

October 23, 2020

RE: Rise in COVID-19 Cases in the Community and Implications for Schools

Dear Van Buren County Families,

As superintendents proudly representing and serving the school districts of Van Buren County, we first want to acknowledge your extraordinary patience during these difficult times. Your understanding during this pandemic has been critical in keeping our schools safe.

As you may be aware, the number of COVID-19 cases in Van Buren County and in many other counties across Michigan have been on the upswing recently. A report shared with the superintendents on Friday, October 23, from the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department indicates that Van Buren County has climbed from the *High Risk* to the *Very High Risk* Determination Level in the past week. For schools, this means that the consideration of school closures for face-to-face learning has increased. While the county remains at the *Very High Risk* level, schools will need to consult with the Health Department while considering temporary closures each time there is evidence of ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in buildings.

With this new information, it is abundantly clear to us that CDC guidelines for mitigating the spread of the virus are extremely important if we are to keep our schools open and operating for our students. Wearing masks, social distancing, and frequent hand washing have been very successful strategies for minimizing the spread of the virus in our schools. We ask for the support of all of our community members in adhering to these guidelines, as well as avoiding social gatherings, in order to prevent likely COVID-19 transmissions that could easily reach our school buildings. Safety remains our number one priority, and we recognize the important role schools serve for our broader community. Schools are vital in supporting the academic, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of students and families. We must do everything we can to keep schools safe and open.

The actions we all take in the next few weeks and months will have a direct impact on our schools. Following mitigation protocols now, and throughout the upcoming holiday season, will help us keep students in school.

Together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19. On behalf of the students and communities we serve, we thank you for your continued support.

Best regards,

Lynn Johnson, Superintendent
Bangor Public Schools

Christopher Rice, Superintendent
Lawton Community Schools

Andrew Hubbard, Superintendent
Hartford Public Schools

Deb Paquette, Superintendent
Bloomingdale Public Schools

Randy Fleenor, Superintendent
Mattawan Consolidated Schools

Jeffrey C. Mills, Superintendent
VBISD / Wood School

Yolonda Brunt, Superintendent
Covert Public Schools

Rick Reo, Superintendent
Paw Paw Public Schools

Jeffery Rehlander, Superintendent
Gobles Public Schools

Patrick Creagan, Superintendent
Decatur Public Schools

Kevin Schooley, Superintendent
South Haven Public Schools

Gretchen Gendron, Superintendent
Lawrence Public Schools