

Information Packet

For Public Distribution

For the

June 9, 2010

Board of Education Meeting



Ann Arbor Public Schools

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Todd Roberts, Ed.D.

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MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education Trustees
From: Todd Roberts *TR*
Date: June 4, 2010
Subject: Information Update

I wanted to bring to your attention that we have an Executive Session for the purpose of Negotiations and Attorney Client Privilege scheduled for Wednesday at 5:30 PM prior to the regular Board meeting.

High School Update

On the agenda for Wednesday's meeting is an update on Skyline High School. We also have an update on Huron and Pioneer scheduled for the June 23rd meeting. A memo from Joyce Hunter is included in the Blue Book that provides an outline of the topic to be covered. Essentially, Sulura Jackson and Skyline staff will provide an update on the Skyline implementation heading into the school's third year of operation. They will also report on the implementation of the magnet programs after their first year in operation, which was this current school year.

On June 23rd, staff from Huron and Pioneer will discuss the impact of becoming smaller on their schools and the transition planning that they have been doing as they have been reducing students and staff. They will also report on the impact and changes to the academic program that have resulted from implementing the new high school graduation requirements. The report will also go over the results from the climate surveys that Huron and Pioneer conducted this spring.

Food Service Contract Renewal

On the agenda for first briefing at Wednesday's meeting is the annual renewal option for our food service contract. Included in the Blue Book is a memo from Robert Allen explaining the annual renewal and the recommendation to renew the contract for the 2010-2011 school year.

If you have any questions please let me know.

Schools of Choice Enrollment

Included in the Information Packet in Tab 1 is a spreadsheet showing the enrollment totals for Schools of Choice. As you can see we have 94 students in total who have accepted enrollment. The spreadsheet shows the enrollment by grade and the district from which the student is coming. We are inquiring with the state to determine if we can open a second window to take applications in August when we open the window again for in-district space available transfers. I will let you know if the state allows us to open a second window.

Retirement Update

Based on the state retirement incentive we currently have a little over 80 retirements. By the end of next week we will likely be close to 90. The end of today (6/4) is the final day for employees to file for retirement extensions. I expect that we will have approximately 30 requests. We will make decisions about extensions on Monday, 6/7.

I also want to let you know that Larry Simpson and Bernice Fluker both retired as of June 1st. Both were planning to retire and chose to retire by June 1st in order to not be a part of the new state retirement guidelines that take effect July 1st. Since Larry and Bernice are no longer working, any questions or issues regarding special education will be addressed as follows:

- elementary to Sandy Bromley
- middle school to Bill Harris
- high school to Cassandra Benion.

We will be posting for the Administrator for SISS position next week. Our goal is to have this position filled in August. Part of our budget reductions included eliminating an assistant director position so we will not be filling Benice's position.

Also, as I wrote to you about in an earlier packet, I am appointing Jazz Parks as the principal at Tappan and Rick Weiler as the assistant principal. Both served in these roles in interim capacities this year and did a very good job. I have included a copy of the letter that went out to Tappan families on Friday (6/4) afternoon in the Information Packet (Tab 2).

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**Schools of Choice Approved Applications
Feeder District Data
June 2010**

District of Residence	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 6	Total
Dexter	1	0	0	1
Lincoln	17	11	6	34
Milan	3	1	0	4
Saline	0	2	1	3
Whitmore Lake	3	1	0	4
Willow Run	9	5	3	17
Ypsilanti	14	7	10	31
TOTAL	47	27	20	94



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June 3, 2010

Dear Tappan Families:

I am writing to inform you that Mrs. Jazz Parks is being appointed as the principal at Tappan and Mr. Rick Weiler is being appointed as the assistant principal. Mrs. Parks and Mr. Weiler have done a very good job this year while serving as interim principal and assistant principal. They have done an excellent job of working with staff and parents to insure that students at Tappan have had a successful school year. Their familiarity with staff and students provided for a calm and productive school year in spite of many challenges we have faced over the course of the year. I believe that Mrs. Parks and Mr. Weiler are an effective administrative team capable of providing high quality leadership for Tappan in the coming years.

Mrs. Parks is in her third year at Tappan as an administrator. Prior to serving as assistant principal at Tappan this year, Mr. Weiler taught at Tappan for 14 years. Mrs. Parks and Mr. Weiler are both excited about the opportunity to continue providing leadership for Tappan. Over the next few weeks, Mrs. Parks and Mr. Weiler will be available after school if you would like to visit the school to speak with them.

I am very pleased that Mrs. Parks and Mr. Weiler will continue as the leadership team at Tappan and I look forward to the two of them continuing to work with staff, parents and students to provide an outstanding learning environment for students.

Please give me a call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Todd Roberts

Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education meeting (May 26, 2010): Though no one took the opportunity to speak during the public budget hearing, the board formally considered the proposed 2010-11 school budget and accompanying millage rates, with final approval expected at a meeting in June.



AAPS board member Christine Stead at the May 26 board meeting. (Photo by the writer.)

Concerns about state school aid funding emerged throughout the budget discussion, as well as during the rest of the meeting.

In its business for the evening, superintendent Todd Roberts sought input from the board on granting 32 retirement extensions. Four sinking fund projects were approved as part of an extensive consent agenda. A new textbook was suggested for AP biology.

And multiple awards were presented to both AAPS staff and students.

2010-11 Budget and Millage Renewal

Robert Allen, deputy superintendent of operations for AAPS, presented a summarized version of the 1/2-inch thick, line-item budget available for public review at the board office. He described it as very similar to what had been presented in draft form to the board in March, with only slight adjustments based on board input and shifts in accounting regarding American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.

In a review of the March presentation, Allen discussed how AAPS is funded, stressing how frustrating it is to work with such uncertainty in the state budget. "Our next fiscal year begins July 1," he said, "and today, May 26th, we still don't have funding set for this year that's almost over."

The budget as reviewed on Wednesday included both Part 1, which reduces staff by 82.2 FTEs, and Part 2, which reduces it by an 42 additional FTEs. Together, the two parts of the proposed budget will save the district over \$20 million.

Allen noted that Part 2 will only come into play if AAPS is unable to get specific concessions from the teacher's union, or if the anticipated foundation allowance from the state changes. He held the state specifically accountable for the budget cuts, pointing out the "simple math" that expenditures continue to rise at 5-6% per year, while school funding from the state has

grown only 1.3% per year on average since 1994.

2011-11 Budget: Public Commentary

There was one public comment on the budget, which came during general comment time, not during the public hearing on the budget. **Priya Menon**, a Skyline High School student, expressed concern about the possibility of inconsistent counseling being offered to Skyline students if the pink-slipped counselors there are not called back. She argued that getting all new counselors next year would put this year's sophomores at a disadvantage when applying for colleges, because the new counselors would not know the students well enough to aid them in finding their "best fit" colleges. Menon asked the board to take that into consideration.

Questions and discussion among board members on the budget centered on two themes – the three-year budget projections that were part of Allen's report, and budgeting as part of the strategic planning process.

2011-11 Budget: Three-Year Budget Projections

The proposed budget as presented by Allen contained a slide enumerating the three-year projected budget for AAPS. The most notable line was the rapidly diminishing fund equity balance, closing at \$20 million in 2010-11, \$9 million in 2011-12, and showing a deficit of \$4.8 million in 2012-13. Allen noted that these numbers are "very rough."

Andy Thomas acknowledged that though the numbers were only an estimate, they were "very disturbing." Saying that in a year, the board would be back in this same room, looking at another \$12-15 million budget deficit, he argued, "... we have to look out farther than a year." Allen concurred, quoting teachers' union president Brit Satchwell: "You can't cut your way out of a structural deficit."

Christine Stead noted that a recent report highlighted the potential for the U.S. to experience a "double dip" recession, which would impact Michigan. Noting that the board could have even bigger challenges ahead, with fund equity becoming even more important, Stead concluded, "We need to plan for the worst." She also mentioned that Michigan spends more on prisons than on education. Spending 50% less on education since 1994 cannot ensure sustainability, she said. She suggested that education funding in Michigan needs to shift from supporting manufacturing to supporting a wider knowledge base.

2011-11 Budget: Part of Strategic Planning Process

The board engaged in a somewhat spirited discussion about the ideal timing of the district's strategic planning process. Trustees Thomas and Susan Baskett were in favor of reconvening the strategic planning teams as soon as possible, but Stead, Irene Patalan, and Glenn Nelson argued that it should not start until fall.

Superintendent Todd Roberts began the discussion by saying the strategic planning process would be reconvened in late August or early September, when "people are back and ready to be engaged." Baskett suggested that some planning teams start earlier, noting that not everyone goes away for the summer. Thomas added, "How are we going to handle the 2011-12 deficit? ... I don't see how you can separate the strategic plan from the budget plan."

Baskett also pointed out that the fall is a very busy time for families with school starting, and then soon after that it's the holiday season. She noted that she thought the strategic planning teams were supposed to reconvene in May, so she was a little surprised by the delay. She agreed with Thomas that the strategic plan and budget plan cannot be "divorced" from each other.

In addition to noting that "July is not a good month in all of our experience," Roberts based his objection to starting sooner in the practical concerns regarding the extensive workload he and his administrators face this summer regarding staffing. "We have so much to do in June," he said, "that I don't think we have the resources to have an effective process."

Thomas pressed on: "I recognize that this will be a stressful summer. I'm just suggesting that the more of a head start we have, the better." Roberts eventually assented, saying he would look into the feasibility of starting in July, but that it might not be possible.

Stead mentioned that strategic planning was what led her to join the board, and said she believed there were important reasons to defer to Roberts' judgment about the available level of staff leadership and engagement. With the large amount

of change occurring, Stead argued, she would prefer the administration devote its full attention to staffing over the summer. In addition, she said, by fall, not only will staffing be set, but there will be fewer unknowns coming from the state.

Patalan concurred with Stead, saying, "The community expects the administration to do a good job getting the school year up and running." Nelson added that he also respected Roberts' judgment, and that opening the schools in the fall successfully was important to setting the tone for the year.

2011-11 Budget: Public Hearing

Before opening the floor to public comments, a few board members made closing comments on the budget. Patalan commended Roberts and Allen for the work they did on the budget, and noted that the AAPS student count has remained relatively consistent compared to the rest of Michigan.

