



Ann Arbor Public Schools

Superintendent Update

Board of Education

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

We are in the midst of the third week of the 2023-2024 school year. I had the wonderful opportunity to stop into Lawton Elementary just yesterday, and on Day 11, we are grateful to see students, teachers, staff, and families settled into the rhythms and routines, learning and growing together, during these back-to-school fall days.

Our schools are engaging in Curriculum Nights now - we are seeing big crowds turning out across our schools. Students, staff and families are excited about all the opportunities, including many athletic and enrichment activities and special events such as Fall Carnivals, Fun Runs and more coming up this fall.

I want to share a special thank you to our students, teachers, support staff and principals, our parents and families and our Ann Arbor community; everyone has worked together to launch a successful back-to-school in the AAPS this fall. We are strengthening our practice of dignity, belonging, and well-being for every child, every day

Enrollment Preview

Our annual public report of audited enrollment will be shared in December. As an initial preview, we are delighted to see solid student attendance this fall, with our schools remaining very consistent in overall enrollment across the AAPS. We are especially excited to share that the incoming cohort of Y5/Kindergarten is consistent with last year at approximately 1,500 members; welcome to the Class of 2036!

Staffing Update

In P12 education, as is true across so many sectors, we are in fierce competition for quality talent to serve our students; step by step, we are meeting this challenge. Recent increases in wages place us in a more attractive position, and in terms of teachers in classrooms, while we continue hiring as is normal in September, we are mostly staffed across our AAPS schools.

We continue to have unmet staffing needs in Special Education positions and across hourly roles such as paraeducators, before and after care, and we continue our work to take additional steps to ensure we are fully staffed in these areas as well as on the transportation team.

It appears that the shift we made to year-round recruitment will continue as an ongoing process, and our team is up to this challenge.

Paraeducator Recruitment, Retention and Support

Paraeducators serve in valued and important roles to support student success, and this remains an area of critical shortage for us. The Office of Special Education team has carefully coordinated a yearlong plan to provide paraeducators with ongoing connection and professional learning opportunities in response to their survey responses and expressed needs.

A major shift lies in fully including these team members with additional pay, in our staff meetings and after-school curricula design day professional learning sessions. On the recruitment and retention side, we are working together with the Human Resources team to address methods of incentivizing signing and staying on with the AAPS. We look forward to sharing more of those details soon.

Office of Special Education Update

- Cohort 1 of the EMU Paraeducator Teacher Certification program began student teaching this Fall, 2023.
- Paraeducator **Sat Paul Goyal** is an accomplished and very published author and poet. I am pleased to share one of his most recently **published poems**. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zi2g0ALMGs6QFehj5RWqDx5VVxadl8qFrHcUvjNf7N4/edit>
- This past year, **Lawrence Robuste of Pioneer High School** won **multiple gold medals** in the 100m and 200m at the **Michigan State Special Olympics Summer Games**. He was also a torch bearer and lighter for the State of Michigan! Special Olympic cauldron.

As a result of his state successes, Lawrence qualified for the **World Special Olympics Games in Berlin** this summer, where he excelled. His participation in the World Games was due to the support of **Club Unify**, a student-led organization at Pioneer High School. The club raised over **\$10,000** for him, as well as another **\$5,000** for the Pioneer OSE department. None of Lawrence's opportunities would have been possible without them.

At the World Games, Lawrence obliterated his **personal record (PR)** every time he raced ; an extremely impressive feat for any athlete. In the **100 meters**, his previous personal record was 13.08 seconds, yet he ran a World Games time of **12.84!** Likewise, his **200-meter** personal best of 26.52 seconds was eclipsed by a World Games time of **25.50!**

As a member of the **United States 4x100 relay team**, Lawrence and the team accomplished a **5th place finish**. You will note that Lawrence was competing against world athletes who were **5-10+ years older** than him, further cementing the impressiveness of all his accomplishments.

Exceptional Teacher - DeMarko Thurman

This week's AAPS District News Exceptional Profile is of A2 Virtual+ teacher DeMarko Thurman. Principal Anthony Lauer shares, "De'Marko's leadership style and passion for online learning is evident in his approach to supporting teachers, students, and families. His tireless work ethic as the A2 Virtual+ Summer Term Principal does not go unnoticed by the over 800 students who take summer classes through A2 Virtual+."

District Health/Well-being

- The first of four 2023-24 Early Release Day sessions focused on staff well-being will take place Sept. 27. Jenna Bacolor and Bill Harris are leading this effort using the Office of the Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being and CASEL adult SEL competencies.
- The 23-24 COVID guidance for students/families and staff is posted on the district website. Per Washtenaw County Health Department requirements, we are continuing to monitor student and staff case reports frequently to detect potential outbreaks early. The same tools of early communication to parents, sending home over-the-counter tests, and masking can be deployed when there are clusters or outbreaks. School nurses continue to support building staff, students, and parents with COVID questions and recommendations.
- The school nurse team has updated the When to Keep Your Child Home from School guide for parents. This one-page document includes recommendations for many symptoms and communicable diseases.

Community Division: Community Education and Recreation (Rec & Ed)

Before/After Care

- For fall 2023, before/after care is available for the following 11 elementary school communities: Abbot, Allen, Angell, Burns Park*, Carpenter, King*, Lakewood, Lawton*, Mitchell, Pittsfield (after care only with bussing to Allen) and Wines.
(*3rd party provider)
- Enrollment: As of September 6th, there are 88 students enrolled in before care and 202 in after care (many students are enrolled in both). 44 scholarships/fee waivers have been awarded.
- Staffing: we've retained about 25 supervisors, assistants, and high school after care assistants from last year and hired about 7 new staff. Interviewing and hiring continue with the intention of continuing to add more program sites.

Community Division: Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement

- **Stuff the Bus Recap** -- Through our partnership with Stuff the Bus, AAPS received hundreds of school supplies that will help support student academic success at our elementary Schools. Donations included hundreds of binders, backpacks, writing utensils, glue, erasers, paper, markers, crayons, pencils and more.

- **Strategic Partnership Engagement** -- AAPS is delighted to welcome back our nearly 70 district-level Strategic Partners to our schools. This year, the AAPS Strategic Partnership Office created [a Guide for Strategic Partners](#) to help our partners continue to work effectively with our students and our schools. This guide contains information on district programs, community resources, district policies and protocols, resources for learning, a brief overview of some key district initiatives and more.

Communication from the AAPS

To stay up-to-date with daily updates and information on school and district activities, you may want to follow us on social media.

- Twitter [@A2Schools](#) and [@A2SchoolsSuper](#)
- On Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/AnnArborPublicSchools>
- Subscribe to our A2Schools podcast at: <https://a2schools.buzzsprout.com>
- AAPS YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/AnnArborPublicSchools>.

Also attached separately is a **Special Education Fall Update** to note our next steps in continuous improvement in ensuring strong service provision for students served on an IEP across the AAPS.

We are grateful for all your partnership and support in our work together to support our students, staff, schools and this beautiful Ann Arbor Public Schools community we share.

Thank you for the honor of serving in the Ann Arbor Public Schools and for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Update this evening.

Sincerely,



Jeanice Kerr-Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Ann Arbor Public Schools