



WASHTENAW COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF



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JERRY L. CLAYTON
SHERIFF

MARK A. PTASZEK
UNDERSHERIFF

August 27, 2012

Dedrick Martin, Superintendent
Ypsilanti Public Schools
1885 Packard Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Laura Lisiscki, Superintendent
Willow Run Public Schools
235 Spencer Lane
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Re: Letter of Support for Ypsilanti and Willow Run School Merger

Dear Superintendents Martin and Lisiscki, and Ypsilanti Willow Run community members:

I believe that the merger of the Ypsilanti and Willow Run School Districts into one new innovative school system has the potential to positively impact the lives of the children of both the Willow Run and Ypsilanti School Districts. While this merger is not a panacea that can solve all of the difficulties that may be facing both of these communities and their school districts, in my opinion the proposed consolidation of these districts is a step in the right direction.

It is my understanding that both districts face a series of challenges related to finances and student achievement. Both school districts appear to have significant budget shortfalls, declining enrollments and what is most distressing to me, low student academic achievement scores, all of which pose a serious threat to the future vitality of our overall community. For example, third grade reading scores, which the Michigan Department of Corrections uses to determine the need for future prison beds, are below 50% for both Ypsilanti and Willow Run Schools.

It is not anticipated that this will be a situation where two challenged districts will simply merge their current realities resulting in an end to their problems. The vision and plans being worked on collaboratively with the State of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Education, State Representative David Rutledge, Washtenaw Community College, Eastern Michigan University,

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Public Safety -- Emergency Preparedness -- Quality Service -- Strong Communities

the WISD, both school districts, their teachers and their parents anticipate two districts joined together to create new innovative, cost-effective ways of delivering education that will produce better outcomes for our children. As envisioned, the merged school district would bring collaborative partners together to create a new system that would embrace early childhood through post-secondary education and help prepare our children to have more productive and successful lives.

To keep our communities and our residents safe we need strong communities. An effective sustainable education system is an integral part of a strong community. The merger of the Ypsilanti and Willow Run School Districts and the creation of a new innovative collaborative school district has my support and I urge the residents of both these districts to approve it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Clayton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton