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April 9, 2020

Dear Families, Districts, Staff and Friends of IEA,

On behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph, our Board of Directors and the IEA Administration, we hope you are safe and healthy as we continue to meet the challenge of this public health crisis together. It is stating the obvious to say that the last several weeks have been a challenging and uncertain time. As a school, we felt the challenges of this crisis quickly and acutely. In the words of Fred Fable of McMurry University in Abilene Texas, “You grow through what you go through”, we have had the opportunity to rise to these challenges as the last several weeks have tested our students and staff in ways we would have never thought possible.

A rapid school closure, that was quickly then extended, required us to adapt quickly to provide education and support to our students and families. While this first appeared like an overwhelming total revamping of our educational model, we quickly realized this was not the complete change we had feared. The fact is, we have, not without a few bumps and bruises, successfully implemented our Distance Learning Plan because of the following four reasons:

1. We are a small school with an already personalized adult to student ratio. So, organizationally speaking, it was easier to make this transition.
2. We have existing relationships with our families. We were able to modify this new brand of education for each family when necessary.
3. We have the infrastructure. We are “project based” which lends itself to more active learning. Each student already had an iPad or Chromebook, a Google Account, an IEA email and were, with few exceptions, comfortable using their devices. Teachers were fluent in integrating technology into their instruction: using websites, Google Classroom, and educational software.
4. We have a culture of creativity. Rarely will you hear “we don’t do that here” at IEA. We have the capacity of making adjustments on a daily basis. Not to minimize this crisis, but our “change-is-normal” culture made this adjustment that much easier.

During this period of Distance Learning, our top priority, even above our commitment to teaching a rigorous curriculum, is to support our families. The strain of balancing their own personal jobs, supporting the education of their children, and perhaps, caring for a sick family member, is an “above and beyond” role

Intensive Education Academy, Inc.

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none of us anticipated. The same can be said for our own faculty as they teach from home. We are continually aware of our obligation to not create additional stress onto an already stressful situation; it is, in fact, our Mission. That is why our teachers and related services staff are continually meeting with each other to better coordinate and individualize our assignments and expectations for each student.

As the Federal and State governments are trying hard to support workers and adjust or minimize traditional bureaucratic rules, each day seems like a month to us. Labor rules, funding and special education regulations are being adjusted daily; all in an attempt to better support our families and to ease the obstacles for us, to the maximum extent possible, in continuing to provide a quality education to our students.

We truly miss seeing the students, their families, and our staff every day, but IEA will make it through this uncertain time. We are so thankful you are part of this IEA community. We were financially and technologically prepared because of the creativity and commitment of our faculty and staff, the perseverance and patience of our families, and the continued generosity of many of you, our supporters. We continue to see a bright future for each of our students.

In gratitude,

Jeff Forman
Executive Director

Michelle Andrews
Director of Education

Tracy Barbour
Assistant Director of Education

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