

Superintendent Communication to AAPS Teachers
Regarding Teacher Evaluation Process

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Hello AAPS Teachers,

Last week I received a written request from AAEA leadership to delay the adjustments to the new evaluation system for one year. I have carefully considered the concerns that were articulated, and want to share my response with all of you. I wanted you to have this information directly from me before leaving for winter break on Friday.

I am confident that we will continue to work together through these times of change. Our work to hear concerns, provide clarification and supports, and improve our implementation process will continue as we move through this school year. All of us in Ann Arbor Public Schools have the same goal – to provide an education of excellence to all students; given our shared commitment, I am confident we will use the research-based evaluation tool, one of four permitted by the State, to advance our students' learning.

Thank you all for the work you accomplish every day on behalf of our children.

Sincerely,

Jeanice Swift

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Thursday, December 17, 2015

Hello Mr. Przygodski,

Thank you for reaching out to me regarding your concerns about the new evaluation process.

I understand the concerns about the evaluation process that you have articulated in your letter to me dated December 9<sup>th</sup>, and certainly know well from experience the challenges of individual and organizational change such as the current transition we are making to the Michigan state-mandated evaluation system. As we have taken the initial steps to move forward with adjustments to our evaluation process this fall, our team has very much appreciated receiving input and having the opportunity to regularly discuss concerns and questions with members of our AAEA problem-solving team, with teachers and principals. Mr. Comsa and our team have kept me apprised of this solid work, and I am proud of our teacher leaders for the way they are openly working to resolve issues while

also moving forward with necessary adjustments to our process. As with any new system, it will take time for all stakeholders to understand and feel comfortable with the new requirements.

While we continue to modify the evaluation system to comply with state law and best professional practice, we are reassured that this current work is based in the same familiar Danielson evaluation model that we have used for several years in AAPS. In addition, our current progress is also built on the strong foundation that we have achieved through many years of working together to maintain a high standard for strong instructional practice. This current work rests on a longstanding foundation of excellent teaching and learning in the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

In keeping with our strong commitment to pace our change to support success, we are amending our 2015-16 evaluation plan in the following ways for the balance of this school year:

- 1) Allow for the use of a *menu* of ‘rigorous and comparable measures,’ and provide the opportunity for teachers and leaders to choose from among these measures to demonstrate student growth.

For example, elementary teachers may choose from a list of measures that meet state requirements, including but not limited to NWEA, benchmark assessments, and EveryDay Math benchmark assessments. Secondary teachers may choose from a list of measures such as Common Content Assessments, ACT/SAT, SRI, and Student Learning Objectives (SLO).

- 2) During January, we will assemble two teams of AAPS teachers, elementary and secondary, who will work to support in this transition to ensure a strong evaluation process, and we will compensate these teacher teams for working alongside district curriculum leaders and principals throughout the coming year to clarify, support, and refine the implementation of an aligned teacher evaluation system and effective student growth measures.

More detailed information about the application process for these two teacher work groups as well as additional clarifications about our evaluation process will be shared during January.

Clearly, during this 2015-16 school year, we are participating in the development phase for full compliance with all legal requirements and achieving a strong evaluation model by the required 2016-2017 timeline. During this transition stage in our work, we should not expect perfection. I know that our teachers, building and district leaders will continue to participate in solution-oriented dialogue; we will learn together, help each other, and continue to contribute to our shared success as we move forward together in our service to children. Mr. Comsa and members of our team will also continue to meet with AAEEA and other stakeholders to listen to concerns, receive input and make adjustments as

appropriate.

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 the requirements we have been given by the state our 'own,' and how we will leverage this opportunity to set and achieve our own shared goals of 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.

Someone has said, "We make the path by walking together." There is no doubt that this 2015-16 school year proves a defining moment for our organization. During times of change such as this, we each have a choice – to continue to work together, to leverage these opportunities to improve the work we do, or to allow the deterioration of our relationship and delay the progress of the important work we accomplish together. I know that in the AAPS, we will choose to continue to work together to achieve our shared success - we will walk this path together.

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.

Sincerely,

Jeanice K. Swift  
Superintendent of Schools  
Ann Arbor Public Schools