

# AAPSNews

News, features, profiles and activities in The Ann Arbor Public Schools

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Issue No. 38, June 27, 2011

## New superintendent has great expectations for district

Following is a letter to the AAPS community from Dr. Patricia Green, who starts as the district's new superintendent on July 1:

Dear Ann Arbor Public Schools staff, families and community members,

Shortly, I will be joining the Ann Arbor Public Schools, a district that has demonstrated its ability to inspire the imagination of young minds and to open young eyes to the world beyond their normal, everyday experience. Ann Arbor is a district that enables

children of all ages to develop curiosity and resourcefulness, to care for others and to create their place in a world of tremendous, global change.

Ann Arbor is a special community and I am enormously proud to join its heritage of excellence. Throughout my career, I have always believed in the concept of "Great Expectations ... The Best Is Yet To Come!" in which all community members join together with the highest of expectations and strive to create the best world in which our

*See Superintendent letter, page 4*



*Dr. Patricia Green, Ann Arbor's new superintendent, begins her duties this week.*

## Patricia Green begins leadership post on July 1

From AAPSNews Service

Dr. Patricia Pataky Green will join the Ann Arbor Public Schools on July 1 as the district's new Superintendent of Schools.

Green has a five-year contract with the district, giving her the responsibilities for overseeing all education programs in the district. She is charged with maintaining and improving the quality of education and operations of the district. The school board selected her in March.

Green most recently served as superintendent of North Allegheny School District in Pennsylvania and also served as Acting Deputy Superintendent for Instruction for the Prince George's County Public Schools, a large district in Maryland.

Before coming to Ann Arbor, she spoke about parent involvement, leadership, diversity and her philosophy on education.

Green said she advocates strong parent involvement and said that in her current role, she hosts a series of superintendent-parent committee meetings. "They set the

*See Superintendent, page 6*

## Tile mural project reflects talent among Allen Elementary students



*Teacher Debra Campbell with several upper elementary students at Allen Elementary, where each student contributed to the end-of-year mural project in the front hallway. The project was coordinated through the Allen Elementary Parent Council.*

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

A wall of color adorns the front hall at Allen Elementary School thanks to the artistic endeavors of every child in the school.

Flowers, fish, snails, trees and other gifts of nature are depicted in the all-school project, which has 396 tiles in all and was unveiled during the last week of school.

The tile mural was the idea of parents Amy and Brodie Burris and Lanette and Keoki Williams, who worked with art teacher Debra Campbell to plan and create the masterpiece. The work will be tied into the school's 50th anniversary celebration in the fall as a

*See Tile mural, page 4*

# Achievement Teams help 3,200-plus students

From AAPSNews Service

Achievement Teams have been active and working in each of the Ann Arbor Public Schools building over the past two school years, put in place to monitor student progress and offer assistance when students are struggling or need help.

The teams are comprised of teachers, administrators and other staff who meet regularly in each school to assess the needs of individual students in their school buildings.

Achievement Teams are in their third year of operation and more than 3,226 students have been touched through the process, according to district statistics. That number includes about half who are elementary age students and the other half who are in secondary schools.

The program includes a specially designed database created by the school district that allows staff and teachers to follow a student throughout his or her career in the Ann Arbor Public Schools and find methods to help the student be more successful.

“Staff in any building you walk into, K-12, would know about the Achievement Team process,” said Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Joyce Hunter. “Anybody who pulls that child’s name up (in the database), they can see what has been done for that child” from grade-to-grade. “They can see what we are doing to support that child.”

The Achievement Team process was researched for more than one year before being put into place in August 2008. It is one of many ways the school district is addressing the achievement gap by looking an individualized student plans and making changes to the culture of the school district.

The process is part of the district’s ongoing Strategic Plan, which looks at personalized learning plans for individual students as well as other strategies which look at equity and eliminating achievement gaps.

The district is also working toward implementing an overall Achievement Gap Elimination Plan, which was discussed at the board committee level in the fall and, more recently, during a full board study session June 15, when a first reading of the plan was presented. It is being reviewed by building-level School Improvement Teams and Equity Teams before being posted on the district website.