Thomas also complimented Roberts and Allen, but noted that the budget did contain some "aggressive assumptions," such as anticipating filling all the School of Choice slots for next year. He suggested maintaining fund equity as high as possible to deal with possible unmet enrollment targets.

Deb Mexicotte and Nelson commented on elements of the budget beyond AAPS control. Mexicotte called the mandated increases in retirement contributions – 3% more by employees, and 2.47% more by employers – costs that were "passed along to districts and state employees." Nelson mentioned that the state is actively considering moving the community college budget into the K-12 school aid budget. He called this strategy "taking from the right hand and giving to the left." He urged the public to contact their legislators to tell them not to move other expenses into the school aid fund.

Mexicotte then asked Amy Osinski, the board secretary, to open the public hearing, and she did. But no one from the community was there to speak. After closing the hearing, Mexicotte added that public input was welcome in any other format, and that a public hearing, even if it is required by law, is not always the best venue for the community to offer its voice.

2011-11 Budget: Millage Renewal

There are four active millages currently being levied on AAPS school district residents. Each year, the millage rates are set based on taxable value of homesteads, as well as truth-in-budgeting legislation. They need to be approved by the AAPS board before they can be submitted to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. Allen requested that the board approve the following 2010 tax millages for AAPS: Homestead, 4.5344 mills; Non-Homestead, 18 mills; Debt Service (from the Bond projects), 2.1226 mills; and Sinking Fund, 0.5 mills.

There were no questions from the board on the millage renewal.

The 2010-11 budget, as well as the millage renewal, were first briefing items, and will come back to the board for a vote at a regular meeting in June.

State Retirement Reform and Extensions

During the budget report, Robert Allen noted that the state retirement reform signed into law May 19 could still have a significant impact on the 2010-11 budget if numerous employees choose to sign up before the June 11 incentive deadline. Employees of the Michigan Public Schools Employees Retirement System (MPERS) who are eligible and choose to retire before June 11 will receive a significant increase in their monthly pension due to an increase in part of the formula from 1.5% to 1.6%. Another major element of the legislation raises non-retiring employees' contributions to MPERS by 3%.

Superintendent Todd Roberts explained in an information item to the board that AAPS has been given 32 extensions by the state, which the district can grant if it chooses to do so. These extensions would allow an employee to commit to retiring, but be able to work for one additional year before doing so. Having received no guidance from the state about how these extensions should be granted, Roberts said, he had requested information from neighboring districts.

The exact process for how the extensions would be selected is still being developed, Roberts said, but the district has decided to allow extensions only for positions which would be difficult to fill if left open at the end of this year. The other restriction will be that no extensions will be granted for positions for which current employees have been given lay-off notices.

Roberts asked if the board had any concerns about moving forward with that plan, since the district would need to get a memo out to employees soon regarding the process. It is being suggested, he said, that teachers would need to express an interest in the extension by June 4, with the district selecting who will be granted a retirement extension by June 7, so that employees would be able to file retirement paperwork by June 11. Roberts noted that the suggested timeline would allow employees to know whether or not they would be granted an extension before they commit to retiring.

Lastly, Roberts noted that knowing these retirements are coming ahead of time would be helpful with next year's planning and the 2011-12 budgeting process.

Many board members gave statements in support of the AAPS plan regarding the extensions. Irene Patalan called the extensions "our insurance policy," and appreciated being able to slow the transition of too many employees retiring at once. Glenn Nelson reiterated his concerns about the fiscal year 2012 budget, saying he supports the philosophy of preserving any possible flexibility one year from now. Christine Stead called the plan very fiscally responsible and Simone Lightfoot concurred.

Andy Thomas approved of the fairly restricted use of the retirement extension option, and said that he did not want to give extensions out as a "perk." Deb Mexicotte confirmed for Roberts that the board seemed to offer "general assent in the direction you're heading."

Roberts confirmed that the language in the memo makes clear that the offer is contingent on the restrictions he outlined above.

Lightfoot asked how the retirement legislation has affected the number of retirement applicants in the district, and if this will cause any changes in the number of teachers laid off. Roberts answered that the number of retirements is slowly rising, and that the board will have a good idea by the end of next week how many there will be. He noted that these retirements may help reduce the number of layoffs necessary, but added that not all of the retirees will be teachers, and that if AAPS has many principals retire, it could be problematic to fill those positions quickly.

Thurston Paving Project and Other Second Briefing Items

During public commentary, **Kathy Griswold** argued that proper process was not followed in terms of including public input in planning for the upgrades to the Thurston Elementary School parking lot. She mentioned how a similar driveway set-up proposed to the community near King Elementary was rejected, and asked why a driveway plan that's not good enough for King school was good enough for Thurston.

As part of a second briefing on proposed facilities projects, trustee Susan Baskett asked Randy Trent, the district's executive director of physical properties, how he would address the concerns brought by Griswold during public commentary. Trent reported that a certified traffic engineer had approved the design, and asserted that the design had been reviewed with the public at least four times. Baskett confirmed again, "So, these [designs] were reviewed and supported by the Thurston community?" Trent answered, "Yes."

Christine Stead added that when the planning committee was briefed on the paving projects, Thurston's public involvement came across as an asset. Irene Patalan concurred, saying she appreciated how Trent always includes the local community in the projects he leads. Trent added that having a certified traffic engineer approve the plans protects the district, and that he hopes to continue working with each community.

None of the other second briefing items were discussed by the board at this meeting. They included three facilities improvements, in addition to the paving project, to be funded from the 2010 sinking fund: roof replacements, ADA site improvements, and an energy conservation program. Additional second briefing items included: the third quarter financial report, the WISD budget, and updates to board policy, all of which were presented at the last regular board meeting on May 12.

Consent Agenda Approved

In the only vote of the night, trustees approved a lengthy consent agenda. It contained all the second briefing items mentioned above, as well as gift offers, and approvals of minutes. The consent agenda was moved by Stead, and seconded by Patalan.

Outcome: The consent agenda was unanimously approved by trustees Nelson, Mexicotte, Lightfoot, Patalan, Stead, Baskett, and Thomas.

New AP Biology Textbook Sought

Joyce Hunter, administrator for middle and high school education, presented a proposal to purchase new textbooks for high school advanced placement (AP) biology classes, a college course taught in 12th grade. Citing the rationale that the College Board requires textbooks not to be more than eight years old, and noting that the books currently used will be eight years old next year, Hunter recommended purchasing 175 books (and accompanying teacher materials) at a total cost of \$23,094. This will be enough, she said, to cover a third AP biology class when materials are redistributed to Skyline High School as 12th grade is added there.

Hunter also explained the process used to select a new textbook, including review and rating of books under consideration by a committee of teachers. In response to a question from Glenn Nelson regarding the necessity of updating materials, Hunter introduced Dolores Kingston, a zoologist who teaches AP biology at Pioneer.

Nelson had asked for comment on whether AAPS would have wanted to purchase a new book for this class soon anyway, even if it was not required by the College Board. Kingston responded, "It's absolutely necessary that we keep up." She cited recent advances in molecular biology as having a big impact on that section of the revised book, and noted that, "When the AP Board makes its test, it makes it on current data." Saying he felt reassured, Nelson said he felt good about spending money on the textbooks.

Christine Stead supported the new book, mentioning that she holds a degree in cellular and molecular biology from the University of Michigan, and can attest to how quickly knowledge changes in that field.

Irene Patalan noted that the recommended textbook is a 2008 edition, and asked when the 2009 edition was expected to come out. Susan Baskett also questioned whether AAPS is required to use a textbook, as opposed to web sites and other resources. Kingston responded that the 2009 edition will not be out until the middle of next school year at the earliest. On a blog she follows written by AP biology teachers, she reported that some of them have tried teaching without textbooks and it has not gone well. Kingston pointed to the stellar illustrations as a large asset of the recommended textbook.

Deb Mexicotte requested that Hunter have a copy of the textbook available for public review at the Balas administration building, 2555 S. State St., if requested. The board will vote on approving the new AP biology textbook in June.

Transportation: Public Commentary

The district is still in negotiations with the AAPS transportation workers' union, as well as in discussion with the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) regarding possible countywide consolidation of transportation services. Two bus drivers spoke out against the WISD consolidation plan during the meeting's public commentary.

Richard Miller pointed out that consolidation is only possible because workers' salaries decrease while their health insurance costs increase. He noted that if AAPS joins the WISD plan, workers would be fired and could reapply without regard to seniority. Calling the WISD plan "illogical," and "a clumsy and doomed design," Miller concluded: "What a mess we have in store."

Chai Montgomery echoed Miller's concerns and argued that consolidation works a lot like privatization, and that drivers and aides have not been included in the consolidation planning. He noted that the drastic reduction in wages, hours, and overall jobs could result in high turnover and unsafe driving. Montgomery also pointed out that it's not clear if WISD could outsource if they "won the bid."

He requested that if the board does choose to go through with consolidation, that it be done as a transfer of workers, not a re-hire, and that seniority and accumulated sick time be preserved. Lastly, Montgomery pointed out that if workers are fired and rehired, the recently passed changes to the state retirement system would cause them to be reclassified into a different, and lesser, retirement plan.

Kathy Griswold also addressed the board regarding transportation issues from the perspective of the Transportation Safety Committee (TSC), on which she serves. The TSC is made up of representatives from AAPS, the city of Ann Arbor, nearby townships, and the Washtenaw County Road Commission. In addition to raising questions about the Thurston

paving project, discussed above, Griswold advocated for moving the crosswalk in front of King Elementary School from its mid-block location to a four-way stop. She noted that there was broad support for the move from the King community. She posed two specific requests to the board: 1) that the board and superintendent send a letter to the city of Ann Arbor requesting the crosswalk be moved, and 2) that a comprehensive, outside analysis be done of the districts' school walk zones.

Association Reports

For the first time this calendar year, the board received a report from the Black Parents Student Support Group (BPSSG). It also heard from the Youth Senate, the Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee on Special Education (AAPAC), and the Ann Arbor Education Association (AAEA). The Parent-Teacher-Organization Council (PTOC), and the Ann Arbor Administrators Association (AAAA) did not report at this meeting.

BPSSG Report

Chairperson Sylvia Nesmith reported to the board on the activities of the Black Parents' Student Support Group (BPSSG). After a brief review of the group's activities from earlier in the year, Nesmith commented on the recent issues at Dicken Elementary leading to the disbanding of its African-American Lunch Bunch program. She said the BPSSG appreciated the supportive statements that came from the board and the administration, but that everyone needs to take the dignity of children into account when discussing the situation. Nesmith registered BPSSG's concern at the quality of African-American curricular enhancements, and noted that local Black history was not included in the Ann Arbor local history curriculum used in the district.

