



March 20, 2020

Good Evening Fellow Shorians,

I continue to wish you and your family peace and good health and are continuing to do your part to help suppress the spread of the COVID-19 Virus. Most importantly of this message, we all have an important role in making sure we are adhering to the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control. Please protect our community by doing your part.

As many of you may have heard, earlier today the Michigan Department of Education issued a memo indicating that virtual learning during the mandated closure would not count as instructional time. Like many of you, I found this announcement to be frustrating, confusing, and completely the opposite of what I see occurring in our school community. Let me be clear. What we are doing counts. It's making a difference. It's providing stability. It's holding students and teachers together. It is a safe harbor in the midst of a storm. It most definitely counts. For our families, our staff, and most importantly our students, it counts.

While much is yet to be decided in regard to what will happen in the future, the MDE announcement was specifically in regards to the 3 week closure the Governor ordered. Should we reopen after Spring Break on April 13th, it would be up to the State Legislature to decide whether we would extend the school year or "forgive" the days we have been closed, similar to last year's polar vortex closures in January. Regardless, the consequence of the announcement has led to much discussion in terms of what's next. The reality is that in this unprecedented event, we need to take things day by day and begin by making sure we as a community are taking care of one another, including our most basic needs while making sure we keep our students engaged in academic exploration. It's good for their minds. It's good for their souls.

I challenge any member of MDE or our legislature to come and see what we as a community are doing reaching out to one another, providing opportunities to continue engaging in learning activities, and making sure our collective needs are met and tell me that this does not "count" The mere thought of this is absolutely absurd. Over the past week I have been inundated by stories of selflessness, kindness, service, and love. I have heard from countless teachers, families, and students sharing the same story of how much they appreciate what we are doing for each other. All the while I know we aren't doing it for thanks and appreciation. We are doing it because we know it's the right thing to do. We are doing it because we all care about these children. We are doing it because we are Shorians.

The common reaction to this would be for us (all of us: parents, teachers, students, everyone in our community) to throw up our hands and say what's the point. We have to be uncommon. We have to continue to be the safe harbor. Our kids and our community are depending on us and in spite of such ludicrous and irresponsible decision making in Lansing. We will continue to watch over our kids here in Lake Shore. Don't do it for MDE. Don't do it for our state government. Do it because you know its the right thing to do and our kids are depending on us.

I don't expect that this will be the last of this discussion. We will continue to engage with the legislature and MDE to show them exactly the impact we continue to make and in spite of the shutdown, just how critical our relationship is. In the meantime, continue to connect. Continue to engage. Continue to be the difference in our students lives. With you, they will get through this. With you, it will count.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joe DiPonio  
Superintendent  
Lake Shore Public Schools