

Information Packet

For Public Distribution

**For the
September 9, 2009**

Board of Education Meeting



Ann Arbor Public Schools

2555 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734.994.2230

Todd Roberts, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools
robertst@aaps.k12.mi.us

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education Trustees
From: Todd Roberts *TR*
Date: September 4, 2009
Subject: Information Update

The First Day of School

The first day of school is on Tuesday, so if you want to get out and visit a school or two and soak up the first day excitement, I'm sure folks would love to see you.

H1N1 Preparation

On Wednesday's agenda we will be giving a presentation on the district's H1N1 preparation. I have enclosed in the Blue Book a copy of a letter from the district and from the Washtenaw County Health Department that we are sending home to parents next week. At Wednesday's meeting we will also do a presentation with information for parents that we have made available in a presentation on our district website. We have been working diligently to try and be prepared for what the CDC and Health Department believe will be a very challenging flu season. We expect that it is likely we will begin to experience flu cases within the first month of the school year.

If you have any questions let me know.

Superintendent Goals

I will present the goals we discussed during our retreat earlier this week with the suggested modifications.

Pioneer Contractor Recommendations

On the agenda for approval is the bid awards for the renovations scheduled for Pioneer. This is our only action item.

This should be a short meeting.

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AUGUST 19, 2009 – DISTRICT LIBRARY

TENTATIVE EXECUTIVE SESSION, 5:30 PM – For the purpose of Negotiations and Attorney/Client Privilege

President Mexicotte called the meeting to order at 5:38 pm.

Present – Trustees Mexicotte, Baskett, Gates-Bryant, Patalan, Nelson

Trustee Gates-Bryant, supported by Vice President Patalan, moved to go recess to Executive Session immediately for the purpose of negotiations and attorney/client privilege. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0. Trustees Hollier and Friedman absent.

Recessed to Executive Session at 5:39pm

RESUME REGULAR MEETING, 7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

7:11pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Trustee Hollier led the pledge

ROLL CALL

Present – Trustees Baskett, Gates-Bryant, Hollier, Mexicotte (President), Nelson (Secretary), Patalan (Vice President)

Absent – Trustee Friedman (Treasurer)

Present from Administration – Allen, Comsa, Trent, Osinski (Recorder)

INTRODUCTION OF NON-VOTING MEMBER AT THE TABLE

President Mexicotte introduced Dr. Todd Roberts, Superintendent of Schools.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

None.

REPORTS

Associations – Youth Senate, BPSSG, AAPAC, PTOC, AAAA, AAEA

No reports.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Performance – no meetings have been scheduled. Meeting schedule will be posted on the website.

Planning – Trustee Gates-Bryant reported that the committee met 8/18. They received bid recommendation for the Pioneer High School construction. Also received info on energy savings project. Reviewed meeting schedule. Meetings will continue on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm.

INFORMATION

Facilities Update

Mr. Trent provided an update on the CSIP projects. 97% of the bond budget has been authorized. Because bids came in 20%-25% lower than expected, many of the schools' wish list items were added. Renovations at Pioneer High School are underway.

FIRST BRIEFING

B04-222 – Pioneer Contractor Recommendations

Mr. Trent reviewed the work that will be done at Pioneer and presented the bid award recommendations. This is the second to the last bid to be presented. The total contract is significantly below budget, even including alternates.

ACTION – CONSENT AGENDA – scheduled for approval at this meeting

Approval of Financial Institutions

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Nelson, moved to approve the Financial Institutions for deposit or investment of district funds for FY 2009/10 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried 6-0, Trustee Friedman absent.

Draft Minutes of the 7/8/09 Organizational Meeting

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Nelson, moved to approve the minutes of the 7/8/09 Organizational Meeting as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried, 6-0, Trustee Friedman absent.

Draft Minutes of the 6/10/09 Executive Session

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Nelson, moved to approve the minutes of the 6/10/09 Executive Session as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried, 6-0, Trustee Friedman absent.

Gift Offers

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Nelson, moved to accept the gift offers as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried, 6-0, Trustee Friedman absent.

ACTION – BOARD ITEMS

MASB Board of Directors Election

Nelson offered comments in support of Gregory Peoples for MASB Board of Directors.

Trustee Nelson, supported by Trustee Gates-Bryant, moved to vote in support of Gregory Peoples for a 3-year term on the Region 7 MASB Board of Directors. Further, the Executive Secretary to the Board of Education is directed to complete and submit the electronic ballot. On roll call vote, the motion carried 6-0, Trustee Friedman absent.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Roberts gave his report.

ITEMS FOR AGENDA PLANNING

Opening Day @ Pioneer on September 1, and Board Retreat September 2.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD**ADJOURNMENT**

7:42 pm

MSTMA event in Ann Arbor loaded with information

Aug 13, 2009
Athletic Turf News



ANN ARBOR, MI — It used to be that summer field days for sports turf managers focused almost exclusively on turfgrass and baseball infields. Not anymore. With the explosion in the installation of synthetic turf sports fields, today's sports field managers have to know how to take care of turfgrass and synthetic surfaces. His or her job, after all, is to provide the safest and most playable sports surfaces, regardless.

Ninety-eight participants showed up for the recent Field Day put together by Dana Davis and his Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association team and sponsored by Pioneer Athletics, headquartered in Cleveland, OH. The Field Day took place on a cloudy but pleasant July 22 at modern Skyline High School here.

The newly built Skyline High School opened just this past school year, in August 2008, to alleviate crowding at two other public high schools in Ann Arbor, Huron and Pioneer High Schools. Everything there is new, including the stadium and synthetic sports field where the participants met.

Presenters at the Field Day included:

- Herb Combs, Penn State University, who provided information about maintaining natural and synthetic turf
- Chris Flore, Pioneer Athletics, who gave attendees some field-level instruction on field marking
- Brad Morgan, Morgan Composting, who offered valuable information on composting-based fertility programs and organic materials
- Charlie Coffin of the Detroit Lions who explained some of the techniques used by the pros in painting natural and synthetic turf, including the use of stencils
- Ron Calhoun, Michigan State University, who gave the attendees practical information on weed control

Take advantage of field days in your state or region. They always offer excellent information and give you an opportunity to get to know, network with and share information with other professionals facing the same challenges as you do.

Enjoy the following images, courtesy of the Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association.

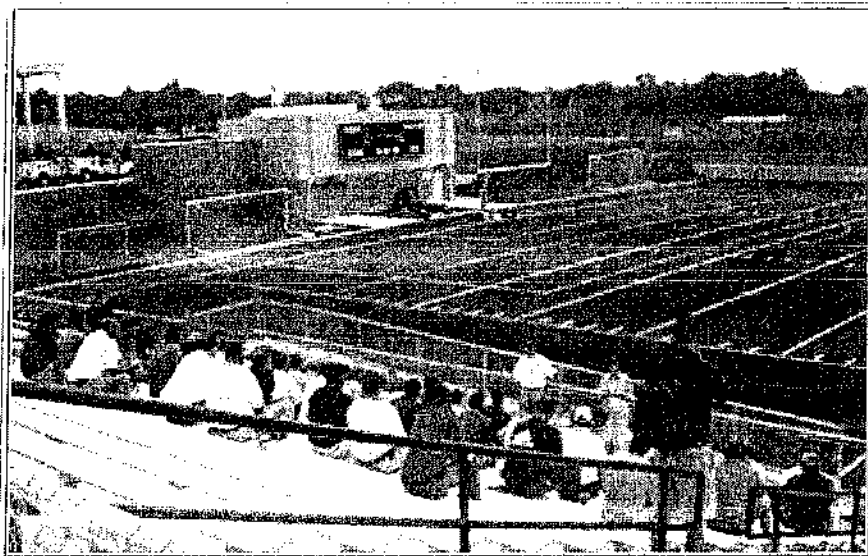




Charlie Coffin of the Detroit Lions



98 sports field managers and guests attended the
MSTMA event



Everything is new at Skyline High School



Brad Morgan offered valuable information about organic products

1

AnnArbor.com
8-16-09

- **Schools receive
\$16,000 grant**


- ◊ The Ann Arbor Branch of Farm & Garden recently presented a check for \$16,000 to the Ann Arbor school district for the Agrarian Adventure at Tappan Middle School.

- ◊ The grant is from the proceeds of the 19th Annual Ann Arbor Garden Walk, which was June 12.

— From staff reports

THIS WEEK IN LOCAL EDUCATION: **Ann Arbor school board holds pair of meetings**

Posted: 6:10 p.m. August 17, 2009

 0 Comment. [Comment Now](#)

The Ann Arbor school board starts back to its normal workload this week with a pair of meetings.

The board's planning committee will meet at 4 p.m. Tuesday in the district's administrative offices.