Nesmith reported that the BPSSG is also concerned that the cost-sharing of athletic fees (part of the 2010-11 budget proposal) will lead to "elitist" athletics. She told the board that some parents were struggling, even though they do not qualify for free and reduced lunch. Nesmith cited the transportation requirement, which requires families to transport students to and from athletic events instead of using district transportation, as a hardship for many parents.

Lastly, Nesmith said that the problem resolution and group dynamics pieces of the middle school planning centers, as they were originally intended, were very important. The planning centers are set to be cut completely out of next year's budget, but Nesmith suggested phasing out the centers while instituting the positive behavior support approach. The BPSSG, she said, would be submitting some suggestions on the planning center phase-out, as well as the reconfiguration of the program at Dicken and similar student support groups. Nesmith closed by thanking Susan Baskett and Todd Roberts for their support.

Youth Senate Report

Nikila Lakshmanan gave the district update from the Youth Senate, which ended its year of work on May 16. The Senate thanked everyone who supported its recent walkathon and picnic to raise money for its Fight Poverty in Africa initiative. Following Lakshmanan's report, two senior youth senators made statements to the board.

Abraham Liddell spoke with gratitude of the Achievement Solutions Team (AST), a project of the Youth Senate sponsored by the Youth Empowerment Project. Saying he could rely on them whenever there was a need, Liddell later became a peer coach for the AST. Though he comes from a family with only a handful of college graduates, Liddell said, he will attend the University of Michigan in the fall.

Keo Robin credited the senate's opportunities and support with getting him through high school, thanking two teachers in particular – Millicent Fisher, who taught him in third grade, and Susan Washabaugh, who taught his AP chemistry class. However he said, the system isn't perfect, and argued that, "We do not necessarily lack the academic support resources needed for widespread student success in this district; but rather, we need to work on the methods of implementation we use to make these resources available." Robin suggested that the board look at research from other schools on closing the achievement gap, as well as seeking solutions through the Youth Senate's "Leap the Gap" research and pilot of ASTs.

AAPAC Report

Kathy Grijalva reported for the Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee on Special Education. She spoke of the services that were offered to her special needs son, including a positive experience with the bus drivers who transported her son for

learning in a self-contained classroom. She expressed concern about the consolidation of some self-contained special needs classrooms, but recognized the benefits to the district of moving forward with such plans.

Lastly, Grijalva expressed regret at the retirement of Larry Simpson, administrator for student intervention and support services, noting that there have been five administrators of special education in 13 years, with Larry Simpson's four-year tenure being the longest. She credited Simpson with establishing the elementary community classrooms, and the core behavior support team, as well as developing the Teaching and Learning Camp for Extended School Year services, a summer program for special needs students. Grijalva thanked Simpson for taking to heart and genuinely championing the interests of students receiving special education services and wished him the best in his retirement.

One public commenter also spoke about inclusion of special needs students. **Joanne Darr**, of the Washtenaw Association for Community Advocacy, addressed the board about inclusion. She told the board she has a hard time understanding why inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms is not more prevalent in the district. She pointed out that often, at mediations or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings regarding the placement of special education students, inclusion is often not suggested, and placing students in self-contained classrooms seems to be preferred.

Darr asked her son, Alex, a special needs student in the district, to speak to the board about what he had learned during his school's "Reality Day." Alex spoke briefly about the duties of law enforcement officials when performing body searches, and Darr used his comments to illustrate how much more she feels her son is getting out of his education by being mainstreamed instead of taught separately in a self-contained classroom. She closed by saying that she hopes the board looks more thoroughly into "universal design."

Ann Arbor Education Association Report

Brit Satchwell, president of the teachers' union, began his report by characterizing anything the district does in terms of budget cuts as nothing more than "coping mechanisms." He reviewed the speakers who had attended the Michigan Education Association rally earlier that week, and thanked the district for allowing the AAEA to hold the meeting at the Skyline High stadium, as well as Skyline's administration for its support. Satchwell urged all members of the AAPS community to continue to find "common cause," and rallied, "If we don't look to the source of the problem and try to solve it, shame on us."

Satchwell also encouraged everyone "to have a landslide victory of the millage vote in your own house," by donating to the AAPS Education Foundation whatever amount they would have been levied had last fall's millage passed. "You don't have to take that 'no' for an answer," he challenged. "You have your own 'yes' in your pocket – in your wallet."

Lastly, Satchwell noted that the teaching staff will step up to shoulder the burden, but maintained his goal of rescinding all 191 lay-off notices. Satchwell encouraged everyone to hold out hope, as the teachers' union and AAPS bargaining teams continue to work out a contract.

Awards and Accolades

The board devotes time at each meeting to reflect on positive accomplishments in the district, and honor those people who go above and beyond their calls of duty.

Pioneer Omega Yearbook Award

The Pioneer High School yearbook, entitled the Omega, won a National Gallery of Excellence award from the Walsworth Publishing Company. Walsworth's Michigan representative, Nora Guiney, was on hand to present the award to yearbook staff, and described the Omega as representative of the best yearbooks in the country.

Susan Baskett expressed pride that the publishing company recognized the students' work. "As a former editor-in-chief of the Omega," she said, "the lessons I learned ... are still with me." Todd Roberts recalled his four years as yearbook advisor while an English teacher in North Carolina, noting, "We never won any awards." Then, he leaned over and said something to Deb Mexicotte, who reported, "Dr. Roberts just told me that being superintendent is not as hard as being yearbook advisor."

Glenn Nelson added that he knew right where his yearbook was on his shelf, and commended the Omega staff: "What you are creating ... really is something very lasting and meaningful."

Envision Michigan Scholarships

State Rep. Rebekah Warren presented three students each with a \$500 scholarship from her Envision Michigan fund. Warren spoke to the board and public, saying she has maintained her commitment to the strong public education system since taking office in 2006. Students who received awards were: David Shapiro and Sarah Juster from Pioneer, and Ramona Mladin from Huron. In the fall, Shapiro will attend UM, Juster will attend Yale, and Mladin will attend Wayne State University.

Celebration of Excellence Awards

The last two Celebration of Excellence awards of the school year were given at this meeting – the first to Sandra Maconochie, a music teacher at Tappan, and the second to Pat Butler, a custodian at Northside.

Andy Thomas presented Maconochie with her award, noting that she started one of the first middle school jazz bands in the district, among many accomplishments during her more than 26 years with the district. Thomas read comments from a parent who touted her child's experience in Maconochie's jazz band as "the highlight of [his] school experience." A former student said that playing in Maconochie's programs "absolutely laid the foundation for my future as a professional musician."

Maconochie came to the podium, and accepted the award on behalf of not only herself, but also shared it with AAPS students, families, district music staff, and Tappan music staff. Saying she was grateful for the opportunity to have worked with students and shared her love of music with them, Maconochie said, "I have had the best gig in town!"

After Maconochie received her award, Martine Perreault, co-chair of the PTOC, announced that a scholarship fund had been established in her name through the AAPS Educational Foundation. All are welcome to contribute.

Then, Pat Butler was presented with her award, read by Irene Patalan. Patalan noted that Northside staff commended Butler for having "one of the best work ethics of anyone we know." She was honored for her positive attitude, cheerfulness, and friendliness. A Northside teacher said of Butler's work, "She treats it as if it's a personal mission, and ... I don't think I have ever seen her without a smile."

Butler spoke briefly after accepting her award, making a "shout out to the 500 wing, and the pretty lady – she rocks!"

Superintendent's Report

Among many notable accomplishments, Todd Roberts thanked all retirees for their years of service to the district. He also noted many scholarships and individual awards received by AAPS students this year, including the receipt of Kiwanis scholarship money by Stone School for the first time. In addition, he said, 21 Stone students received scholarships to attend Washtenaw Community College. Roberts congratulated the Pioneer Regatta winners, and the Pioneer concert band and director for winning awards.

Clague Orchestra Special Presentation

A subset of the strings orchestra of Clague Middle School performed two pieces at the start of the meeting, under the direction of Abby Alwin. Board members were very supportive and thanked the students for their hard work and stellar performance.

Items from the Board

Christine Stead acknowledged having attended the May 24 MEA-sponsored rally for education funding, and noted that it was good to see the common awareness of the need for securing stable school funding from the state.

Andy Thomas invited everyone to attend the naming ceremony for the Tappan gym for Rob Lillie, to be held on Sunday, June 6 from 2-4 p.m.

Glenn Nelson reflected on attending the Neutral Zone's Breakin' Curfew, the Pioneer Grammy concert, and the district's retirement dinner. He also reiterated that there is still time to attend the district art shows at the Work and Slusser galleries,

and commented positively on the scholarships and mentoring Stone School students received from the Rotary Club. Stone School, Nelson said, "literally changes the lives of students."

Simone Lightfoot invited the public to the follow-up to the College and Career Ready Review, which was held recently at Mitchell Elementary.

Susan Baskett noted that the Senior and Academic Recognition at Roberto Clemente Student Development Center was powerful, and thanked Joyce Hunter for maintaining the homebuilding program. She also expressed thanks on behalf of the grandmothers of Jasmine Thomas, a Pioneer student who died on May 19, for the support they received from the AAPS community at her memorial service on Tuesday. And, lastly, Baskett congratulated this year's graduates and urged them to celebrate safely.

Irene Patalan commented also on the Pioneer Grammy award ceremony, saying it was just wonderful. Also regarding the rally at Skyline High School earlier in the week, she agreed that "putting vision on securing funding is absolutely worthwhile." Patalan also expressed satisfaction at having filled the vacant board seat: "It's nice to be sitting here with seven people on the board."

Finally, Deb Mexicotte offered her general comments. First, she remarked that it was a honor to be invited to Scarlett Middle School's Portfolio Day, in which professionals from the community connect with students on a personal level by conducting mock interviews with them for jobs in their respective fields. Mexicotte also thanked Rebekah Warren for coming to the meeting earlier, and commended her support for AAPS students, and for education in general.