*A more detailed version of this article appears online.*

# Evaluation tool approved

## NWEA will test students in real time, allow teachers to adjust lessons to pupil needs

From AAPSNews Service

The Ann Arbor Public Schools will begin using the Northwest Evaluation Association student evaluation tool next fall, which is expected to give elementary school teachers real-time feedback on student performance and adjust more quickly to student needs.

The program will be purchased for use with students in grades K-5 and in grades 6-8 at Scarlet Middle School.

The Ann Arbor school board approved purchase of the tool on May 25 at a cost of \$92,700. Of that amount, the district has applied to the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation grant for \$47,700; if the grant is approved, the outlay from the district will be reduced by that amount.

The testing will not replace standardized Michigan Educational Assessment Program, or MEAP tests, but will be used in addition to those tests, allowing teachers to get immediate feedback on how students are understanding concepts and moving forward in their learning.

“This adjusts in real time for students,” said Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley. “It generates a profile of what the child knows and shows us what objectives a student needs to improve upon. We’ll be able to give a much clearer picture of what our student achievement is and what we’re doing to improve it,” she added.

Dickinson-Kelley said although the mandatory MEAP will continue to be a measure for districts and individual schools, those tests are given in the fall so measure learning from a previous year. And, with results not given to the district until spring, the data is older than instructional staff would like.

The NWEA tests will be given at three points during the school year in September, January and June, and will be scheduled as assessment times as to not interfere with the use of computer labs for other learning, she added. The tests are interactive, allowing students to be asked questions based on their knowledge level of a particular subject. Each test in K-2 takes about 20 minutes; NWEA assessments in grades 3-5 will take an average of 40 minutes.

Feedback from the tests will allow teachers to immediately address concerns with students not making progress on a particular lesson and also

allow students who are making great strides in an areas to move ahead at a faster pace. It will offer pre and post assessments for summer school and help the district to measure intercessions during school breaks in the Mitchell-Scarlett Partnership with the University of Michigan School of education.

The NWEA is also expected to play a greater role in giving parents feedback about their children’s progress.

“It’s student-driven instead of top-down,” Dickinson-Kelley added. “It’s in real time and will allow staff to have meaningful conversations with parents.”

The program comes to Ann Arbor at a point in which the state Department of Education is changing the standards by which it measures student MEAP results next year. Dickinson-Kelley said the NWEA will allow districts to get ahead of the curve in helping students and raising the bar on what they learn. This is particularly important, she said, for students making great progress, but who have not yet reached proficiency targets.

Professional development for staff is expected to take place over the summer, with implementation in the classroom beginning in the fall. Dickinson-Kelley said the program could eventually expand to grades K-8, assisting the district with assessments as algebra reaches down into middle school grades.

In May, AAPS Board Trustee Andy Thomas wrote an opinion column for AnnArbor.com explaining his view of the NWEA program. He noted that this will be the first time that Ann Arbor students in grades K-2 will be tested, as MEAPs are given starting in the third grade. “So the NWEA product will allow teachers to identify struggling students and provide appropriate interventions at a much earlier age,” he said.

“I strongly believe that the NWEA product will be an outstanding tool for teachers in our district,” he noted.

“It will permit much more timely feedback regarding how well students are doing, will permit an assessment of student progress at various times throughout the year, and will allow teachers to make adjustments in student interventions according to what is and is not working.”

At right, Team Leader Jennifer Hart for the WAY Washtenaw program, left, and Ann Arbor student Debra Destefani, who said the online program suits her better than her time in a traditional high school. Below (inset), students discuss their online projects in a lab at Stone High School in Ann Arbor.

## Online program shows high school students the WAY

### Project-based learning works for students in new initiative

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

Ask Debra Destefani what high school program has worked for her. This 17-year-old Pittsfield Township resident has a ready answer.

She is enrolled in the WAY Washtenaw program, a 365-day, online countywide high school program that uses team leaders, mentors, subject experts and regular labs to teach students.

Previously a Community High School student, Destefani said this alternative approach is better suited to her needs, allowing her to do her project-based school work, studying in ways that work for her while she holds down a part-time job.