On the agenda is a review of bids for work at Pioneer High School and an energy savings program.

The full board will gather at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday in closed session at the downtown Ann Arbor District Library to discuss, among other things, negotiations with the teacher's union.

At 7 p.m., they'll deal with a pretty light agenda in a session open to the public. Among the items on the agenda is the same Pioneer High School work being discussed the night before and an update on the district's bond construction work.

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Tags: [Ann Arbor school board](#), [Ann Arbor schools](#), [This week in local education](#)

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Ann Arbor schools construction work to be done in time for opening day

Posted: 8:06 p.m. August 19, 2009

 2 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

Construction work at Ann Arbor schools should be wrapped up by the time students come back to school in early September, district officials told the school board Wednesday night.

Work at Burns Park, Carpenter, Eberwhite, Bach, King, Logan and Northside elementary schools will be wrapped up in time for teachers to get back in classrooms next week, Randy Trent, the district's executive director of physical properties, said.

The work on those schools included items such as new flooring, heating systems work, new cabinets and renovations to lobbies.

In addition, the district did Americans with Disability Act work on 22 schools this summer. That largely dealt with improving access to schools and concrete work, Trent said. Sixteen of those projects are complete, with the others scheduled to be done by the start of school Sept. 8.

Work is also wrapping up at Huron High School, Trent said.


The projects are being funded by a bond passed by voters in 2004 that renovated all the districts schools and built Skyline High School.

The board has awarded 97.7 percent of all the work to be done in the project, Trent said.

Still awaiting bids to be awarded are projects at Pioneer High School, the purchase of some buses and about \$1.5 million left for an early childhood classroom addition if the district decides it needs the space.

Ann Arbor school district taking Option Magnet program applications

Posted: 4:19 p.m. August 19, 2009

 0 Comment. [Comment Now](#)

The Ann Arbor school district's Option Magnet program is accepting applications for the 2009-10 school year from now until Sept. 11.


Applications will be available at Community High School and online on the CHS Web site.

Applications can be sent by mail to Community at 401 N. Division, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 or dropped off the school, faxed to 734-994-0042 or e-mailed to jaquette@aaps.k12.mi.us.

The program allows students to use a variety of classes, including one-on-one instruction, online, small group seminars or a combination.

The program is available to Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Ypsilanti, Willow Run and Whitmore Lake students.



Share this post 

Tags: [Ann Arbor schools](#), [Community High School](#), [Options Magnet](#)



2 Votes

VOTE

Former bus driver, Ann Arbor Public Schools sued in sex assault case

Posted: 6:57 p.m. August 20, 2009

7 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

Ann Arbor Public Schools failed to properly monitor a bus driver, which allowed him to groom a student for three years and sexually assault her, according to a lawsuit filed today.

The girl and her mother are suing the former award-winning driver, 41-year-old Olumide Osuntuyi of Ypsilanti Township, and the school system, seeking an unspecified amount of money.

The suit was filed in Washtenaw County court, where a judge sealed the plaintiff's names.

Liz Margolis , Ann Arbor Public Schools spokeswoman, could not immediately be reached for comment tonight.

Osuntuyi is at Washtenaw County jail, officials said, serving a one-year sentence after pleading guilty to second-degree criminal sexual conduct and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Authorities said he had sexual encounters with the 14-year-old during a two-week period in December 2007.

The city's school board gave him a Commitment to Excellence award that year, honoring him for his ability to build relationships with students.

The school system encouraged drivers to "develop personal relationships" with students on its buses, the suit states.

The victim began riding his bus in the sixth-grade.

Osuntuyi groomed female students, the suit alleges, giving them candy and birthday cards and calling them on the telephone.

When the victim was a freshman at Huron High School, she confided in him about family problems, but he changed the subject to sex, according to the suit.

He kept her on the bus late in the morning and afternoon, waiting until they were alone to kiss her and ask her to touch him inappropriately, the suit alleges.

Ultimately, he had sexual contact with her without her consent, the suit states.

Another female student had complained that Osuntuyi sexually harassed her, and the school system responded by taking her off his route, the suit alleges.

At one point, the school system reprimanded him for handing out candy to students on the bus.

The victim has suffered panic attacks, nightmares, loss of self-esteem, distrust of men, distrust of people in authority and had other problems as a result, the suit alleges.

Her mother also has suffered, the suit states, including nightmares, weight loss and worry about her daughter's future.

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ShareThis

Stop the presses forever

Daily newspaper's death leaves Ann Arbor at a loss

Sunday, August 23, 2009 3:36 AM

BY JOE HALLETT

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

ANN ARBOR, Michigan -- As she prepared informational packets for school board members 10 days ago, secretary Amy Osinski yelled a question to her boss that probably wouldn't be asked in a city with a daily newspaper.

"Hey Liz, what should we do about clipping articles now?"

Liz Margolis, director of communications for the 16,500-student Ann Arbor school district, was preoccupied with other effects from the local paper ceasing daily publication three weeks earlier. Two of her three teenage sons were competing in the city's annual junior golf tournament, and she could find nary a story or photo anywhere.

"The *Ann Arbor News* covered the heck out of it," Margolis said, lamenting the loss of a companion for her boys.

"Even though they're online all day, not having that sports page at night is a tragedy. My middle son took the sports pages to bed every night and studied the box scores."

Across this city of 114,000, residents are coming to grips with the loss of their venerable daily newspaper, replaced by a Web version. Declining ad revenue and a prolonged recession are ravaging the newspaper industry, last year killing such iconic mastheads as Denver's 149-year-old *Rocky Mountain News* and the 146-year-old Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*.

But Ann Arbor -- with its powerhouse university, world-class medical center, well-educated populace and an economy the envy of a down-and-out state - seems an unlikely destination for the ink-stained Grim Reaper.



PAUL SANCYA | ASSOCIATED PRESS

Don McDevitt reads the final edition of *The Ann Arbor News* on July 23.



It feels strange being in a town without a paper," Dave Maurer, 67, said as he checked the stock market on his laptop at Espresso Royale Caffe on Ann Arbor's vibrant Main Street.

"To me, it's a big loss because I don't like reading news on the Web. I like the feel of a newspaper in my hands, having the stories and ads all in one package."

Maurer and others in A2, as it is known, already are starving for news about the city's schools, government, cultural life and biggest employer, the University of Michigan.

Nate Hurley, 35, a financial analyst for Ford, has *The Wall Street Journal* delivered daily to his home, but wonders what's happening around town since the *News* stopped daily delivery.

"It's been hard to come home and not have it there," Hurley said. "After being at work all day and looking at a computer screen, it was nice to relax and read it on the couch. It was good for knowing what was going on in the city and the state."

For public entities accustomed to newspaper coverage, the loss of the *News* is forcing an unwanted role reversal -- now they make the news *and* deliver it.

"Our office is literally having to be the content creator," said Bruce Madej, director of media relations for UM athletics. "We used to be the enablers."

Madej has a more disconcerting concern: "I don't know who the watchdogs are anymore."

The *Ann Arbor News* was born in 1835, two years before Michigan became a state. It died July 23 when its out-of-town owner, Advance Publications, killed it in favor of AnnArbor.com, an online offshoot of the newspaper. The company kept Thursday and Sunday print editions, also called AnnArbor.com to help brand the Web site and keep the newspaper's most profitable ad days.

"Thirty years into the business, that's not what I thought would happen," said longtime newspaperman Tony Dearing, now the Web site's "content director."

But as editor of *The Flint Journal*, also published by Advance, Dearing said he saw what newspaper executives across the country have faced: "declining revenues, declining staff and declining news hole. We were in a downward cycle, and I didn't see any way out of it."

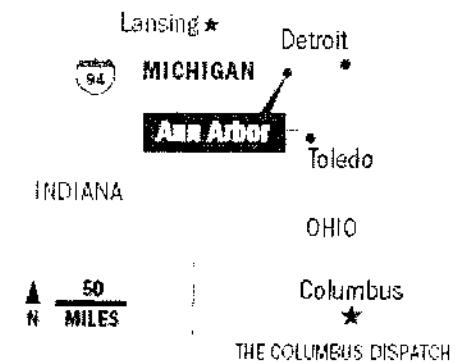
The Newhouse family, owner of Advance, a group of about 20 newspapers including Cleveland's *Plain Dealer*, is using Ann Arbor as a media laboratory to answer a question reverberating through the publishing industry: Can the country get along without printed newspapers in the digital age?

"It's the great national experiment," said UM Athletic Director William C. Martin.

"Where better to try it than Ann Arbor, where even old ladies go on line," said 70-year-old Washtenaw County Commissioner Leah Gunn, an Ann Arbor resident for more than 40 years.

