



# Independent School District #1 Aitkin Public Schools

*"A community in continuous pursuit of educational excellence for all"*

**(218) 927-2115**

**Aitkin High School and District Office**

306 2<sup>nd</sup> St NW

Aitkin, MN 56431

**Rippleside Elementary School**

225 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW

Aitkin, MN 56431

DANIEL J. STIFTER, Superintendent

HEATHER HIPPI, Business Manager

PAUL KARELIS, High School Principal

JASON CLINE, Dean of Students

ALEX WHITE, Activities Director

ANDY DOKKEN, Elementary Principal

LARA PARKIN, Community Ed. Director

November 5, 2020

I want to start by thanking everyone for their efforts to keep Aitkin Public Schools open and operating in-person. We have worked very hard to keep in-person learning for students and families PreK -12. We have worked very hard to provide Remote Instruction to all students and families who have chosen that model or have had to use that model due to being quarantined by COVID-19. I believe our efforts have made a difference in the lives of our children. That is why this is such a difficult letter to share.

Due to the increase in COVID-19 numbers in Aitkin County, our community and our school in particular, we are having challenges staffing our High School due to staff being quarantined. Due to this challenge, we are going to make a switch in our model of instruction. On November 9, 2020, we will be making the switch in our learning model at the High School. We will be going into a Remote Learning model for grades 7 -12 from November 9th through November 25th. Grades PrK - 6 will continue with in-person school following their existing schedule. We feel that as challenging as Remote Learning can be for our students, families and staff, it is even more challenging for our youngest learners. That is why we are going to continue with in-person learning at Rippleside Elementary. We are planning on being in this model for 3 weeks at which point we will evaluate our current data and situation as it pertains to staffing and the COVID-19 pandemic.

More rationale for this change includes the following:

1. Aitkin County Public Health has reported the current rate of new cases in our county at over 31.58 cases per 10,000 residents. Next week this number is expected to rise to the mid-30's and most likely higher the next week..
2. The Public Health Department is confident the trend will continue as unprocessed tests are completed and added to the data. We follow their recommendations and certainly appreciate and respect their expertise and the many ways they've been a help to us this fall.
3. We have seen a jump in the number of active cases in our schools among students, parents and staff this week.
4. The active cases in our schools and among our staff has made staffing our schools a significant challenge. Today, November 4th we have 16 staff staff out due to COVID-19 related reasons/quarantine district. This does not take into account the number of staff out due to "regular" illnesses or personal reasons.
5. The work to contact trace is now outpacing the district's abilities and resources.
6. Our main challenges regarding COVID-19 are impacting our high school at this time, with a much less impact at Rippleside, that is the reason for the change only at the High School.
7. And finally, the health and safety of our students and staff has always been and must always be our top priority.

We need to make sure our ISD #1 family stays healthy.

In our remote model, students are expected to log in using Canvas and Infinite Campus to their classes each day at their scheduled time. They need to check in with their teachers to get the latest instruction and guidance for that days class period. Daily attendance is required. Lessons will be live streamed or made available each class period on Canvas. Each class period, teachers will be available to work with students while learning from home. Every day, students need to be engaged in their learning. New lessons and material will be presented for students every scheduled school day.

Here are some other details regarding our change in our High School:

1. Our buses will run our regular routes to pick up and deliver our elementary children.
2. Special Education services and transportation for secondary school students will be implemented as determined by the individual students Contingency Learning Plans.
3. Families should plan on remote Learning 7 - 12 through Thanksgiving. The district will continue to work closely with public health to determine when a transition back to in-person school can be made.
4. Student activities and athletics will continue through the fall season.
5. Families should continue to report cases of illness to the school for attendance purposes while remote learning to help the district to contract trace and monitor school level data.

We know that internet connectivity is still a challenge for some students. Please let your school and teachers know if you do not have internet and need alternate supplies and materials. We want everyone to be successful while learning from home. If you have access to the internet, we ask that you use that as we use our Remote Learning Delivery system.

Meals will also be available for pick up at the school on the days that students are remote learning. This process will not change for our current Rippleside Remote Learners. Meals for our high school students will be available at the NW Secure Entry from 11:00 - 12:30 each day school is scheduled to be in session. You will receive a hot lunch for that day and a breakfast for the next morning. There is no charge for the meals. We will be sharing a google form for families to complete to request meals. We will not be delivering meals door to door this year. **We will have a survey to complete each week as follows for: November 9-11, November 16-20 and November 23-25 regarding your students meal needs. . We will have a list of remote locations where families can pick up a lunch and breakfast for the next day every day we have a scheduled day of school. Families can chose to pick up their meals at the high school everyday and get a HOT lunch with a cold breakfast for the next day. After you schedule and are not able to pick-up your meal for some reason, please call 218-927-2115 ext. 3431 by 9:00 am that day that you will need to make a change**

ISD #1 students and families, this is not a decision anyone wants to make. I want our students to be here in our schools where they learn best, but COVID knows no boundaries and we need to respond to protect our students, staff, and the greater community. Thank you for continuing to support our students and staff.

Take care, stay healthy, and go Gobblers!

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Stifter  
Aitkin Public Schools  
Superintendent

We Are ISD #1