"I'm self-motivated," she said. "I think maybe it's all about mindset and attitude. I guess I can be myself – it allows me to focus on what I like and at the same time get credit for it. I felt like I would get swept away in a crowd (at a traditional school.)"

Widening Advancements for Youth is run through the Washtenaw Intermediate School District, with individual districts participating by purchasing seat time in the program. In its pilot year in 2010-11, the program had 240 students from 10 Washtenaw districts enrolled; in the coming year, it will expand to a full program and add more students, bringing the total served to as many as 420.

There will be only one base lab for the program at Willow Run in the coming year due to budget cutbacks, but labs will also be scheduled regularly at public library sites around the county, including Mallets Creek and downtown Ann Arbor branches to accommodate students here.

The program must follow the same guidelines as traditional high schools in meeting the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Team Leader Jennifer Hart – in a role that she said would be comparable to a principal in a traditional



high school – said the program is challenging. "Projects are not easy – we want there to be rigor and relevance," said Hart, a former English teacher and literary coach who oversees Destefani and many of the other Ann Arbor students in the program. "In order to receive a diploma, they have to prove they are proficient in all of the areas to pass."

Students in the program are referred to as "researchers" and, in addition to team leaders and mentors, there are experts available in key subject areas and technicians who can help with the technical issues learning in an online, computer-based program. Before being accepted into the program, families must apply and home visits are conducted. The program carried a waiting list of students this year.

Hart said Destefani is a great success story of the program. She came into WAY Washtenaw having only earned four credits over two years, which is well below what is needed to graduate over four years. Destefani said she just didn't go to class and fell behind. WAY Washtenaw has changed her approach and her attitude.

She has already finished 6.5 credits since the fall – about one per month – and is moving along in the program so quickly, she will be on target to graduate in December 2012 – the year she would have graduated with her classmates at Community.

Hart said team leaders play many roles: principal, counselor and truant officer, among others. They are responsible for tracking students online and, if they have not logged in and worked in any given day, they are called and, sometimes, get unannounced home visits.

At a recent information session for WAY Washtenaw, parents and students were eager for more information on this alternative program that targets students who either have already dropped out of high school, are at risk of doing so or are attending school but not on track to graduate with their class.

The program generally serves students who are 15 or older, and they must finish the program by Aug. 31 after they turn 20.

Students who complete the WAY Washtenaw program receive a diploma from home districts; this spring, three earned diplomas.

Monique Uzelac, director of instructional technology for the Ann Arbor Public Schools, has been one of the key persons setting up the program at the WISD and was involved with interviewing and hiring staff and interacting with families as they were interviewed to be part of the inaugural program.

She said the program is off to a strong start and gives students a solid approach for achieving the credits they need to graduate.

"In Washtenaw County, almost 650 students drop out each year," Uzelac said. "This program has been successful at pulling students up who are falling behind and becoming discouraged and also at returning students to the classroom who have given up hope."

And what is Destefani's future? She loves to write essays and plans to attend college, hoping to follow in her father's footsteps as a writer and editor.

## District makes transportation changes for 2011-12 year

From AAPSNews Service

Changes are planned for student bus transportation in the fall of 2011, approved as part of the 2011-12 fiscal year budget that begins July 1. Families will be notified of specifics via SchoolMessenger and updates will be posted to the district website.

The district will not mail the Back-to-School booklet or high school guides for students and parents in the 2011-12 year. Bus stops and times, the "Rights and Responsibility" handbook and general school information will be posted on individual school and district websites. Forms needed for the start of the school year will also be posted on the websites for downloading. Hard copies will be available at school buildings beginning in mid-August.

Following are changes that will be made for Ann Arbor Public Schools transportation for the 2011-12 school year:

### For all students:

- The district will enforce the approved walk zone. There will be walk zones to .5 miles between each bus stop.
- Bus seating will be to capacity: (three students to a seat for elementary students; two students to a seat for middle and high school students.)
- Some bus routes will be combined, aligning them from feeder schools to the next destination.

### Middle School transportation:

- No 4 p.m. after-school bus service at the middle schools.

