

June 11, 2014

Hello Ann Arbor Community,

Over the two weeks since we initially proposed the outsourcing of custodial services for Ann Arbor Public Schools as a cost-savings measure, many statements have been made regarding the possible implications of taking such a step in our school district.

In the interest of ensuring that we are weighing facts in this proposal throughout this ongoing discussion, I want to share just a few clarifications regarding the potential outsourcing recommendation:

- There is worry that all AAPS valued custodial staff will lose their positions and will no longer be working in the school where they currently work. In reality, the current proposal stipulates that all current AAPS custodial employees are *guaranteed an interview* with any company selected for the custodial contract.
- Employees who have been performing well and whose buildings are currently kept clean will be among the *most-highly valued employees* to be hired by a company coming in to support AAPS with a custodial contract.
- There is concern that custodial jobs will be taken from the community and outsourced beyond Ann Arbor. In reality, most employees working for the district contractor will typically be hired *from within current school district employees*. While employees may have a different employer following a potential change, the jobs remain right here in AAPS schools where they have always been.
- There is fear that employees will be paid at substandard rates of pay. The contract under consideration offers pay with beginning averages between \$ 9.50 - \$ 12.00 per hour. In many cases, the reduction in pay will not be as significant as perceived, and some more recently hired current AAPS custodians may actually realize an increase in their hourly rate. Benefits are provided with these positions as well and include medical, dental, and vision. All current Ann Arbor Public School employees will start at the highest wage in each range.
- It is true that custodial employees will no longer participate in the state retirement system. Those employees who are eligible for retirement and those who are able to bridge over to retirement will be fully supported in their processes to qualify for all they are eligible to receive in retirement pay for their work up to the effective date of any change.
- All employees in any new potential arrangement will have obtained thorough, complete background checks as required by School Safety Legislation and as have been completed in the past.
- The company that will be recommended for Board consideration today already holds similar contractual agreements for custodial work in a number of high-performing, highly-regarded school districts across Michigan.
- Currently, approximately half of Michigan school districts have outsourced custodial support services in order to increase efficiencies and reduce expenditures.

Among the 19 other Michigan districts served by the potential provider are Utica, Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Pontiac, and Royal Oak.

We have communicated with district leaders from these other districts to confirm their good experience with the contract arrangement and building cleaning performance outcomes over time.

The ultimate goal in considering any change to our AAPS approach in sourcing custodial support is to ensure, first, that our schools are cleaned to high standards for our students and staff while also rendering savings to the budget to spare more significant and devastating cuts directly to teaching and learning in the classroom.

In Ann Arbor Public Schools, we have significant fiscal challenges to overcome. In fact, those fiscal realities appear to have worsened even over the recent 24 hours of legislative activity. Budget realities compel the consideration of this admittedly difficult proposal. If the decision is made to move forward, we will take every reasonable step to ensure that our employees are considered through all steps of a transition process.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify some information about the recommendation to outsource custodial services and we look forward to purposeful discussion and a decision that will benefit our AAPS students.

Sincerely,
Jeanice Swift
Superintendent