Despite newspapers' battered bottom lines, it's far too soon to write the industry's obituary, said Kenneth A. Paulson, former editor of *USA Today* and chief executive officer of the Newseum, a Washington-based museum dedicated to the First Amendment.

Ann Arbor News employees console each other on the newspaper's last day.



It's so easy to confuse the recession with what's really going on out there," said Paulson, noting that last year only 14 of the nation's 1,422 daily newspapers went out of business. "Until we bounce back economically as a nation, you can't get a realistic sense of where the newspaper industry is."

Paulson said that newspapers "still are significantly profitable and viable for the long run," adding that the value they bring to communities "cannot be replaced by any number of tweets or Facebook postings."

Ann Arbor is the first substantial city in which the only daily newspaper has given way to a Web version. AnnArbor.com is one of three Web sites -- along with the Ann Arbor Chronicle and the Ann Arbor Journal -- trying to fill the void left by the *News*.

In one sense, Dearing said, Ann Arbor is a digital throwback to the halcyon days of "when you had maybe three newspapers competing in a way that communities were better covered. With online, it's a more competitive environment and there are more sources of news and, in a way, it's better for the community."

With 35 full- and part-time newsroom employees, AnnArbor.com has about half as many as did the *News*, but still enough to do the job, Dearing said.

"What I hear from the community is what they really want to preserve is the watchdog journalism and a credible news source," he said, confident that AnnArbor.com is succeeding.

Around town, though, people are withholding judgment and many have not automatically defaulted to AnnArbor.com. Joan Lowenstein, an attorney who formerly taught communication law at UM, said many in Ann Arbor can't overcome the newspaper habit and resent that Advance didn't give them a chance to help save the *News* by paying more for it.

"There's a whole segment of the population that just isn't going to look at an online newspaper everyday and most of them probably are over 50," Lowenstein said. "It's not second nature to think of that as a source of news."

A member of Ann Arbor's City Council from 2000-08, Lowenstein referred to an income-tax increase the council was contemplating for the November ballot and said, "I don't know how they would ever be able to convince people it's needed without newspaper coverage."

County Commissioner Gunn was no fan of the *News*, but doubts that residents are better informed by AnnArbor.com: "It's the comments, the blogging that goes on after the (online) stories. It's out of control. Many of those blogs have misinformation in them. They distort the public debate."

With the daily newspaper gone, Margolis said Ann Arbor schools are expanding outreach to parents and students and will hire a "district editor" to oversee new in-house publications.

But Margolis said the district suffers by not having the inherent credibility of a newspaper vetting school news before publishing it, conceding a greater potential for the schools' own newsletters to be perceived as propaganda.

"What we don't have is that journalism window of a third party so it's just not us telling the story."

As he watched the Wolverines practice football, Athletic Director Martin said he was from the old school: "I haven't personally made the changeover to go online for news."

Martin made a fortune in real estate and started the Bank of Ann Arbor before joining UM. As one of the bank's directors, Martin said it advertised regularly in the newspaper and now is uncertain how

TO USE ITS \$250,000 AN BUDGET.

"We don't know," he said. "We may try lots of things. The void is trying to be filled by two or three online publications."

Martin is facing another digital-age dilemma -- what to do with the burgeoning band of Wolverine football bloggers. "If they become the quasi-press, who are you going to put in the press box?"

jhallett@dispatch.com

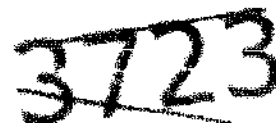
Read all 19 comments »

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on your
post)

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:



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Ann Arbor

Browse a huge selection now. Find exactly what you want today.

(www.ebay.com)

Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance

\$180,000 Refinance \$939/mo. See Rates- No Credit Check Req.

Writer from Ann Arbor, Cherry Cheva, branches out from "Family Guy" to teen novel

Posted: 5:57 a.m. August 24, 2009

0 Comment. [Comment Now](#)



Law school probably isn't the most common route through which to get a fabulous Hollywood writing job, but it worked for Ann Arborite Cherry Chevapravatdumrong.

After graduating from Huron High School in 1995 (full disclosure: we were classmates), she headed to Yale for a degree in psychology and then to New York University for her law degree — despite not really wanting to be a lawyer. "By the time I started law school, I thought, 'This is not gonna happen,'" she said by phone from Los Angeles, Calif. "I didn't want to go. I was interested in TV and writing, but I was just too scared." And then there were her parents' reminders of the value of a good education. Besides, New York City didn't seem to be a bad place for a person interested in the entertainment industry, so she decided she'd at least show up.

"I thought I would drop out. But then it was a semester, and then a year, and then I'm halfway done so I might as well finish it. It was basically me delaying the inevitable."

"I thought I would drop out. But then it was a semester, and then a year, and then I'm halfway done so I might as well finish it. It was basically me delaying the inevitable."

That came pretty much the minute she had her degree in hand. "I said, 'Forget it,' put all my stuff in the car and drove to L.A. I didn't know anyone, but I had no more school to go to." I guess getting a job on a TV show was the ultimate goal in the back of my head, but I didn't think I was going to be able to do it because the odds are against you," she stated (or maybe more accurately, understated). "Until it happened, I had no idea it was going to work. So I just said, 'I'm gonna try.'" She found a job as an assistant to an agent and started writing test scripts, working her way around as an assistant to TV executives until she landed on the staff of the Jason Alexander sitcom "Listen Up" — which lasted one whopping season. But she'd put in enough good face time to get an agent and make some contacts. "I feel like everyone does the same thing," she said. "You've got to meet people and write the scripts."

So when the animated series "Family Guy," whose DVD sales from its short-lived first run so impressed 20th Century Fox Television that it made a historic comeback from cancellation, returned to the air in 2004, Chevapravatdumrong managed to get herself on board (and has since worked her way up to the position of supervising producer). Asked if it was a good fit, her answer is instantaneous: "Oh God, yes. I thought it was hilarious before I worked on it. I just like laughing all day; I think there are very few jobs where you know that 30 seconds after you walk in, everyone's laughing. Our job is to show up and make each other laugh all day."

Well, it's a *little* more involved than that. After all the outlining, drafting, reading, table-reading with the actors, sketching, editing, sending to Korea (where the animation is done), returning and fine-tuning, it can be a year or more from the assignment of an episode to its airing. Which is kind of a long

lead time. "I know!" she laughed. "We're rewriting an episode now that isn't going to be on TV until 2011. It's kinda nice sometimes, because by then you've forgotten what happens."

Good things apparently come to those who wait, judging by this year's Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Comedy Series — the biggest the show has come up for yet, despite 10 appearances on the nominee list (it's a regular in the Outstanding Animated Program category) and three wins (for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation, Outstanding Music and Lyrics and Outstanding Voice-Over Performance). There's another easy, generous laugh when I ask how one finds out that kind of exciting news. "It depends on how high up in the food chain you are. If you're my boss, you get a phone call at 5:30 in the morning, but if you're me, your brother calls and tells you at a normal time." She doesn't know yet if she'll be one of the lucky souls taking a stroll down the red carpet (tickets are limited and only those with particular job titles are guaranteed a seat).

It would be enough of a story to stop there, but no. This whole glamorous, award-winning, Hollywood TV gig? Yeah, that's just her day job.

Chevapravatdumrong also just published her third young adult novel, "DupliKate" (Harper Teen), about an overachieving high school senior named Kate who's trying to manage a crushing schedule of activities and get into Yale with her boyfriend. Passing out after a grueling night capped off by a computer malfunction, she wakes up to find that a long-discarded avatar from a game called SimuLife has gained three-dimensional status — and come for a visit.



This is predictably disturbing to Kate at first, but the alter-ego seems plenty eager to please, and it doesn't take long to figure out that a spare self could be the answer to her time management problems. Unfortunately, the "dupliKate" quickly develops an inconvenient sense of autonomy, putting serious strain on the life it's taking all Kate has to keep chugging in the right direction. (Frankly, I'm dying to give away the ending, because if you've read this far into this article, you'd appreciate it — but I won't. You'll have to check it out for yourself.)


What draws Chevapravatdumrong (who writes under the name Cherry Cheva) to the young-adult genre? "Okay, well, I'm 13 years old at heart," she confessed. "Maybe 10. I like teenagers." As much as anything else, though, she says she sort of fell into it: her first book, "She's So Money," was set in high school but marketed as a crossover, and she noted that it's the publisher, not the author, who decides in which category a book is placed. At any rate, it's fine with her. "I like that stuff. I feel like I remember high

school pretty well, and it seems natural to me. I just have no problems flashing back there. I don't think I set out to do it, but it happened and I feel like it works.

"And also now that I'm in it, the YA world, everyone's so nice to each other. There's this whole blogging community from the writers to the teenagers... I wouldn't change it. Everyone's great. Not that I know anything about the adult literary world, but teenagers get very enthusiastic about things."