Mexicotte continued, noting that though the state has just decided to award \$65 per pupil back to the district, it's only one-sixth of the \$398 per pupil that was cut this year. As much as she wants to be happy about the slight funding increase, Mexicotte said, with a \$297 cut to per-pupil funding anticipated next year, all representatives need to support education. She noted that, "It is an election year, and politics does play a role into how these funding decisions are made."

Committee Reports and Agenda Planning

Neither the performance nor the planning committees had reports for this meeting. In planning future board agendas, Deb Mexicotte pointed out that superintendent Todd Roberts will be evaluated in June, and that Irene Patalan and Amy Osinski will be setting up that evaluation. She also repeated her request that board members turn in their summer schedules to the board secretary as soon as possible so that the board retreat can be scheduled, possibly for sometime in July.

Present: President Deb Mexicotte, vice president Irene Patalan, secretary Glenn Nelson, treasurer Christine Stead, and trustees Susan Baskett, Simone Lightfoot, and Andy Thomas. Also present as a non-voting member was Todd Roberts, superintendent of AAPS.

Next Regular Meeting: Friday, June 4, 2010, 5 p.m., at the Balas Administration Building, 2555 S. State St. [confirm date]

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BLOGS & STORIES

25 Best Cities for College Grads

by Richard Florida

May 26, 2010 | 1:08am

The Class of 2010 is heading into the real world but where should they live? Urban guru Richard Florida and his team find the best cities for the young and ambitious.

Congratulations, Class of 2010—and welcome to one of the worst job markets of all time. You've likely seen the litany of stories echoing the gloom and doom meme. *Harvard grads grateful for the chance to wait on tables. MIT computer whizzes pioneering new ways to flip burgers.* And then there are the terrifying statistics. Unemployment for people between the ages of 15 and 24 has passed 20 percent. You won't just be competing with your peers—all 1.6 million of them—but with people your parents' ages too, who lost their savings in the crash and have had to postpone their retirements for pretty much forever. "With the obvious exception of youngsters born during the Great Depression, no generation in American history faces more daunting obstacles," writes a dour Joe Queenan in *The Wall Street Journal*. "Even the pasty-faced Pilgrim toddlers gamboling around Plymouth Rock in 1620 had better prospects."

[Click Image to View the Top 25 Cities for College Graduates](#)



[View the Top 25 Cities for College Graduates](#)

Let's not go overboard. That 20 percent plus unemployment rate includes high school dropouts and people who didn't finish college. The unemployment rate for college graduates is actually less than 5 percent. And the unemployment rate in the professional and technical fields where you're most likely to work—science and engineering, business and management, education and health care—is just under 4 percent. Make no mistake about it, times are tough—but it's

blue-collar workers and blue-collar communities that have borne the full brunt of the crisis.

Most recent college grads *will* find jobs, even if they have to look a little longer than previous classes did. And that's not such a bad thing. With all those high-paying corporate entry-level jobs for the taking during the boom years, too many young people went for the bucks and landed in careers that were unsatisfying and unfulfilling.

Now more than ever, it's really important to put serious thought into *where* you want to live. The place you choose to live is key to your economic future. Jobs no longer last forever. In fact, the average twentysomething switches jobs every year. Places can provide the vibrant, thick labor market that can get you that next job, and the one after that and be your hedge against layoffs during this economic downturn. Early career moves are the most important of all, according to Don Peck in the National Journal. He cites a prominent study that finds that "about two-thirds of all lifetime income growth occurs in the first 10 years of a career, when people can switch jobs easily, bidding up their earnings." Sure you can move from place to place—and it's true twentysomethings are three- to four-times more likely to move than fiftysomethings—but it's a lot easier to manage a forward-looking career if you choose the right place with abundant opportunity to start out in.

So what do twentysomethings want in a community? To get at this, my team and I analyzed the results of a Gallup survey of some 28,000 Americans in their 20s. Some key things stand out. Jobs are clearly important—but just as clearly, they're not all-important. When asked what would keep them in their current location, twentysomethings ranked the availability of jobs second.

Twentysomethings understand well they face not only fewer job options but dwindling corporate commitment—it's not only harder to find a job, it's also easier to lose it. So it makes good sense to pick a city where the labor market is thick with job opportunities as a hedge against economic insecurity. What twentysomethings value the most is the ability to meet people and make friends. This also makes very good sense actually. Personal networks are about much more than having fun, they're among the best ways to find a job and move forward in a career.

Twentysomethings rank the availability of outstanding colleges and universities highly. Many want to go back to school to pursue a graduate degree or professional degree, and having these options available where you live is a big plus. Of course, young people value amenities, too—from parks and open space to nightlife and culture. It's less about all-night partying though, twentysomethings prefer places where they can easily go for a run or bike ride, work out or walk their dog, grab a coffee, take in a concert, see interesting new art, or take in a good meal with friends.

With all this in mind, we compiled our rankings of the Best Places for Recent College Grads. These rankings are based on an index of nine statistical indicators for the more than 350 metropolitan areas (that is, core cities and their surrounding suburbs) across the United States. The core measures in the rankings include:

- Presence of twentysomethings (20-24 year olds) in the population
- Singles—measured as the share of unmarried people
- Earnings potential—measured as average salary
- Unemployment rate
- College educated workforce—the share of the workforce with a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Rental housing—having an abundant, available stock of rental housing is key. We measured this as the share of all housing made up of rental units.
- Youth-oriented amenities—like bars, restaurants, cafes, sports facilities and entertainment venues.
- Creative capital: We use this to capture the creative energy of a place. It's measured as the share of employed

artists, musicians, actors, dancers, writers, designers, and entertainers in the workforce.

- **Openness:** A region's openness to new and different kinds of people reflects a lack of barriers and willingness to let newcomers, including young people, have a go. Our measure is the share of gays and lesbians and foreign-born residents in a community

Affordability: The overall rankings do not take housing costs into account. Generally speaking, new college grads are renters and can easily share apartments to reduce costs. It's also difficult to get a handle on the full living costs borne by young people—some communities have accessible mass transit; in others, new grads must buy a car (and pay for insurance, maintenance, gas, and parking). So, we decided to break out an additional index to account for affordability. This index includes a variable for rent levels—median contract rent. It weights affordability at 25 percent of the overall index value, and lets the other nine indicators account for the remaining 75 percent. We mark cities that rank in the top 25 on this combined affordability index with an asterisk(*)

The data is the most current available, for 2008, 2009, or 2010 depending on the variables. All nine variables are equally weighted. The technical analysis was conducted by a [Martin Prosperity Institute](#) team of Charlotta Mellander, Kevin Stolarick, Patrick Adler, and Ian Swain.

College towns dominate the top spots. Ithaca is first followed by Madison, Wisconsin; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Durham, North Carolina; Austin, Texas; and Boulder Colorado. That may seem a bit surprising to the legions of new grads who are off to the big city. Boulder and Austin are two of the country's leading centers for innovation and high-tech business with great sports and music scenes to boot. And college towns—from Iowa City, Iowa to Charlottesville, Virginia, from Lawrence, Kansas to Lincoln, Nebraska, from Columbia, Missouri to State College, Pennsylvania—provide terrific “stay-over” locations for new grads who want to maintain their networks, try out their skills or develop new ones. They have high percentages of young, highly educated singles; they provide an affordable alternative to bigger cities while still delivering a high quality of life; and they've proven to be among the most resilient communities during the economic downturn.

The list also has its share of big cities. D.C. is the top big city on our list in seventh place; and it's followed closely by New York City and Boston. San Francisco, San Diego, L.A., Seattle, and San Jose (the hub of Silicon Valley, still hands-down the best place for techies) all make the top 25.

But do remember: There's no absolute best place for new grads—or anyone else for that matter. Different strokes for different folks: For every twentysomething that wants to head to the big city there are those who prefer some place closer to home or a smaller, more affordable community.

It's best to think of this list as a general guide to help you orient your choices. When we were building our index we found that small shifts in the datasets we used and how they were weighted would reorder the cities near the top, but the picks in the top 25 remained surprisingly consistent. Ithaca, for example, always made the top 25, but adding the last two variables to the index raised its rank from 14th to first. So college grads should think of this list as a way to orient their own personal list, rather than a winner-take-all competition. That's the key thing, really—to pick the place that's best for you—that fits your own career outlook, your current situation, and your life plans. My team at the Martin Prosperity Institute has developed a tool called [Place Finder](#) that asks for some of your preferences and generates a custom list of places that might be right for you.

That choice is more important now than ever. While the place you choose to start your career and your life is always important, it's taken on additional importance during the current economic downturn. This is no run-of-the-mill economic cycle recession but a full-blown economic transformation, the kind that comes around only once every generation or two. [Great Resets](#) like these give rise to the life-altering “gales of creative destruction” that the great economist Joseph Schumpeter wrote of—to new technologies, new industries, and whole new ways of living. If some cities may fall further and further behind, others—the most innovative, adaptive, open-minded places—may be on the brink of unprecedented prosperity. And you might just be a part of it. Choose wisely.

Richard Florida is Director of the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute and author of The Great Reset, published this month by Harper Collins.

Kevin Stolarick developed the data; Charlotta Mellander conducted the statistical analysis. Patrick Adler and Ian Swain assisted with the analysis.

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Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

High school graduation information for Ann Arbor

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Editor's Note: Huron High School and Stone School graduation information was not available.

Ann Arbor Public School graduation information

Community High School: June 1, 7-9 p.m. at Rackham Auditorium

Huron High School: June 2, 6-9 p.m. at EMU Convocation Center

Pioneer High School: June 3, 7-10 p.m. at Eastern Michigan University Convocation Center

Stone School: June 7, 7-9 p.m., Washtenaw Community College, Morris Lawrence Building

Community High School graduation details

At Community High School, there is no honors program and each student says a few words at graduation.

In addition, there are performances between the students being awarded their diplomas.

They receive their diplomas by the Forum, which is like a home room, not alphabetically, says John Boshoven, the master of ceremonies for graduation.

In 2009, there were 122 graduates. The same number is expected this year.

Diane Grant will hand out the diplomas, Boshoven says, adding there will be two video presentations and three musical numbers.

Seven special scholarships will be awarded, and \$2,987,160 in Merit Scholarships were reported.

Pioneer High School graduation details

At Pioneer High School, 677 seniors will graduate, as well as 13 students from Roberto Clemente, who graduate with their "home high school."

A total of 690 students will graduate compared to the Class of 2009, which had 625 graduates, according to school officials.

