I. “Alternative Paths to a Diploma” Panel Introduction

Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley (Asst. Superintendent) moderated the evening. She welcomed parents and had each panelist introduce themselves, and describe their role in AAPS. Panelists were given questions in advance to address, with parents given time for individual questions after the pre-planned questions.

II. Panelists Q&A

Tyron Weeks (Principal, Pathways to Success):

- **Who would my student’s IEP team contact if we were considering your program?** The process would start with the middle school or high school counselor in the student’s current school. After reviewing the student’s learning style, and social and academic support needs, the counselor would have the principal or asst. principal contact Tyrone to submit the referral. The final step would be a workshop to establish what was happening previously, what Pathways offers, and future planning. IEP paperwork would also transfer to the new IEP team.

- **How can parents learn more about Pathways?**: They have an Open House every 9 weeks at the school that is open to current families and those looking into the program. Their staff visit each middle school in January to speak to students as well.

- **“Everybody doesn’t fit into the big machine”**: Tyrone explained that Pathways smaller size (200 students), class sizes (capped at 20), and co-taught classes allows them to help students who struggle at the larger comprehensive high schools. They also have a new partnership with ZingTrain that is allowing students to apply what they learn, and the option to dual enroll at Washtenaw CC.

Cindy Leaman (Principal) & Claudia Parfitt (Teacher) (A2 Virtual+ Academy):

- **How can parents learn about A2 Virtual+?** Their website [http://a2schools.org/Domain/39](http://a2schools.org/Domain/39) has good info. They host several information/open house nights each year. Classes are available starting in Grade 5 for math, and are available for all middle & high school students. IEP students are typically
referred to them by TCs or counselors. Many IEP accommodations are easily implemented online e.g. extended time on tests, allowing students to take a 1 semester class over 2 semesters, etc. About 30% of the students have an IEP or 504 Plan.

- **When is A2 Virtual+ not a good fit?**
  Students who are avoiding school may also avoid the computer. They also need to be able to learn independently and be motivated to finish the work. The website includes a parent guide with a rubric to see if your student is ready to learn online. Some students will be ready sooner than others.

- **Who teaches the classes?**
  AAPS teachers, who are housed in the high schools. They also visit the middle and elementary schools on a rotating basis. They keep in touch with students via email and text messages almost 24/7. Video instruction is available at any time to rewatch. There is also a help center Tuesday evenings that is staffed by MSU student volunteers.

- **Where/when would a middle school student take a class?**
  Their online class would be part of their daily course schedule, and they would report to the media center to work on the class during that hour.

- **What if a student starts a class but doesn’t succeed?**
  There is a drop/add option in the first 2 weeks. Or in some cases a class is offered in more than one format (e.g. more video based vs text based instruction) and switching to the other resolves the issue.

- **Do they have their own TCs?**
  No, they work with the student's TC in the building, who communicates with their virtual teachers. Virtual staff will attend achievement team, 504 Plan, and IEP meetings as well.

Karen Eisley (AAPS CTE Director) & Jody Gielinski (SW Washtenaw Consortium Director) (Career and Technical Education):

- **What courses/programs are available in AAPS vs. the SW Washtenaw Consortium?**
  The consortium’s Cosmetology program is currently the only one that takes AAPS students. It’s a ½ day program that takes 2 years, including summers. Currently 30 AAPS students attend, and at the end of the program they can sit for the state exam. Students get applications from counselors, and are interviewed beforehand. Most of the other consortium programs are similar to ones currently offered at AAPS. The consortium’s include automotive, visual imaging/digital photography, education, CNA, IT, horse judging, and landscaping. AAPS offerings include Automotive (which can be taken for math credits), Project Lead the Way, Health Science (can count as a science credit), Homebuilding, Hospitality, Marketing, and Web Design.

- **How do students learn about CTE?**
  In February, Karen and the counselors present information to students, including a video. Many electives are available to all AAPS students.

- **How are students chosen for the popular Homebuilding program?**
  They look for students who are interested in construction, architecture, and interior design. Counselors have the applications. There is an interview team that includes the instructors. Attendance is critical, and students must pass an OSHA test.