### High school transportation:

- There will be common bus pick-up sites for high school students at select elementary schools, determined by the 1.5-mile walk-zone radius to each high school as well as factoring in safety.
- Common bus stops will also be instituted around the outer "ring" of the district to accommodate students who do not live near elementary schools.
- There will be no seventh-hour bus service at the high schools.
- More specifics about bus stops will be sent to families this summer.

## Superintendent letter, from page 1

children can learn and grow.

As educators, our children sense our expectations intuitively. A knowing glance, a raised eyebrow, a smile of encouragement, all bring meaning to a child no matter what their age. Each of us in a school community plays a dynamic role, whether we actively realize it or not, in helping our children develop the critical skills needed to create and achieve a vision for their lives. The skillful balance between academics, the arts, athletics as well as social and emotional learning help our children become caring, scholarly individuals today and in their future years.

As I prepare to join the district in July, it is clear to me that Ann Arbor Public Schools is bound together by its educational workforce and its committed and dedicated community in a constant quest for excellence. When a school district and a school community embrace great expectations together, we all help our children construct meaning from the world they inhabit today, as well as help them dream of the possibilities for the future world that they will create.

There will always be challenges, but when we join together to help children create a portrait of their possibilities from a productive, school-community experience, we enable young minds to capture the spirit of who they are and what they can achieve.

As we look toward the 2011-12 school year, let's unleash the power of "possibility thinking" for our children, because to see a child is to see the possibilities of the future. With great expectations, the best is yet to come for all of them.

I am looking forward to being a part of this exceptional school district.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Patricia P. Green*

## Tile mural, from page 1

special project, said Principal Joan Fitzgibbon.

"It was a huge undertaking," Fitzgibbon said. "The important thing is showcasing the student talent and the fact that every kid is represented up there."

Students created artwork in Campbell's class on 8" x 8" squares. The drawings were then sent to Square 1 Art, an art fundraising company that creates the tiles and also can put student artwork on mugs, T-shirts and other items that are sold to parents, with a portion of proceeds coming back to the school.

The Allen Parent Council paid for every child's artwork to be made into a tile and the additional fundraising sales helped to defray the cost of the tile mural, which cost about \$3,800 total.

A contractor was hired to put up a board and

frame and the four parents laid out the tiles, installed them and grouted them to a beautiful finish; they also painted the background wall red to make the tile mural pop, Fitzgibbon said. Having the tile on the board will allow the artwork to be moved should there ever be renovation in that portion of the school, she added.

Williams, said it has been fun to see the students stop at the wall and find their own tiles. "The thing I'm most proud of is every child is represented," she said. "That was the reason we funded it."

Kindergarteners did sunflowers, first graders fish or snails, second graders butterflies, third graders flowers, fourth graders winter trees and fifth-graders branching patterns. "We just drew inspiration from different things," Campbell said.

"Kids naturally enjoy nature so that's a hook."

Allen student Eric said he enjoyed the trees-in-the-winter theme. "I enjoyed doing mine," he said. Classmate Cloe, said she gained inspiration from looking at photo. "I like how everyone's turned out really different," she said.

Kiele, another young artist, said she "liked the idea of the branching pattern and the different ideas you could do off of it." And student Cam said his favorite part of the project, was the ability to use bright colors individually to create the large, finished project.

Included in the Allen display are tiles in memory of Fitzgibbon's father and also of Robert Kooistra, the grandfather of an Allen student, who had volunteered numerous hours beautifying the school grounds. He passed away in January.

# Ann Arbor alumni, friends invited to join association

**A**re you an Ann Arbor Public Schools grad? Employee? Friend? All are welcome to visit and register at the new Ann Arbor alumni website, which has started to take off since its soft launch last fall.

Organizers at the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation, which makes the site possible, say although the site is still developing, they're putting the word out so that anyone with an interest in district can find it, sign up and begin networking and finding their long-lost friends.

The site is managed through the AAPSEF and is coordinated by Kristin Kelley Howard, a 2001 Community High School graduate and the daughter of Jerry and Diana Kelley, Jerry a retired AAPS principal and teacher and Diana who still works for the district in the Physical Properties and Operations Department.

