

March 12, 2020

Dear Students, Parents, Staff, and Community Members:

In the interest of public health, the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the communities we serve, the superintendents of public, Christian, and Catholic schools within Kent ISD have canceled all student field trips, school-related travel, assemblies, and events involving more than 100 community participants, effective immediately until further notice.

Please understand we do not make these decisions lightly. We recognize extracurricular activities and events are a rich part of the school experience for students and their families.

This decision is consistent with the recommendations of the Kent County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. These recommendations also reflect the precautions suggested by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who this week declared a [state of emergency](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our state.

These are the most appropriate actions to be taken at this time. The Kent County Health Department assures us, and the community, that our schools are the safest place for students to be. Data collected worldwide indicates healthy children are the least likely demographic group to contract or spread COVID-19. That said, students who are ill should stay at home. All schools are temporarily suspending attendance awards and incentives.

Our immediate plan for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our communities while advancing student learning is based on three factors:

1. Avoiding unnecessary exposure of our staff and students to illness.
2. Working to the best of our ability to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning in Kent County.
3. Protecting the health and well-being of our multigenerational community, especially those who are most vulnerable to illness.

With this in mind, we will enact the following measures related to events and programs scheduled outside of the regular school day beginning Thursday, March 12:

- All field trips are suspended until further notice.
- All school-sponsored travel is suspended until further notice.
- All assemblies and performances in our schools involving more than 100 participants in one room from the general public, other than students and staff, are suspended until further notice.
- All community meetings, community education programming (excluding before/after school childcare, preschool, and daycare programming), rentals, and gatherings scheduled to take place within our school facilities are suspended until further notice.
- All athletic events will continue in accordance with guidance issued by the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Updates will be posted at www.mhsaa.com.
- Schools will follow the guidance of the Kent County Health Department for outdoor activities not governed by the MHSAA. The Health Department reports the transmission of this disease, and most others, is far less likely outdoors than indoors.
- Any indoor after-school activity consisting of a group of less than 100 people and an extension of the normal learning day (clubs, athletic practices, etc.) will continue as planned.
- All tours of school facilities will be suspended until further notice.
- While we appreciate volunteers, we are limiting access of visitors to classrooms until further notice.

As we prepare for all possible scenarios, we are asking you to develop a plan for your family in the event schools were to close for an extended period of time. We are taking COVID-19 very seriously and hope that, with your help, we can mitigate the spread of this virus in Kent County. Please follow the recommendations to wash your hands, stay home when you are sick, and practice good hygiene.

We also ask families planning to travel during spring break to be aware of the conditions at their destinations, and in the airports they must use, to ensure they do not put their family or others at risk during their trip or upon their return. We anticipate more guidance coming from the Health Department surrounding protocols of students returning from spring break as we get closer to that date.

Schools are the safest, healthiest, and most nurturing environments for students to be. The Kent County Health Department has emphasized that, based on the science surrounding this disease, there is no benefit to closing school, and in fact could make matters worse as it could accelerate the spread of the virus to vulnerable populations (e.g., grandparents who would provide child care when school is closed, etc.). Universities that have closed have done so based on a separate set of variables, namely college dormitories. The Health Department has assured us closing is not the proper course for K-12 schools.

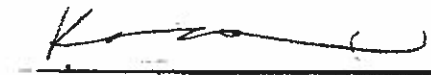
We will continue to take any/all measures to keep our children, staff, and school community safe. The situation involving this health challenge is rapidly changing and we will update you regularly as additional guidance is received. The above actions are the measures deemed appropriate **at this time** given the latest guidance from federal, state, and county experts. Thank you for your attention and support regarding this important topic as safety is our number one priority.


Sincerely,

The Superintendents of the Kent ISD Public and Private Schools

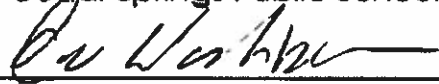
Local School District Signatures



Ronald E. Caniff
Kent Intermediate School District


Kevin Macina,
Byron Center Public Schools


Detric Martin, Ed.D.
Caledonia Community Schools



Scott Smith
Cedar Springs Public Schools


Dave Washburn
Comstock Park Public Schools


Heidi Kattula, Ed.D.
East Grand Rapids Public Schools

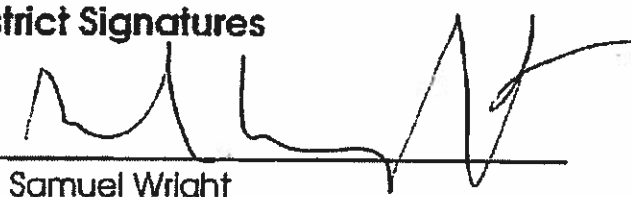

Daniel Behm
Forest Hills Public Schools


Kevin Polston
Godfrey Lee Public Schools

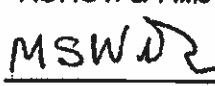

William Ferrerhoff
Godwin Heights Public Schools

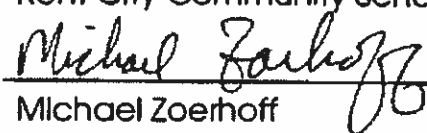

Ron Gorman, Ph.D.
Grand Rapids Public Schools

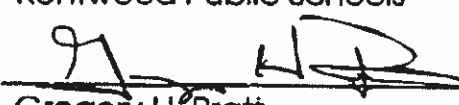

Roger Bearup
Grandville Public Schools


Samuel Wright
Kelloggsville Public Schools

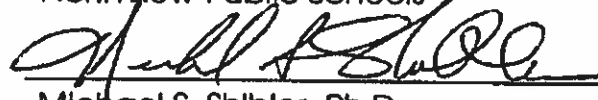

Gerald Hopkins
Kenowa Hills Public Schools



Michael Weller
Kent City Community Schools


Michael Zoerhoff
Kentwood Public Schools


Gregory H. Pratt
Lowell Area Schools

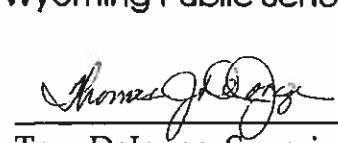

Scott Korpak, Ed.D.
Northview Public Schools


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Pete Bush
Sparta Area Schools


Rob Blitchok
Thornapple Kellogg Schools


Craig Hoekstra
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Tom DeJonge, Superintendent
Grand Rapids Christian Schools