



August 3, 2020

Dear Alton School District Families:

In early July, the Alton School District shared a proposed plan to reopen our schools on August 20 with in-person instruction. At that time, we also stated schools could be forced to a more restrictive plan even before the school year began due to COVID concerns in our region and/or state. Unfortunately, we are now at that point. In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of our students and staff, the Alton School District will provide remote-only instruction for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year.

Over the past three weeks, we have continuously monitored Madison County's COVID positivity rates, consulted with the Madison County Health Department, and gathered additional local data. The current information and trends for our region are deeply concerning. We want to provide you with some of the information that led to this incredibly difficult decision:

****On Friday (7/31/20), Madison County set a single-day record for the highest number of positive cases to date.***

****The City of Alton also had the highest number of positive cases in Madison County on Friday (7/31/20).***

****The entire Metro-East region continues to demonstrate volatile and erratic positivity rates ranging from 5% up to a staggering 11% on a given day over the past two weeks.***

****Rates among Madison County youth and young adults continue to steadily increase.***

****The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a study last week regarding a recent outbreak among youth stating children are more susceptible to the virus than originally suspected and play an unintended, but key role in exposure and transmission.***

It was our greatest intent and hope to provide in-person instruction for students at the start of the new school year. Extensive planning and preparations were made to place every necessary safety precaution in place for in-person instruction if our region demonstrated a significant reduction in COVID positivity rates. However, the positivity rates are not decreasing as we move closer to the start of the school year. Rather, they are increasing and at an alarming rate. The planning, preparation and all of the safety supplies ordered for in-person instruction will likely still be needed, as will our other two plans (in-person and blended/hybrid), when we transition back to in-person instruction later this year.

The first day of remote instruction will be Monday, August 24. The previous first two days of school, August 20 and 21, will now be utilized for parent/teacher/student introductory conferences, remote planning, and device and supply distributions for students and families.

Please know the decision to begin the first quarter with remote-only instruction is based solely on protecting the health and welfare of our children and staff members to the highest degree possible. With that said, we know this places an enormous hardship on many of our district families. While a large number of parents already selected remote-only instruction for their child(ren), many families were still planning for their child(ren) to attend school each day. We realize that childcare for working parents and support for students during remote instruction are of the utmost concern. Our teachers, staff and administrators are mindful of these valid concerns and are prepared to support students and families at the highest level possible.

Remote instruction and learning will look much different than it did during the emergency closure of schools last spring. Students will engage in robust learning each day. Teachers and staff will still be at school each day during school hours. Per Illinois State Board of Education guidelines, teachers will provide at least 2.5 hours of synchronous (live) instruction for students each day as well as asynchronous (recorded) instruction and independent work. Attendance will also be taken each day and schools will return to their grading and assessment practices that were in place prior to the closure of schools last spring and making modifications where needed. *Attached to this letter, please find the Alton School District Remote Learning Plan which will provide additional information.*

The following pages also provide answers to what we believe are some of the anticipated questions families may have as we transition to remote-only instruction and learning. An email link at the end also provides parents with an opportunity to submit specific questions.

In closing, please know that we understand the magnitude of this change and the impact it will have on our students, staff and families. However, please always remember that the decision in moving to remote-only instruction and learning for the first quarter was made to place the health, safety and welfare of our students and staff above all else. Thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding under these unprecedented and ever-changing circumstances.

Sincerely,

David Fritz

Kristie Baumgartner

David Fritz
Board of Education President

Kristie L. Baumgartner
Superintendent

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS REGARDING REMOTE LEARNING

Did the district consider a blended or hybrid plan prior to remote only instruction for the first quarter?

Yes. A blended/hybrid plan was developed and highly considered. However, even by reducing the number of students at school each day using an A/B schedule, the increasing Madison County COVID positivity rates still pose significant alarm where student and staff safety are concerned.

How will students meet their teacher(s) to start the school year?

