

TrueNorth 804 Reimagined

September 17, 2025

Overview

Topics We'll Be Covering

**Background on the Reorganization
Committee**

Solution Recommendation

Proposed Program Offerings

Proposed Service Offerings

**Financial Model, Governance
Structure and Staffing**

**Benefits of Reorganization
VS Dissolution**

Revisions to Articles of Agreement

Background: Reorganization Committee

Purpose: providing an alternative future to TrueNorth, other than the singular pathway of dissolution that aligns programs and services with the evolving needs of member districts. **This plan is one consolidated recommendation from the dissolution and reorganization committee to meet the needs of all member districts at this time.**

Process:

- Held meetings, surveys and feedback sessions with Superintendents and Directors of Special Education
- Examined governance models and financial structures that support long-term stability

Lessons Learned:

- Demand for a la carte services
- Program priorities to match district needs
- Importance of reestablishing trust, strengthening communication, and building a collaborative framework

Background: Dissolution/Reorganization Committees

Contributing Members of Dissolution/Reorganization Committees:

- Dr. John Deiter, Superintendent, Northbrook School District 27
- Dr. R.J. Gravel, Superintendent, Glenbrook High School District 225
- Dr. Chris Johnson, Deputy Superintendent, New Trier High School District 203
- Dr. Lisa Leali, Superintendent, Lake Bluff Elementary School District 65
- Ms. Heather Miehl, Director of Special Education, Northbrook School District 27
- Dr. Matthew Montgomery, Superintendent, Lake Forest Districts 67 and 115
- Dr. Jason Pearson, Superintendent, Northbrook School District 28
- Ms. Tracy Roehrick, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Lake Bluff School District 65
- Dr. Monica Schroeder, Deputy Superintendent, North Shore School District 112
- Dr. Catherine Wang, Superintendent, Glencoe District 35
- Admin at True North as needed

Reorganization Plan Highlights (TLDR)

**No
Membership
Fees**

**1
Therapeutic
Day School
Model**

**Restructure
d
Leadership,
Staffing and
Governance**

Recommendations

1. A single therapeutic day school is recommended to support students with significant social, emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental challenges. This setting will provide high-quality, unique academic instruction integrated with specific therapies, small class size, and highly specialized staff.
2. School districts currently contracting a full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position through TrueNorth **consider the option to transition** these individuals to employment within their own districts. TrueNorth will continue to provide contracted itinerant and specialized services to districts requiring less than a full-time allocation.
3. Access to contracted itinerant and specialized services will remain a direct benefit of cooperative membership, with **no financial obligation** unless a district chooses to utilize the services.
4. In lieu of a membership fee, districts will be charged tuition and service delivery fees that incorporate the total cost of providing the service.

Important Note

As part of this work, it was acknowledged that some member districts would likely continue to pursue withdrawal, and other member districts would remain in a smaller cooperative.

It is important to note that if many districts were to withdraw from TrueNorth, the programmatic recommendations might need to be reevaluated.

Milestones

September 17, 2025

- Present the reorganization plan to the Leadership Council with an overview of changes to the Articles of Agreement.

October 15, 2025

- Conduct the first reading of proposed changes to the Articles of Agreement, followed by a vote to waive the 60 day requirement for amending the articles.
- Provide any additional information on the reorganization plan as requested by member districts.
- Request that school districts formally declare their intent to either withdraw from the cooperative or adopt a resolution rescinding their intent to withdraw (by November 2025).

November 19, 2025

- Conduct the second reading of proposed changes to the Articles of Agreement, followed by a vote to adopt the changes.
- Announce each member district's final determination regarding withdrawal or continued membership in TrueNorth.
- Present a recommendation to the Leadership Council to adopt a resolution either reorganizing or dissolving the cooperative.

December 17, 2025

- The Leadership Council will take official action on the appropriate resolution.

January 2026

- The new Governing Board and Executive Committee meet for the first time.

Shift in Culture

While many of the programs and services families value will remain, TrueNorth is undergoing a significant shift in leadership structure and focus. The vision is to re-center our work so that a strong, unified culture permeates every classroom, keeping students at the heart of all decisions. This change ensures that the excellence of our programs is matched by a renewed focus on classroom practice and student outcomes. By doing so, TrueNorth can return to its role as a leader in innovation and service—not only within our member districts, but also across the region and the state.

