about what the District has been doing for Prevention, Safety and Security Preparation. Dr. Catherine Wang, Glencoe District 35 Superintendent, and Mrs. Dubravec have attended several security trainings. The two of them hosted training for superintendents where they completed tabletop exercises. Also discussed was the Standard Response Protocol (SRP), which Illinois has now adopted, so the language that the District's been using for the past two years is the language that needs to be used across the state. They also discussed roles pertaining to reunification. A team ran several systems tests in early August. Prevention, Safety, and Security Day will be held on August 26th for students. Faculty shared what to do and where students should go based on where they are located and what type of event it is. A test text notification will go out to staff, parents, and students on August 26th as well. Additional communication will also be sent to parents. Faculty and staff will also go through training. Security and Physical Plant Services (PPS) went through traffic management and school crossing training. Finally, Mrs. Dubravec shared an example of connection and belonging from a staff member.

Dr. Johnson then shared a construction update for the Winnetka Campus, noting the District is in the third and final year for the North/Tower Building project. He also shared what remains of the project schedule over the next year. He thanked the PPS staff and Pepper Construction for their work. He also thanked Mr. Bill Franz, PPS association president, who shared all the work that the department does to maintain the campuses. Dr. Johnson also noted that Ms. Angie Woodul, New Trier Extension program assistant and Support Staff association president, also spoke.

Ms. Megan Zajac, Executive Director for Special Education, shared an update from special education. She shared that they welcomed incoming Educational and Life Skills (ELS) freshmen students to the Winnetka Campus. Some will participate in adviser room and electives at Northfield; however, their main campus will be at Winnetka. This change allowed for other spaces to be reimaged. She then went on to share information about Transition Services and the partnerships that they have, such as making PE uniform shirts for Washburne and Central schools. Ms. Tomlinson inquired how many PE shirts Transition has made over the years, to which Ms. Zajac replied that the number is probably in the thousands.

Next, Dr. Tillery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, shared what goes into welcoming and supporting the newest faculty members. Dr. Melissa Dudic, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, shared an overview of new teacher induction and new leader orientation. Dr. Nashwa Mekky, Chief Human Resources Officer, then introduced each new faculty member, shared details about the orientation for new support staff, the workshop for new and returning substitutes and the back-to-school department assistant meeting. Finally, she shared about the Northeastern Illinois University Leadership Cohort that will take place at New Trier and is a two-year program for educators who are interested in becoming administrators.

Ms. Pofcher thanked the group of new teachers for their decision to become teachers at New Trier.

Dr. Tragos then shared about what happens from the time that the Board approves the Annual Plan in July to August when the new year with faculty and staff is kicked off. He spoke about the message he shared with the Expanded Leadership Team, which includes 75 faculty leaders, and meets the week before school starts.

Shifting gears from the Annual Plan to other work that takes place daily, Dr. Tragos shared those areas for continuous improvement, which are shared concerns that emerged from a close partnership with association leadership. Dr. Tragos noted that Ms. Meg Garton, President of the Education Association, is a reliable partner in addressing these. He shared details of each of the five areas: the block schedule, the adviser program structure task force, class size, calendar, and final exams.

Dr. Tragos then displayed the Board Presentation Calendar for this school year, indicating where progress updates will be given pertaining to the Annual Plan. Ms. Tomlinson asked if the calendar was on BoardDocs, Dr. Tragos replied that it would be added.

Ms. Pofcher asked that for the topics where Dr. Tragos is looking for substantive Board engagement and will lend themselves to commentary, that enough time is built into the agenda.

Ms. Tomlinson thanked Ms. Pofcher for her words of welcome to the new teachers. She also noted that Ms. Garton gave a nice speech for Opening Day. Dr. Tragos shared that new teachers were invited to the Board meeting as he wants the Board room to be a welcome space for teachers. He went on to share some of the comments that he gave to new teachers when he welcomed them to New Trier.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for July 2026

Dr. Johnson provided the Treasurer's Report for July 2026. The District has received the first installments of the property tax distributions from Cook County in June, July and August that are attributable to last year. Other revenue categories are typical for this time of year. The interest rate is 3.56% for short term investments/cash, which are all less than one-year instruments due to property tax delays. For long-term investments, the interest rate is 4.08%. New long-term investments also continue to be paused due to the property tax issue. Fund balances for all accounts are \$147,329,460.

B. Financial Report for July 2026

Dr. Johnson then provided the Financial Report for July 2026. Operating revenue for the first month of the Fiscal Year 2027 was \$2.2 million, or 12.77% higher compared to last year. Any funds attributable to the 2025-26 school year that are received by August 31st will be recognized in that year. Cook County did make a property tax distribution of approximately \$1.8 million in July that is not included in this month's revenue as the report looks at the current fiscal year, and that revenue was recognized in the past fiscal year.