There are 476 students who will graduate "with honors" diplomas. These students have maintained a 3.0 or higher

cumulative grade point average for the first seven semesters of high school.

There will be 99 "Pioneer Scholars," students, who have a 3.9 or higher cumulative GPA for their first seven semesters.

The average college attendance is 75 percent for four-year colleges and 15 percent to two-year colleges.

There will be four speakers at graduation.

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STAFF
By Ryan J
Stanton
AnnArbor.com Staff

Rebekah Warren announces college scholarships for three Ann Arbor high school students

Posted: May 27, 2010 at 4:14 PM [May 27, 2010]

State Rep. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor, announced the winners of three \$500 scholarships during Wednesday night's Ann Arbor school board meeting.

The scholarships are sponsored by the **Rebekah Warren Envision Michigan Fund**, which promotes progressive policies, educational opportunities and active citizenship.

This year's awardees were nominated for the scholarships by teachers, counselors and community leaders.

The winners are all graduating high school seniors:

- **Ramona Mladin**, from Huron High, hopes to join the pre-med class at Wayne State University this fall.
- **Sarah Juster**, from Community High, intends to join the class of 2014 at Yale University.
- **David Shapiro**, also from Community High, will attend the University of Michigan.



Rebekah Warren

"Each of these outstanding students represents the future of Michigan and our nation," Warren said. "I am as excited as they are about their college careers and am confident that they will be inspirational civic leaders after they graduate."

Warren said she created the scholarship funds to highlight the importance of post-secondary education in a time when many Michigan families are concerned about where their children will live and work. She said it's a theme she is carrying into her campaign for the Michigan state Senate's 18th District.

"Higher education is the gateway to opportunity and the key to Michigan's long-term prosperity," she said. "One of the central tenets of my campaign was making higher education more affordable and accessible to all. While I remain wholly committed to maintaining and increasing state funding, I also want to do my part to ensure that our students receive the education they need to compete in our global economy."

Since 2006 Warren has awarded \$5,000 in Envision Michigan Scholarships to 10 area graduates to help them attend a university, college, technical or trade school.

Ryan J. Stanton covers government for AnnArbor.com. Reach him at ryanstanton@annarbor.com or 734-623-2529.

Tags: 18th District, election '10, Rebekah Warren

6 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

students new beginning

Heritage Newspapers

Scholarships offer

By Lisa Allmendinger
A2 Journal

Marriah Richardson is ready to graduate from Roberto Clemente High School and continue her education at Washtenaw Community College.

She will start her college life with a \$1,000 scholarship after winning the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor's Bettie Hunt Memorial Scholarship May 24.

Richardson plans to major in criminal justice.

"To me, this scholarship means a new beginning — a new life. It's not high school anymore. This is a whole new hand," she said.

Richardson was among 29 Ann Arbor Public School students who received \$1,000 scholarship after they were recommended by their high school counselors.

DeAndre White, who is about to graduate from Community High School, also plans to go to WCC and study nursing before attending Eastern Michigan University. He was awarded the Rev. Charles W. Carpenter scholarship and was selected "based on his character, leadership, ser-

vice to the community, academic performance, financial need and involvement in promotion of understanding between different racial or ethnic groups."

The Kiwanis Scholarship program is a cooperative effort between the club, its current and former members, and the Ray and Elcanor Cross Foundation.

"We are always pleased when we can provide a modest boost to the future of talented young people as they pursue their dreams," said Harry Cross, a Kiwanian and president of the Cross Foundation.

"This scholarship will make college affordable to me," said Kevin Egedy, a Huron High School senior who plans to attend U of M and study engineering.

He says it will help him buy books, instead of taking the money out of his savings account.

For Brea Haywood, a Pioneer High School senior, the scholarship "means a lot to me because I've had a lot of difficulty affording college."

She plans to attend Eastern Michigan University and study English literature and psychol-

ogy.

Cecilio Palacio, a Huron High School senior, says he plans to attend Michigan State University and study journalism.

"My grandma got me into it," he said.

"College is expensive," Palacio said, adding that he'll have to work his way through college.

Ned Messmore, a Huron senior, says the scholarship makes him feel appreciated. He plans to attend WCC and study business management.

"I have a cousin who started a business and I like the idea of working for myself," he said.

Sruthi Naraharisetti, a Huron High School senior, plans to attend MSU and is leaning toward a degree in social justice.

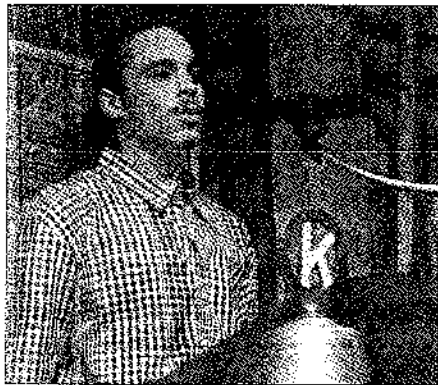
"This means a lot to me that my counselor picked me for a scholarship," she said.

Superintendent of Schools Todd Roberts said \$1,000 goes a long way to help young people.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.



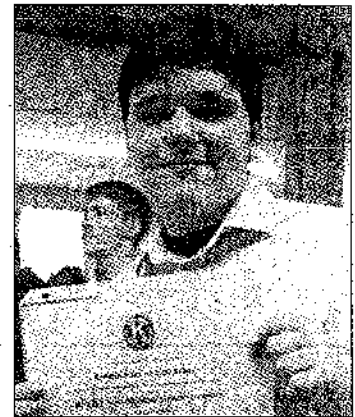
Andrea Manoppo of Community High School is winner of the Eleanor K. Cross Memorial Scholarship. She plans to attend the University of Michigan.



George Kalell Quarles of Stone High School, the first Kiwanis scholarship winner for the school, was awarded the John Davall Memorial Scholarship. He plans to attend Baker College.



Marriah Richardson of Roberto Clemente High School won the Bettie Hunt Memorial Scholarship. She plans to attend Washtenaw Community College.



Joseph Langley of Pioneer High School is winner of the Ray E. Cross Memorial Scholarship. He plans to attend Michigan Tech.

(Left) Kevin Egedy and Cecilio Palacio, both seniors at Huron High School, pose for a photo before the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor awards ceremony. Egedy plans to attend the University of Michigan and Palacio will go to Michigan State University. The Kiwanis Scholarship program is a cooperative effort between the club, its current and former members, and the Ray and Eleanor Cross Foundation. "We are always pleased when we can provide a modest boost to the future of talented young people as they pursue their dreams," said Harry Cross, a Kiwanian and president of the Cross Foundation.



Photos by Lisa Allmendinger

Twenty-nine seniors from the Ann Arbor Public Schools received \$1,000 scholarships from the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor May 24. They were Gabe Appel-Kraut of Community High School, Kevin Egedy of Huron High School, Ian Gottschalk of Pioneer High School, DeAndre White of Community, Sruthi Naraharisetti of Huron, John Spalding of Pioneer, Lamar Todd of Huron, Victor Osomo of Pioneer, Joseph Langley of Pioneer, Andrea Manoppo of Community, Kathleen Fluellen of Huron, Jacob Merrell of Pioneer, George Kalell Quarles of Stone High School, Keenan Bear of Pioneer, Cecilio Palació Jr. of Huron, Kevin Bailey of Roberto Clemente High School, Kirby Lee of Pioneer, Srilatha Eadara of Huron, Spencer Johnson of Pioneer, Ned Messmore of Huron, Marriah Richardson of Roberto Clemente, Brea Haywood of Pioneer, Marlen Cordova of Huron (not in photo), Julia Mogerman of Community, Will Scheiman of Pioneer, Donovan Hyter of Huron, Robert Beckett of Community, Muhammed Ansari of Pioneer and LaShondra Wafer of Huron.

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

Ann Arbor school district to begin improvement projects

Friday, May 28, 2010

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Angell, Carpenter, Clague, Scarlett, Slauson, Tappan and Thurston schools will see paving work this summer paid for by the 2010 sinking fund millage.

The seven paving projects, estimated at about \$576,500, are one of several construction jobs that will be completed this summer while students are on summer vacation.

About \$1.15 million in roofing work will be done at Pioneer, Huron, Forsythe, Slauson, Mitchell, Clague and Northside.

Improvements, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, will take place at Allen, Scarlett, Stone and the school transportation building this summer, as well.

The total for the work is estimated at about \$73,800.

A customized behavioral energy conservation program will be implemented to achieve reductions in consumption throughout the district, as well.

Johnson Controls was awarded a four-year contract at about \$273,200 to "improve the energy conservation of the district," according to a memo from Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties for the district.

Johnson Controls was chosen by a three-member committee based on the company's "global experience, past success in the district and the price, guaranteed savings and student involvement," the memo states.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.

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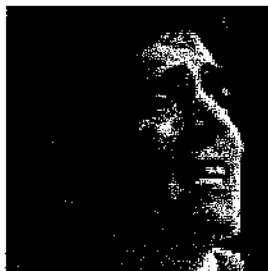
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By: [Jeff Kass](#)

Community Contributor

From the Front of the Room: Poem for Teachers (Why we matter)

Topics: [Education](#), [News](#)

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Posted: May 28, 2010 at 8:00 AM [May 28, 2010]

On Monday of this week, our local teachers' union held a rally at Skyline High School to try and encourage members to speak up for themselves and urge state politicians to increase funding for education. I know there are a lot of anti-union folks out there and specifically a whole lot of anti-teachers' union folks, and a lot has been written both locally and nationally about how teachers' unions are the major impediment to educational progress and, personally, I think that's garbage.

We can talk about merit pay if people want to have an honest conversation about that and I'm not necessarily opposed to new evaluation systems that base lay-offs less on seniority and more on teacher effectiveness, as long as how we measure teacher effectiveness has little to do with standardized tests, but I'll be honest, I think schools in this country are better than they've ever been.

We educate more people, from more varied economic, ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds than any society ever has in human history and what we have to teach them in order for them to be productive members of society changes faster than it ever has before, and I think we overall do a pretty darn good job. I don't wear rose-colored glasses, believe me, but I also don't imagine there was some educational golden age back in the day where schools were so much better than they are now. For sure, the education we give at Pioneer High School in 2010 is a whole lot more interesting and demanding than the one I got at a top-notch New York suburban high school twenty-five years ago.

