

Washtenaw Superintendents' Association

Washtenaw ISD □ Ann Arbor Public Schools □ Chelsea Schools □ Dexter Community Schools
Lincoln Consolidated Schools □ Manchester Community Schools □ Milan Area Schools
Saline Area Schools □ Whitmore Lake Public Schools □ Ypsilanti Community Schools

April 6, 2020

To our Washtenaw County students and families,

With the Governor's recent Executive Order suspending in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year due to coronavirus (COVID-19), the nine public school districts in Washtenaw County and the Washtenaw Intermediate School District want to provide you with an update about our next steps as a unified educational community. This unprecedented situation is overwhelming and causing anxiety for students, families, and educators for many reasons. While there are many unknowns during this time, we *do* know this: **Every single student across Washtenaw County is important to all of us.**

Although you may have witnessed fierce rivalries on the football fields or the robotics arenas, our districts have the same shared commitment of ensuring all students have the educational opportunities, resources, and supports needed to achieve their fullest potential. The COVID-19 crisis shines a light on deep inequities across our county, including within education, and we stand firm in our belief that schools have an opportunity to collaborate and work towards closing the opportunity gap, rather than exacerbating it.

We believe every single student should have access to high-quality, rigorous educational opportunities, regardless of circumstance or this pandemic. During these challenging times, our districts have been and will continue working together to develop Continuity of Learning plans that honor our commitment to high-quality, equitable, and inclusive education for *all* students, including students: with disabilities, of color, without access to broadband internet, in poverty, experiencing homelessness, who are incarcerated, who are food and housing insecure, and more.

Working with each community's assets, our districts and programs will strive to provide meaningful learning experiences in an environment that is challenging for everyone. In this situation, we know we cannot possibly maintain the same expectations as if our students were coming to school every day. The reality is that we are all learning our way into a new process for ensuring continuity of learning while recognizing that each student, staff member, and our larger community have been impacted in various ways by this disease, and those lived realities impact the extent to which students will be able to navigate their learning to close out the 2019-20 school year.

While the COVID-19 school building closures have brought us together, we also recognize that how we work now will impact our work together when school buildings reopen. Our shared purpose embraces the concept that all students are our students and we must ensure equity and

inclusion for all, within and across districts. To deliver this shared purpose with transparency, authenticity and intentionality, we embrace the following core beliefs now and in the future:

- **Equity and Inclusion for All:** We work within and across districts and recognize that all kids are our kids.
- **Stronger Together:** We work as a community, together, in ways that unite us.
- **Belonging:** We build a system that sustains a sense of belonging for children and adults.
- **Connection:** We strengthen our human connections, both to deepen connections with ourselves and, with generosity, to help others.
- **Student-Centered Learning:** We support students in developing a love for learning by focusing on the whole child and ensuring opportunities for learning for each student.
- **Creativity:** We persist, innovate and use a culture of creativity to develop new approaches to learning.
- **Community and Love:** We support one another, are generous, and build relationships of trust.

We take this commitment seriously. Over the coming weeks, we will work on Continuity of Learning plans together that address health and well-being, as well as the formal learning that students need. As we learn more about our “new normal” and ways to better serve the needs of students and families remotely, you will see our districts lean on each other as we amend these plans for the collective good. We hope to emerge from this as a stronger, more collaborative, supportive and equity-focused education community with a shared-commitment to all students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Scott Menzel, Superintendent
Washtenaw Intermediate School District

Kevin Upton, Interim Superintendent
Manchester Community School

Dr. Jeanice Swift, Superintendent
Ann Arbor Public Schools

Bryan Girbach, Superintendent
Milan Area Schools

Dr. Julie Helber, Superintendent
Chelsea Public Schools

Scot Graden, Superintendent
Saline Area Schools

Dr. Christopher Timmis, Superintendent
Dexter Community Schools

Tom DeKeyser, Superintendent
Whitmore Lake Public Schools

Robert Jansen, Interim Superintendent
Lincoln Consolidated Schools

Alena Zachery-Ross, Superintendent
Ypsilanti Community Schools