Catch "Family Guy" on Fox at 9 p.m. on Sundays, and tune in to the Emmys at 8 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 20 to see if they got their win. Cherry Chevapravatdumrong is currently planning an appearance at Ann Arbor District Library on Dec. 29; keep an eye on their web site for further details.

Leah DuMouchel is a free-lance writer who covers books for AnnArbor.com.

 Share this post ▾ Tags: books, Family Guy, TV



Votes

VOTE

NEIGHBORHOODS

WITH POLL: Defining neighborhoods in the city of Ann Arbor a tough task

Posted: 2:30 p.m. August 24, 2009

 24 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

What defines a neighborhood?

That's the question the Community Team at AnnArbor.com has been struggling with over the past few weeks. Hyperlocal neighborhood coverage is a key part of our strategy to make AnnArbor.com of, by and for the community. But before we launch full-force into trying to create the kind of rich, hyperlocal content we envision, we have to define the neighborhoods in the city.

It's important to note that this effort is focusing on the city of Ann Arbor and its neighborhoods. It is separate from any strategy we'll have for covering nearby cities and communities such as Ypsilanti, Chelsea, Saline or Dexter.

So for the past three weeks, we've been meeting with various folks to get input on neighborhoods, including Liz Margolis, Ann Arbor Public Schools spokeswoman and Ann Arbor native. We've talked to a few real estate agents and our neighborhood contributors.

We've been mulling it over as a team and sorting through maps, city guides, neighborhood watch info and lists of residential associations.

Our initial list of neighborhoods was based almost entirely on elementary school attendance areas, along with a geographic quadrant division. We realize this list misses several neighborhoods.

There are so many ways to look at what defines a neighborhood. We thought about doing it geographically, in quadrants, and then by elementary school. We talked about political ward lines, historic district boundaries, parks, major landmarks and subdivisions. We debated whether some people even define themselves by the neighborhood they live in - and if they ever would.

Above all, we want our list of neighborhoods to reflect how the community sees itself. And we also need to be able to create useful content for the neighborhoods we list on our site since each will have its own page. That may mean some very small neighborhoods should be listed as part of a larger neighborhood since it will be difficult to create meaningful content for an area that only encompasses a handful of houses.

In the future, I envision our neighborhood pages will have content as diverse as real estate listings and data, stories from our digital journalists, reports from our neighborhood contributors, event listings, wedding and birth announcements, death notices and obituaries, crime maps, forums, classifieds, multimedia galleries ... and the list goes on.

So below is our current list and an additional list of neighborhoods we've come up with after consulting with others. We'd like your input; take our poll to select the neighborhoods you'd like to see on our site, leave a comment below or e-mail me at StefanieMurray@AnnArbor.com.

Is there a neighborhood listed that should be combined with another? Is there a neighborhood that we missed? Is there a neighborhood listed below that really isn't a neighborhood, or isn't how the residents define themselves? Let us know.

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'He hit me first': teaching kids about rationalization

Posted: 6:00 a.m. August 24, 2009

[Comment](#), [Comment Now](#)

Several years ago, when my son tried to convince me that he had no choice but to hit his brother, I took the opportunity to teach my kids the word "rationalization."

The way I explain it, rationalization works backwards from the answer you want by cherry-picking the logic that gets you to that answer.

Kids use it to sell a story about how life should go in a particular way - like two desserts today because they didn't have any yesterday, or to justify why life went the way it did - like how they couldn't do their homework because it didn't make sense or how they HAD to hit their brother because "he hit me first."

Parents might call them excuses, stories, lies, or even the makings of a future lawyer. My interest is in teaching my kids to appreciate it's flawed logic because no matter who or how old you are, the minute you forget that you are vulnerable to this phenomenon, you can be caught by it.



Not to blow these kiddie crimes out of proportion, but it's a slippery slope. Everyone has a story that justifies his or her actions. Rationalization is used to get out of responsibilities, manipulate a situation, lie, cheat, get drunk, have affairs, discriminate, embezzle, behave in all kinds of abusive ways, bilk people out of billions of dollars, go to war.

The trouble with rationalization is that it insists we minimize information that doesn't fit our answer and oversells any logic that does. What makes it tricky is that there is usually some plausibility to an argument - albeit sometimes quite twisted.

The only way to sidestep rationalizations is to be honest about any 'unspoken motives' that are pushing you in a particular direction (I didn't feel like doing my homework; I wanted to hit my brother).

Helping kids test for rationalization is as simple as asking whether that same information could be used to come up with a different action (ask for help with homework; use your words to deal with your brother). Of course, having them admit that they wanted to hit their brother isn't the end of it, but at least now we're getting to the heart of the matter. It can be so exhausting to spend all that time just to get our kids to admit that they HAD choices. Appreciating that moves us much farther along so we can work on acknowledging the anger while challenging the action.

Using real world examples can also be effective. "Above the law" politicians, unethical business and community members, the plots of movies, most comedy and lawyer shows, and every advertisement is selling an opportunity to justify an action. In fact, late night talk show hosts would be out of business without the absurdity of some of these stories.

So I asked my son if teaching him about the word "rationalization" was useful. He didn't hesitate for a second in saying yes. Frankly, he is now one of the most truthful people I know. He doesn't always make the choices I wish he would, but he is always honest about his reasons.

So does that mean that I'm raising an awesome kid? Well that works for me!

Annie Zirkel, LPC is a local parenting and relationship consultant. You can find her at www.practicehow.com. Submit your relationship question to annie@practicehow.com



17 Votes

VOTE

New Ann Arbor teachers contract calls for pay freeze

Posted: 3:25 p.m. August 24, 2009

37 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

Faced with a projected budget deficit, Ann Arbor teachers are considering a contract with wage freezes for the first time in history.

The tentative contract is now awaiting a ratification vote from the 1,100 union members.

There's no pay raises this school year, although teachers will continue to get step increases for years of service.

And the contract has no details on wage adjustments for the 2010-11 school year. Instead, there's a clause in the contract that allows it to be negotiated in the future.

"It's a reality-based contract," said Brit Satchwell, who was recently elected as the teachers' union president. "The district can't see ahead very far when it comes to the budget. The union can't see ahead very far when it comes to the budget.

"The only thing we can predict is a projected budget deficit."

Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts agreed.

"We have no idea what the state is going to do (this) school year, much less (the 2010-11) school year," he said. "This gives us flexibility in addressing wages. We didn't want to lock ourselves in."

The 80-plus-page agreement also details other changes for teachers.

Prescription drug co-pays will be going up. But the amount of money the district contributes for teachers' health care also will go up. Teachers can choose how they want to spend that money. If they opt for the most-expensive plan offered, they'll have to pay out part of the cost. If they choose the lower-priced HMO, they'll get money back from the district.

Both sides said that when they sat down this summer to negotiate a new contract, a multi-year deal was an attractive option to bring some financial planning stability to the district and helps parents and staff plan schedules.

The district's projected finances are still in flux. The state hasn't yet determined how much per-pupil funding (the district's main source of revenue) Ann Arbor will receive this or next school year.

And a countywide enhancement millage is headed to voters Nov. 3. If it passes, Ann Arbor could get more than \$11 million a year from it.

If it fails, and district projections hold true, Ann Arbor could be facing a \$15 million hole in the 2010-11 budget.

In addition to pay and benefits, the agreement - which is scheduled to be voted on by union members Sept. 16 and 17 - sets the calendar for the next two years.

Several parents have noted that calendar, especially the district's midwinter break, doesn't align with calendars for the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University.

A state-mandated start date of the Tuesday after Labor Day - a week later than normal - impacted the schedule, officials said, as well as a new countywide calendar for K-12 schools.

The contract also opens up the potential for other changes in the way the district does business, especially in the areas of how teachers are evaluated and merit pay.

"We felt like it's important to look at option that might exists (for merit pay)," Roberts said. "It warrants a collaborative discussion about that as we move forward."

Satchwell isn't shrinking from that discussion.

"This is public education," he said. "The public dictates the agenda. Our job is to engage that conversation as fully as possible and with as much information as possible. I think teachers have all sorts of merit. It's time for that debate. Everything is on the table."

Both committees are scheduled to report back by the end of this school year.

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



Share this post ▾

Tags: Ann Arbor school district, news-a2, teachers union

Variety of factors complicate Ann Arbor school calendar making

Posted: 3:26 p.m. August 25, 2009

[33 Comments](#). [Comment Now](#)

There's no doubt the most-discussed portion of Monday's release of details of a tentative agreement between the Ann Arbor school district and the teachers' union was the calendar for the next two school years.

In case you haven't been following all the comments on the original story, let me bring you up to speed.

