

**Message from the School Board President
David Kurlinkus**

These are extraordinary times—thank you, Captain Obvious. I don't know if anyone is going to read this. No one alive today remembers the last true pandemic in the United States—the influenza epidemic at the end of World War I. This is a time of the unknown for all of us, and the Hononegah Nation and community is included.

Of course, it's a different world in which we find ourselves, a world of social distancing, quarantining, shut-downs. These are limitations on our lives that we have never seen. So far, they are voluntary. Oh, schools and many businesses are closed, but the imposition of isolation, that health officials say is our only hope of slowing the spread of the virus, has been left up to us. Last month we had our first-ever telephonic Board of Education meeting.

It's dangerous out there. We don't know much about this disease. There aren't enough testing kits, and there really aren't any consistent symptoms that indicate who has it and is spreading it. The closing of Hononegah and all other schools by the governor should be an indicator of how serious is the threat of infection. The administration and staff have tried to keep a semblance of normality in the educational process by instituting e-learning, but, of course, it's not the same.

It will take a tremendous amount of discipline to make it through this crisis. Students will have to maintain a schedule and a commitment to make e-learning work. The social component of high school is gone for the foreseeable future. Of course, there is social media to partially make up for that loss, but that, too, will not be the same. There is something that all of us will miss without there being a sharing of physical presence, but that is what we have—the new normal.

We are going to lose, at least temporarily, those things we expected and anticipated. A few short months ago, it would have been inconceivable that our classrooms would be closed, our gyms and practice fields empty, activities cancelled. Now we are left to wonder what will be next? How long will this total disruption continue? Will classes resume? Will there be a prom? Graduation? No one knows the answers.

More important than anything is the danger we are all facing to our health. Anything else can recover. Right now, peoples' jobs and livelihoods are in jeopardy. Those will recover, but those who become infected by the virus may not. People are dying of this illness, and, although they are at high risk, not just the elderly. It is the tradition of the young to think that they are immortal. Unfortunately, many of them feel the same about this threat.

I know it's monotonous and boring, but encourage your students to comply with the stay at home recommendation. There's a reason that schools are closed as well as most stores and businesses. The virus spreads by social contact. The less we have, the better the chance of slowing the spread. This means that gatherings outside of school must also be

eliminated. Closing schools and still having meetings, parties and recreational sporting events defeat the purpose of the quarantine. The only way we'll survive this pandemic is together.

Our regular Board meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the school library. If you are interested in being placed on the agenda to speak or would like to attend a committee meeting where most of our planning is done, please call the district office at 624-5010. You can always contact me at 389-1382 or e-mail me at dkurli@hononegah.org.