

2025-26

# Aitkin Alternative School Parent/Student Handbook

Revised 06/12/25



Aitkin Alternative School  
306 2<sup>nd</sup> St. NW  
Aitkin, MN 56431  
(218) 927-7121

# **Welcome**

Welcome to the Aitkin Alternative Program. Aitkin Public Schools established the Aitkin Alternative Program to meet the needs of a variety of individuals in a caring educational environment designed to encourage personal growth and self-directed, life-long learning. Our program has been designed to give students and adults the opportunity to complete their high school diplomas. The curriculum and learning materials are specially designed for students who haven't succeeded in traditional educational settings or for credit recovery.

The purpose of this handbook is to acquaint students, parents, and guardians with our regulations and school rules that govern the alternative school. This handbook should be used in conjunction with the Aitkin High School Student/Parent Handbook. Both the students and parents/guardians should become familiar with the policies, procedures, rules, and guidelines associated with the Aitkin Alternative Program and with Aitkin Public Schools. This handbook is meant to serve as a guide. Not every circumstance or event can be anticipated; therefore, students are subject to all district rules, regulations, and policies, as well as the interpretation by school officials. For a complete list of adopted board policies, please contact the School District Office at 218-927-7106.

The School Board and School Administration reserves the right to make changes to school policy and the handbook when needed or required by state or local statute. Changes to the handbook will be posted at the Aitkin Alternative School. The rules and state regulations that govern the school's day-to-day operations included in this handbook are extensions of the School Board policy. Failure to read and become familiar with this handbook does not excuse students from the rules and regulations described within. Personal factors or contradictory advice from any other source are not acceptable grounds for seeking exemptions from these rules and regulations. We strive to help each student maximize their potential in a welcoming and safe environment. We will do everything we can to help you make the most of the 2025-26 school year at the Aitkin Alternative Program. Have a great year!

## **Our Goal**

The goal of the Aitkin Alternative Program is to provide students, impacted by a variety of specific life situations, an opportunity to earn their high school diploma in a self-directed educational setting. The curriculum and learning materials are designed for students who haven't succeeded in the traditional high school or for credit recovery purposes.

The Alternative Program school staff members are committed to delivering the best educational opportunities to ensure student success. We value the desire, motivation, and innate ability that lie within each individual.

# Admission/Enrollment

Students enrolling in the Aitkin Alternative Program will be identified as either full-time or shared (dual enrolled) students (those attending AHS and the Alternative Program). Full-time enrolled students attend only the Aitkin Alternative Program to receive their education. Shared students receive instruction from both Aitkin High School and the Aitkin Alternative Program for credit recovery purposes.

The Aitkin Alternative Program is open to students in grades 9-12 who have limited success in traditional education settings. The criteria for enrollment are as follows:

- ☐ Is under the age of 21
- ☐ Is behind in satisfactorily completing coursework or obtaining credits toward graduation
- ☐ Progress impacted due to:
  - ☐ Mental Health or other medical issues
  - ☐ Homeless Status
  - ☐ Expulsion
  - ☐ Chemical Use
- ☐ Pregnant or is a parent
- ☐ Has withdrawn from school/ Re-enrollment
- ☐ Has been chronically truant
- ☐ Is a victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- ☐ Is in need of credit recovery

**To enroll in the Aitkin Alternative Program, please contact:**

**FULL TIME ENROLLMENT:**

Lisa DeMars  
Principal  
218-927-7113  
[ldemars@isd1.org](mailto:ldemars@isd1.org)

Sheri Sanbeck  
Administrative Assistant  
218-927-7121  
[ssanbeck@isd1.org](mailto:ssanbeck@isd1.org)

**SHARED ENROLLMENT (Part time Alternative School enrollment)**

Meredith Sander  
Guidance Counselor, grades 10-12  
218-927-2115 ext. 3406  
[msander@isd1.org](mailto:msander@isd1.org)

Samantha Croatt  
Guidance Counselor, grades 7-9  
218-927-2115 ext. 3409  
[scroatt@isd1.org](mailto:scroatt@isd1.org)

# General Information

## **Dates and School Hours:**

The Aitkin Alternative Program is in session on Monday and Tuesday afternoons from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. beginning on Monday, September 8, 2025, and going through Tuesday, May 26, 2026. Full-time students have the opportunity to continue their studies through the summer. Students will be notified about any changes to the academic schedule.

## **Instruction:**

Students receive instruction with curriculum and materials through the Edgenuity online curriculum.

