



Advice on Transition to New Trier from Experienced Glencoe Parents:

This handout contains tips from parents of New Trier students, things they wished they had known when they were in your place. These tips reflect only a sampling of opinions and are offered as guidance only. Each parent knows what is best for their child.

Glencoe Parent Connection connects parents with parents, schools and resources to help us raise emotionally healthy kids within a supportive environment. www.glencoeparentconnection.org

EASING THE TRANSITION

- Yes, New Trier is a huge school but the Northfield campus is just freshmen and there are opportunities for every student to find their niche.
- Summer school at New Trier between 8th and 9th grades is a great way to meet new students with shared interests. Note: Summer school classes for incoming freshmen do not count toward graduation requirements.
- It's nice if your student attends the summer event their adviser and senior helper will organize. They should get to know the senior helper assigned to their Advisery as he/she is a great resource.
- Encourage your child to try a fall activity. There are numerous options open to all students, from no-cut sports to service clubs, stage crew to speech team. It's a great way to meet other students. Don't miss the May evening session at New Trier "After the Academics," which serves as an athletics, activities, and performing arts fair. An Activities Fair is also held during lunch periods the first month of school. Students can sign up for clubs and activities at any time throughout the year.
- If your child is anxious about the first day, walk your child's schedule with them before school starts. Even better, have your child do this with a friend or an older student (to foster their independence).
- Remind your child not to expect to see their Glencoe friends very often at New Trier, and to be open to meeting new people. Encourage your child to reach out to one student in each class, make one contact. This is also helpful in case your child is absent one day and needs to call someone from class to get an assignment.
- Attending New Trier sports games is fun and helps build school spirit. The freshman mixer in the fall is enjoyable and low pressure (no dates).

GETTING INFORMED

- Go to the information sessions at New Trier during 8th grade – they are very helpful. Talk to experienced parents so you can learn their insights.
- Read the extensive documents on the New Trier website, including data on the class of 2011 (*2011 Student Profile*) class levels and college placement, as well as participation in extracurriculars. www.newtrier.k12.il.us
- Be aware of the timing of various extracurriculars and how they may conflict with each other, to help your child prioritize interests.

- Encourage your child to contact leaders of various extracurriculars to get more information as needed (after they've attended the relevant information sessions).
- Attend the "go to school" night (you and your child walk through his/her schedule and meet teachers) as well as the information sessions for freshmen and their parents.
- Keep in mind that your child's adviser is "the link between home and school," the gatekeeper for anything and everything having to do with your child at New Trier. Advisers are not assigned until August but once determined, your child's adviser should be your first call with any questions or concerns.
- Students stay with their adviser group of 20-25 students for all four years (switching advisers sophomore year when they move to the Winnetka campus). You may not request for your child to have a particular adviser or be placed with a specific student but you may request that he/she be separated from a particular student. Contact the Adviser Chair by the May deadline to do so (see form in the packet you received at the 8th grade Academics evening).

ADVICE ON SPORTS

- It can be challenging to get onto some New Trier teams but do encourage your child to try out. Be aware that even if they make it on a "cut" team freshman year, they will have to try out every year and have no guarantee of staying on the team. Manage expectations and encourage them to check out no cut sports and activities as well.
- Keep in mind that fall sports will have tryouts and start practices in early August. For some very competitive sports, it's highly recommended that students interested in trying out take the corresponding summer school session if it's offered (it's often run by the coaches).
- From the New Trier Parent Book (available online, on the NT website): "When deciding on a sport, talk to other parents in the sports your child is interested in and take a realistic look at what is expected. Pay attention to the difference in commitment level for freshman, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity. The level of play and sport chosen has an impact on your child's school schedule and activities and on the family's plans. Helping your child stay in shape with conditioning year-round is a good idea. (...) When a student joins a team, there is a team culture that comes along with it. Be aware of team expectations, events and philosophies. Some teams fit in better with a demanding academic schedule or one that includes fine arts. Some allow more balance than others—talk to parents about the team culture. A team becomes a social group, so there are unique team dynamics at work, and those dynamics differ widely between sports. Again, talk to other parents whom you trust or the coach."
- Track and cross country come highly recommended – while still competitive, these are no cut sports with reportedly great coaches.
- Other no cut sports include wrestling, girls' water polo, swimming, diving, football. There are also many sports clubs.
- Aside from the varsity and club sports sponsored by the school, intramural sports are available. The Intramural Sports Club organizes some, and the Booster Club organizes Night League basketball, Spike League volleyball, Trevian Racquets tennis and the Trevian Golf Association. The Booster Club sends flyers to New Trier families each season with registration and cost information.