The proposed calendar, which is set through the bargaining process between the district and the union, moved the mid-winter break from its traditional alignment with the University of Michigan's break.

A variety of reasons were cited for the move.

The first factor: U-M's spring break this year was moved to the first week in March. (Eastern Michigan University's break is the same as U-M).

If Ann Arbor matched its winter break to the university's spring break, that would mean students would be in class just four weeks between the district's winter break and its spring break, which is set for the first week in April.

District and union folks didn't like having that short length of time between the two breaks.

So you might think the solution is simple - just have the district move its spring break back a week or two, creating more distance between the two breaks.

But that's not possible, thanks to another state law.

That law, passed in 2007, mandates that all the school districts in a county adopt a common calendar that has the same weeks for winter holiday and spring break.

Washtenaw County adopted a common calendar in 2008. But Ann Arbor had an existing teachers' contract that had a calendar already established, meaning it didn't have to match up this year.

The contract, including the calendar, isn't yet set in stone. Ann Arbor's teachers and then the school board will have to approve the entire contract.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. Reach him at davidjesse@annarbor.com.

Register for Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Fall/Winter classes

1 day ago, expires 5 days from now [Visit our Web site](#)

Registration for Fall/Winter Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation classes/programs has begun. Consider playing golf this fall at Huron Hills & Leslie Park Golf Courses; open swimming or American Red Cross swim lessons at Mack Indoor Pool; visit the Ann Arbor Farmers Market; take a class or trip with the Ann Arbor Senior Center; canoe/kayak at Gallup & Argo Canoe Liveries; or take ice skating and hockey lessons at Buhr Park and Veterans Memorial Ice Arenas. There's so much to do and learn.

How do I register?

If you're registering online, visit www.a2gov.org/parks and click the link to A2 Parks Online. You can view and download the new 56-page program guide on our Web site.

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Wage freeze looms for Ann Arbor teachers

BY DAVID JESSE
davidjesse@annarbor.com

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The tentative contract is now awaiting a ratification vote from the 1,100 union members.

There are no pay raises this school year, although teachers will continue to get step increases for years of service.

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

Pioneer Theatre Guild wins two national awards

Posted: 3:37 p.m. August 27, 2009

 4 Comments. [Comment Now](#)



Pioneer High School's Theatre Guild recently won two awards from National Youth Theatre - an organization that highlights and evaluates high school theater groups - for the school's recent production of "Urinetown: The Musical."

Senior Ashley Park won the award for outstanding supporting actress in a musical for her performance as the show's precocious narrator, Little Sally; and the show's cast received the award for outstanding ensemble.

To identify award-worthy work, NYT sends experts around the country to theatrical productions involving young people; this year, 200 productions were considered.

NYT's review of Pioneer's "Urinetown" production can be viewed at http://www.nationalyouththeatre.com/reviews/reviews_pioneer_urinetown.html.

Jenn McKee is a staff digital journalist for AnnArbor.com. You can reach her at 734-523-2546 or jennmckee@annarbor.com or follow her on Twitter @jennmckee.

 Share this post 

Tags: Pioneer High School, Pioneer Theatre Guild, theater

WITH POLL: Ann Arbor's traffic roundabouts improve safety, data shows

Posted: 7:00 a.m. August 27, 2009

54 Comments. Comment Now



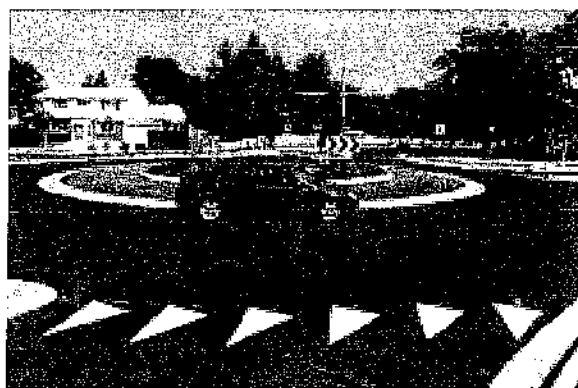
With Washtenaw County road officials planning more roundabouts in the coming years, new data concludes traffic circles recently built in Ann Arbor have reduced the number and severity of accidents.

Statistics compiled by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments show that in 2008 - the first full year after the roundabouts at Maple Road and M-14 near Skyline High School were completed - accidents there dropped nearly 40 percent, from 13 in 2007 to 8 last year. The accidents also have been less harmful, according to the SEMCOG data.

That evidence matches what road and law enforcement officials have been saying about roundabouts - not only do they reduce the number of accidents, but the crashes that occur are less severe because speeds at roundabouts are slower than regular intersections.

"They're extremely safe," said Steve Puuri, managing director of the Washtenaw County Road Commission. "Any accidents are low-speed."

Puuri said some common mistakes drivers make when negotiating a roundabout are going too fast for the curves, and hesitating upon entry.



According to a guide to driving roundabouts on the commission's Web site, the keys are to slow down, look to the left for oncoming traffic, and yield to vehicles already in the roundabout. Traffic in a roundabout always goes counterclockwise, so drivers should never turn left into one, the guide says. Also, the only reason to stop in a roundabout is to avoid an accident.

Even in more complicated configurations, once motorists get used to them, accident counts don't increase where roundabouts are built. In Green Oak Township near Brighton, a string of three roundabouts built by a mall developer caused some uproar among drivers - but SEMCOG statistics show accident rates in 2007 and 2008 were not any higher than before the roundabouts were built in 2006.

Green Oak Police Chief Bob Brookins said the roundabouts are working well.

"The severity of crashes is significantly reduced," he said. "We've had two or three minor injuries - everybody's at a lower speed."

A new roundabout was recently completed at Huron Parkway and Nixon Road on Ann Arbor's north side. And Puuri said more are planned, including two at the interchange of Geddes and US-23, one at Geddes and Earhart near Concordia University, and one at Whittaker and Stony Creek in Ypsilanti Township.

Puuri said roundabouts cost more to build than traditional intersections, but save money in the long term by avoiding traffic signal maintenance costs. The roundabout at Whittaker and Stony Creek is budgeted for \$1.37 million in the Road Commission's current capital improvement plan.

"You're probably spending a little more up front, but in the very short term you're getting it back," Puuri said.

And after some initial concern over the roundabouts near Skyline, Brian Mielewski, head of the parent-teacher-student organization there, said he hasn't heard any dissatisfaction about them.

"I haven't fielded any complaints from parents," he said.

[Click here to take our poll about roundabouts.](#)

Photos by Lon Horwedel, AnnArbor.com: The new roundabout on Nixon Road on Ann Arbor's north side recently opened.

Freelance reporter Dan Meisler can be reached at danmeister@gmail.com.

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Pioneer High School student remains in juvenile detention in attempted jogger attack

Posted: 5:30 p.m. August 26, 2009

[16 Comments](#), [Comment Now](#)

A Pioneer High School student charged with attempting to rape a jogger behind Slauson Middle School will remain in custody as he awaits a pretrial hearing next month, a judge ordered today.

The 16-year-old boy is charged as a juvenile with assault with intent to commit criminal sexual conduct involving sexual penetration, Ann Arbor police Det. Bill Stanford said.

He will be tried in juvenile court and, if convicted, could be sentenced to remain in state custody up to age 21.

The boy was in shackles as two detention officers led him into a courtroom for a brief hearing this afternoon in Washtenaw County Juvenile Court.

His mother sat next to him, put her arm around him and gave him a kiss. She and three others who attended the hearing declined to comment.

Ann Arbor police say the boy tackled a 23-year-old woman as she was jogging about 8:40 p.m. Aug. 20 on West Washington Street, took her to the ground in a grassy area and attempted to take off her jogging pants.


The victim, who is a graduate student instructor at the University of Michigan, bit one of the boy's fingers and yelled at him, scaring him away, police said.

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The boy, who was scheduled to enter his junior year at Pioneer High, was arrested Aug. 22 after police received a tip.

A pretrial hearing is scheduled for Sept. 28.

Lee Higgins covers crime and courts for AnnArbor.com. Reach him at leehiggins@annarbor.com or 734-623-2527.

