March 12, 2020

Dear Parent and Student,

We are facing a very challenging time as we respond to the pandemic Coronavirus Covid-19 threat in our country, state and community. At the time of this letter, we do not have any reported cases of the virus in the School Town of Munster. We are currently monitoring daily absenteeism of our staff and students. We have taken the precautions of vigilantly cleaning restrooms (sinks, faucets, and handles), door handles, desks and many other surfaces that may come into human contact. Our bus drivers are cleaning handrails and seats after each daily route. It is not a perfect process and we cannot guarantee that every surface is disinfected. We are directing our teachers to work with their students to make sure that they regularly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as much as possible during the school day. Teachers are also working with students to follow the specific guidelines set forth by the CDC and Indiana Department of Health.

Two of the many questions that we are asked are whether we will close school and cancel school trips and events. We are currently looking for specific guidance from the CDC, Indiana Department of Health, Indiana Department of Education and Lake County Health Department on this matter. In the past, I have closed a school when over 20% of students were ill at one time. I am hoping that we will get similar guidance from these entities.

If we close school, many of our parents have asked if we will do e-learning. At this time, we are not prepared nor do we have the computers available to provide to students. Some of our students do not have internet access in their homes and would be required to go to a local business or library for access. This would defeat the purpose of isolating students from possible infection. We also have many specialized classes that require specific equipment or computer programs that would not be available for students to access at home. Furthermore, much of the research on distance learning shows that it is ineffective. E-learning is a short term practice not intended for weeks of absences as this virus may dictate.

We also have many parents who will find it a major hardship if their students have to stay home especially if they must have elderly parents watch their children, or they must stay home with their children if their local childcare program closes. Our administrative team and staff will be meeting this week and next to develop possible alternative educational opportunities for our students K-12.

We are also concerned about students and parents attending evening events, going on field trips or participating in extracurricular sporting or academic competitions. We have cancelled all of our programs at this school this next week. After spring break, we will review all scheduled events and decide if the events should be held. We are also reviewing events outside of the school district. Many of those events have been cancelled. In the event that the host sponsor does not cancel, and you don’t want your student to travel, please contact the teacher/sponsor as soon as possible so they can make the necessary arrangements.
Finally, we are working very hard to stay on top of this situation. We are doing everything we can to keep our students and staff safe. I know that this letter probably does not address every concern that you may have. We will work hard to communicate information to you as we move forward. We also know that the situation may become worse upon returning after Spring Break. The chance of exposure to this virus will be greater if you, your family, and our School Town of Munster families travel to destinations that have a higher rate of contraction or exposure.

Again, we will make every effort to communicate new information to you when it becomes available. We appreciate your support and understanding during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Jeffrey A. Hendrix