Schools will be scheduling beginning-of-the-year meetings to give parents and students an opportunity to meet their teacher(s). During these meetings, teachers will share expectations for virtual learning, review the teaching and learning platform that will be used and provide students with needed technology devices.

How will remote teaching and learning look different than it did last spring?

Remote instruction and learning will look much different than it did during the emergency closure of schools last spring. Students will engage in robust learning with the teachers each day. Teachers and staff will still be at school each day during normal school hours. Per Illinois State Board of Education guidelines, teachers will provide at least 2.5 hours of synchronous (live) instruction for students each day as well as asynchronous (recorded) instruction and independent work. All district teachers will use Google Classroom as their instructional platform so that students can access resources and organize their learning. As the start of school draws closer, a parent training will be provided on Google Classroom. Attendance will also be taken each day and schools will return to their traditional grading and assessment practices that were in place prior to the closure of schools last spring making modifications where needed. Schedules regarding classes and log-in times will be provided by each school in the coming days.

When and how will class/school schedules be communicated to students and families?

All remote learning schedules will be communicated to students and families no later than Monday, August 10. Some schedules may be released sooner. Parents and students will receive direct communication from their child's school and middle school/high school schedules can be viewed on this date in Skyward Family Access.

Will a Chromebook be provided to students?

Yes. Chromebooks will be distributed to students who do not already have a device in their home for use during remote learning. Students needing a device will be provided with a school-issued Chromebook. For families lacking internet access in their home, portable WiFi hotspots can be loaned to students for the purposes of school-related work only.

Will Alton Middle School and Alton High School students still be able to participate in athletics and music?

At this time, yes. The IHSA and IESA are permitting remote-only students to participate in athletics under the new restrictions and guidelines issued by Governor Pritzker on July 29. Only athletics for the fall season (HS: Boys and Girls Golf/Cross Country, Girls Swimming/Tennis and MS: Baseball, Softball and Cross Country) are approved at this time. The District will continue to evaluate and approve each season as it approaches use local and state guidelines. The updated guidance classifies risk levels and limits activities based on these levels. Some of the seasons for specific sports (fall, winter, spring and now summer) have been moved/adjusted as a result (see ihsa.org or iesa.org for more information). Our coaches and directors for music and sports are already working with students. Specific protocols for symptom screenings, social distancing, masks, limiting group sizes where needed, restricting direct contact, waivers of liability and other necessary requirements for participation will all be strictly adhered to for each activity. Information relative to each sport will be provided by the school and coach.

Can AHS students still take Driver's Education/Behind the Wheel?

Yes. ISBE and IDPH permit this to continue as long as certain guidelines are followed including limiting the number of students in the vehicle, masks worn by all occupants, car sanitizing in between drivers and other requirements.

What will student schedules consist of each day for remote learning?

Depending on the school/grade level (early childhood, elementary, middle or high school) schedules for remote and instruction will vary. The Illinois State Board of Education guidelines state 5 instructional hours should be provided each day with 2.5 hours of this time being synchronous or live instruction between the teacher and students. This instruction will take place over the course of a condensed school day. Students will experience live teaching with ample breaks built in to ease screen time where possible. In addition to the 2.5 hours of live instruction each day, the other remaining time can be asynchronous instruction (students working at their own pace with recorded instruction and resources) and/or independent work. Your child's school will be contacting you in the coming days with specific information on the remote learning schedule and all classes. Teachers will also discuss schedules and student expectations at the beginning-of-the-year conferences with families.

If parents need childcare, what resources are available?

The District realizes converting to remote-only instruction presents childcare concerns. District staff members have compiled a list of area childcare providers with current availability. Please keep in mind that these providers are not affiliated with the district, should be vetted at the parent's discretion and this list is only provided as a reference. [Link: Childcare Resources](#)

Will school-provided breakfasts and lunches still be available to students?

Yes. The Alton School District plans to use the same distribution methods as last spring (if approved by the USDA). Meal bags will be distributed on Mondays and Thursdays each week using neighborhood bus and designated school pick-up locations. Additional information will be provided in the coming days.