Howard likens it to some of the larger websites that allow people to find former classmates, but "it's only for the Ann Arbor schools, so it's personalized and it's free," she said.

"I think a lot of it is for the events, the reunions, as well as what's going on at the schools. All kinds of news," said Howard, a freelance web designer.

Only members at AnnArborAlumni.org have access to information about other members and posted information can also be limited by preferences when you sign up. Members can also use photo avatars, if they so choose. Home addresses are taken, but not published on the site. Registration asks for a visitor's name, year of graduation, school and an optional paragraph about yourself.

Wendy Correll, executive director of the AAPS Educational Foundation, said the site is a welcome addition to offer information to the Ann Arbor Public Schools educational community.

"We wanted to sponsor this site as a way to bring people interested in the schools together at one, online location," Correll said. "We wanted to have a simple place for those interested in our schools to connect. We hope to see it grow as friends, graduates and staff and retirees discover it."

"We were fortunate to have had the Ann Arbor Convention and Visitors Bureau sponsor the site during its early stages."

In recent months, Howard has added



*Kristin Kelley Howard, a 2001 Community High School graduate, operates the Ann Arbor alumni website [www.AnnArborAlumni.org](http://www.AnnArborAlumni.org). The site is managed through the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation.*

a variety of feeds including ongoing news posts from local news outlets, the AAPSNews and also added a Facebook group page to encourage activity. There are links to school pages and ways for members to contact each other and search for people with whom they've lost touch. The site has a message board for members where they can post class notes, ask questions and suggest jobs for other alumni.

"I've been adding and updating the site on a daily basis or whenever things come up," she said.

She hopes visitors will send their feedback. "If people would send us suggestions of what they would like to see on the site we can consider adding it," Howard added. She noted that she would also welcome any alumni who would like to help build the site and offer suggestions in that vein.

One of Howard's newer projects is looking for scanned versions of Ann Arbor high school yearbooks, which she has started posting on the site. Eventually, she will have software installed where site members can upload their own photos and yearbook pages for others to view.

Now, she has collected a 1937 yearbook from Ann Arbor High School and a number of Community High School yearbooks from the 1980s and 1990s.

There is a link on the front page of the site listing all of the different events in date order.

"This way, people can see all of the events in one place without needing to scroll through several different months to see what is coming up," Howard said.

Those who are organizing and promoting Ann Arbor high school reunions can send an e-mail to Howard and she will post both information about reunions and Web links if groups have separate event websites.

Organizers are also considering using sponsorships on the site that would be related items including class reunion ads, local business sponsors and other selected groups. There are currently more than 140 members signed up for the site, but Howard is hoping that number will grow as alumni and other friends find out about it.

Howard is also seeking suggestions for alumni who could be featured on the site on a regular basis in short profiles. Eventually, the plan is to allow members to sign up for a regular newsletter.

Anyone visiting AnnArborAlumni.org can view a Google map that pinpoints where current members are located (no addresses are listed.) Visitors will see that members live around the world.

A link to Howard's e-mail can be found toward the bottom of the website where she is listed as the site manager. She welcomes suggestions and information to be posted.

## Superintendent, from page 1

agenda,” she said. “We’ve changed things based on the passion of the community. Sometimes as leaders we have to sit down and listen.”

She notes that a good superintendent needs input from a variety of sources to be successful. “You don’t do things in isolation,” she added. “You reach out for partnerships.” Green said in her current role, she has a variety of advisory committees in place, including ones with local police and ministerial groups. She also hosts a regular dinner for student leaders.

In the area of equity, diversity and global awareness, Green said a school district must celebrate each student and community member and what they bring to the system and must prepare students to be citizens of the world. “It has to come from the leadership of the school district and it has to be valued,” she said. “We must celebrate what you are, what you bring to the table.

And we have to prepare students for their world of the future – not our world of the past.”

She said good leaders should have “kaleidoscopic vision,” including many opinions and viewpoints. A good leader also needs to know when to step forward and when to step back and allow others to take the lead, she said. “Some pieces look different depending on how you turn the lens,” Green said of her philosophy. “It looks different with new information.”

