

Macomb County superintendents: Michigan kids need us all to wear masks, social distance

Michael DeVault, Ryan McLeod and 20 superintendents representing schools in Macomb County

Published 7:01 a.m. ET Dec. 1, 2020

Detroit Free Press

We are at a critical point in the fight against COVID-19. Since August, Macomb County schools, alongside districts across the region, have worked diligently to offer in-person and hybrid learning for our students. From the onset of this pandemic, our teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, food service members and custodians have united to deliver supports and services to our students.

Now, as the second wave spreads across our state, we are faced with difficult decisions.

Schools that were able to reopen for in-person learning did a good job of containing the virus within our schools, but the spread of COVID in the community has left our staff members exposed and forced us to return to remote learning until we can fully staff and safely reopen schools.

Our county executive and health department have worked tirelessly to help support our schools during this pandemic, but if we cannot slow the spread of COVID19, our efforts will be limited in their ability.

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A respected group of Michigan's hospital CEOs recently pleaded with the public to wear masks and end social gatherings for the near future. We are all tired of this virus, and many of us want life to go back to normal. There are signs of hope, including promising vaccine news, studies demonstrating long-term immunity and better care for those who become ill. However, until we can deliver a vaccine and protect more people, we must all do our part and act now.

We are asking all our families, students and the public to unite and fight this pandemic, demonstrating an unwavering American spirit. Sacrifice has been a core value since our nation's birth. If we can wear masks, socially distance and limit our social gatherings, we can return life to normal in the coming months. Together, we can help our first responders and healthcare workers stay healthy, we can return our children to school and we can protect our most vulnerable citizens — but only if we all step up and do our part.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's actions are difficult but important steps to limit the spread of this virus, and give schools the chance to offer in person education.

As our medical experts have warned, our healthcare institutions are on the verge of being overrun, and have already put limitations on who can enter. If you are symptomatic or think you have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19, stay home, get tested and alert your friends, family and coworkers so that we can identify and squeeze this illness out of our lives.

We agree with the governor's efforts to keep schools open for younger students and those with disabilities.

We stand with the governor and frontline healthcare workers asking for a united effort to bring down the spread of this virus.

The people of Macomb and Michigan understand the word "sacrifice," and we can and should lead the nation in the fight against COVID-19.

We promise to do our part and continue to serve the public, and we will rely on the public to help overcome the challenges of this pandemic.

Now is the time to act together, sacrifice for one another and lift one another up.

This column is signed by the 22 superintendents in the Macomb Intermediate School District: Macomb Intermediate School District Superintendent Michael DeVault, Anchor Bay Schools Superintendent Leonard Woodside, Armada Area Schools Superintendent Michael Musary, Center Line Public Schools Superintendent Joseph Haynes, Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts, Clintondale Community Schools Superintendent Barbara VanSweden, Eastpointe Community Schools Superintendent Ryan McLeod, Fitzgerald Public Schools Superintendent Kim Pawlukiewicz, Fraser Public Schools Superintendent Carrie Wozniak, Lake Shore Public Schools Superintendent Joseph DiPonio, Lakeview Public Schools Superintendent Karl Paulson, L'Anse Creuse Public Schools Superintendent Erik Edoff, Mount Clemens Community Schools Superintendent Monique Beels, New Haven Community Schools Superintendent Cheryl Puzdrakiewicz, Richmond Community Schools Superintendent Brian Walmsley, Romeo Community Schools Superintendent Todd Robinson, Roseville Community Schools Superintendent Mark Blaszkowski, South Lake Schools Superintendent Ted VonHiltmayer, Utica Community Schools Superintendent Robert Monroe, Van Dyke Public Schools Superintendent Piper Bognar, Warren Consolidated Schools Superintendent Robert Livernois, Warren Woods Public Schools Superintendent Stacey Denewith-Fici