Do families, who previously registered their child(ren) for in-person or remote-only, need to do anything else at this point?

No. The District will convert all students to remote instruction for the first quarter. Families who have yet to register their child(ren) for school need to begin the registration process immediately (online at altonschools.org or by contacting your school). If you haven't registered, please make this a priority today.

If COVID positivity rates significantly decrease, is it possible the District could reopen schools under the blended or in-person models prior to the end of the first quarter?

If changes in the COVID-related health data surrounding our region improve greatly prior to the end of the first quarter, the Alton School Reopening Planning Team will consult with local and state officials to determine how to safely reopen our schools under an in-person or blended model.

Where can the complete 2020-2021 Alton School District Return to Learn with all three plans (in-person, blended and remote) along with other information be viewed?

The complete plan is available and can be viewed at altonschools.org.

What school supplies should families purchase for remote learning?

When students transition from remote learning back to in-person learning later this fall, we will ask that they bring the school supplies designated for their grade level at that time (families may wish to purchase the supplies now while stores are offering discounts). For remote learning, teachers will discuss what supplies will be needed for each of their respective classes. Students should have paper, pencils, pens, paper and folders at a minimum along with other teacher-recommended supplies.

Additional Questions May Be Sent To: parentquestions@altonschools.org

(continued....)

Alton School District Virtual Learning ***2020-2021 Remote Learning Plan for PreK – 12th Grade Students***

The Alton School District Remote Learning Plan is highly subject to change should updated guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, Illinois State Board of Education or other educational and/or health management agencies be provided.

Alton School District Approach to Remote/Virtual Learning:

Alton CUSD #11 and all schools remain committed to providing our students and families with a comprehensive approach to remote learning even when schools are required to be closed. Equity shall serve as the fundamental priority during remote instruction and learning. As such, the District will continue providing supports to meet the academic, physical, mental, social and emotional health needs of our students and families.

The Alton School District will implement a remote learning plan for all students for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. The remote learning plan will provide an average of 5 instructional hours each day to all K-12th grade students through the following virtual and independent approaches:

Synchronous Instruction – Students are logged on at the same time as the teacher for “live” instruction (at least 2.5 hours per day).

Asynchronous Instruction – Teachers provide recorded materials and videos that students can view at their own pace.

Independent Work - Teachers provide assignments and enrichment activities students complete independently and then receive follow-up and feedback from the teacher.

Digital Platform and Devices:

All Alton School District teachers will use Google Classroom as the digital platform for all instruction, instructional content and in managing student assignments. Parent trainings will be offered prior to the start of school to acquaint families with Google Classroom and strategies to better support your child as a remote learner.

The Alton School District will provide Chromebooks for student use during remote learning. If students have a preferred personal device, they may use it instead of a school-provided device as long as it meets all requirements necessary to participate in remote instruction. Care of school-loaned devices and returning the device in the same condition received is an expectation for all students. Device pick up and distribution will be communicated by each school as necessary. The District can also loan portable WiFi hotspots to students who do not have internet access in the home. The hotspots are to be used for school-related purposes only.

Remote Learning Teachers and Teacher Access:

Teachers providing remote learning will be available during normal school hours. Teachers and staff will work in classrooms each day (unless a state-required “stay at home” order has been issued). Teachers will provide a combination of the instructional methods previously mentioned to meet the individualized learning needs of students. Teachers will also communicate directly with parents and families using various methods (email, phone, REMIND App and other formats).

Instructional Minutes:

While instructional minutes vary by grade level, class and the method of delivery, the District will subscribe to the suggested instructional minute ranges provided by the Illinois State Board of Education to the degree possible (see Page 16 of the complete Alton School District Return to Learn Plan available at altonschools.org). Some classes that require additional rigor such as Honors, Dual Credit and Advanced Placement, may require additional time on task.

Attendance Procedures:

Attendance and accountability for learning are important during remote learning. Teachers will report to their school on contractual days. Teachers will take attendance virtual/remote learning day at the scheduled start time and record it in Skyward. If students are not completing work or participating in learning, teachers will be contacting parents, principals, and social workers to work with families to develop plans for student engagement based on the needs of each student.