Of course, there are some lousy teachers that the current system affords too much protection for, but they're largely the exception, and the truth is if we want better people in the classroom, we better figure out how to pay them more. What talented young person wants to commit to a profession where you will struggle to pay a mortgage in the community where you teach? Where you can work your tail off for several years and produce terrific results and then get laid off because you live in a county where too many people don't want to pay an extra two hundred dollars a year in taxes?

I think it's true that how we value our children can be measured by how we value the people who spend time with them and, let's be honest, who spends more time with children than teachers? Parents? Maybe. Depends on the family.

People who support teachers argue that we're hurting our own economic future when we don't support the teachers who try to equip students with the skills to succeed and I think there's truth to that, but I also think what happens in a school is much deeper than what kind of skills we teach, much more profound than the curriculum in our state framework. Every single kid in my classroom is a complex and contradictory human being and at the rally on Monday I read the following poem in an attempt to communicate what that means. The thing is, when I'm at the front of the room, I honestly don't need anything to hold me accountable other than the 30-plus faces looking back at me each hour. I'd be a pretty lousy human being if I didn't try and do everything I possibly can to help them grow. So, sorry for the length of this poem, but I get overwhelmed sometimes, and this is what educators face every day. Every day.

One of the Big Problems I have with School

Brian writes in his portfolio, is I dread waking up in the morning so early to go to something that makes me so unhappy. I'm not a morning person so I literally need some motivation to get out of bed. I need to know when I wake up I'm looking forward to something that's going to make me happy and not miserable. My girlfriend, of course, is motivation for me because I want to see her, but sometimes even she isn't enough and I need a little something extra. Well, your class was that little extra. I knew it was always going to be fun....Thank you!

During February break, I was driving to Chicago with **Aimee Le** so we could help out at the Chicago Youth Poetry Slam where 400 students read original poems, many of them about classmates who shoot each other or about the one bludgeoned to death with a two-by-four, and she asked me what I try to accomplish every day when I

walk

into class. Aimee's a sophomore at Dartmouth and one of the most powerful writers, of any age, I've ever had the privilege to encounter

and one of her best friends tried to kill himself a few months ago and then called for help but it ended up being too late to save him and it's a long drive to Chicago and I've got my own kids and won't

see them for three days so there's no way I'm going to B.S. Aimee and I tell her, *sometimes, I feel like the best thing I can do is concoct an hour*

that makes most of my students feel happier walking out than they were

when they walked in. Aimee's one of the smartest people I know and not

afraid to wear enormous owl glasses to prove it and she looks at me

and puts a hand to her chin and says, *that would be a pretty great teacher.*

This winter, two of my students gave birth, and both eventually brought their babies to class on days when they had no child-care options, and both handed in their portfolios late and I've got a boy named Daniel who often misses weeks at a time to survive a body that's failing and only accepts food through a tube and Aaron gets migraines on a regular basis which he describes as *leathery bastards that climb through your ear with twelve suction cups* on each tentacle and his portfolio's late too - he has to take care of his three brothers every afternoon and there's no privacy in his house at all, no place where he can be alone with his thoughts even when his head feels like its been latched on with *fish hooks with two sets of teeth* and all this lurches into my classroom and I take it home in the bookbag of my own head and Benji got mugged and a black eye in the parking lot and Melissa

writes how her mother taught her to hide behind the washing machine in the basement so she won't have to see her father pound her bloody in the kitchen and Jonas describes his backyard as the place where he's from, where his father pitched him batting practice and caught his fledgling fastball and threw him touchdowns

but he hasn't seen him in four years even though he lives less than two miles away and Angie's got a four-year-old brother and when their father erupts fire because the boy stuffed too much bread in his mouth, she feels guilty when he runs to his room terrified and crying - she could have said something snarky to arrow their father's seething in her direction but she didn't, for once, she didn't feel like absorbing it and Jasmine's been home for six days on her own, her mother said she was headed out for a couple hours and hasn't come back, and this happens once a month and Jasmine lies in the dark on the floor of her kitchen, near the oven, curled up and waiting and Vivian waits too, for her sister who ran away two weeks ago with a boyfriend who hits her and there's been no word and she has no words except *empty*, empty as the police lights flash through her window and she merges into the doorframe, her forehead calcifying into wood and she brings the stiff of that breaking into my classroom and I bring it home in my bookbag and she writes in her portfolio that Creative Writing kept her from skipping school, she wanted to be there for sixth hour and Cheyanne walks into seventh hour shaking. A boy called her the c-word in her previous

class and she got in trouble for shouting back and I don't know what

that story's about but I know her mother calls her fat a lot and she throws

up her food a lot and her father drinks a lot and her best friend had to move

hundreds of miles away from her own father, he couldn't keep his hands

off her, and all this I bring home in my bookbag and I grade papers
on the sidelines of my daughter's soccer game and Miguel's
grandmother
passed away last summer and she gave him his first soccer ball but
he didn't
get to say goodbye, she was still living in poverty in Mexico with
no doctor
and Jason almost never speaks in class and never looks anywhere
but forward,
dead straight ahead, and I wonder if he's the kind of boy who will
detonate
like a pipe bomb and he writes how he once glued construction
paper beneath
a buzzing fan and then dropped the Valentine anonymous on the
porch of the girl
he was too shy to talk to, then watched another kid take credit in
class the next day
and he didn't do anything except write about it five years later and
I grade papers
during field hockey and flag football and look up barely in time to
see my daughter
make a dazzling tackle and thank you, Brian, for saying my class
makes you want
to wake up and even if you're just B.S.-ing and sucking up for a
better grade,
thank you, anyway, for caring enough to do that, and thank you,
Lauren,
for sharing how your twenty-four-year-old cousin molested you
when you
were eight and how you survived it and thank you, Meng, for
trying to fight
back against the boy who wrestled you to the grass on New year's
Eve
and I carry your stories in my bookbag and sometimes I lift
weights

and wonder if it's to maintain the strength to do that but these stories feed me too and how you muster the throat to tell them tells me to keep listening and I try to make you laugh, I try to make all of you laugh, I try somehow to make every hour better. It's what I do. I'm a teacher.

***Note - if you're looking for a really fantastic experience for high-school aged and college-aged students, The Neutral Zone is once again offering a week-long Creative Writing camp called the VOLUME Summer Institute. It'll be from June 27th - July 2nd and features world class faculty members teaching workshops in poetry (Roger Bonair-Agard, Patricia Smith, Kevin Coval, Scott Beal); fiction (Adam Mansbach); and Creative Non-Fiction/College essay writing (Sarah Andrew-Vaughan, Karen Smyte). Tuition is on a sliding scale basis. More info is available on the Neutral Zone's web site @ www.neutral-zone.org. ***

Jeff Kass teaches Creative Writing at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor and at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, and directs the Literary Arts Programs at the Neutral Zone, including the VOLUME Youth Poetry Project, which meets every Thursday night at 7pm. He will post new blog entries every Thursday morning throughout the school year.

[Report this comment to staff](#)



Patti Smith

Posted 5 days ago

Thank you for this article. This is one of my favorite poems (I am an inner city special ed teacher) and if you take out "pray" and substitute "teach", I think it about sums it up.

We pray for the Children

who sneak Popsicle's before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those

who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never "counted potatoes,"
who are born in places where we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children

who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray for those

who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray for children

who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories, who shove dirty clothes under the bed,
who never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those

whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children

who want to be carried and for those who must,
who we never give up on and for those who don't get a second
chance.

For those we smother and . . .

for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

[Report this comment to staff](#)

5/20/10

LOCAL

Ann Arbor school district budget largely depends on outcome of negotiations with teachers union

Union, district remain optimistic



Brit Satchwell, president of the Ann Arbor teachers union, is hopeful the union and the Ann Arbor school district will reach an agreement to avoid layoffs. "(Teachers) will step up and take their share of the burden," he said. **Melanie Maxwell | AnnArbor.com**

BY DAVID JESSE
davidjesse@annarbor.com

Ann Arbor teachers union President Brit Satchwell said he remains optimistic his union and the Ann Arbor school district will be able to reach an agreement that will stave off teacher layoffs.

"We've been talking about concepts that guarantee solvency for the district," he said. "(Teachers) will step up and take their share of the burden."

What savings that agreement could generate for the district's 2010-11 budget is just one of several variables still in play as the school board moves closer to a vote on its \$183-million budget. That vote is expected in June.

Other unknowns include the number of teachers and other staff members who will

retire this year and the amount of state aid the district will receive.

The proposed budget crafted by the school district's administration is set forth in two parts, depending on those variables.

The district is aiming to cut about \$20 million from its budget.

The first part of the plan would cut 82.2 full-time equivalent positions, including 50.7 full-time teaching positions and 9.5 full-time administrator positions. That plan would generate about \$16 million in savings.

The second part of the plan largely depends on negotiations with the teachers union, which are ongoing.

If the two sides can't come up with \$4 million in savings, another 39 teaching positions and three admin-

istrative positions would be eliminated.

Because teaching positions would be eliminated under the plan, the district issued layoff notices to 191 teachers.

How many teachers would actually be laid off depends on the negotiations and also on retirements. A new state law gives school employees until June 11 to file for retirement and receive an incentive for doing so.

Superintendent Todd Roberts told the school board on Wednesday that the district has seen a steady trickle of employees expressing interest in retiring since the new law passed. He said the pace picked up a bit Wednesday, and he expects more after this weekend.

That same state law allows the district to issue about 30 special exemptions to employ-

ees who file for retirement June 11 to qualify for the incentive, but don't leave the district until the end of the next school year.

Roberts told the board an exemption would be offered to anyone filling a position targeted for elimination under the budget proposal.

Still, the district's next step in the budget process largely rests on the negotiations with the teachers union.

"We're putting our best people at the table and coming up with good ideas," Satchwell said. "I remain committed to making sure that all of those teachers (who got layoff notices) are recalled by the start of next (school) year."

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or 734-623-2533.

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

Butler recognized by peers at Ann Arbor schools

Monday, May 31, 2010

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Editor's Note: Individual staff members from the school were not named in the application for Pat Butler's award.

Northside Elementary School staff members say they're lucky to have Pat Butler at their school.

The custodian was described as friendly, ingenious, caring and a hard worker by staff of the school in nominating her for the Ann Arbor Public Schools Celebration of Excellence Award.

Trustee Irene Patalan read and awarded Butler her certificate.

