

Thursday, October 8, 2020

To: Constituents in Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties:

We're writing to you today to ask for your help.

We are four weeks into the year and already schools in our seven-county region have had to adjust their learning models from either in-person to hybrid or hybrid to distance learning due to sharp increases in positive COVID-19 cases¹. This is disappointing for everyone involved.

We have been given requirements from the Minnesota Department of Health² that we are following, and it is working. Across the state, there has been minimal transmission within schools. However, officials at MDH have said the COVID-19 virus is, for the most part, spreading **outside of school**³ – **transmission is happening in community settings and at family and social gatherings.**

We want our kids in school as much as possible. You, the great people in our communities, have said you also want our kids in school. We know of only one way that gives us the best chance at safely keeping our kids in school, sports, and activities.

We need your help. This information is nothing you haven't already heard, but bears repeating as it's going to take all of us to make a difference. Please – help us keep cases low and our kids in school by following the very clear guidelines offered by MDH⁴:

- Avoid crowds.
- Keep family and social gatherings outdoors.
- Stay 6 feet from others.
- Wear a mask.
- Wash your hands.
- Stay home when sick.

Do it for our kids.

Sincerely,

Dan Stifter, Aitkin Public Schools
Eric Koep, Bertha-Hewitt Public School
Laine Larson, Brainerd Public Schools
Scott Vedbraaten, Browerville Public School
Jamie Skjeveland, Crosby-Ironton School District
Eric Weber, Freshwater Education District
Stephen Jones, Little Falls Community Schools
Jon Kringen, Long Prairie-Grey Eagle School District
Kevin Wellin, Menahga Public School District
Gregg Parks, Nevis Public School
Patrick Rendle, Northland Community Schools
Lance Bagstad, Park Rapids Area Schools

Chris Lindholm, Pequot Lakes Public Schools
George Weber, Pierz Public Schools
Michael Malmberg, Pillager Public Schools
Jonathan Clark, Pine River-Backus Schools
John A. Phelps, Royalton Public Schools
David Fjeldheim, Sebeka School District
Eugene Harthan, Swanville Public Schools
Vern Capelle, Upsala Area School District
Paul Brownlow, Verndale Public School
Eric Pingrey, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Public Schools
Lee Westrum, Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools

¹ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/stats/wschooll.pdf>

² <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf>

³ https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/09/24/covid19-cases-already-closing-some-minnesota-school-buildings?fbclid=IwAR163y5BkMglwRopUA55CiYUrLLHDy0xsAj1o6evIMj-IOLGDhwtCX2Ti_Uk

⁴ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html>