Educational and Instructional Services:

To be successful in preparing our students for the next level, the Alton School District believes the continuation of education is a critical service we can provide to support our families. We recognize that students learn in different ways. We will utilize a combined approach to learning that includes online learning and online or telephone contact between teachers and students.

All Alton teachers will utilize Google Classroom as our learning management system. Our online learning resources are accessible through Clever and the teachers’ Google Classrooms. Utilizing these resources allows us to offer online training, instruction, and support to our faculty, staff, students, and parents.

The Alton School District is fortunate to have strong support from our school board and community. This support has enabled us to provide Chromebooks/devices to all students in need of this resource at home. Recognizing a pandemic-level event requires a new level of dependence on technology, our technology department is assessing, assisting, and supporting our instructional staff in providing the best learning environment for each student.

Student Access to Devices and Connectivity:

The Alton School District will provide Chromebooks to all students in need of a device for remote learning. Measures will be taken to ensure all students have a device during a closure.

Technology staff, in partnership with school staff, will oversee the deployment of devices to students. In a remote learning situation, this may be through curbside pickup in accordance with CDC guidelines or via conferencing while be mindful of social distancing and other safety precautions.

We will communicate directly with families to determine which students need a device, internet access, or additional support.

Parents will need to indicate whether they will need a device provided to them or if they will supply their own device. If using a personal device, please ensure it meets the requirements for students to participate in remote instruction (speaker and microphone capability). Parents will also need to indicate if they do not have internet access in their home. A device and wireless web access will be required for all remote learning options. Parents will need to maintain this device and web access in their homes for a student to access lessons, personalized learning, and assignment retrieval. However, in the event of a COVID-19 related closure high-speed internet access will be provided on the designated school parking lots and community locations. While iPads are capable for some resources, they are not the most ideal for students to complete their work. Please let your child's school know that you need a Chromebook for remote learning when provided with the opportunity designate so.

Access to All Classes:

During remote learning, Clever, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, and supplemental online resources will be used to virtually interact with our students to provide services and support.

Service Assurances to Students with Individualized Needs:

The Alton School District ensures equitable access to resources through our social workers, psychologists, and homeless liaison.

Social-Emotional/Relationships:

- Feedback/connection between students and teachers will occur daily.
- Trauma-informed practices will continue to be practiced by staff and social work services are still available to students.
- Usage of school resources for mental health supports will be provided on our district website and through our ongoing partnership with Centerstone.

Health/Wellness:

- If a family doesn't have a primary care provider, please call 1-866-ALL-KIDS.
- Try to maintain healthy eating habits healthy. Children under the age of 18 can continue to receive meals from the district including breakfast and lunch.
- Get lots of sleep, exercise, and stay hydrated.
- Practice stress management for all in your household through tips on the district website.
- Resources on health can be found at IDPH (<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/>) and CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/>).

Illness:

A parent will need to call the school if their child is sick and not able to participate in remote learning that day. The student will be given time to make up the work/view recorded instruction. If a family member of a student becomes ill, compassion and support for the student are the first priority of the district.

Self-Certification of Symptoms and Temperature Screenings:

Any individual who enters an Alton School District school must self-certify they are COVID-19 symptom free. If a staff member is not symptom free he/she must contact their immediate supervisor prior to entering the building. Temperatures will also be taken for all visitors, staff and others entering the buildings.

Delivery of Services During Remote Learning/Virtual School for Students with Disabilities:

Special Education Evaluations, IEP meetings, and assessments will continue to be completed within the federal and state guidelines. The Alton School District, during this unprecedented national emergency, will work with parents to reach mutually agreeable extensions of time, as appropriate. (e.g. special education referrals, assessments, and timelines).