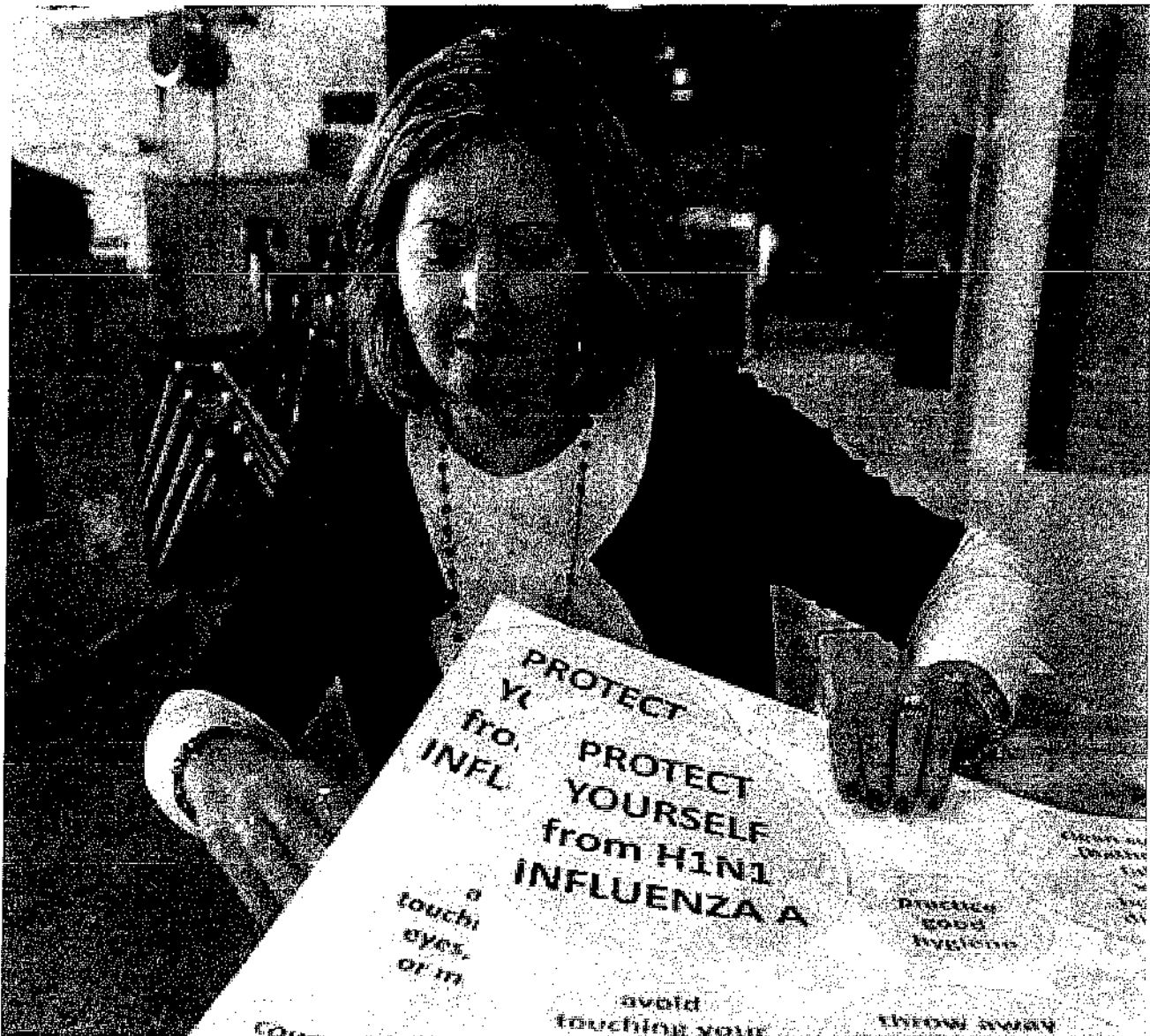
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Tags: Ann Arbor police, attempted rape, Slauson Middle School

Washtenaw County schools, universities say they're prepared for potential resurgence of swine flu

Posted: 6:21 a.m. August 30, 2009

11 Comments. [Comment Now](#)



Saline Schools Superintendent Scot Graden has been blogging as a way to easily communicate with those in his district. So when a few children fell ill from the H1N1 novel flu virus, it seemed a natural extension to begin a blog about it.

That blog has now become a part of Saline's strategy for quickly getting news out to parents and students should H1N1 - commonly known as the swine flu - become an issue again during the fast approaching school year.

"We don't want to spread fear and hype, but we want to make sure we're communicating," Graden said.

Local schools say they're rebuilding their emergency contact lists and stocking up on hand sanitizer and face masks. They're launching public awareness campaigns and telling parents to be watchful for symptoms and willing to keep their children home if they become ill.

For the past few weeks, school officials have been meeting on a regular basis with Washtenaw County to get updates; they plan to offer daily updates on how many children are out sick when school resumes next week.

Schools are working with local hospitals and public health professionals at a level officials say hasn't happened before as they make preparations for the anticipated resurgence of a pandemic flu in Washtenaw County.

"We don't know when it's going to happen - earlier or later - and we want to be as vigilant as possible," said Diana Torres-Burgos, the county's medical director. "Usually schools are reflective of what we would start seeing in a community."

WHAT HAPPENED THIS SPRING

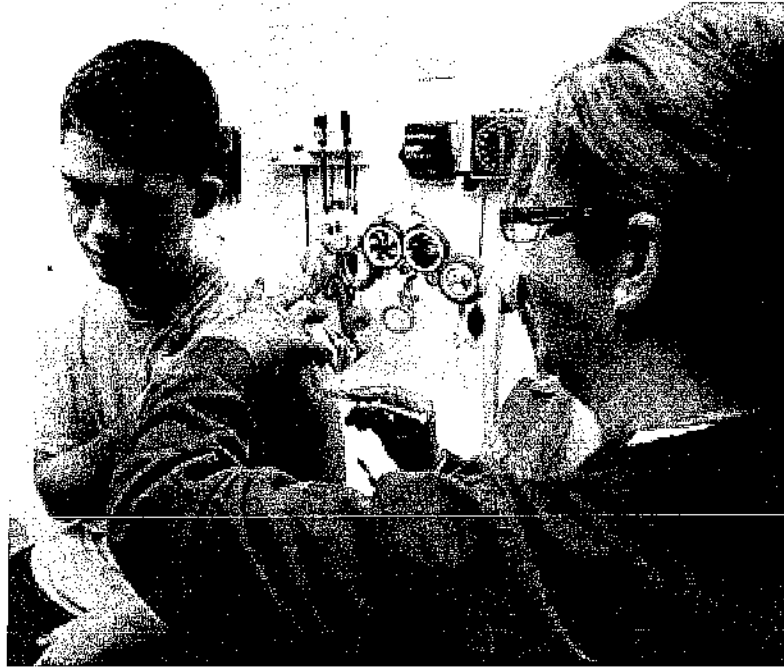
When the H1N1 virus began circulating in the United States, several local schools began reporting students who were ill. Ann Arbor's Father Gabriel Richard High School announced it would close for a week in early May after two students fell ill with the flu.

Experts say the flu will likely begin to spread quickly at the beginning of the school season because children will be spending much of their time in close gathering spaces like classrooms and cafeterias. Many children share food and drinks and fail to wash their hands enough or cover their coughs and sneezes.

"Every local health department has been meeting with their schools, their businesses, their faith groups, their colleges and universities, especially in Washtenaw County," said state epidemiologist Eden Wells. "We know we've had a first wave of the flu, we've had a bit of a reprieve ... but when schools reopen, we'll have young people in congregate settings again where the flu could pop up again."

This flu virus has acted differently from other flu viruses, which usually impact the older population the most severely. People younger than 24 were most likely to catch the flu and have complications, while those older than 65 were more likely to avoid catching it, Wells said.

The added concern for this virus isn't due to the number of people becoming ill - it's because of the extreme severity of symptoms in a small number of patients and the unpredictable nature of a virus that impacts different demographics than traditional seasonal flu.



The flu season usually starts as early as October and can last through April.

But this flu didn't die off over the summer and continued to cause outbreaks in local summer camps, Torres-Burgos said.

"We know the virus is still in our community," she said.

Swine flu was first detected in Mexico in April and circulated the globe in weeks. Between mid-June and mid-August, 110 probable cases were reported in Washtenaw County, and more than 3,300 were reported in the state of Michigan. Officials warn that those numbers likely aren't close to actual numbers because most who become ill with the flu never have a reason to report it.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SCHOOLS

As a federally-subsidized vaccine for H1N1 becomes available in mid-October, schools are preparing to be the main place where children get vaccinated.

Children are among the priority groups to receive the vaccine, which is a different from the seasonal flu vaccine also being recommended by health officials.

But the county still isn't sure how many doses of the vaccine it will receive and at what rate it will get them.

Ann Arbor school district spokeswoman Liz Margolis said a large part of her job has become monitoring the regular updates from the county and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, then communicating those changes to parents and students. A school nurse likely will be dedicated part-time to following updates with H1N1, she said.

An initial email will go out to parents this week, she said.

Following CDC recommendations, parents are being asked to keep children home if they have flu-like symptoms. Staff are being told to stay home if they're ill and shouldn't return until they can keep a fever down for at least 24 hours without medication - a process that could take up to five days.

