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April 16, 2021

RE: Temporary shift to virtual learning model

Dear Ionia Public Schools Community:

Ionia Public Schools will move to a FULLY VIRTUAL model of instruction for one week, beginning Monday, April 19, 2021, through Friday, April 23, 2021. Building administrators and/or staff will contact students and parents with information regarding the virtual instruction. Spring sports will continue if they are taking place outdoors. No indoor practices or events will be held next week.

The decision to move to a Fully Virtual model of instruction is based on the number of IPS students and staff who are currently quarantined due to close contact exposure to individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. On Monday, April 12, 2021, IPS had 90 students and 9 staff members quarantined due to close contact, and 14 students and 5 staff tested positive for COVID-19. As of 12:30 pm today, IPS has more than 230 students and 10 staff quarantined, with 25 students and 7 staff members testing positive for COVID-19.

We continue to partner with the Ionia County Health Department to ensure that we are following the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of our students and staff. We will update parents as additional information is available regarding the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

The collective hard work of Ionia Public Schools alone is not sufficient in controlling the spread of the coronavirus in our community. Public health experts report significant increases in positive cases across our state and region in recent weeks. The Ionia County Health Department has reported a significant local increase of confirmed cases in April, with more than 19.2% of all tests indicating positive results.

Health officials cite that the rise in cases is largely due to a lack of safe practices -- mainly proper social distancing and mask-wearing -- in social settings and community gatherings. If local cases continue to trend upwards, the County Health Department warns schools may be forced to implement additional restrictions to prevent continued infections.

Schools are vital in meeting students' and families' academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being. While I recognize the important role schools serve in our broader community, safety must remain our number one priority. I will do everything within my power to keep Ionia Public Schools safe and open.

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community and to keep our schools open, I ask that all social and community gatherings continue to adhere to safe mitigation protocols. My staff has worked very hard over the last several months to allow Ionia Public Schools the opportunity to open for in-person instruction and extra-curricular activities. I need your help and continued diligence in order to stay in this model. Working together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19.

Ionia Public Schools will reevaluate our COVID-19 student and staff data next Wednesday to determine if virtual learning will need to be extended beyond Friday, April 23, 2021. Meal pick-up will be available Monday and Thursday from 12:00-1:00 pm at Jefferson Elementary, Twin Rivers Elementary, and Ionia High School. If you will be picking up meals, please complete the form at <http://bit.ly/IPS4-19>. This will assist our food service department with preparations. I appreciate your patience and understanding as we deal with this unprecedented situation. These are challenging times; however, I believe the Ionia community will work through it together. Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ronald C. Wilson