Dear Taft School Community:

As the Chief of Schools new to the Taft High School Community, I would like to introduce myself and share information on school coverage during Principal Mary Kay Cappitelli’s leave.

I am honored to be the new Chief of Schools for Network 1, which includes Taft High School. I have been the Chief of Schools for the O’Hare Network on the North-Northwest Side of Chicago. The new Network 1 now includes the area high schools. I was promoted to Chief from my role as the Deputy Chief of Schools of the O’Hare Network. Prior to that, I was the Principal of Hawthorne Elementary for six years. I have 20 years of teaching experience. I am thrilled to be taking on this role to work with the high schools in our area.

As you know, Principal Mary Kay Cappitelli will be starting an extended medical leave next week. I want to share some information on her leave and the school leadership plans.

- Ms. Cappitelli is not retiring. She is taking an extended medical leave. She is working with the CPS Benefits team to understand her options to best take care of herself. At this time, we do not know the timeline of her leave. Ms. Cappitelli continues to be the contract principal of Taft High School during her absence. She has graciously agreed to make herself available for consultation purposes, if necessary.
- Because Ms. Cappitelli has not formally announced her retirement, the school leadership coverage is an assignment, not a permanent position. If and when Ms. Cappitelli decides to retire, the LSC will then begin the formal search process for the contract principal. I will work with the LSC to maintain an open line of communication regarding the school and school leadership.
- Because of the extended medical leave status, an Acting Principal will be assigned by the Chief of Schools with the approval of the CEO, Dr. Barbara Byrd-Bennett. The LSC is briefed on the process and decision, but does not take a formal role in the process because there is no contract being offered to the individual. The timeline for the Acting Principal’s services will all depend on Ms. Cappitelli’s status. It is Board Policy that any individual named as Acting, Interim, or Contract Principal in any school must be someone who passed the Principal Eligibility Process.
- Ms. Carolyn Rownd, current Assistant Principal from Jones College Prep, will be Acting Principal at Taft High School, beginning Monday, November 25, 2013, until June 30, 2014. If Ms. Cappitelli retires before the end of this school year, the LSC may begin their search process, but Ms. Rownd will complete her Acting Principal term until June 30. This is in order to avoid yet another transition in the school leadership within the same year, which ultimately can be disruptive to the school learning environment.
- The Acting Principal does not have voting rights in the LSC. Decisions regarding budget and staffing fall under the jurisdiction of the Chief, with approval from the LSC. In order to maintain stability, school personnel and programs/initiatives will continue for the remainder of the school year.
- Ms. Rownd will be visiting Taft High School on Tuesday, November 19. She will meet with Ms. Cappitelli, Dr. Shane Smith, Deputy Chief of the Network, LSC Chair, Lisa Schwieber, and with teachers, staff, and students.
I am very aware that changes in the school leadership, particularly during the school year, can create an unsettling feeling across the school community. I am asking for all of us to ensure that we protect the high quality learning environment for the students at Taft. This is a time for all of us to work together and strengthen our commitment to the work of educating children. I am also asking that we welcome Ms. Rownd and give her the support she needs in order to be successful. She is grateful for this opportunity and considers it a privilege to be part of the dynamic Taft High School Community. I am grateful to Dr. Joe Powers, Principal of Jones College Prep, for agreeing to “loan” Ms. Rownd. Please know that there is no “hidden agenda” in this arrangement. It is simply about finding the right leadership for the school under the circumstances. Network 1 will be a strong support system for Taft and looks forward to a strong partnership. Members of my team will be at the school next week to support the school administrative team in any way we can.

I look forward to meeting you soon. Please feel free to reach out if have any concerns or questions. I can be reached at amalvarado@cps.edu or call the office number at 773-534-1083.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anna Alvarado
Chief of Schools
CPS- Network #1