Beginning with the 2026–27 school year:

- Prioritizing high-impact programs for students over ancillary professional development services.
- Focus on improved quality and student outcomes within the Therapeutic Day School.
- Building and utilizing deep expertise across every role in the organization.
- Adapt therapeutic approaches and mobilize support personnel to meet the evolving needs of each child across programs.
- A hands-on approach from all administrators to ensure quality outcomes, effective supervision, and strong support.

Reimagined Therapeutic Day School

TrueNorth is evolving from offering a multiple smaller therapeutic programs to establishing a high-quality therapeutic day school (TDS) serving students formerly in Arbor, NSAE, and NSA middle and high school programs.

Beginning with the 2026–27 school year:

- Highly structured and personalized learning environment to support students with complex learning profiles with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges
- A public TDS to support students eligible for special education in categories that include: learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, autism, other health impairments, etc.
- High-quality instruction and services designed to enhance student outcomes
- Student-centered coaching tailored to support learners in this specialized environment
- Collaborative, team-based teaching and support model implemented across campus
- Tuition includes related services and transportation coordination
- Shift away from a high number of 1:1 teaching assistants to program and classroom based staffing
- Transition services within TDS for students up to age 22 that require transition and vocational support
- Therapeutic Day Program housed in existing facilities on the TrueNorth campus
- Created for member districts, with non-member districts playing an essential role in strengthening and sustaining the program.

Proposed Programs

The tables that follow present a side-by-side comparison of the cooperative's current structure and the proposed revisions, informed by enrollment assumptions and feedback from member school districts.

	2025-26	2026-27 (New Financial Model - Tuition Only)
Transition Services	Status Quo	Sunsets on June 30, 2027
North Shore Academy - High School	Status Quo	Merge to 1 Therapeutic Day School (K-12, Transition)
North Shore Academy - Middle School	Status Quo	Merge to 1 Therapeutic Day School (K-12, Transition)
North Shore Academy - Elementary	Status Quo	Merge to 1 Therapeutic Day School (K-12, Transition)
Arbor Academy	Status Quo	Merge to 1 Therapeutic Day School (K-12, Transition)
Early Childhood	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Supported Learning Environment (SLE)	Sunsets on June 30, 2026	
Stand-Alone Extended School Year (ESY)	Sunsets on June 30, 2026	

Proposed Services

TrueNorth will continue to provide contracted itinerant and specialized services to districts as a direct benefit of cooperative membership, with no financial obligation unless a district chooses to utilize the services as long as that is less than a full-time allocation.

Beginning with the 2026–27 school year:

- School districts currently contracting a full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position through TrueNorth **consider the option to transition** these individuals to employment within their own districts.
- Services will be supervised by the Director of Programs and Services. This will be a restructured position with a new job description.
- Services will be contracted in block FTE increments with a **minimum two-year commitment**.
 - If a district no longer requires the service, it may transfer its contractual obligation to another district; otherwise, the district remains responsible for fulfilling the agreement.
- **TrueNorth will provide substitute coverage** and coordination at no additional cost when a contracted staff member is unable to fulfill their responsibilities.
- If a district develops a mid-year need, additional services will only be available if capacity exists within the staffing commitments established at the start of the year (e.g., a district contracted for 0.4 FTE but is only utilizing 0.2 FTE, leaving 0.2 FTE available for another district).
 - TrueNorth will no longer maintain staff for “just-in-case” needs.

Proposed Services

	2025-26	2026-27
Itinerant Services		
Adapted Physical Education	Sunsets on June 30, 2026	
Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Vision	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Nursing (Coordination and 1:1 Nurses)	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Psychologist	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Speech-Language Therapist	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts
Other Services		
LEA Staffing	Sunsets on June 30, 2026	
Professional Development and Coaching	Sunsets on June 30, 2026	
Stand-Alone Transportation Coordination	Status Quo	Continue to offer to Member Districts

Proposed Financial Model

Membership Fees

2025-26	2026-27
<p>The cooperative will maintain its current structure under FRED 4.0. Each member district will be responsible for an annual membership fee, which includes the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership Assessment• Professional Learning Assessment• Property, Plant, and Equipment (PPE) Charges <p>In addition, districts will be assessed an Operations and Maintenance Assessment, as outlined in the FRED 4.0 schedule. For the 2025-26 school year, this assessment totals \$800,000, which will be allocated proportionally across member districts.</p>	<p>In recognition of the cooperative's Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) allocation of \$2.5M from the Illinois State Board of Education, existing <u>TrueNorth members will no longer be assessed a membership fee as of the 2026-27 school year.</u></p> <p>All expenses of the cooperative not otherwise provided for through the utilization of the EBF allocation will be incorporated into tuition and service delivery fees.</p> <p>Should a new member be approved to join the cooperative, a one-time membership fee shall be assessed using a formula to be established by the Governing Board post reorganization.</p>