## **Models of Learning:**

Full-time students in the Alternative School program MUST attend in person every Monday and Tuesday from 3:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. However, students are encouraged to work on classes daily in order to graduate on time. Credits are awarded based on completion of the course AND attendance.

Shared students (those attending AHS and the Alternative School program) are required to attend at least one of the sessions and can choose to attend either Monday or Tuesday or both from 3:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

## **Attendance:**

All students enrolled as full-time or shared students in the Aitkin Alternative Program are expected to attend class each week, showing expected course progress to meet credit completion expectations. Regular attendance is vital for academic success, for receiving credit for courses completed and making satisfactory academic progress towards graduation.

Full-time students in the Alternative School program will be expected to attend every Monday and Tuesday from 3:30 - 6:00 p.m. Students will also be required to do an additional 20-25 hours of online learning at home each week. **In-person attendance is required in order to earn credit for completed courses.**

Shared students (those attending AHS and the Alternative School program) will be expected to attend one night per week. Students may be assigned either Monday or Tuesday if student numbers increase. Students should arrive at 3:30 p.m. and stay until 6:00 p.m. If you are not able to be there by 3:30, you must contact Ms. DeMars or Ms. Sanbeck and let them know your reason for being late.

In the event that a full-time student will be absent, the student, parent, or guardian should contact (by phone or email) the alternative school and inform the secretary or the alternative school administrator prior to the absence and state the reason for the absence. Full-time students who have absences for reasons other than those listed below or have not received prior approval will be recorded as unexcused absences. A truancy petition may be filed with the Aitkin County Attorney's office for full-time students under the age of 17 who acquire 3 unexcused absences. Students missing 6 consecutive days may be dropped from enrollment.

The following are considered acceptable reasons for absence:

- Student illness
- Medical or dental appointment
- Court appearance
- Other absences receiving prior approval from the Alternative School administrator.

***For full-time enrolled students, each alternative school day is equal to 2.5 regular school days.***

**Note:** If a student is dropped from enrollment in the Alternative School Program, the parent or guardian may schedule a re-enrollment meeting with the Administrator of the Alternative School Program. Re-enrollment will be subject to seat availability.

### **Sign in procedure:**

When students enter the Alternative School room, they need to sign in on the clipboard with their name and the time they arrive. When students leave, they enter the time they leave.

### **Academic Progress:**

All students enrolled at the Aitkin Alternative School are expected to make satisfactory progress toward graduation. Satisfactory academic progress is defined as progressing in online Edgenuity classes at a rate that meets the expected timeline for completion of the assigned classes.

The following bullet points are presented as a gauge for you to measure your own progress based on annual expectations for each student.

- Full-time students should be completing 11 or 12 credits each year in order to stay on track.
- Full-time students should be attending school a minimum of 5 hours per week. (2.5 hours per session on Mondays and Tuesdays) and working online 25-30 hours per week.
- Shared students should be attending the Alternative School one day per week.
- Students should be working on their classes every week day. Edgenuity can be accessed at home during the week so students can make adequate progress towards completing classes.
- The first semester ends on January 16, 2025. Full time students should have completed at least 6 classes by the end of the semester and should be ready to begin their next set of classes.
- Shared students should be able to complete a credit recovery class during the semester.

### **Graduation:**

Full-time students who have completed all state and district graduation requirements and testing requirements will be issued an Aitkin High School diploma. Full-time students who have earned their high school diploma may, at their choice, participate in graduation ceremonies at Aitkin High School. Information regarding the graduation ceremony can be found on the high school web page.

### **Earning Credits:**

**Edgenuity** online curriculum will be implemented and supported by the on-site teachers. Teachers are available to answer questions, review concepts/material, and support advancement in the class. Courses meet high school rigor standards and students proceed through the courses by listening to lectures, completing work, and passing quizzes.

Full-time students will be able to check out a MacBook Air computer to use at the Alternative School and to take home to complete work. A permission form and insurance form for the MacBook must be filled out and turned in before the device can be taken home. These forms are available in the high school office, at the alternative school and on the school web page. Students who do not have these forms on file will be able to use the computer while at the Alternative School, but will be required to leave the device at the school.

Edgenuity has the following types of class options:

- Initial Credit - These classes need to be completed in whole for the student to earn credit. Grades of A - D will be given for classes completed with a passing score.
- Credit Recovery - These classes can be edited by the teacher to cover only the material that was not mastered by the student in class at AHS. Credit Recovery classes earn a P grade when completed with a passing score.

