

# NT ranks 15th in Illinois in U.S News HS Report

Selective schools that allow AP classes for frosh/soph grab top spots

by Julia Nagel

In the 2019 U.S. News Best High Schools report released at the end of April, New Trier ranked 15th in Illinois and 307th nationally of the 17,245 public schools reviewed across the nation.

New Trier placed below some of its neighboring schools, such as Stevenson High School (No. 6) and Glenbrook North (No. 16), but above Glenbrook South (No. 24) and Evanston Township High School (No. 27) in the state rankings.

According to the US News website, “The 2019 Best High Schools rankings take a holistic approach to evaluating schools, looking at six factors: college readiness, reading and math proficiency, reading and math performance, underserved student performance, college curriculum breadth and graduation rates.”

Despite the US News’ claim that the report evaluates schools in a comprehensive manner, Winnetka Campus Principal Denise Dubravec believes the rankings don’t necessarily take into account

the bigger picture. For that reason, Dubravec said that parents and students should disregard this report and similar ones, or at the very least take them with a grain of salt.

“They give a flat, one-dimensional view of any one school. These rankings can be very misleading,” said Dubravec.

For example, Dubravec said one significant factor in determining the rankings is evaluating the number of students that participate and perform well in the College Board’s Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

However, because New Trier limits its AP classes to junior and senior students, she said this puts the school at a disadvantage in the rankings.

“We believe AP classes are not developmentally appropriate for freshmen and sophomores, and that under these rankings schools that place many kids in AP classes—whether they fail the AP tests or not—will rank above us because the most important measure the school’s percentage of students enrolled in AP classes. In the current ranking, some schools that are struggling to meet state standards are ranked above us, and others have far less success at passing AP tests.”

Director of Curriculum and Instruction at the Winnetka Campus, Chimille Dillard, agreed that the rankings aren’t necessarily an accurate representation of the school, but for a different reason.



New Trier prioritizes freshman and sophomore readiness over Advanced Placement classes. | New Trier

The top five schools in the Illinois rankings are all selective Chicago Public Schools, which Dillard said that due to their selective enrollment process, cannot necessarily be directly compared to New Trier.

“As a CPS selective enrollment alum, I am aware that students must test and apply to selective enrollment schools. Since they are not traditional ‘neighborhood’ schools (schools that allow all students that live in their neighborhood), only the top of the top students are admitted,” said Dillard.

According to Dubravec, the rankings also fail to consider qualitative data, meaning that the rankings don’t take into account some of the defining aspects of New

Trier.

Dubravec said that New Trier is exceptional due to its extensive extra-curricular opportunities, supportive and engaged parent community, and strong relationships between students and staff that make the environment of the school—despite its large number of students—seem small and personal.

Because the U.S. News rankings rely on quantitative data, none of these unique and important qualities can be considered.

Dubravec said that New Trier prioritizes providing the best possible education for its students above all else, and that the methods to achieve this goal might not always line up with what the reports or lists are looking for.

“We have a proven track record of successfully preparing students for rigorous college coursework, and our students attend college at a rate of 98 percent. Our post-graduate surveys show that our students overwhelmingly feel well-prepared for college courses, and college admissions officers across the country recognize New Trier as an exemplary high school.”

For this reason, Dubravec believes that the school should not, and will not, change its methodology in order to try to get the #1 ranking.

“We will not change our philosophy of individualized student curricular choices simply to get a higher rating on some list produced by a magazine or newspaper,” said Dubravec.

## High school traditions: NT vs the movies

Class rank and prom court not part of school culture

by Megan Reimer

Before you get to high school, your understanding of it is a fictionalized version drawn from TV, shows and films. One that includes the perfect prom, being crowned king or queen, the cheerleaders and the football players, and the graduation where all the caps are thrown into the air after the cathartic farewell speech is delivered.

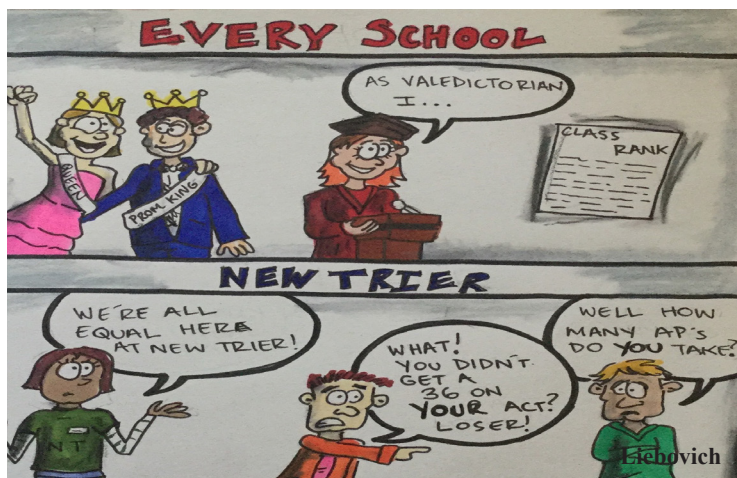
These iconic aspects of high school, such as a Prom King and Queen or a Valedictorian, have been notably missing at New Trier. With the absence of these acknowledgements, the question remains whether students have been held back from experiencing the “traditional high school experience”?

