

**Remarks of Christine Fowler-Mack**  
**Appointed Superintendent of Akron Public Schools**  
**April 27, 2021**

Board President (Dr. Akbar), Vice President (Dr. Hall), Members of the Board of Education, Superintendent James, and to our scholars, staff and community, I am deeply humbled and **extremely** excited to be here today to publicly commit to leading Akron Public Schools as your next superintendent of schools.

It is both an honor and a privilege to be able to return to the system where my hopes and dreams began, and where I ultimately began my career as a teacher and an educational leader.

Board Members, I don't envy the task you had to select a superintendent to succeed someone of the stature of Dr. David James, who served Akron Public Schools for 29 years and led this district through some of its most challenging times over the last 13 years.

I am not only grateful for your trust in me to take the reins as Superintendent, but am ready for the challenges we will face together.

When visiting APS last week, the twinkle in the eye of an Akron Public Schools student at Ellet CLC put this moment in perspective for me, reminding me of the quote, “the best scenario is when preparation meets opportunity.”

I am fully prepared for, and am truly grateful for, this opportunity.

Akron is so special to me. In addition to my very positive and successful K-12 educational experiences here, I was motivated to pursue the APS Superintendency when I read the district’s vision statement--one that is worth repeating:

“to become the number one school system in the United States.”

While such a vision is grand, one must **believe** the vision is attainable to make it so, and **I do believe** Akron Public Schools can and will distinguish itself as a top urban district in the United States.

While such a goal begins with a vision, it requires setting meaningful priorities and implementing a comprehensive plan.

Of significance is that a plan (with priorities) is already in place—“Advance APS 3 in 3”. It commits the school system to three things I

deeply care about and plan to build on: Academic Achievement, Equity and Engagement.

One must be more than well-trained, experienced and prepared to implement a plan aligned with this type of grand vision. One must also be realistic about, and undaunted by, the complexity of the work and the challenges we face in improving outcomes and conditions for the most underserved among our scholars and priority schools.

The success we envision requires targeted commitments of time, resources and talent to areas of greatest need. It also requires us to remain equally committed to sustaining, expanding and further developing the strategies and opportunities that are working.

You have my commitment to those desired goals.

Today, and in talking with staff, community partners and civic leaders last week, I believe whole-heartedly that this school community will work in partnership with its schools to make Akron the number one urban school system in the country.

I accept this post with eyes wide open, recognizing that this opportunity comes at a time that is clearly the most challenging point in history—after a full year of disruption due to a pandemic that altered our lives, our work and our schools in countless ways.

It's been said that where there is crisis, there is opportunity. And that certainly applies to this important moment for APS, when our focus on safety, recovery and renewal must be balanced with an aggressive pursuit of academic achievement through an expanded lens on the future.

The opportunity before us implores us to embrace a broader set of ideas and contributions from these inspired and resourceful school partners at a time when their active engagement and meaningful supports can lift our scholars and families in immeasurable ways on a path toward excellence together.

As I pledged when I outlined my first 100 days as your superintendent, I will Listen, Learn and Lead, in that order.

I look forward to working with Dr. James to ensure a smooth transition of leadership, and I look forward to meeting with scholars, educators, staff, Principals, caregivers and families to fully understand our starting point: APS today.

One of the blessings, as I begin this important work, is that Dr. James, Dr. McWilliams-Woods, and I have been colleagues and friendly over the years. While this is a remarkable milestone in my life, I do not take for granted your faith in me as your new superintendent.

In the days to come, I will work to earn your trust and to validate the faith you have shown in my readiness to lead Akron Public Schools into the future.

Today, I reaffirm my commitment to making Akron Public Schools

- a system where scholars graduate fully prepared for college, careers and life, regardless of the pathway they choose.

- a system where academic achievement is possible for all, because caring educators provide authentic/joyful learning experiences.
- a system where a dedicated community provides meaningful supports to academic success, social-emotional growth and an independent, entrepreneurial spirit for every child.

Our vision will take the time, talents and resources of every one of us who have committed ourselves to making APS number one.

Finally...To our beautiful, diverse, capable and determined APS student body: You are our priority! You are my priority! We want you to dream big and reach high, and we are here to support you as you discover and try new things, as you meet high standards and develop new skills.

And to the talented and hardworking APS leaders, teachers and staff I look forward to working with, your voice matters to me, as I seek

to understand your needs and to build on the great things already happening in our system.

When I was a Teacher at The Academy at Robinson, our Parent Engagement / Reading Recovery Specialist (Sandra Roebuck) shared a poem with me that seems particularly fitting for this moment, as I prepare to lead our school community through the challenges and opportunities ahead of us: The poem is titled, "Unity."

# Unity

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I dreamed I stood in a studio and  
watched two sculptors there.  
The clay they used was a young child's  
mind and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher  
the tools that were used  
were books, music, and art.  
The other, a parent,  
worked with a guiding hand  
and a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day,  
the teacher toiled with touch  
that was deft and sure.  
While the parent labored close nearby  
and polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when their task was done,  
they were proud of  
what they had wrought,  
For the things they had molded into a child  
could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agree they would have failed  
if each had worked alone.  
For behind the parents stood the school  
and behind the teacher stood the home.

