

**Ann Arbor Public Schools
Board of Education**

Email: boardofed@a2schools.org | 2555 S. State Street | Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Friday, June 17, 2022

Dear AAPS Community,

The Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education strives to provide excellent public education to all students in an anti-racist and equitable environment every day. When we hear of incidents that conflict with our mission, we take them very seriously.

On August 24, 2020, students in the University of Michigan Law School Civil Rights Litigation Initiative (CRLI) sent a letter to Ann Arbor Public Schools alleging a climate of racial discrimination and hostility at Pioneer High School, alleging bullying, humiliation, singling out, and retaliation against Black students and members of the Black Student Union. CRLI demanded that a teacher, Michele Macke, be terminated, that AAPS review its curriculum and staff composition, and that a formal reporting system be established for reporting claims of racial discrimination.

In order to [better understand these claims and to develop a plan for improving the educational environment where needed](#), the Board of Education retained Dykema Gossett PLLC to conduct an independent investigation into the allegations. At no time did any member of the Board of Education, AAPS administration, or AAPS staff give the investigation team any instruction regarding the methodology, conducting of, or reporting on the investigation.

In the attached report, readers will have access to a full description of the investigative method, including the history of engagement with AAPS and how the investigation was conducted. The Board of Education regrets that the primary claimants, Makayla and Charmelle Kelsey, were not made available by the CRLI to be interviewed by Dykema. Their absence affected the investigation team's ability to hear their version of the events, gain valuable follow-up information, or assess their credibility.

What you will see in the report is 1) an executive summary, 2) a description of the investigation method, 3) findings of the investigation, and 4) a list of recommendations. A next steps action plan developed by Superintendent Swift and her team in response to the findings is also included with this letter.

What you will not see is information protected by FERPA. FERPA is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which is a federal law that prevents the disclosure of personally identifiable information from students' educational records. Parts of the report that include these things are not omitted but rather redacted with opaque bars.

The Board of Education and the Ann Arbor Public Schools are committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or other aspects of their identity, learn and thrive in an environment that is diverse, equitable, and celebrates every child. The Board recognizes the tension between urgency and accuracy, and we thank the community for its patience while the team has worked tirelessly to create a comprehensive report and action plan to help move Ann Arbor Public Schools toward this goal. We invite you to review the report and related action plan. We look forward to receiving feedback from our stakeholders in upcoming school and community listening sessions as we move forward in our next steps together.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Lazarus", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Lazarus, President
Trustees, Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education

Related information: The legally redacted [Dykema Report is available here](#), and the [AAPS Next Steps Plan here](#).