"Wow! Say a few things about Pat? How can I limit them? One of my favorite things about Pat is that she always has a smile and a kind word for word for others," one staff member wrote.

Butler's friendliness and enthusiasm were mentioned numerous times by the many staff members at the school who supported her nomination.

Butler "seldom has to be asked to do anything because it has been done way before she is asked," another staff member commented.

The school building "is treated as if it were her home," the nomination reads.

In addition to her work ethic, Butler was credited with always being cheerful while doing her work.

"I can't think of a more deserving person than Pat for this award," another staff member wrote.

Even students at the school weighed in on her nomination: "I love Ms. Butler," one said, while another added "Ms. Butler helps out school stay clean and neat."

Butler's terrific customer service was summed up by "as you can see, many people at Northside love and respect Pat Butler, and we can think of no one who deserves the celebration of excellence award more than Pat."

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.



STAFF
By: Amalie Nash
AnnArbor.com
News Director

Two Huron High School students plead guilty to misdemeanor charges in vandalism of police car

Posted: Jun 2, 2010 at 6:00 AM [Yesterday]

Two of five Huron High School students accused of vandalizing an Ann Arbor police car pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges in exchange for felony charges being dismissed

Anthony Meneghini and Peter Godfrey, both 17, entered guilty pleas last week in 14A District Court to an added charge of malicious destruction of personal property between \$200 and \$1,000, said county Chief Deputy Assistant Prosecutor Steve Hiller. In exchange, two felony charges of malicious destruction of police property were dropped.

A total of five teens were charged with damaging the school resource officer's Ford Crown Victoria between 5 p.m. March 5 and 11 a.m. March 6 in the school parking lot. Ann Arbor police said the rear window and tail lights were smashed out with a hammer, a recliner was placed on the roof of the car and feces was poured on the roof.

Investigators identified the teenagers after reviewing surveillance video of cars that were at the school at the time, police said.

Attorney Ellis Freatman, who represented Meneghini and Godfrey, said they were only involved in placing the recliner on the roof, which caused minor damage.

"It became clear from the investigation and the statements that Anthony and Peter did not participate in the destruction," Freatman said. "They were only involved in the original prank to place the recliner on the car."

Under a sentencing agreement with the judge, prosecutors will not object to Meneghini and Godfrey being sentenced under the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act. Under that act, youths ages 17 to 20 who plead guilty to certain crimes can have the records expunged if they successfully complete their sentence.

No jail time will be recommended under the sentencing agreement, Freatman said.

"Their intent was to commit a prank and nothing more," Freatman said. "Frankly, this is difficult and a harsh lesson, and the lesson has been learned."

Meneghini and Godfrey will be sentenced July 2.

The other three 17-year-olds charged - Miles Staton, Stephen Bakarich, and Dillon Pearce - are scheduled to appear for preliminary hearings June 9. They each face two felony charges of malicious destruction of police property.

Tags: Ann Arbor police, vandalism

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School upgrades to begin

*Money coming
from millage*

By Lisa Allmendinger
A2 Journal

6-3-2010
Angell, Carpenter, Clague,
Scarlett, Slauson, Tappan and
Thurston schools will see paving
work this summer paid for
by the 2010 sinking fund millage.

The seven paving projects,
estimated at about \$576,500,
are among
several construction jobs
that will be
completed
this summer while
students are
on summer
vacation.

The total
for the
work is
estimated
at about
\$73,800.

About
\$1.15 million
in roofing
work will be
completed

at Pioneer, Huron, Forsythe,
Slauson, Mitchell, Clague and
Northside.

Improvements, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, will take place at Allen, Scarlett, Stone and the school transportation building this summer, as well.

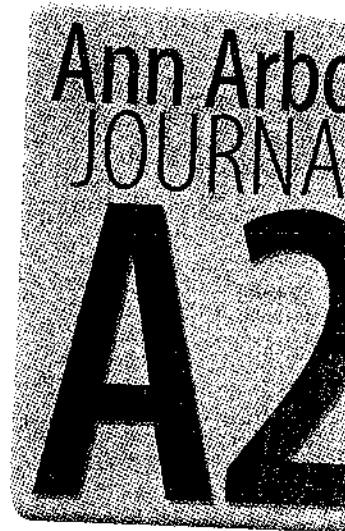
The total for the work is estimated at about \$73,800.

A customized behavioral energy conservation program will be implemented to achieve reductions in consumption throughout the district, as well.

Johnson Controls was awarded a four-year contract at about \$273,200 to "improve the energy conservation of the district," according to a memo from Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties for the district.

Johnson Controls was chosen by a three-member committee based on the company's "global experience, past success in the district and the price, guaranteed savings and student involvement," the memo states.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.



SECOND FRONT

Heritage Newspapers

June 3, 2011

Tappan teacher wins award

by Lisa Allmendinger
2 Journal

Sandy Maconochie will retire with a long history as a teacher in the Ann Arbor Public Schools with Celebration of Excellence award.

Maconochie called her time at Tappan Middle School "the best gig in town."

She was nominated by colleagues at the school and received accolades from fellow teachers, former students and parents.

"My esteemed music colleague and veteran teacher is about to retire after sharing over 32 years of experience in our district," wrote Fred Smith in his nomination of

Maconochie.

The two have taught in tandem for many years.

In fact, for 25 years, Maconochie served as the band director at Tappan Middle School.

She says she shares the award with the teachers and students at the school, as well as the "cherished Tappan music staff."

Her bands have worked with many famous groups and people such as Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Orchestra of New York.

Maconochie began her career with the district as a bus driver before teaching, said Smith, who worked with her for 24 years.

"Playing in Ms. Maconochie's band program at Tappan Middle School absolutely laid the foundation for my future as a professional musician," wrote former student and University of Michigan graduate Ingrid Racine.

The parent of a child at Tappan, Jayne Gissner credited Maconochie with being the reason her son got up and went to school in the morning.

Practice club and jazz band is the highlight of David's school experience," Gissner said.

"Sandy is one of the most dedicated teachers I have ever met," said Joseph DeMarsh, orchestra director at Tappan.

He worked with Maconochie for 20 years, and said, "I am constantly amazed and impressed by her patience, dedication and insight at the difficult middle school level."

DeMarsh added that he would "learned an immense amount about teaching, planning and adolescents from her."

A tribute fund has been set up in Maconochie's name through the Ann Arbor Education Foundation.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.



Photo by Lisa Allmendinger

Sandy Maconochie, band director at Tappan Middle School, will retire with an Award of Excellence from the Ann Arbor Public Schools. She received the award May 26.

Butler earns school award 6-3-2010

By Lisa Allmendinger
A2 Journal

Editor's Note: Individual staff members from the school were not named in the application for Pat Butler's award.

Northside Elementary School staff members say they're lucky to have Pat Butler at their school.

The custodian was described as friendly, ingenious, caring and a hard worker by staff of the school in nominating her for the Ann Arbor Public Schools Celebration of Excellence Award.

Trustee Irene Patalan read and awarded Butler her certificate.

"Wow! Say a few things about Pat? How can I limit them? One of my favorite things about Pat is that she always has a smile and a kind word for word for others," one staff member wrote.

Butler's friendliness and enthusiasm were mentioned

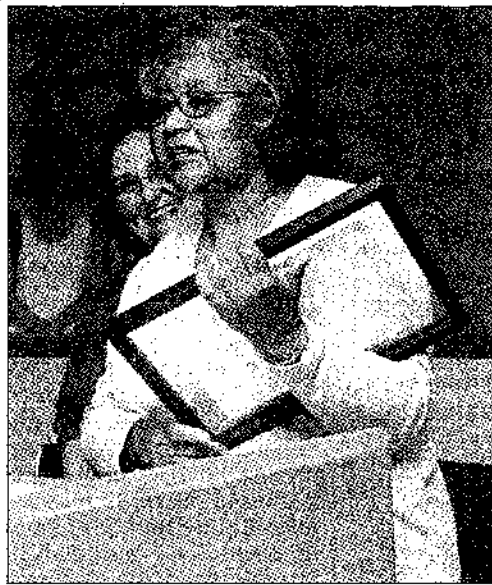


Photo by Lisa Allmendinger

Pat Butler, a custodian at Northside Elementary School, was nominated for an Award of Excellence by staff members from the school. Board Vice President Irene Patalan awarded Butler her certificate and stands in the background.

numerous times by the many staff members at the school who supported her nomination.

Butler "seldom has to be asked to do anything because it

has been done way before she is asked," another staff member commented.

The school building "is treated as if it were her home,"

the nomination reads.

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Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com. Check out her daily blog at www.A2Journal.com.



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6-4-2010

Time to get serious about school bullying

If state lawmakers manage to pass anti-bullying legislation this year, it will be known as Matt's Law.

Matt Epling of East Lansing was 14 years old when he committed suicide after a hazing incident in which several older students physically attacked him. At its worst, bullying can result in such tragedy. For every Matt, there are innumerable children who dread going to school every day because they are being bullied.

In Washtenaw County and across the state, there are school districts that understand bullying behavior is a major problem. It not only makes the lives of children miserable, but also interferes with their ability to get an education. These districts have policies that prohibit bullying and outline clear steps for dealing with the problem.

We think all school districts in Michigan should take this issue as seriously. At the very least, schools should have a policy in place so that students understand that bullying is not acceptable behavior, and so that students, parents and teachers know what to do if someone is being bullied.

Michigan remains one of seven states that does not have anti-bullying legislation, and efforts to get a law passed here have gone nowhere during the past decade. This month, the state House passed a bill sponsored by Rep. Pam Byrnes, D-Lyndon Township, and a similar bill is being considered in the Senate. We support the passage of this legislation as a welcome step toward getting all school districts to give this issue the attention it deserves.

Past efforts to get an anti-bullying law through the Legislature have bogged down primarily because of concerns about creating another unfunded mandate for local schools. We are sensitive to that issue, and we agree that previous versions of the legislation were overly prescriptive.

Byrne's current bill, House Bill 4580, is more basic. It calls on all districts to have an anti-bullying policy, and recommends, but doesn't mandate, that it include such elements as education, parental involvement, and intervention. It requires a district to have at least one public hearing before approving the policy, and to send the state a copy of the final policy.

6-4-10

This would not create an undue burden on school districts. Many, including Ann Arbor Public Schools, already have anti-bullying policies in place. For those that don't, the state Board of Education offers a model policy that can be used as a guide. Other resources are available as well.