Sophomore Chloe Blesi doesn’t think so. “No, I don’t think we need a homecoming king or queen, or a valedictorian” Blesi said, “all of those things make this already-stressful environment even more stressful.”

During a high school graduation, the tradition of having a valedictorian means the student in the graduating class with the best academic achievements, gives a farewell speech to the class called a “valedictory.” The Valedictorian speech in a high school graduation has famously been portrayed in movies, and TV shows such as Legally Blonde, Gilmore Girls, and of course High School Musical 3.

“I’ve seen those speeches on TV and in movies, but I think it’s not really needed, because our class is so big it’s hard to pick out who should or should not be rewarded for their work in high school,” said senior Maggie Graves.

Denise Dubravec, the Principal of the Winnetka Campus, said “we



believe student accomplishments are broader than just grades, levels, and their ranking, and that there is more to an individual than a single indicator of their accomplishments.”

A Valedictorian requires the student to be first in their class. While New Trier has no such ranking system, there have been past systems put in place that attained this aspect of a class-ranking.

“In 2000 we stopped doing ranking and we went to a decile, but in 2008 we stopped doing the decile as well,” Dubravec said.

“Genuine student achievement is more important, and [the class rank] was unfairly affecting student’s prospects for acceptance to college.”

Dubravec continued, “Our students do so well nationally that if we narrow them through deciles and rankings, it would negatively affect them in admissions to certain colleges.”

While being awarded the role of Valedictorian is based on recognizing a person’s academics, Prom king and queen is a different type of recognition, recognition of “social” achievements. This high school tradition has been famously portrayed as well in pop culture.

Typically, the prom queen is chosen by voting ballots from fellow students, the prom queen is partnered with a prom king who is elected in

the same sort of process. According to CBS, this tradition originated in the late 1800s at universities to promote social etiquette and manners in each year’s graduating class.

Junior Mason Werner likes the idea of having a prom king and queen. “It’s sort of that thing that we all picture high school being like before we actually are in high school,” Werner said, “I think having a prom king and queen would make the dances a bit more exciting and memorable.”

New Trier hasn’t had any sort of homecoming or prom kings and queens, dating back to even the very first homecoming dance in the late 1930’s.

“We want everyone to feel special at New Trier, and it just feels wrong to isolate one or two individuals out of a school of 4,000,” said Dubravec.

New Trier’s long-running traditions and educational systems have carried on throughout the years, and while some may argue that a valedictorian or a prom king and Queen might make the experience more like High School Musical, according to the administration and some students, these traditions and acknowledgements would negatively affect the already hyper-competitiveness in New Trier.

## 67 seniors are awarded Seal of Biliteracy

Recognition will appear on diplomas and transcripts

by Eleanor Kaplan

Sixty-seven New Trier seniors are recent recipients of the Seal of Biliteracy, an award granted by the Illinois State Board of Education and given by New Trier High School’s Modern and Classical Languages Department in recognition and celebration of students who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English and one or more other languages.

Students demonstrate their language proficiency by earning an English score of 21 or higher on the ACT or a score of 4.8 on the ACCESS exam. Students can show proficiency in another language earning a 4 or a 5 on the AP (Advanced Placement) language exam or by taking a state approved test, such as the AAPPL (Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages) exam, and earning an Intermediate High or

Advanced score.

Learning another language prepares students to be citizens of the global community by developing an awareness and appreciation of other cultures. The process of learning to comprehend and communicate in another language develops insight into the nature of language, as well as connections to other disciplines. The Seal of Biliteracy builds upon the rich linguistic and cultural assets of the district and community, providing students with the necessary skills to be successful in college, career and life.

The Modern and Classical Languages Department is honored to recognize the following qualified New Trier seniors who demonstrated proficiency in more than one language.

Students who earned the Seal of Biliteracy will have their achievement acknowledged on both their diploma and transcripts. Seniors who qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy based on their AP exam in May 2019 will be awarded this honor in the fall.