"We understand the burden this puts on families, but it's the only way to contain any sort of sickness," Margolis said.

Schools also have been asked to create isolation rooms for children who have flu symptoms at school.

In the Saline district, the designated isolation rooms have doors to the outside of the building so students won't walk through the halls or pass other children when they leave, Graden said.

In Ann Arbor, the school's health clinics - which have cots - will likely serve as the isolation rooms, Margolis said. The CDC recommends sick children wear a mask to prevent spreading the illness, but Margolis said the district likely will only ask adults caring for them to wear masks while they're in the room. They might be asked to wear masks as they walk the halls of the building.

Local districts are still waiting for guidance from the county about when to cancel classes due to illnesses. The CDC suggests school closures as the last possible resort, saying it often causes parents to find day care elsewhere and could lead to further spreading of the virus.

Local public schools begin the day after Labor Day - Sept. 8.

"We're all dressed up and ready to go, but we won't know more for three to four weeks when we get all the kids back," Graden said.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON CAMPUS

With students set to move in this week, officials at



Who's At A Higher Risk?

Local and federal officials saw a disproportionate number of people who were young or had some other underlying medical condition - they were more severely impacted by this strain of the flu. Those people will likely be high priorities to get the vaccine. If they do become ill with flu-like symptoms, they should talk to their health care provider as quickly as possible.

Risk factors include:

- **Women who are pregnant.** Women make up about 1 percent of the U.S. population at any given time, but made up about 6 percent of U.S. swine flu deaths.
- **Children.** Local officials say people who are younger than 50 are at increased risk because their bodies have never been exposed to this strain of the flu, but those younger than 24 seem to be at even higher risk for getting the virus.
- **People older than 65** seem to have a lower risk for this flu strain, but if they become sick, they have an increased risk of it being a severe case.
- **Kids and teens** who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and might be at risk for experiencing Reye's syndrome after flu virus infection are at higher risk.
- **Adults and children** with asthma, other chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders such as diabetes are considered high risk.
- **Adults and children** with suppressed immune systems.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Washtenaw County Public Health Department

WHAT THE COUNTY IS RECOMMENDING

The most important thing local residents can do, officials say, is to isolate themselves if they become sick. For instance, students can get food delivery arranged in the residence halls and will be given masks to wear in hallways and bathrooms, Ernst said.

Officials are encouraging residents, particularly those younger than 24, to get the vaccine that's been created for H1N1, in addition to the seasonal flu vaccine.

"People need to understand it's not a new process," from the production of the seasonal flu shot that's administered every year, Torres-Burgos said. "It's just a strain change, and the safety regulations are being followed."

Residents - particularly parents - are being urged to be aware, but not panic if their child becomes ill, Torres-Burgos said.

"They're really not being asked to do anything differently from what they'd do with the seasonal flu," she said.

Photo 1: Liz Margolis, director of communications for Ann Arbor Public Schools, sifts through 5,000 H1N1 Influenza posters at the school district headquarters Thursday afternoon. (Lon Horwedel | Ann Arbor.com)

Photo 2: Carl Evers of Hamilton, Ohio, gets an experimental H1N1 Flu vaccine shot for children from Tammy Lewis-McCauley at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. (AP Photo/ Ernest Coleman, The Cincinnati Enquirer)

THIS WEEK IN LOCAL EDUCATION: **Washtenaw County districts prepare for the start of school**

Posted: 8:55 a.m. August 31, 2009

[2 Comments](#), [Comment Now](#)

The floors are being polished, desks are being carefully arranged and books are neatly stacked on bookshelves.

It's back to school time.

With students due back in schools next week (all local public schools start Sept. 8), schools are starting to get back in the swing of things.

School offices opened last week for parents to drop by for registration.

Lots of Ann Arbor elementary schools are holding welcome back picnics this week.

Ann Arbor's teachers will kick off the 2009-10 school year on Tuesday, when they gather for their traditional opening day ceremony at Pioneer High School.

Teachers will then get plenty of professional development over the next couple of days.

As for public meetings this week, the Ann Arbor school board has a couple.

On Tuesday, the board's planning committee will meet at 6:30 p.m. in the district's administrative offices. An agenda wasn't available as of 9 a.m. Monday.

On Wednesday night, the full board will gather at 5:30 p.m., also in the district's administrative offices, for its annual board retreat.

On the agenda is a discussion about social climate in the schools, a report from Superintendent Todd Roberts on his goals for the upcoming school year and a discussion about how the board feels it met its goals for the 2008-09 school year.




Share this post ▾

Tags: Ann Arbor school board, Ann Arbor schools, This week in local education

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WITH POLL: Ann Arbor teachers asked to support school enhancement millage

Posted: 7:58 a.m. September 1, 2009

 64 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

The annual opening day assembly for Ann Arbor's teachers and other staff members briefly turned into a campaign rally today as Superintendent Todd Roberts urged staff members to support a countywide enhancement millage.

"Each of us needs to actively support (it)," he told more than 1,200 staff members who gathered at Pioneer High School. "I can't impress on you how important this is."

After spending several minutes reminding the staff members of how "exceptional" the Ann Arbor school district is, Roberts turned somber as he reviewed the district's finances.

He told staff members the district has cut millions of dollars from its budget over the last several years and is currently looking at a projected \$15 million budget deficit for the 2010-11 school year. That's equivalent to 200 positions, Roberts said.

The countywide enhancement millage, which will be on the November ballot, would place a new 2-mill tax on property owners in Washtenaw County. The money raised would then be distributed to each of the 10 local traditional school districts.

For Ann Arbor, that would mean an additional \$11 million a year for five years.


"There's not a single more important thing" facing the district than the passage of the millage, Roberts said.

He also showed staff the slogan that millage proponents have adopted, "It takes a millage to educate a child."

Most of the opening day celebration was turned over to Pioneer creative writing teacher Jeff Kass, who performed selections from his one-man poetry show.

Teachers will spend much of the rest of the week in professional development before students arrive on Sept. 8.


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

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Tags: Ann Arbor schools, countywide enhancement millage

Washtenaw County schools looking at countywide International Baccalaureate program

Posted: 10:19 p.m. September 2, 2009

 3 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

A countywide program for advanced students will "very likely" be started by the fall of 2011, Ann Arbor school Superintendent Todd Roberts said Wednesday.

A committee of local school officials has begun the planning process to form some sort of countywide International Baccalaureate program, Roberts told his school board.

The effort is being supported by all 10 local traditional school districts and is based on a consortium model running in Oakland County.

In that model, each district would offer support for the program, and in turn would get a set amount of seats in the school.

Details about how big the school would be, how many seats each district would get, the application process and cost still have to be worked out, Roberts said.

"We're assessing what it might look like," he said.

Roberts' report came during a wide-ranging review of the district's strategic plan, the board's goals for the last school year and Roberts' goals for the upcoming year.

Adding International Baccalaureate, which is a rigorous program of learning used around the world with advanced students, was one of the goals of the district's strategic plan.

Roberts said he brought the idea of sharing the program to the county's superintendents as a way to combine services and operate efficiently.

Roberts said he brought the idea of sharing the program to the county's superintendents as a way to combine services and operate efficiently.


The board spent a considerable amount of time talking about efforts to improve the social climate at the district's high schools, a long-time area of interest to several board members.

The district has begun looking at a variety ways to measure the social climate at the three comprehensive high schools - Pioneer, Huron and Skyline.

District officials are also looking at the role of guidance counselors at the high schools. Board members told Roberts they want to see counselors spend more time counseling and working with students and less time working on scheduling.

Roberts' goals for the 2009-10 school year were mostly a repeat of his goals from the previous year and centered on improving student achievement, reducing suspensions, continuing to work on equity in the district and the transition planning for Huron and Pioneer as Skyline fills up.

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

 Share this post ▾

Tags: Ann Arbor school board, ann arbor schools, International Baccalaureate

Author at library to read from back-to-school book

With school beginning in a little over a week, it's time to get back into the swing of things. Today, from 7 to 8 p.m., at the Pittsfield branch of the Ann Arbor District Library, local children's author Jacqui Robbins will be reading from her new back-to-school book, "Two Of A Kind."

"Two Of A Kind" is a story for children in preschool to third grade. From Jacqui's Web site: "Sometimes a friend can bring out the worst in you ... but a real, true friend will always bring out the best." From the author of "The New Girl ... and Me," "Two Of A Kind," is a sweet, insightful story about the in crowd, the outcasts, and the bravery it takes to be a real, true friend.

The event also includes a special hands-on activity as well as a book signing with the author (books will be on sale at the event). What a great way to start your child off for a brand-new school year! The Pittsfield branch is at 2359 Oak Valley Drive in Ann Arbor. For more information, call 734-327-4200.

