

Little Wound School Board
Misty Hunter
Cecelia Fire Thunder
Nicole Little Whiteman
Linda May
Raymond Janis

Little Wound School Board
Little Wound School
P.O. Box 500
Kyle, South Dakota 57752
Website: www.littlewound.us

Office of Superintendent
Telephone:
605-455-6174
Fax:
605-455-2340



July 22, 2020

Dear Little Wound School Community,

Since our campus closure in mid-March and subsequent transition to distance learning, we have been monitoring COVID-19 in South Dakota and constantly working to ensure that we serve our students and community well during this unprecedented time. Part of this has been our planning around when and how to resume school in the Fall. We know that this decision must be made in the best interest and wellbeing of our students and staff.

To this end, our LWS Board and leadership team have been in direct communication with the Bureau of Indian Education, South Dakota Department of Health, Indian Health Service and Oglala Sioux Tribal Education. We have also been regularly reviewing guidelines published by federal, state, tribal, and local authorities, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Throughout this process we have also made a point to solicit and listen to input from our students, parents, families, and other community members. So far we have conducted three online surveys. We encourage you to review the results of these surveys on the school website www.littlewound.us.

Based on these diverse sources of input, Little Wound School has developed a working draft of its reopening plan for the 2020–2021 school year. This reopening plan includes:

- **The first semester of school will be conducted through distance learning.** As COVID-19 cases rise in South Dakota and nationwide, reopening our campus to 900 students in this environment is not feasible. We understand that some school districts regionally and in other states have decided to reopen their campuses in the Fall. However, in consultation with health experts, we concluded that reopening Little Wound School for in-person classes poses an untenable health and safety risk to our community. Our students reside in eight of the reservation's nine districts, and the potential for community spread of COVID-19 is increased with an in-person reopening. We believe, as demonstrated by student and staff engagement during our spring campus closure, this decision does not undermine the opportunity for student learning and academic growth.
- **The first day of school will be rescheduled to September 8, 2020.** This will replace our current scheduled start date of August 31. By delaying the first day of school, we have more time to review guidelines and implement reopening plans in accordance with recommendations from the CDC. (This decision would not impact the length of the school year or reduce the amount of instruction students receive.) We will use the time between August 31 and September 8 to prepare students for distance learning. This will include an online orientation for new students, ensuring that students have access to the internet, and making sure all students are enrolled in Google Classrooms so they can access and complete their coursework.
- **Fall extracurricular activities and team sports will be postponed until further notice.** At this point following the SDHSAA association recommendation for Fall sports would increase the health and safety risk of our students and staff and not comply with established Oglala Sioux Tribe Covid 19 Ordinances. LWS will continue to reassess our stance on this issue continuously.

Little Wound School District is entirely committed to ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality, transformational, culturally relevant education. This does not change when students are participating in school

through distance learning. Distance education has sometimes carried a stigma with the idea that students are left to their own devices to learn. But this is not true, and students at Little Wound will continue to have consistent access to their teachers, principals, and other staff members. By hosting video-based and on-demand classes, curating and individualizing coursework for students, and creating space for one-on-one and small-group tutoring and socializing, our students will continue receiving the same high standard of education you have come to know at Little Wound.

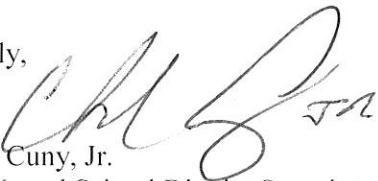
Our students, and their academic and personal growth, remain the most important priority during this unique time in our history. We are committed to providing the services and resources you and your students need to access this education. This includes:

- *Exceptional Children's Program (ECP) Services:* Our legal and ethical commitment to serving students with individualized education plans continues. Students will receive individual and small group sessions that support success in general education classes. Please reach out to Little Wound School's ECP department with any questions you may have about your student.
- *Early Childhood Education:* Meeting the developmental needs of our youngest learners through distance learning requires a unique relationship between families and teachers. Parent participation in the educational process and increased communication are required, and our elementary school principal and teachers are putting together plans for how we best support young learners during this time.
- *Technology:* We are expanding technology accessibility for students. This year, we will be providing technology to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. We understand that we have more work to do as we ensure that every student has the technology they need. If you need support with technology, please share this with your student's principal.
- *Communication:* Our commitment is to openly communicate with the community about our school's COVID-19 response plans. Additionally, we are creating a framework to ensure adequate and consistent communication between parents and our teachers, principals, and support staff. Please make sure that your phone number is registered to receive School Messenger calls and that you are a follower of our school's website and Facebook page, where information is also published.
- *Counseling:* Individual and small-group counseling services remain available to all students. We understand that the national health pandemic and its impact on everyday life can be disorienting. Our school's counseling staff are on-call to talk with students. Please contact your student's principal with any questions about how to access these services.

It is my hope that a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is developed soon. This will allow us to safely return to campus and resume face-to-face education. As the situation changes we will continue to communicate our plans with you. In the coming weeks we will also be publishing additional information about school registration, student orientation, food service, access to technology, and other topics. Please continue reviewing our school's communication channels for this information.

We are grateful for your support during this time. Please continue to reach out to us with any questions, thoughts, or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,



Charles Cuny, Jr.
Little Wound School District Superintendent