

Dear Lake Central Families,

Our administrative team has been sitting in on regularly scheduled teleconferences with both the Lake County Department of Health and the Indiana Department of Health. We have also viewed Governor Holcomb's press conferences and participated in webinars with the Indiana Department of Education. Most importantly, we have continuously scrutinized the data related to COVID-19 in our area, specifically Lake County.

The current thresholds for consideration by the CDC as well as numerous county departments of health in Indiana and the United States recommend that we open in a virtual learning environment given the current infection rates. One key metric that is closely followed by medical professionals is the positivity rate, or the percentage of people tested who are positive for COVID-19. Our county was lower in June, but has grown to nearly two times the CDC's recommended 5% rate for limited opening. Our hospitalization rate in Lake County which had been hovering between 15-20 persons per day was reported to be over 50 this week. These infection data points have contributed greatly to our decision to make the new recommendation to our Board.

I also want to share that these data points are creating significant anxiety for our staff and many families. As we analyze our ability to provide educational opportunities to our community, we must make decisions that focus on keeping our teachers healthy in order to accomplish our top priority.

Our administration will make a recommendation to the LCSC Board of School Trustees at a School Board meeting on August 3, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. that all students participate in a virtual learning from the first day of school for a minimum of four weeks. We are recommending that the first day be pushed back four days to a new start date of August 17 to allow for distribution of textbooks, chrome books and other materials during the week of August 10. During the established virtual learning period, we will continue to collaborate with the county and state departments of health regarding further discussions and recommendations. We will make a decision regarding the need to extend virtual learning based on where we are with infection rates around Labor Day. This will depend on a significant decline in the positivity rate and other key metrics regarding infection.

On numerous teleconferences, state and local health officials have not even wanted to discuss safety protocols for extracurricular activities. The doctors do not believe any of them should be taking place. While we hate to admit it, we agree with these experts that these activities present a continued risk of spreading the virus. If we were to have any significant staff members become ill, we would not be able to adequately replace many of them. For this reason, we will also be recommending the suspension of all extracurricular and co-curricular activities for as long as we are on the eLearning format.

Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support of Lake Central schools.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Dr. Veracco