

Hello and Happy New Year, 2016,

Thank you, AAPS team, for such an excellent start back-to-school this January. I am reaching out today to follow-up from my December 17 message regarding our next steps with 2015-16 teacher evaluation expectations. I want to clarify and provide more information on our immediate next steps.

Teacher Evaluation Advisory Group

As we shared in December, we are assembling a team of AAPS teachers, including elementary and secondary educators, to support and clarify the transition to an improved evaluation process. We will compensate these teachers for working alongside district curriculum leaders and principals over the coming months to refine the implementation of an aligned teacher evaluation system, including clarifying effective student growth measures.

Today, the application is posted on our website and teachers have the opportunity to apply to work on the AAPS Evaluation advisory group. We are seeking solution-oriented individuals who will be available to meet after school hours, twice monthly, during January through June, 2016. The work of this group of teachers, content curriculum leaders, and district administrators is to work together to clarify expectations, offer supports, address challenges, and remove technical and other barriers to support a successful implementation of the AAPS teacher evaluation. It is our intention to compensate Evaluation Advisory members in the amount of \$1500 for the commitment of their time and efforts.

I am encouraging committed and qualified AAPS team members to apply. You will find more information at [this link](#). We look forward to engaging with the talented individuals who will participate in this work group and know that their thinking will support all of us in smoothing the transition process.

Evaluation Questions Help Line

Certainly, teachers and staff are busy individuals and may have questions that arise regarding evaluation. Today, we are providing an email address where questions and concerns can be submitted via a simple email message. In this way, we will monitor what issues may

need real-time support as we move through the coming weeks/months. We will share the issues from the email help line with the Evaluation Advisory Group, in addition to providing responses to the individuals who reach out to us via this tool. Please submit any questions to evalquestions@a2schools.org

Continued Work with AAEA Representatives

In addition to the Evaluation Advisory Group and to the Evaluation Questions Help Line, we will continue to receive regular input and participate in monthly discussion with members of our AAEA problem-solving team as well as with our Principal group.

We know well from experience the challenges of individual and organizational change such as the current transition we are making to an enhanced evaluation system. As we all know, the most important work we accomplish together during this transition will be those quality conversations among our teachers, building and district leaders during the process of our daily work together. We will learn together, share our best ideas and lessons learned. I know that we will help each other, and continue to offer our very best to this transition work in service to children.

A Caution

AAPS team, I would caution any who would state that the current evaluation system is 'illegal;' those who would make that statement are incorrect, and any such statement is absolutely false. The adjustments in our 2015 evaluation are in compliance with recent changes in law and also represent work to improve our process in updating and achieving best instructional practices, aligned to new standards. It is important to focus on seeking our solutions together, not creating controversy.

I know that we have the capacity to work together toward positive and productive change. As with the adjustment to any new system, it will take time to refine our processes, and for all stakeholders to understand and feel comfortable working with new requirements. We will do this work together over time; that is the way of successful organizational change processes.

As I shared in December, every day in the district I am already seeing and hearing, from our own teachers and building leaders, of excellent

ideas as to how we will make an improved evaluation process our 'own,' and how we will leverage this opportunity to set and achieve our shared goals of realizing excellence together. This is Ann Arbor, and this work will continue to support the proud legacy of strong instruction, high achievement and excellence across our AAPS classrooms.

AAPS has served as a model district in the state, and we will continue to do so. I am confident that when we are on the other side of this pivotal school year, we will be proud of the progress we have made together, and we will be glad to have accomplished solid work on behalf of our children, while also satisfying and embracing best practice in evaluation and the requirements of the new Michigan Teacher Evaluation System in the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

We don't have to look far in our state to realize how *very fortunate* we are in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. By working together over recent years, we have stabilized district finances, implemented new, successful programs, and increased district enrollment. Our children continue to achieve at high levels and our school district is one of distinction, both in Michigan and across the country. We have successfully navigated change in the past, and together we will meet this challenge, also.

Thank you for the work you do every day to bring our highest and best effort to our classrooms on behalf of our children.

I know we all remain committed to deliver the top-quality teaching and learning that our children and families expect and deserve.

Sincerely,

Jeanice K. Swift

Superintendent of Schools

Ann Arbor Public Schools