Hosting an Individual Education Plan (IEP) - The IEP team meetings will be held in accordance with current community health standards either in person or virtual meetings. Remote Learning Plans will be completed for all students that have a current IEP or 504 plan. These will be completed with the collaboration of the parents, teachers, special education staff, and related service personnel.

Parent Communication:

All teachers are encouraged to communicate with parents frequently. Parents are welcome to email their child's teacher or principal with any questions that may arise.

High Quality, Effective Educational Services

Assessments - Teachers will continue to utilize our current curriculum assessments. However, the delivery method may be adjusted and differentiated to meet the needs of the students. Assessments will be virtual, formative, and summative through our online platforms and by student work.

Grades - We will continue to follow our policies, practices, and grading structure during the closure. Work will be assigned AND will be counted toward the student's final grade. Additionally, the failure to complete work will not only hurt the child's final grade but may also count as an "unexcused absence" within their attendance report. Teachers will assign between 2-5 assignments per week per content area.

Academic Progress Monitoring - Data teams will continue to meet as teams to discuss instructional best practices, methods, and strategies. This planning team will continue to monitor students' academic progress in all academic areas; including but not limited to ELA, math, social studies, science, fine arts, and SEL. Student progress will be continuously monitored and addressed on a bi-monthly basis. Any differentiation to instructional delivery or interventions will be discussed during meetings similar to our RTI/MTSS model if teachers identify academic concerns or adjustments, differentiation of instruction will occur as identified through the RTI/MTSS intervention plan.

District approved curriculum will continue to be used during remote learning. We will continue to monitor instructional delivery and make adjustments to scaffold learning as needed.

Student progress monitoring will be done through district-approved modalities. This includes Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, emails, app alerts and phone calls. Teachers will meet with parents/guardians to address the instructional needs of their student/s.

Teachers will offer virtual delivery of their instruction via Zoom or Google Meet. Progress monitoring will be done frequently utilizing these district communication tools. Teachers will communicate with colleagues and their building principal to discuss instructional delivery, teacher and student progress, and instructional plans moving forward. To maintain compliance and accountability of instructional planning and implementation, teachers will verify daily assignment understanding and completion using district-approved modalities.

Student Meals:

Student breakfast and lunch meal bags will be provided throughout remote instruction. Neighborhood bus and school pick-up locations, days and times will be provided closer to the start of the school year.

Student and Teacher Expectations for Learning

Teacher Expectations:

Teachers will provide five hours of instruction/classwork/independent assignments daily that includes at least 2.5 hours of synchronous learning (live teaching that has engagement with students and their peers). Teachers will provide breaks as well as a lunch break throughout the five hours of instruction. This will be done from their classrooms, unless a state-issued "stay at home" order is in place or permission has been granted by the District to teach from home due to medical vulnerabilities. Teachers will make remote learning activities available in a timely manner, as well as provide timely feedback on assignments. Teachers will provide students with assignment feedback within one week or submission (or sooner) and will enter grades into the Skyward Student Management System which can be viewed through Skyward Family Access.

Student Expectations:

Students will be online daily during remote learning hours to participate in five hours of instruction, coursework, independent assignments daily. This includes at least 2.5 hours being synchronous learning (live teaching that has engagement with students and their peers). Students will receive breaks as well as a lunch break throughout the five hours of instruction. Schools will

provide exact schedules for students. Students will complete and turn in assignments by each due date. Work will be assigned AND will be counted toward the student's final grade. Students will be able to ask clarifying questions when they need help or don't understand. Students should be respectful to themselves, teachers, and peers. Students will adhere to all rules and policies as outlined in the ACUSD #11 Student Handbook.

Family and Parent Expectations:

Families and parents will ensure the student is online daily during remote learning hours and review work assigned. Work will be assigned and counted toward the student's final grade. Additionally, the failure to complete work could potentially impact the student's final grade and may also count as an "unexcused absence" if the student is not present for learning. In rare circumstances of failed technology or the inability of the student to access instruction, teachers will record synchronous activities so that the student may view at a later time that day.

School and Student Schedules for Remote Learning:

Each school/teacher will provide students and families with the remote learning schedule and expectation for attendance and participation.

