



2010 N. 59th Street, Kansas City, KS 66104
(913) 551-3200 FAX: (913) 551-3217

WWW.KCKPS.ORG

March 2, 2016

Dear staff,

I want to take this opportunity to talk with you about work that the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education has undertaken to reform and align their Board policies, and to improve the work conditions for all staff in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. As you are no doubt aware, public education in Kansas has faced a relentless and withering attack from segments of the Kansas legislature, and our district in particular has, on a number of occasions, been singled out for criticism by our governor. Still, despite deceptive claims to the contrary, funding in Kansas has, for a third time, been declared constitutionally inadequate by the courts, and that lack of funding has had a devastating impact on you, and on the students we serve.

The Board has been systematically working to review and revise its policies, in order to ensure that we are doing everything we can to provide fair and equitable working conditions for all staff. As the Board has undertaken its review process for its policies, along with agreements with various employee groups, one of the things that became glaringly obvious is that there are a number of inconsistencies between our various policies and negotiated agreements. These inconsistencies have resulted in discrepancies in areas such as leave policies, grievance procedures, and other benefits. These inconsistencies have caused frustration and misinformation for staff and administration alike.

While we are certainly not the only organization in which these inconsistencies exist, many organizations have responded to this realization by trying to ignore and downplay it. Our Board, on the other hand, has since the days of First Things First in the '90s, had the courage to make difficult information public, in the belief that we will never be able to fix our problems until we are able to acknowledge them. Let me give you a few examples of what these inconsistencies look like.

- With our leave policy, some employee groups have been able to take sick leave in order to care for a sick parent, while others have not
- With bereavement leave, some groups have had access to bereavement leave for relatives that was not available to employees in other groups
- Some employee groups had access to grievance procedures and options which were not available to other employee groups

To remedy this, the district intends to move away from negotiating isolated agreements with individual employee groups with the exception of the teacher's bargaining unit. Instead, the district will institute a "meet and confer" process with a newly formed group that represents ALL employee groups with the exception of those represented by the teacher's bargaining unit. This will ensure fair and equitable representation for all employee groups. This idea is currently already in practice with our insurance committee, and it is working well. The "meet and confer" group will meet regularly with me and my team to talk about compensation, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment.

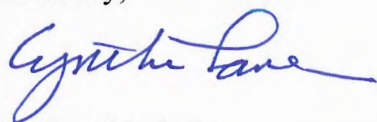
As referenced above, the newly formed "meet and confer" group will convene this spring. Contracts will continue to be negotiated with the current bargaining units for the paraprofessionals, secretaries, bus drivers and law enforcement officers for the 2016-17 school year. As of July 1, 2017, the district would no longer participate in the Public Employer-Employee Relations Act (PEERA), which governs negotiations with non-teacher groups.

In addition, the Board has, over the past year, been making changes and revisions to its policies, in order to bring consistency in the application of policy to all staff. Together, I believe these changes will bring more employee groups to the table, and ultimately provide a more equitable working environment for everyone.

I know that this may raise questions. We will be scheduling two open meetings for employee groups that will be impacted. These meetings will take place on Thursday and Friday, March 3-4 at 4:00 p.m. in the third floor Board room at the KCKPS Central Office. I hope you will come with your questions and concerns, so we can engage in productive dialogue together, in order to continue to move our work forward.

I look forward to continuing to work together with you as we transform KCKPS into one of the top ten districts in the nation for our students, for our staff, and for this community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Lane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Dr. Cynthia Lane
Superintendent of Schools