Operating expenditures for July were \$5.6 million or 20.08% lower than last year's \$7 million. Year-to-year comparisons for the first several months of the new fiscal year are not very informative due to the timing of purchases, such as in Capital Outlay this month, as well as journal entries and adjustments as the District transfers from one year to the next. The report also presents preliminary FY 26 results. Similarly to the June reports, revenue and expenses will continue to change as the District makes year-end adjustments and audit entries. Fund book balances for all accounts were \$141,365,000 as of July 31st.

Ms. Tomlinson inquired if the District thinks that Cook County will issue the next round of tax bills in two months. Dr. Johnson replied that the next agenda item would help answer this question.

Mr. Lee inquired about the lower expenses, which Dr. Johnson explained. Mr. Lee then noted that the District has taken a hit due to recent weather events, he inquired if the District has digested the impacts of that for the coming year. Dr. Johnson replied that three weeks ago, there was severe flooding in the area that damaged part of the Winnetka campus, specifically the track, which had water infiltration due to a pipe that failed above it. The District is working with its architects and engineers to figure out why the pipe failed as it was only installed in 2023. The District submitted an insurance claim, and a new track will be installed in the next couple of months and does not anticipate any cost beyond the deductible.

***C. Resolution authorizing the issuance of Taxable Tax Anticipation Warrants in anticipation of the collection of taxes levied for the year 2025 for educational purposes, directing the County Treasurer and ex-officio County Collector of The County of Cook, Illinois, to deposit amounts collected from said taxes directly into a fund held by a tax escrow agent and authorizing the sale of said warrants to The County of Cook, Illinois.**

Dr. Johnson presented on the resolution authorizing the issuance of Taxable Tax Anticipation Warrants in anticipation of the collection of taxes levied for the year 2025 for educational purposes, directing the County Treasurer and ex-officio County Collector of The County of Cook, Illinois, to deposit amounts collected from said taxes directly into a fund held by a tax escrow agent and authorizing the sale of said warrants to The County of Cook, Illinois. At the July meeting, the Board authorized the District to apply for Cook County's interest-free Bridge Fund due to uncertainty around property tax collections. The District has been approved for approximately \$22.7 million, with funds available August 21st. If property tax bills and distributions occur on the County's current schedule, the District will likely not need these funds. However, because property taxes make up about 90% of District revenues, any significant delay can create a temporary cash-flow need. This loan provides a no-interest safety net and will be repaid automatically once property tax revenues are received. Because this is a limited application window, approving it now preserves the District's flexibility at no interest cost. Last year's issue was not only the delay in the issuing of the property tax bills, but then a delay in the disbursement of those funds. Dr. Johnson shared that as of today, tax bills have been issued with an October 1st deadline. His recommendation is to move forward with this approval. Ms. Tomlinson noted that it is like an insurance policy, which Dr. Johnson agreed with and went on to share additional details. He invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson noted this was well done. Ms. McDonough inquired how many schools applied for or received these loans. Dr. Johnson was unsure, though there was a pool of \$300 million available. One sender district applied for and received funds. Dr. Johnson noted that the County has been a great partner in this.

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. McDonough seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the resolution authorizing the issuance of Taxable Tax Anticipation Warrants in anticipation of the collection of taxes levied for the year 2025 by the Board of Education of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois, for educational purposes, directing the County Treasurer and ex-officio County Collector of The County of Cook, Illinois, to deposit amounts collected from said taxes directly into a fund held by a tax escrow agent and authorizing the sale of said warrants to The County of Cook, Illinois. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Pofcher, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Mr. McLane, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY:

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, July 1 - 31, 2026
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointment, and Stipends - Separation)
- Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Construction Report #13
- Contract with Kiefer USA to provide and install the track and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the contract subject to attorney review
- Intergovernmental Agreement By and Between the School District Members of the Central Suburban League Regarding Payment of IHSA Licensed Officials for Athletic Events

- A three-year contract with Infinity Transportation for charter bus student transportation for the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 school years.

Ms. Tomlinson inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, July 1 - 31, 2026; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends - Appointment, and Stipends - Separation); Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Construction Report #13; Contract with Kiefer USA to provide and install the track and authorize the Deputy Superintendent to execute the contract subject to attorney review; Intergovernmental Agreement By and Between the School District Members of the Central Suburban League Regarding Payment of IHSA Licensed Officials for Athletic Events; and a three-year contract with Infinity Transportation for charter bus student transportation for the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 school years. Mr. Lee seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Lee, Ms. McDonough, Mr. McLane, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson

NAY:

IX. Board Member Reports

There were no Board Member reports.

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

Dr. Tragos highlighted the following events:

- Tomorrow is Opening Institute Day 2.
- First day of student attendance is Wednesday, August 19th and is an early dismissal.
- Labor Day is September 7th.
- There will be no school on September 21st due to Yom Kippur.
- The next Board meeting is Tuesday, September 22nd.

Ms. Tomlinson then inquired whether there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McLane moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Sally Tomlinson, President