Get connected

Make the most of your end-of-summer weekend and join in the fun Sunday at the Gaffield Children's Garden at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. From 1 to 4 p.m., celebrate the official grand opening of this unique space for fun, learning, and discov-



Taking the Kids

By Tammy Mayrend
AnnArbor.com contributor

ery, allowing kids an opportunity to reconnect with nature in a playful way.

The garden features dozens of "special" spaces including a "sense-ational garden"; a natural builders garden; a habitat garden for exploring and imagining the homes of wild animals; a butterfly garden for attracting and encouraging butterflies; secret spaces for children to find and create their own places in the garden; and much more.

The grand opening celebration will also include three children's theater performances, and music and activities throughout the afternoon. Free with no registration required. For more information call 734-647-7600.

Michigan State Fair

While growing up one of my favorite end-of-summer activities was going to the Michigan State Fair.

I know it sounds silly, but I actually enjoyed seeing all of the animals the 4H kids raised, the horse shows, the entertainment, the giant carved butter sculpture and of course the midway

and rides — I even liked the pig races! I grew up just up Woodward a bit, and I suppose I took for granted that the fair would always be around. I am not sure why, but last week I was a bit shocked to hear that this might be the end of the fair due to the economy.

The end of the Michigan State Fair? That can't be. I'll never have the chance to win a blue ribbon for my prize-winning recipe or overly large vegetable. That being said, I haven't taken my children to the state fair since they were born.

I suppose once I moved to this side of town we've only attended the Wayne County and Washtenaw County fairs, but not the granddaddy of fairs in Michigan. I'd hate to lose this great tradition though, so I would like to encourage all of my Ann Arbor friends and families to attend the fair this weekend if possible.

I know it's a 30-minute drive to the fairgrounds for us, but really it's worth the trip!


The Michigan State Fair runs through Monday. We'll be there sometime this week to support the fair for future generations to enjoy and hope to see you there as well.

Come and enjoy America's first state fair!

— Tammy Mayrend is an Internet search marketing professional who blogs on local activities for families at www.annarbormom.com.

UPDATED WITH DATA: **All Washtenaw County school districts meet federal AYP standard**

Posted: 10:18 a.m. September 3, 2009

 6 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

All 10 traditional schools districts in Washtenaw County met the federal Adequate Yearly Progress measurements, the state of Michigan reported this morning.

However, a trio of local high schools didn't meet the guidelines: Ann Arbor's Stone High School, Willow Run High School and Ypsilanti High School.

AYP shows how well schools and school districts are meeting common standards of academic performance.

Performance objectives need to be met for AYP. By 2013-14, schools need to have all their students 100 percent proficient on the MEAP (for elementary and middle school students) and the Michigan Merit Exam (for high school students).

View reports for all Washtenaw County schools

The state of Michigan released AYP status and grades for all schools and districts in the state. Click on each link below to view a PDF showing how your school did.

In addition, in grades 3 to 8, schools must have an average daily attendance rate of 85 percent or higher. High schools must have a 85 percent graduation rate.

Schools Meeting AYP

Districts Meeting AYP

All of the items are measured not only for the entire school, but also for subgroups like special education, economically disadvantaged and others. To make AYP, a school has to have all its subgroups meet all the criteria. Missing one means the school doesn't make AYP.

Schools Not Meeting AYP

Schools receiving Title I funding, a federal program that provides resources to schools in areas of economic need, could face sanctions under the federal No Child Left Behind Act if the school doesn't make AYP for two or more years in a row. These sanctions increase in severity for every year a Title I school does not make AYP.

This story will be updated later with data from the state, including a letter grade for each school in the county.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. You can reach him at davidjesse@annarbor.com or 734-623-2534.

		Accreditation Grade (Education/YES)
District Name	School Name	
Ann Arbor Learning Community	Ann Arbor Learning Community	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Abbot School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Angell School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Ann Arbor Open at Mack School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Bach Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Burns Park Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Carpenter School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Clague Middle School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Clifford E. Bryant Comm. School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Community High School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Dicken Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Eberwhite School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Forsythe Middle School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Haisley Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Huron High School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	John Allen School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Lakewood Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Logan Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Martin Luther King Elem. School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Mary D. Mitchell School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Northside Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Pattengill School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Pioneer High School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Pittsfield School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Roberto Clemente Center	C
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Scarlett Middle School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Skyline High School	No Grade
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Slauson Middle School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Tappan Middle School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Thurston Elementary School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Uriah H. Lawton School	A
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Wines Elementary School	A

District Name	School Name	Accreditation Grade (Education/YES)
Central Academy	Central Academy (1-12)	C
Chelsea School District	Beach Middle School	A
Chelsea School District	Cassidy Lake Technical School	No Grade
Chelsea School District	Chelsea High School	A
Chelsea School District	North Creek Elementary School	A
Chelsea School District	Pierce Lake Elementary School	A
Chelsea School District	South Meadows Elementary School	A
Dexter Community School District	Bates Elementary School	A
Dexter Community School District	Cornerstone Elementary School	A
Dexter Community School District	Creekside Intermediate School	A
Dexter Community School District	Dexter High School	A
Dexter Community School District	Mill Creek Middle School	A
Dexter Community School District	Wylie Elementary School	A
Eastern Washtenaw Multicultural Academy	Eastern Washtenaw Multicultural Academy	B
Fortis Academy	Fortis Academy	A
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Bessie Hoffman Elementary School	A
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Child's Elementary	A
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Lincoln Brick Elementary School	B
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Lincoln Middle School	B
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Lincoln Redner Elementary School	B
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Lincoln Senior High School	C
Manchester Community Schools	Luther C. Klager Elem. School	A
Manchester Community Schools	Manchester High School	A
Manchester Community Schools	Manchester Middle School	A
Milan Area Schools	Clayton H. Symons Elementary School	A
Milan Area Schools	Milan High School	B
Milan Area Schools	Milan Middle School	B
Milan Area Schools	Paddock Elementary School	A
New Beginnings Academy	New Beginnings Academy	C
Saline Area Schools	Harvest Elementary School	A
Saline Area Schools	Heritage School	A
Saline Area Schools	Pleasant Ridge Elementary School	A

		Accreditation Grade (Education/YES)
District Name	School Name	
Saline Area Schools	Saline Alternative High School	No Grade
Saline Area Schools	Saline High School	A
Saline Area Schools	Saline Middle School	A
Saline Area Schools	Woodland Meadows Elementary School	A
School District of Ypsilanti	Chapelle Community School	B
School District of Ypsilanti	East Middle School	C
School District of Ypsilanti	Erickson School	B
School District of Ypsilanti	Estabrook School	B
School District of Ypsilanti	Forest School	No Grade
School District of Ypsilanti	Olive M. Adams Elementary School	C
School District of Ypsilanti	Washtenaw County Drop Back In Academy	No Grade
School District of Ypsilanti	West Middle School	B
South Arbor Charter Academy	South Arbor Charter Academy	A
Washtenaw ISD	High Point School	No Grade
Washtenaw Technical Middle College	Washtenaw Technical Middle College	A
Whitmore Lake Public Schools	Whitmore Lake Elementary School	B
Whitmore Lake Public Schools	Whitmore Lake High School	B
Whitmore Lake Public Schools	Whitmore Lake Middle School	A
Willow Run Community Schools	Cheney Academy	B
Willow Run Community Schools	Ford Elementary School	B
Willow Run Community Schools	Holmes Elementary School	B
Willow Run Community Schools	Kaiser Elementary School	B
Willow Run Community Schools	Kettering Elementary School	B
Willow Run Community Schools	Willow Run Middle School	C

District Name	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chelsea School District	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dexter Community School District	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lincoln Consolidated School District	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manchester Community Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Milan Area Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saline Area Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
School District of Ypsilanti	Yes	Yes	No
Whitmore Lake Public Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Willow Run Community Schools	No	Yes	No

District	School	AYP Phase	Accreditation Grade (Education/YES)	Subgroup	Participation ELA	Achievement ELA	Participation Math	Achievement Math	Attendance/ Graduation
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Stone High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	All Students	No	No	No	No	No
School District of Ypsilanti	Ypsilanti High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	All Students	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
School District of Ypsilanti	Ypsilanti High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	Black or African American	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School District of Ypsilanti	Ypsilanti High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	Economically Disadvantaged	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School District of Ypsilanti	Ypsilanti High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	White	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Willow Run Community Schools	Willow Run High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	All Students	No	No	No	No	No
Willow Run Community Schools	Willow Run High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	Black or African American	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Willow Run Community Schools	Willow Run High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	Economically Disadvantaged	No	No	Yes	No	No
Willow Run Community Schools	Willow Run High School	Restructuring (Phase 4 and above)	D-Alert	White	Yes	No	Yes	No	No