

## Dickinson and Iron Superintendents' Message

In anticipation of the upcoming school year, Dickinson and Iron County Superintendents have been meeting to discuss their COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plans. Superintendents include Wendy Warmuth Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District, Craig Allen Breitung Township Schools, Jerry Sardina Iron Mountain Public Schools, Louis Steigerwald Norway-Vulcan Area Schools, Angel Inglese North Dickinson County Schools, Christy Larson Forest Park Schools, and Chris Thomson West Iron Public Schools.

Daren Deyaert and Ruth Manier of the Dickinson Iron Health Department joined the Superintendents to offer advice and up-to-date information and agreed to continued meetings. They discussed the need to work on protocols that can be used between the Health Department and the schools to allow for proper communication and yet maintain privacy and HIPAA rights.

Currently, Upper Michigan schools are in Phase 5 as defined in the Michigan Safe Start plan. Phase 5 allows for in-person instruction. Our schools will follow our state's directives regarding the opening of schools as well as health and safety guidelines. We know there is potential for changes to these directives, our phase status, and other circumstances. We stand ready to adapt and be flexible to ensure the best outcome for our students.

Each local school district will be offering a variety of learning choices to our families. Under phase 5 schools are planning virtual and/or distance learning options as well as in-person learning. The in-person option may include a blend of in-seat and online learning. We learned many lessons last year and one of them was that we must be prepared to change quickly when we are given new directives from our state. We will be ready to shift from in-person to online or packet learning if it becomes necessary.

Working collaboratively strengthens our ability to better serve our community. We look forward to returning to learn in whatever format is most comfortable for each of our students and their families. We value our staff and have been impressed with their commitment to education as well as their dedication to our students and schools whether as teachers, ancillary staff, aides, support staff, custodians, food service, daycare, bus drivers, secretaries, or administrators. Our focus continues to be on providing quality and safe public education to our students in the best way possible under our historic circumstances.