- **Are IEP accommodations made?**
  Yes, their staff implement IEPs, and work hard to make sure students are successful.
John Boshoven (Community High Counselor) & Claudia Siewert (Clague Counselor):

- **What do counselors do?**
  Counselors serve students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Their roles include listening, advocating, outreach, and referral. They also attend IEP and 504 meetings for students. This year they have started offering more parent information nights on topics like substance abuse, how the teen brain works, gap years, and college options for those with learning differences.

- **What is an Educational Development Plan (EDP)?**
  Middle school counselors work with students to help them with ideas for what career interests may be a match with them. In 6th grade, students are assessed to see what their learning style is. In 7th grade, they start using the “Career Cruising” program which has a matching program where students answer questions to see what careers may be good fits. They can also explore videos interviews on careers, see what education is needed, and job market info. Their plan will include info such as short and long term goals. Students retake the inventory in 8th grade to see if their interests have changed. All students including self-contained classroom students should have an EDP. Parents can ask students for their login to view the Career Cruising site from home.

- **What options are available in community for students to explore careers?**
  Counselors can provide this guidance to students e.g. referrals to summer programs, internships, or mentorships. If a counselor can’t find a match, they network with other counselors to find a community resource for that career.

### III. Open Q&A from Parents

- **How can a parent of non-IEP student with mental health issues such as anxiety or depression get accommodations for their child?**
  **John B.:** Let counselors know of issue, they will help advocate with teachers or programs like A2 Virtual+
  **Cindy L.:** Communicate early and often, they recognize not one size fits all students, and will meet student where they are.
  **Tyrone W.:** Pathways choices can also support this type of student e.g. their extend evening classes 3-7 pm, online classes which include evening in-person meetings with teachers to provide more face-to-face support, and dinner offered on-site.

- **What type of supervision would an AAPS student get taking an online class?**
  **Claudia S.:** Middle schoolers typically work in the media center with a requirement to sign-on or call-in for attendance. High schoolers have more flexibility – can schedule the class during 1st hour so they can sleep-in and do the work later in the day, others go to media center during school day.
  **Cindy L.:** The system allows for detailed monitoring from a distance. Teachers can see what the student was student was doing, when they were online, idle time, etc. Parents receive weekly reports.
  **Claudia S.:** Students are required to email weekly as well. If she doesn’t get a check-in, she reviews their records, contacts the student, and will also email parents.

- **What opportunities does Project the Lead Way offer?**
  **Karen E. & Lee Ann D-K.:** AAPS intends to roll this out as a K12 STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts Math) curriculum, currently in a few elementaries, all middle schools, and high schools. They will be one of only a few districts in the country to offer a K12 implementation. Elementary students get a hands-on, project-based learning
experience, middle school emphasizes robotics, and high school has a course sequence with intro classes, focus classes, and a culminating senior project.

- **What deadlines are there for registering for A2 Virtual+?**
  *Cindy L.*: Each term does have a deadline. She encourages students to start with just 1 or 2 classes to see if it’s a good fit, though there is not a limit as AAPS has a seat time waiver. Some families on sabbatical have students taking all online classes. Each class takes 100-120 hours of work.

- **Can students dual enroll at Pathways and another high school?**
  *Tyrone W.*: Yes, if they talk with a counselor. They encourage students to wait until 10th grade, and will schedule classes at beginning or end of day to provide time for students to transition between buildings. Unlike A2Virtual, Pathways can allow students to accelerate as well e.g. go beyond the credit hour limit/term. Pathways students also become eligible for the Rotary $2000/yr scholarship for WCC if they meet attendance and grade minimums. Some dual enroll just in evening classes at Pathways so they can stay at home high schools during day.

- **Do A2 Virtual+ or Pathways allow work on online classes over summer?**
  *Cindy L.*: Students can take 2 weeks beyond the end of the school year to complete classes. If students want to enroll in summer classes through them (or the regular summer school) there is a fee, with options for scholarships for low-income families. Doing 15 weeks of work in 5 weeks though is often extremely hard for students. *Tyrone W.*: Pathways students who are more than ½ through their online classes are allowed to continue working over the whole summer, for free.

- **Can students take 5 years to graduate from high school?**
  *Tyrone W.*: Pathways applied for a state waiver and is hoping to offer this option soon.

- **How can an IEP’s transition plan be connected to the student’s EDP?**
  *John B.*: Counselors can show teacher consultants how to export EDP info into an IEP. EDPs are required for all students.