Proposed Financial Model

Tuition and Services

2025-26	2026-27
<p>Member districts will be charged tuition and/or service fees when they enroll students in TrueNorth programs or partner with TrueNorth to access itinerant, professional development, or other service offerings.</p> <p>Districts utilizing tuition-based services will receive a proportional Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) credit, calculated based on the number of students enrolled in TrueNorth programs.</p> <p>Non-member districts will be charged tuition and service fees, along with a non-member surcharge of 25%.</p>	<p>Member districts will be charged tuition and service delivery fees that incorporate the total cost of providing the service. This will include a \$2,000 allocation per student enrolled in a TN program for a Capital Projects fund.</p> <p>Projected tuition rate ranges are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC - \$55,000 (½ day) - \$85,000 (full day) • K-12 - \$85,000 - \$95,000 <p>(The Reorganization Committee is continuing to evaluate the number of classroom and one-on-one teacher assistants needed for each program, which will impact tuition rates.)</p> <p>This is in alignment with other public therapeutic day schools, and with the all-in costs of current TrueNorth costs.</p> <p>Member districts will have priority access to tuition-based programs and services.</p> <p>Annually, the Chief School Business Official will present a true-up analysis to evaluate how to address tuition revenues exceeding expenditures or when expenses exceed tuition revenue.</p> <p>Non-member districts that utilize tuition-based programs and services will be assessed a non-member surcharge of 25%.</p>

Potential Cost Saving Per District

The chart that follows demonstrates the financial comparison between the **current financial model** and the **proposed model**.

- The 2025-26 Total Costs include:
 - All membership fees;
 - 2024-25 or 2025-26 enrollment (whichever is highest), multiple by the 2025-26 rate.
 - The enrollment includes only NSA, NSAE, Arbor, EC Half Day, EC Full Day, EC Partnership, and 1:1 Teacher Assistants.
 - Related service costs have not been included as they are still under development.
- The proposed model costs include the enrollment numbers multiplied by the tentative new rates for a K-12 therapeutic day school and early childhood program.
- The goal is to reduce the likelihood of 1:1 teacher assistants in the long term, therefore, these costs are not included in the new model.

Potential Cost Saving Per District

District	FY26 Membership	Usage Costs*	Total FY26 Costs	FY26 Tentative New Model Costs	Difference
27	\$173,843	\$1,375,051	\$1,548,894	\$1,370,700	-\$178,194
28	\$231,880	\$1,286,625	\$1,518,505	\$972,900	-\$545,605
29	\$66,464	\$546,975	\$613,439	\$554,200	-\$59,239
30	\$161,561	\$854,049	\$1,015,610	\$867,900	-\$147,710
31	\$127,056	\$816,073	\$943,129	\$614,200	-\$328,929
34	\$550,936	\$0	\$550,936	\$0	-\$550,936
35	\$161,023	\$145,451	\$306,474	\$150,000	-\$156,474
36	\$231,895	\$1,437,367	\$1,669,262	\$1,722,000	\$52,738
38	\$59,974	\$92,573	\$152,547	\$123,400	-\$29,147
65	\$112,654	\$541,471	\$654,125	\$400,900	-\$253,225
67	\$212,386	\$178,550	\$390,936	\$126,000	-\$264,936
106	\$21,507	\$138,858	\$160,365	\$180,000	\$19,635
109	\$351,333	\$448,998	\$800,331	\$412,200	-\$388,131
112	\$469,743	\$1,418,297	\$1,888,040	\$1,174,500	-\$713,540
113	\$415,409	\$884,007	\$1,299,416	\$1,159,200	-\$140,216
115	\$182,681	\$372,342	\$555,023	\$421,200	-\$133,823
203	\$490,164	\$358,529	\$848,693	\$402,300	-\$446,393
225	\$669,917	\$221,706	\$891,623	\$215,100	-\$676,523

*Enrollment for **ONLY** NSA, NSAE, Arbor Academy, Early Childhood, and 1:1 TAs for either FY25 or FY26, whichever is *highest*

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Proposed Structure

District Office Administration

2025-26	2026-27
<p>TrueNorth will implement a local school district organizational structure that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superintendent• Assistant Superintendents	<p>TrueNorth will be re-organized to reflect a PreK-12 special education cooperative with a therapeutic school setting that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Director<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Serves as chief executive officer of True North○ Serves as the State-Approved Director of Special Education.○ Assist in providing technical assistance to local school districts.• Chief School Business Official• Director of Human Resources• Director of Programs and Services<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Supervise all service personnel.