When asked for her definition of an exemplary school, Green said it is one that is “child-centered and has a high expectation for success” and one that brings arts, athletics and academics together for a well-rounded experience. “I’ve always focused on what’s best for the child with academics to match,” she said.

In terms of budget issues, she said those are the toughest things for a superintendent to tackle. “It’s a challenge across America,” she said. Green noted that she always puts academics and children first

and advocates “using a scalpel, not a machete” in making cuts. She also said she advocates cutting, not eliminating programs, because “once you eliminate good programs, they rarely, if ever, come back.”

Green has served in her current post in the North Allegheny School District since May 2002. She has experience on national, state and local levels in the areas of instructional leadership, administrative and organizational management, labor management, instructional improvement and issues of diversity and multiculturalism. A main focus under her leadership in North Allegheny has been work on the district’s Strategic Plan – something that the Ann Arbor Public Schools community has used in operating the district since 2007.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Maryland, a Master of Education degree in Human Development Education from the University of Maryland’s

Institute for Child Study, and a doctorate in Education Policy, Planning, and Administration from the University of Maryland.

Prior to her superintendent positions, she has worked as a teacher, principal, elementary administrator, assistant superintendent and served an administrative role in special education and pupil services.

Green has been married for 35 years to Dr. Stephen I. Green, a periodontist.

During a visit to the Ann Arbor schools last spring, Green said she enjoyed meeting staff and students. “The best part of today was talking to the kids,” she said. “That’s what it’s all about, folks. It’s about the kids. They have so much to offer ... having their voice spoken often.”

Green replaces Interim Superintendent Robert Allen, who has served in the post since fall; he is the district’s operations and finance chief. Former Superintendent Todd Roberts left his post last fall.

## Deputy Superintendent Dickinson-Kelly retires after 38 years in AAPS

**D**eputy Superintendent for Instructional Services Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelly is retiring June 30 from the Ann Arbor Public Schools after 38 years of dedicated service.

In an end-of-year note to the community, Interim Superintendent Robert Allen recognized her accomplishments and thanked her for the excellent leadership and service she has provided.

Dickinson-Kelly began her career with the Ann Arbor Public Schools as a teacher consultant at Northside Elementary School then moved on to teach Language Arts/World Cultures at Forsythe Middle School where she stayed for 12 years before moving into administration. She served as Principal of Pittsfield and Angell elementary schools then moved into central administration as Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. During the 2010-11 school year, she has served as Interim Deputy Superintendent for Instructional Services.

Allen said he is especially grateful for her time as deputy as he led the district during this time of transition. “Whatever Lee Ann takes on, she gives



*Dickinson-Kelly*

it her all and always keeps a strong focus on what is best for students,” he said.

Dickinson-Kelly implemented a balanced literacy program for primary grades years ago and oversaw its expansion into the higher grades along with other reading intervention strategies, Allen said. She chaired a committee that developed

a food allergy handbook that has received national recognition and accolades.

“She has always recognized the importance of early childhood development programs and was instrumental in getting the Preschool and Family Center built, which opened in 2006,” he noted.

Two years ago, she brought Spanish language instruction to elementary students through a partnership with the University of Michigan School of Education. In addition, she developed an elementary humanities strand and brought in enrichment coordinators for each

elementary cluster. She also was responsible for administering and reporting of state and federal grants as well as coordinating, designing and reporting on School Improvement Plans.

“She did all this in addition to her day-to-day duties as an administrator and manager. She is an extraordinary educator, visionary and leader,” Allen added. “She has been a pleasure to work with and her efforts have been tremendous and their effect immeasurable and far-reaching. I don’t know if we can ever thank her enough.”

Dickinson-Kelly said she was fortunate to have worked in Ann Arbor throughout her career and noted that “being an educator was not simply what I did for 38 years, but who I am. My profession chose me as much as I chose it.” She said she is looking forward to spending more time with family.

“I have been rewarded a million times over by the opportunity to do the good work and serve our community,” she said in a note to staff. “That is all I ever aspired to. I’m very thankful I can look back and say I made a small difference in the life of a child.”