Remote Learning Roles and Responsibilities

Administrators:

- Identify essential personnel to be working in buildings
- Oversee all staff during transition and monitor accountability
- Execute Remote Learning Plan and all district/school operations
- Conduct weekly staff meetings
- Facilitate data days
- Monitor progress of students
- Provide communication and updated guidance to families and staff

Secretaries and Clerks:

- Field phone calls
- Receive guidance from the principal on alternative duties
- Support families, teachers and staff

Aramark Custodians:

- Follow CDC guidelines to thoroughly clean and disinfect all schools
- Continue to clean as necessary, as teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff use the building
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations
- Work contracted hours per day

Nurses:

- Recommend guidelines to the district office
- Provide guidance as needed for various stakeholders

- Assist building principals with the implementation of telehealth services for students
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties
- Participate in IEP and 504 meetings for students with medical concerns
- Monitor physical and immunization records

Classroom Teachers and Self-Contained Special Education Teachers:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan including all instruction, assessment and other academic supports
- Contact/meet with each student and family to answer questions and offer support
- Meet virtually with students daily to provide direct instruction and be available for remediation and/or questions
- Attend IEP meetings and 504 meetings for students with special needs

Special Education Resource Teachers:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan including all instruction, assessment and other academic supports
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support
- Provide accommodations and modifications for core instruction and assignments needed based on IEPs through Google Classroom
- Provide activities related to students' IEP goals
- Attend IEP and 504 meetings

Title Teachers:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan by working directly with teachers/in their virtual classrooms
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support through small group and individualized remote learning sessions
- Provide interventions/small group instruction to students
- Support the differentiated portion of core ELA instruction
- Attend IEP meetings and 504 meetings for students with special needs

Itinerant Teachers:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan including all instruction, assessment and other academic supports
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support
- Provide coursework and activities for students

Social Workers/Guidance Counselors/Psychologists:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan
- Offer individualized support services
- Provide staff consultation regarding at-risk students
- Offer general education and IEP students telehealth sessions or phone calls
- Be available to answer parent questions/concerns via telehealth
- Participate in Google Classrooms with a mental health skill-building assignment
- Attend IEP and 504 meetings

OT/PT Providers:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations
- Offer individualized support services
- Provide staff consultation regarding at-risk students
- Offer general education and IEP students telehealth sessions or phone calls
- Be available to answer parent questions/concerns via telehealth
- Attend IEP and 504 meetings

Speech-Language Pathologists:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations
- Offer individualized support services
- Provide staff consultation regarding at-risk students
- Offer general education and IEP students telehealth sessions or phone calls
- Be available to answer parent questions/concerns via telehealth
- Attend IEP and 504 meetings

Early Childhood/PreK:

- Execute Remote Learning Plan
- Contact each family to answer questions and offer support
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations
- Meet virtually with students daily to provide direct instruction and be available for remediation and/or questions
- Attend IEP and 504 meetings

Teacher Aides/Social Skills Tutors/One-to-One:

- Assist teachers with preparing instructional materials
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations
- Assist student/groups of students in their daily work
- Call/Check in with students/parents not participating at required levels

Food Service:

- Prepare and distribute Grab-and-Go meals
- Follow CDC guidelines for disinfecting and sanitary practices
- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations

Technology Staff:

- Support continued district operations
- Implement help desk procedures to provide support for remote users (teachers, staff, parents, and students)
- Continue to provide training for online learning to teachers
- Provide training for online learning to families
- Communicate with families to ensure they have access to the internet and devices

- Receive guidance from supervisor on alternative duties and follow expectations

District Office:

- Human Resources/Payroll will provide assistance to employees regarding all resources and benefits employees might need
- Accounts Payable and Receivables will continue as normal to communicate with vendors, employees, and the public
- Communication with parents, employees, and the public will continue with normal operations in compliance with government directives
- Employees will receive guidance from direct supervisor on alternative duties/expectations