

PRESS RELEASE

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MAISD Named One of Ten Promise Zones In State

MUSKEGON: Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) Superintendent Dr. Susan Meston received word this morning that the Michigan Department of Treasury has approved the MAISD's application to become one of ten communities in the state to be declared a "Promise Zone" under the Michigan Promise Zone Act. Meston will now serve as the CEO of the initiative meant to support local efforts to promise a college education for all children within the MAISD boundaries.

"This is an important first step in our journey to encourage more students to attend college. We have a very engaged collaborative group of community leaders in Muskegon County who are definitely up for this challenge." said Meston.

The MAISD held a public forum back in February and then adopted a resolution to declare its intentions to become a Promise Zone. The next step will be establishing an 11-member governing authority that will convene and spend time conducting research, planning, and evaluating the potential to raise the private dollars that must fund the Promise Zone for the first two years. After the second year of distributing privately funded scholarships, a certified Promise Zone can then capture one-half of the growth in the state education tax to be used for a two-year associate's degree or up to a four-year degree for resident students.

According to Meston, there is no set time table for how long fundraising efforts may last, although the plan developed by the board will address this issue. The planning process itself may take a year.

The law is very specific about who will serve on the governing board with nine of the eleven members to be appointed by Meston. For the past two years the MAISD has been engaged with a group of education and community leaders called "Muskegon Opportunity." This group has explored the possibility of a collaborative community-wide effort to expand the post-secondary educational opportunities for all of our children. They have been especially active in raising awareness of the Tuition Incentive Program (TIP) also administered by the State Department of Treasury. The MAISD will work closely with Muskegon Opportunity as it examines the feasibility of raising the funds necessary to offer the promise of college.

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