



For immediate release

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Washtenaw Schools and the Washtenaw County Health Department Issue Joint Call to Action

Washtenaw County, Mich. – Nearly 30 school administrators representing public school districts, charter schools, and private and independent schools from across Washtenaw County have signed on to a joint letter with the Washtenaw County Health Department urging the broader Washtenaw County community to continue preventing the spread of COVID-19 so schools can proceed with plans to further phase into face-to-face instruction throughout the fall and winter.

“As we return to face-to-face instruction, we want to be sure we are prioritizing the health and safety of our students, families, and staff. With over 50,000 students and 15,000 staff across our schools, health and safety is of utmost importance,” states Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) Interim Superintendent Naomi Norman. “When schools need to unexpectedly transition from open to closed to open again due to positive COVID-19 cases, it puts a burden on students, families, staff, and our broader community. We are taking safety very seriously by providing remote options and enacting strict protocols within our schools, but bringing students back is dependent on how well we can collectively adhere to the recommended safety protocols.”

Schools across Washtenaw County are in a variety of phases, with some providing fully virtual instruction, some providing face-to-face instruction, and some offering a hybrid of the two. Washtenaw County schools and the Washtenaw County Health Department have been working together to closely monitor COVID-19 trends, data, and best practices locally and regionally, as well as monitoring situations at schools across the state that have returned to full, in-person instruction.

“Across the state, we have seen COVID-19 outbreaks at schools and in communities force classrooms or athletic teams to quarantine and, in some cases, entire schools to temporarily close and transition overnight to fully remote learning environments,” said Jimena Loveluck, Health Officer for the Washtenaw County Health Department. “We’re asking everyone in Washtenaw County to do their part to keep the spread of illness low. We know consistent use of face coverings, distancing, hand cleaning and full cooperation with health officials slows the spread of illness and prevents additional cases. With continued cooperation, we can continue doing



things we love as safely as possible and keeping in mind that COVID-19 continues to circulate in our communities.”

Their joint letter states:

“To our community,

You are with us through it all. You are with us on the football field and at volleyball matches. You support the band boosters and you volunteer for field trips. You help us in our classrooms and you donate school supplies each fall. All of this looks different now because of COVID-19, but with your help, we can *all* return to school as safely as possible and while protecting everyone’s health to the greatest degree possible.

We miss each of our students, from our youngest learners to our seniors preparing for graduation this spring. We know this year has been harder and more challenging than any other, and we are eternally grateful for all of your continued support, patience, and unwavering commitment to our schools. We are eager to fully return to school and we know you and your children are too.

In order for us to all return to school this fall and winter, we are asking everyone in our community to do what it takes to minimize the spread of COVID-19 by taking the following actions:

Get Your Flu Vaccine

Everyone six months and older needs a flu vaccine, especially this year. Widespread flu vaccination will reduce the spread of flu during the COVID pandemic and help prevent serious illness as much as possible. It also reduces the chances of people becoming infected with both flu and COVID-19 at the same time. Contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information on getting vaccinated or [click here](#) for a list of upcoming flu vaccine events.

Wear Your Face Covering

Wearing a face covering is one of the most effective ways to minimize the spread of COVID-19, which may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. The virus spreads easily between people through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or yells.

Social Distance

Social distancing, or staying at least 6 feet away from people you do not live with, is another effective strategy that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Being outdoors in an open



space is safer, and the Washtenaw County Health Department recommends avoiding being in small rooms with poor airflow with non-household members. *This means no indoor parties, sleepovers, or other social get-togethers with non-household members where there is poor ventilation or closed windows.*

Practice Good Hygiene

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if you do not have soap and water. Avoid touching your face and mouth, and cover your coughs and sneezes.

Monitor Your Symptoms and Stay Home If You Feel Under the Weather

People with COVID-19 may have many different symptoms that range in severity. Common symptoms include fever, cough (not attributed to allergies or asthma), shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, muscle aches, severe tiredness, chills, new loss of taste or smell, or diarrhea.

If you or your child are experiencing any of these symptoms, even mild ones, stay home.

Manage symptoms with fever-reducing medicine, stay hydrated and eat when you can, and stay away from people and pets in your household. Call your doctor if symptoms keep getting worse or call 9-1-1 if you have difficulty breathing, chest pain, or if you are feeling light-headed or unstable.

Cooperate Fully with Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

Remember the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to circulate locally. Cases can and do occur. Cooperating with public health guidance is the best way for us to stop any additional spread once a case has been identified. This means responding promptly to school and health officials and answering questions honestly - to protect everyone's health.

Please remember that not everyone infected with COVID-19 shows or feels symptoms, which is why getting a flu shot, wearing a face mask, social distancing, practicing good hygiene habits, cooperating with case investigation and contact tracing are all critical to keeping yourself, your loved ones, and those around you safe and healthy.

As educators, we are truly excited to see all of our students again! Over the last few months, we have watched and learned important lessons from other school communities who have returned to varying levels of face-to-face instruction. We have carefully planned to ensure our classrooms are safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environments ready for students and staff.



Our schools are microcosms of our larger community – **the success of all our schools is dependent on what happens both inside *and* outside of the classroom.** We hope you will join us in taking the above precautions so we can all return to school together.

Signed,

Jimena Loveluck, Health Officer, Washtenaw County Health Department

Naomi Norman, Interim Superintendent, Washtenaw Intermediate School District

Dr. Jeanice K. Swift, Superintendent, Ann Arbor Public Schools

Dr. Julie Helber, Superintendent, Chelsea School District

Dr. Chris Timmis, Superintendent, Dexter Community Schools

Robert Jansen, Superintendent, Lincoln Consolidated Schools

Dr. Bradley Bezeau, Superintendent, Manchester Community Schools

Bryan Girbach, Superintendent, Milan Area Schools

Scot Graden, Superintendent, Saline Area Schools

Tom DeKeyser, Superintendent, Whitmore Lake Public Schools

Alena Zachery-Ross, Superintendent, Ypsilanti Community Schools

Teresa Woods, Superintendent, Ann Arbor Learning Community

Travis Batt, Principal, Arbor Preparatory High School

Luay Shalabi, Principal, Central Academy

Barbara Naess, Campus Leader, Clonlara School

David Lee, Head of School, Daycroft School

Dr. Ellen Fischer, Principal, Early College Alliance at EMU

John Huber, Head of School, Emerson School

Peter Fayroian, Head of School, Greenhills School

Jennifer Rosenberg, Head of School, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor

Al Waters, Executive Director, Honey Creek Community School

Fayzeh Madani, Principal, Michigan Islamic Academy

Dr. Sian Owen-Cruise, School Administrator, Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor

Julie Fantone Pritzel, Principal, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School

Bob Burgess, Principal, St. Paul Ann Arbor

Rachel Goldberg, Interim Head of School, Summers-Knoll School

Monique Uzelac, Program Director, Washtenaw Alliance for Virtual Education

David Dugger, Executive Director, Washtenaw Educational Options Consortium

Nhu Do, Principal, Washtenaw International High School and Middle Academy

Karl Covert, Dean / Superintendent, Washtenaw Technical Middle College