CHOOSING CLASS LEVELS

- Don't stress over the 8th grade placement test scores. They measure one performance on one day. New Trier takes teacher, student, and parent information into consideration as well and, most of the time, the school does a good job placing students at the right level for them. If in doubt, speak to the department head of that particular subject at

New Trier. For the most part, parents have the ultimate say in what levels a child enrolls in.

- Keep in mind that level 2 is considered College Prep, level 3 Honors, and level 4 High Honors/AP. Colleges know NT is demanding and consider level 2 “kind of like normal,” level 3 “advanced,” and level 4 “off the charts.” An A in a 3 level has the same GPA weight as a B+ in a 4 level. There is also a level 2E, which follows the level 2 curriculum but “with focus on the development of fundamental skills.” And level 9 signifies a class with a mix of levels (2, 3, and 4).
- Homework: Expect one hour per night per level 4 class, 45 minutes per level 3, ½ hour per level 2 (with variability, of course, depending on how fast each child works). Know your child and how much they are capable of and willing to take on. Factor in extracurriculars and downtime. Involve your child in the decision.
- If you feel strongly your child needs to be moved to a higher or lower level for freshman year, change request forms are due in February. Once classes start, it can be very hard to move levels due to scheduling conflicts or space availability. If moving up after the semester has started, it can be challenging to catch up.
- The vast majority of students take a mix of level classes during their four years at New Trier.
- It’s easier to change levels from one year to the next in encapsulated classes (where content in one class is not relied upon in the subsequent class) such as history and science, rather than in math or a foreign language.
- Freshman year sets the tone. So “stack the deck” for success. Make sure they get to experience some mastery and some fun. Don’t burn out too soon – their success fall of freshman year will give them a lot of confidence. Keep in mind it’s not a race but a four year progression.
- Once in classes, encourage your child to meet with their teacher when they have questions or concerns, or if they wish to know how they are doing. It is now their job, for the most part, to self-advocate. Teachers are usually very responsive to help them, by appointment or via email.
- Encourage your child to use the New Trier Academic Assistance Center for extra help. At the West campus, it is staffed by retired teachers who know the curriculum well. They will help with any and every subject, and with writing papers. Hours are posted online. Student tutors are also available.
- Be aware that grades are not posted online, unlike Central, so you may not find out your child is struggling until the quarterly (mid-semester) report. Parent-teacher conferences are only 5 minutes long and run smoothly – five minutes seems to be enough time in most cases. If you wish to discuss a significant concern, schedule a separate meeting.

LEVEL 3 OR LEVEL 4?

- Don’t automatically push up to all level 4. The jump from level 3 to level 4 can be a big one, although it can also vary by teacher. The difference between math 3 and math 4 is that the kids are taught the concepts in math 3, whereas in math 4, they’re expected to figure these out on their own, individually or in groups. The biggest factor between a level 3 and level 4 class is how well the student can work independently. Level 4 classes also cover more material and move through it faster. New Trier explains that levels differ on the following dimensions: need for structure and concept repetition, ability to learn independently, self-advocate, and ask questions.
- When considering going up a level from what NT recommended, ask yourself “Does my child LOVE this subject?” “I wish I’d had the courage to move my son down a level [from what was recommended],” said one parent at a GPC discussion. “He tested at all level 4 but didn’t have the study skills for it, so he was miserable in those classes.”

- Needing to move from level 4 to level 3 can be devastating for some kids once the class has started, a huge relief for others. Know your child! How would they react if such a change is needed?
- Also keep in mind that moving from a level 3 to a level 4 class will require the student to catch up to the material already covered in the level 4 class, which moves at a faster pace. From the standpoint of the material, it is easier to move from a level 4 to a level 3 class.
- With a solid 3-level student across the board, consider letting him/her choose one favorite subject (s)he most likes to try at level 4. For all students, encourage them to take one fun class freshman year.

LEVEL 2 OR LEVEL 3?

- Considerations are similar to those deciding between levels 3 and 4. Level 2 is more foundational and level 3 goes at a faster pace and requires more analysis.
- Talk to the Central school teacher in that subject so you get a good view on how your child handled their class, then talk to the New Trier department head in that subject to learn more about the pace and requirements of particular levels. This should give you enough information to decide which is best for your student.