Proposed Structure Governance Model

2025-26	2026-27
<p>TrueNorth is governed by an 18-member Governing Board, with one Board of Education member from each Member District.</p> <p>In addition to the Governing Board, an Advisory Committee will be established, which includes one Superintendent representing each of the three regions (e.g., Northern, Northfield Township, and New Trier).</p> <p>The Governing Board and Advisory Committee will collectively form the Leadership Council, which serves as the primary decision-making body of the organization.</p>	<p><u>Governing Board (Board of Education Members)</u></p> <p>In accordance with 105 ILCS 5/10-22.31, TrueNorth will be governed by a Governing Board, consisting of one Board of Education representative from each member district. The Governing Board will meet twice per year for the purposes of establishing an Executive Committee and ratifying any decisions of the Executive Committee that are required.</p> <p><u>Executive Committee (Superintendents)</u></p> <p>The <u>Executive Committee, consisting of the Superintendent for each member district</u>, will be established for the purposes of administering the joint agreement. This Committee shall serve as the primary decision-making body of the organization, and will consider additional oversight opportunities in terms of staffing, IEP development, and finance/facilities. The Executive Committee will meet a minimum of six times per year, focused solely on the business of the cooperative with a detailed agenda.</p> <p>There will not be a separate Finance Committee.</p> <p>If a Superintendent is unable to attend, they may send a student services administrator/director, but the designee will not have the ability to vote.</p> <p>Any amendments to the Articles of Agreement must receive $\frac{2}{3}$ approval of the Executive Committee.</p> <p><u>This governance change would take place in January 2026.</u></p>

Benefits of Maintaining Membership

For Students and Families

Priority Enrollment Access to High-Quality Programs Near Our Community

- K-12 Therapeutic Day School
- Early Childhood Programs

Access to Contracted Specialized Services with No Financial Obligation Without Use

- Itinerant and Related Services
- Flexible Staffing Model

Benefits of Maintaining Membership

District Finances

Financial Benefits

- Elimination of Membership Fees and Operations and Maintenance Assessments Beginning July 2026.
- Lower tuition and service rates compared to non-members (25% less).
- Access to the benefits of a \$2.5M EBF credit to support overhead expenses.
- Owner of a portion of the cooperative's assets.
- Tuition rates would increase (because all expenses are included), thus reimbursement rates would also increase.

Benefits of Maintaining Membership

Special Education Expertise

Special Education Technical Assistance to Districts

- Support and guidance in state reporting.
- Legislative updates and interpretations of special education laws.
- Collaboration and cooperation on current and emerging special education trends/topics.

Advocacy & Leadership in the field of Special Education

- A collective voice at the regional and state level in support of diverse learners.
- An organization that will provide opportunities for the development of future special education leaders, teachers, and service providers in the field of special education.

Benefits of Maintaining Membership

Oversight

Governance and Influence

- Each member district retains a seat on the Governing Board and the Executive Committee, ensuring direct input on decisions.
- Member superintendents and administrators play a majority role on the Executive Committee, shaping policy, programming, and fiscal priorities.
- Staffing and programming recommendations are being designed to balance quality with cost efficiency.

Negative Impact of Dissolution

For Student Services, Finances and Staffing

Student Services

- Seeking placement for students in local therapeutic settings, competing with higher demands.

Finances

- The Evidence-Based Funding allocation of \$2.5M that benefits all 18 member districts will be lost.
- The organization's liabilities will need to be paid in full. This includes pre-paid pension liabilities from IMRF and TRS.
- Assets must be sold or otherwise disposed of. At this time, there has been no demonstrated interest in purchasing TrueNorth's assets which face significant zoning restrictions.

Staffing

- Existing personnel may have access to positions in member districts, in accordance with provisions of the Illinois School Code.