We have heard some concern that the bill may be too unambitious in what it asks of districts and therefore won't have the impact it should. But given the level of concern about bullying that parents are showing these days, there's less risk of that. Increasingly, parents have been asking schools to make anti-bullying a priority. If districts that don't have a policy are compelled to develop one in a process that includes the public, that can create the opportunity parents have been looking for to have a serious discussion about the issue and make sure the new policy is meaningful and enforced.

Just an important, that policy then becomes a tool for parents whose children are being bullied. If the district isn't addressing the problem, parents can point to the policy and insist that the school follow it.

Another issue that has delayed passage of the law so far has been the question of whether specific groups of students, particularly students who are gay, should be identified as protected groups in anti-bullying policies. Some lawmakers and "family values" groups have opposed any law that included sexual orientation as a protected class.

The current House bill does not address this issue, which, from a political standpoint, improves its chance of passage. We don't understand why a student who is being bullied because he or she is gay, or is perceived as being gay, is any less deserving of protection than any other student who is being bullied. But communities would maintain the ability to include sexual orientation in the anti-bullying policies adopted by their individual districts. Again, this is a matter of getting districts to address the larger issue of bullying, while retaining some local control over what the policies include.

No one disagrees with the basic concept that every child should be able to go to school in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning. Much effort has gone into issues like guns, or gang activity, or drugs in school. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Education reports that incidents of bullying have increased, as have incidents of female students being sexual harassed. In the past couple of years, cyber-bullying has become a major concern, adding new challenges and complexity to dealing with the issue.

Against that backdrop, it is clear that bullying is a more serious concern than ever. It is not too much to ask every school district in Michigan to have a policy designed to deal with it.

6-4-2010



By: Lizzy Aifs
AnnArbor.com
Intern

Huron High School's Huron Players 'Finale 2010!' set to open Friday

Topics: Ann Arbor North, Central Ann Arbor, Entertainment

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Published: June 4, 2010 11:00 AM

Huron High School's Huron Players will host its *Finale 2010!* on June 4 and 5 at 7:30 p.m. in Huron's Little Theatre.



Huron Players members Mary Scott and Sam Teener rehearse a scene for their one-act play that will appear in the finale.


Photo by Jenny Thompson

The Huron Players is a non-profit, student-run organization that puts on four shows a year at Huron High School. The *Finale* is the Players' fourth and final show of the year and consists of six different one-act plays directed by Huron High School juniors and seniors.

According to Huron junior and Players student president **Jenny Thompson**, the Players put a lot of time and effort into creating a great show this year.

Tickets are \$4 for students, seniors, and Huron Staff, and \$6 for general admission and can be purchased at the door.





Allison Punch, Jenny Thompson, Elliot Cruz, Mike Marone and Adam Colas are the five board members for the Huron Players. Elections are held every semester for the board member positions.

Photo by Jenny Thompson

Lizzy Alfs is a senior at the University of Michigan majoring in English. She is also a news reporter for the Michigan Daily. Email her with events and news relating to Ann Arbor's North Side.

Tags: Huron High School, Huron Players, Lizzy Alfs

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6-4-2010



By: David Jesse
AnnArbor.com
Staff

Fired Washtenaw Intermediate School District teacher's aide files federal lawsuit

Topics: Education, News

10 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

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A fired teacher's aide for the Washtenaw Intermediate School District has filed a federal lawsuit against the district, alleging violations of his civil rights.

Michael Beasley was dismissed from his job as a teacher's aide in a special education classroom at Scarlett Middle School during the 2008-09 school year after he was criminally charged with child abuse.

In the lawsuit, filed earlier this week, Beasley alleges his supervising teacher made "frequent, unsolicited and unwelcome comments and questions to (Beasley) regarding her sex life, plaintiff's sex life and sexual acts." The lawsuit said he made complaints about her to his supervisors but was ignored.

The suit also claims Beasley's supervising teacher "made derogatory comments regarding Indians in plaintiff's presence. When she made these comments, the classroom supervisor was aware that plaintiff is an Indian." The lawsuit claims he made complaints to his supervisors but was ignored.

Beasley claims after his classroom supervisor heard about the complaints, he faced retribution.



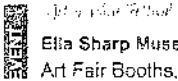
Michael Beasley



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Event Information

"Plaintiff's classroom supervisor falsely accused plaintiff of assaulting a student. Plaintiff's classroom supervisor encouraged another employee under her classroom supervisor to falsely accuse plaintiff of assaulting a student.

"Plaintiff timely filed a charge of race discrimination, sex discrimination and retaliation with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and brings this action within 90 days of receiving his notice of right to sue."

WISD spokeswoman Gerri Allen said the WISD had not seen the case and declined to comment on it.

Beasley is still facing criminal charges from the incident. Court records show a jury trial is set for Sept. 20.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com.

Tags: lawsuit, WISD

 **10 Comments. Comment Now**



STAFF

By David Jesse
AnnArbor.com Staff

Ann Arbor school district sees fewer students apply for schools of choice than expected

Posted: Jun 4, 2010 at 6:02 AM [Today]

Fewer students have applied to attend the Ann Arbor school district through the schools of choice program than district officials anticipated, district spokeswoman Liz Margolis said.

That's prompted the district to consider opening a second window for applications for students who live outside its attendance boundaries, but want to come to an Ann Arbor school.

The district opened up 170 slots in three grades - kindergarten, first grade and sixth grade - for next school year. It's the first time Ann Arbor has participated in schools of choice. All other Washtenaw County traditional schools districts except Dexter and Chelsea run some form of the program.

Applications were taken throughout the spring, Margolis said. The window for applying is now closed.

The district has 47 applicants for kindergarten, 28 for first grade and 26 for sixth grade. Six of those students have since withdrawn their applications, leaving 95 for now, Margolis said.

That's far short of the 170 expected. The district had made the move to enroll out-of-district students as a way of generating more revenue as it's facing a \$20 million budget shortfall for next year. District administrators had projected gaining about \$1.1 million in revenue through schools of choice.

The state pays each school district a per-pupil aid amount that accounts for the bulk of its revenue. Ann Arbor's per-pupil amount is more than \$9,000. However, students coming into the district only come with the amount of money being paid to their home district. In some cases, that can be almost \$2,000 per student less than Ann Arbor receives per student.

Margolis also said the district has received responses from parents interested in other grades not currently available through schools of choice, particularly in the high schools, Margolis said.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

Tags: Ann Arbor school district, school funding, schools of choice

10 Comments. Comment Now



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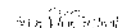
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Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts and Robert Allen (right), deputy superintendent for operations, discuss a draft plan that included opening the district to schools of choice at a January meeting.



By: Frances Kai-Hwa Wang
Community Contributor

ADVENTURES IN MULTICULTURAL LIVING

OPINION: Why are people not more upset about the achievement gap than the field trip?

Topics: Education, Opinion, Parenting

65 Comments [Comment Now](#)



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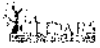
With a name like Chang-Diaz, I was pretty sure he must be part Chinese, and I wanted my children to meet a multiracial Chinese-American astronaut so that they could see with their own eyes that it was possible.

A little embarrassed to be asking something so personal, we waited until after the Q&A, but he smiled when we asked, and he told us the story of how his grandfather had come to Costa Rica from China. There was something very sweet and intimate about that moment and, not surprisingly, his message to my children—third-generation, multiracial, bilingual, and part-Chinese like himself—was different than his message to everyone else. He emphasized the importance of understanding different cultures and languages when one is in space working with astronauts from other countries.

When Dr. Sally Ride came to town for her great Sally Ride Science Festival for Girls, we also went to meet her. Again, simply to let the children see with their own eyes that women could be astronauts if they wished, to hear a woman talk about the importance of math and science—and then let their imaginations take it from there.

I have been slow to respond to the Dicken Elementary School field trip controversy because I have been so perplexed by the anger in people's reactions. Reading through the comments after every article about it has been so painful, so personal, that I can only read a few at a time.

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Remember, this whole thing was about a group of students who came together at lunchtime to support each other and build community in the face of a staggering achievement gap, to form a foundation upon which to help and get help from their peers, to meet someone who looked like them who had succeeded—the main purpose, to improve academically.

Small groups, peer-based support, older students helping younger students, role models, exposure to what is possible—that is exactly what I do for my own children to help them beat the statistics and stereotypes waiting for them. Why such anger?

I understand that there were some problems with implementation, and I know things are different for public institutions. I am not discounting that.

However, what I do not understand is why people are not more upset about the achievement gap. That is the real problem. How long have we had this achievement gap in Ann Arbor? Twenty-five, thirty-five years? Enough time for children to grow up here and have their own children back in our schools. That is the real reason people should be angry—not that thirty African-American students met a scientist. The achievement gap is striking because it cuts across socioeconomic lines and plagues all our schools. If the color of one's skin really did not matter, then there would be no achievement gap, no earning gap, no glass ceiling, no under- or over-representation.

Syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts writes heartbreakingly about a mother brought to tears by a CNN test revealing her Caucasian 5-year-old daughter's untaught bias against African-Americans that the mother naively did not think would be an issue in this age of Oprah and Obama. We are all affected.

Racism is not just white guys wearing white hoods. More often it is subtle, and lies in a glance, a gesture, a joke. Its effects can also be subtle—an insecurity, a harder road, a dream never pursued. We can convince ourselves that race is no longer a problem, and we can pass Proposal 2. However, the achievement gap is telling us something is wrong. Listen.

Frances Kai-Hwa Wang is a second-generation Chinese American from California who now divides her time between Ann Arbor and the Big Island of Hawaii. She is editor of IMDiversity.com, [Asian American Village](http://AsianAmericanVillage.com), lead multicultural contributor for AnnArbor.com, and a contributor for [New America Media's Ethnoblog](http://NewAmericaMedia.com). She is a popular speaker on Asian Pacific American and multicultural issues. Check out her website at franceskaihwawang.com, her blog at franceskaihwawang.blogspot.com, and she can be reached at fkwang888@gmail.com.

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ANN ARBOR, MI (WEMU) - Ann Arbor school district officials say they hope by the end of this week to have a good idea of how many employees will be retiring thanks to state retirement incentives. This could make a big change for the district, which may have to cut up to 90 teaching positions, and which has already given out nearly 200 layoff notices.

Hear more from WEMU's Andrew Cluley. © Copyright 2010, [wemu](#)

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