4 OR 5 MAJORS?

- There are 9 40-minute periods in the New Trier school day, not counting the first 25 minutes of the day spent in Advisery. With lunch and required Kinetic Wellness, there are 7 periods available for major and minor classes. Your child will need to choose whether to take 4 or 5 major (“core academic”) classes.
- Most freshmen take 5 majors (including science, adding up to 5 ½ periods due to 2 additional lab classes per week) and one minor (“elective”). One minor allows for 3 study halls per week (on the days when there is no science lab). Some choose to not take any minors, which allows for study hall every day (plus those 3 extras). In some cases (e.g. chorus) you can take five majors with 2 minors if a minor only requires three class slots per week (filling those 3 days of study hall).
- Some freshmen choose to take 4 majors (adding up to 4 or 4 ½ periods if they take lab science as a major). This may be a way to ease into the academics at New Trier or to allow for 2 minor periods (for instance, jazz band requires 2 music classes, both minors). Keep in mind that if you choose to take 4 majors during the school year, you may need to take a major class in the summer to catch up (some colleges require 4 years of all major classes). Students who take 4 majors can also choose to take one elective class as a major, with more requirements for work outside of class than a regular elective.
- A study hall is helpful to allow students to get a jump on homework, especially if they are involved in extracurriculars after school.
- Summer-school science, although intense, is a good option for kids who dislike science, as they learn it and are tested on it the same day. Plus, they get it over with in 6 weeks vs. a whole year.

OTHER DECISIONS

- You will need to choose the PCB (Physics-Chemistry-Biology) or BCP (Biology-Chemistry-Physics) track in science. Most kids take BCP unless they are particularly strong in math, in which case they may be recommended to start with Physics. (Only 3 years of science are required to graduate.) Environmental Geoscience is not as challenging as Biology, so that can be a good option for freshmen, and the teachers are great.

- You will need to choose if you will continue with your current or start a new foreign/classical language. While it's not a requirement for graduation from New Trier, most colleges require anywhere from two to four years of high school in one foreign language. Tip: If your child wishes to start a new language, have them do so freshman year as the Northfield campus is the only one to offer beginning levels of foreign languages. You can be bussed over from the Winnetka campus if you wish to start a new language in later years, but it can be a hassle.
- You will need to choose if your student will take English and History separately or together (Humanities equivalent) as a double period that is team-taught. New Trier materials state this is best for the student who "feels comfortable doing collaborative work and participating in class discussions." One advantage of the double class approach is that you have only one final rather than two. Disadvantages are that you need to take both classes at the same level and that you are sitting in a class for 80 minutes, which can feel very long.
- If your child is interested in music, theatre, the newspaper, debate, speech, dance, and such, check with the department if there are class requirements freshman year as a prerequisite for participation.
- Summer class or early bird class frees up some periods during the day so kids can have a break or get an early jump on their homework. Although only available for graduation credit to entering sophomores and up, keep this in mind when planning your four-year curriculum.

COLLEGE PLACEMENT

- Don't stress about college placement. Emphasize to your child that success doesn't depend on getting into a top-20 college. Focus more on finding the college that is the right "fit" for your child. Your child can get into a very good school with level 2 and 3 classes. There is a good college for everyone. New Trier's motto is that "college is a match to be made rather than a prize to be won."

TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH IEP'S

- New Trier has great programs and staff for kids with IEPs and special needs simply because of the number of these students who go through the school. It's easy to feel overwhelmed for your child but your middle school social worker & study skills/special ed teacher will work closely with you each step of the way. The transition will be easier than you think. Just be sure to keep your student involved and keep it simple.
- Go to the meetings and discussion groups New Trier offers, especially for IEP & 504 students. These are invaluable and will allow you to meet special education instructors and staff.
- Choosing classes and class levels:
 - 1) Don't panic over the large size of the Program of Studies book which lists all the classes available at New Trier. Your school study skills/special ed teacher will help you choose the right classes for your student. Chances are the choices will be fairly limited depending on your student's disability. The equivalent of middle school Study Skills class is "Resource Seminar" at New Trier, and like Study Skills, it takes up one slot in your child's schedule, which limits how many other classes he/she can take.
 - 2) New Trier will have a meeting for parents about course selection, which may not be necessary to attend for kids with IEP's. Class levels are usually pretty clear for IEP students, limiting options for course selections. Again, your school study skills/special ed teacher will help you choose the right classes for your student.
 - 3) Transitioning to New Trier may cause high anxiety for some IEP kids. Consider making their first year easier by taking only 4 major classes and 1 minor class. Make the

minor class something your student enjoys like an art or media class. This will also leave time for a double period class in a subject your student may struggle with, or time for a study hall. One caveat: Level 2 offerings in core/required academics may be very slim in the summer, so you may need to plan for all of those to be taken over the course of the four regular school years at New Trier. Your child's Resource Teacher and Adviser will be able to help you plan a four-year course of studies that fulfills graduation requirements and meets your child's needs.