Changes to Articles of Agreement

Guiding Principles for Changes to the Articles of Agreement

Financial

- Eliminate the obligation for withdrawing members to pay a portion of the organization's liabilities (e.g., pension system liabilities).
- Eliminate the right of withdrawing members to the organization's assets.
- Reimburse substantiated withdrawal expenses incurred by Glenview School District 34 for the audit previously required by the Articles of Agreement.
- Incorporate a financial model within the Articles of Agreement to eliminate the assessment of a membership fee or facility fee, with most expenditures assessed directly to program tuition.

Governance

- Adjusting the governance structures to establish a Governing Board of school board members, supported by an Executive Board composed of Superintendents.

Changes to Articles of Agreement

Throughout the Agreement

- Change “Superintendent” to “Executive Director”
- Change “Leadership Council” to the “Executive Committee”

Preamble

Article I. The Association

- A. Name
- D. Member Districts
 - 2. Rights and Responsibilities of Member Districts
 - Strike “Member Districts shall be obligated to provide a reasonable amount of classroom space for TrueNorth services as determined by the Leadership Council.”
 - Strike “Member Districts shall perform and provide such other services as determined by the Governing Board.”
 - Strike “Member Districts shall have one superintendent representing each of the three regions (Northern, Northfield Township and New Trier) of the TrueNorth and further defined in Section II.C.1.a on both the Leadership Council and Advisory Committee.”

Changes to Articles of Agreement

Article II. Organization and Function

- A. Governing Board
 - 2. Delegations
 - Update to reflect that, “the Governing Board delegates all its functions and authorities to the Executive Committee.”
 - 5. Meetings
 - Update to reflect a minimum of two (2) meetings a year.
- B. Leadership Council
 - Change all references to the “Leadership Council” to the “Executive Committee”
 - Remove the requirements for the Governing Board to meet with the Executive Committee.
- C. Advisory Committee
 - Strike section.
- D. Nominating Committee
 - Strike section.

Changes to Articles of Agreement

Article III. Finances

- B. Administrative and Program Costs
 - 1. Administrative Costs
 - Revise to reflect that administrative costs shall be paid for through the EBF allocation, or through allocation to tuition-based programs and service fees.
- D. Facility Project and Financing
 - Revise to reflect that any need for financing capital projects shall be funded through an increase to tuition-based programs and service fees.

Article IV. The Superintendent

- A. Employment
 - Revise to reflect “Executive Director”, to be recommended by the “Executive Committee.”
- B. Duties
 - Revise to reflect “Executive Director”, to be recommended by the “Executive Committee.”

Changes to Articles of Agreement

Article V. Accounting Upon Withdrawal or Removal (For Termination Effective Prior to January 1, 2009)

- Strike section, and house in an appendix.

Article VI. Voluntary and Involuntary Termination of Membership

- Revise section title to “Termination of Membership”
- A. Voluntary Withdrawal by Member Districts
 - Wholly revise to point directly to statute.
- C. Accounting Upon Voluntary Withdrawal or Involuntary Removal of Membership
 - Revise to reflect the following:
 - A withdrawing member is not required to pay a portion of the organization’s liabilities (e.g., pension system liabilities).
 - A withdrawing member does not retain property ownership rights to the organization's assets.

Article IX. Amendments

- A. Procedure
- B. Vote

Acknowledgement

For TrueNorth Staff and Leadership

These changes are happening at a time where we are asking you to process the reimagination of the purpose of the cooperative while serving students.

- A reduction in force of approximately 50% of staff and administration over the next two years.
- A significant reduction and change in administrative structure.
- Existing job descriptions, titles, and responsibilities may change.
- Support for those who will be seeking new jobs will be available.
 - Up to date information on posting of vacancies within member districts.
 - Coordinated letters of recommendations for those in need.
 - Support from member HR departments in a coordinated manner to review resumes and cover letters.
 - Host a local job fair for TrueNorth employees with member districts.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to any one who needs supports.

Next Steps

October 15, 2025

- Conduct the first reading of proposed changes to the Articles of Agreement.
- Provide any additional information on the reorganization plan as requested by member districts.
- Request that school districts formally declare their intent to either withdraw from the cooperative or adopt a resolution rescinding their intent to withdraw (by November 2025).

November 19, 2025

- Conduct a second reading of proposed changes to the Articles of Agreement, followed by a vote and approval to waive the 60 day timeline for amending Articles.
- Announce each member district's final determination regarding withdrawal or continued membership in TrueNorth.
- Present a recommendation to the Leadership Council to adopt a resolution either reorganizing or dissolving the cooperative.

December 17, 2025

- The Leadership Council will take official action on the appropriate resolution.

January 2026

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Questions?