4) Modern & Classical Languages (Foreign Languages) - Believe it or not, Latin is a good course. It includes a good amount of memorization, but you don't have to learn to speak it. Also, level 2 Spanish is a fast-paced but fun, interactive class that can be good for students who had to forego foreign language in middle school to take Study Skills.

- If your student has any anxiety about attending New Trier, don't wait until August to visit. IEP students can even visit the campus with their Central School social worker or study skills teacher several times in the spring. Go a few times over the summer. If your student is comfortable, let them walk around the campus awhile with one or more friends. The New Trier Special Ed department also hosts a day before school begins where IEP students (and parents) can walk through their schedule with older IEP students acting as guides. And definitely have them attend the advisory get together before school begins.
- After school starts, your students' Resource Teacher will be your "Go To" person. She/he will be available by phone or email.

BUYING BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

- Students receive a mailing in early August with their class schedule and books list. Books can be purchased from New Trier or from any independent bookseller.
- Besides new books, you can also buy used books in good condition (limited number available on first come basis at NT) or even rent books via the NT website. Or use the ISBN number to buy new/used books on amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.
- If you volunteer to help at the New Trier book sale, you get 10% off your purchases. You can preorder your books online on the NT website for delivery or pickup (they'll preassemble your order and you get to avoid long and slow lines by using a separate checkout during book sale days).
- Your child should find out on the first day of school whether the teacher requires him to have his book in class every day. If so, you may want to consider buying a second copy of a particularly heavy book so he does not have to cart it back and forth daily. If not, he may want to keep all his books at home. If he has study halls, however, he may need use of books at school. If keeping books and supplies at school, keep in mind that there is typically not much time to get to lockers between classes. Some kids don't use their lockers at all and carry their day's books, supplies, and coat with them all day. Others only go to their lockers at the start and end of the day, and maybe during lunch.
- Other than books, only buy those school supply basics you know your child will use regardless, before the start of school. The first week of school, your child will find out from teachers any specific supplies they need and you can get those then. It is not uncommon for each teacher to require a separate binder, so a student with 5 majors can easily end up with 5 binders, rather than the large multi-subject Trapper system most middle schoolers use.

TRANSPORTATION

- Lots of Glencoe kids take the yellow bus to New Trier West freshman year as it's a nice way to reconnect with Glencoe friends, and it is extremely convenient. There is also a late "activities" bus available for those staying after school. Sign up arrives in the mail in

July. Another option is the Pace bus (#213), but its schedule to and from Northfield is limited. Note: Summer school takes place at New Trier East and is serviced by public train and bus.

- Kids start making friends from many different towns so logistics can be challenging. Teach your kids how to ride public buses and trains up and down the North line. It is very helpful and empowering (and will save you some driving!). Summer school is a good chance to practice public train and bus use.

COMMUNICATION

- If your child does not have a Facebook account, now might be the time to consider one. A lot of social plans and classwork collaborations, as well as homeroom and club communications, are done through Facebook. As always, though, know your child and whether a Facebook account is likely to be too big a distraction for him/her.
- Same as at Central, cell phones are allowed on the NT campus but must be off during the day. Don't plan to be able to reach your child during the day, unless you have an emergency that warrants a call to the school.

MORE PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Avoid long lines for student id photos by having the photo taken over the summer (during summer school). In addition to cash, it is also possible to provide lunch money for your student through the student ID. Funds are deposited online so the ID can be used as a debit card for purchases in the cafeteria (most students do this as it's more convenient than cash). Students cannot carry negative balances. If your child chooses to pack a lunch, keep in mind that it is not refrigerated (it is at Central) and that he/she will either have to carry it all morning or retrieve it from their locker during lunch period.
- Avoid extending family vacations into school days as it becomes much harder in high school to miss classes and catch up. If your child is going to be absent or late, email your child's adviser, who will inform the relevant teachers. If your child knows of a planned absence, they should talk to their teachers to find out what they will miss and how they can make up the work. In cases of extended illnesses, teachers are very understanding and helpful in helping complete missed work.