**Grading is based on the Aitkin High School grading scale.**

Letter Grade	Percentage Range		Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A	94.00 and above		C	74.00 - 76.99
A-	90.00 - 93.99		C-	70.00 - 73.99
B+	87.00 - 89.99		D+	67.00 - 69.99
B	84.00 - 86.99		D	64.00 - 66.99
B-	80.00 - 83.99		D-	60.00 - 63.99
C+	77.00 - 79.99		F	59.99 and below

**Alternative academic curriculum** will be implemented when appropriate for students on IEPs or other special circumstances.

**Student Expectations:**

All students enrolled in the Aitkin Alternative Program are expected to behave in a manner that supports and maintains a positive learning environment. Students who behave in a manner that disrupts the learning environment or whose behavior endangers themselves or others will be subject to disciplinary consequences; up to and including suspensions and expulsion.

**Inspections/Searches:**

In order to maintain a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff, student searches may be conducted by school administration or law enforcement in the event that there is reason to believe that the safety of students and staff is in question, including canine searches. Detection canines for prohibited substances and items are routinely used at Aitkin Public Schools and adjoining areas (parking lots and school grounds) in order to provide a safe learning environment. These searches may include all backpacks, bags, and/or vehicles on school property. (Aitkin Public Schools is not responsible for any damages incurred to vehicles or personal property during searches, including canine searches). Weapons and prohibited materials and substances will be confiscated and may be given to law enforcement.

**Cameras/Recording Devices:**

Use of any photographic device, film camera, digital camera, cell phone camera, video camera, and all devices capable of capturing images, including audio recording and recording image video with and without sound, etc. that infringes upon the rights of others is strictly prohibited. Misuse of any such device in a school locker room, bathroom, or elsewhere in a way that violates the personal privacy of any individual may result in school discipline or referral to law enforcement.

**Internet Use:**

The use of the district's network must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational objectives of the Aitkin Public Schools. The use of technology and the Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate or unauthorized use will result in disciplinary action, including the termination of those privileges. Students are expected to use the Internet in an ethical and educational manner. Students caught downloading or

using the Internet inappropriately are subject to losing internet privileges and disciplinary actions.

### **Tennesen Warning:**

The Alternative School Administrator is responsible for investigating disciplinary situations in the school. Students with information pertinent to a situation may be asked to cooperate with the investigation. Any student asked to cooperate has the option of not doing so. No disciplinary action will be taken based on the student's decision. Other than school officials, no one else will receive the information shared by a student (exceptions may be MSHSL infractions and suspected criminal activity).

### **Weapons:**

Possession of or distribution of weapons is prohibited at the Aitkin Alternative School. Students found with weapons will be subject to the following:

- Disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion
- Confiscation of the weapon
- Law enforcement referral

### **Threats/Assault/Fighting:**

Students who threaten others with any type of bodily harm, without material contact, will result in suspension and require a parent/guardian conference before returning to the alternative school. Any student who threatens bodily harm or death while in possession will be immediately suspended and the Alternative School Administrator will recommend the student be expelled for one calendar year to the superintendent and the Aitkin School Board.

Assault and fighting will be characterized by violent aggressive behavior with the intent of inflicting physical harm and be differentiated from "poking, pushing, or shoving". Students who engage in fighting or assaultive behavior will receive disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion.

### **Harassment Policy:**

#### **Racial, Religious, Sexual and Violence**

Everyone at Aitkin Public School District has the right to feel respected and safe. The policy of the school district is to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment and violence on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, familial status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability. The school district prohibits any form of harassment or violence on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, or familial status, with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability.

- I. Everyone at District #0001 has a right to feel respected and safe. Consequently, we want you to know about our policy to prevent religious, racial, or sexual harassment and violence of any kind.
- II. A harasser may be a student or an adult. Harassment may include the following when related to religion, race, sex, or gender:
  - A. Name-calling, jokes, or rumors
  - B. Pulling on clothing
  - C. Graffiti
  - D. Notes or cartoons
  - E. Unwelcome touching of a person or clothing
  - F. Offensive or graphic posters, book covers, or
  - G. Any words or actions that make you feel uncomfortable, embarrass you, hurt your feelings, or make you feel bad.

- III. If any words or actions make you feel uncomfortable or fearful, you need to tell a teacher or the Program Administrator. You may also make a written report or email. Your right to privacy will be respected as much as possible. We take seriously all reports of religious, racial, or sexual harassment or violence and will take all appropriate actions based on your report. The School District will also take action if anyone tries to intimidate you or take action to harm you because you have made a report of harassment. This is a summary of the School District policy against religious, racial, and sexual harassment and violence. Complete policies are available in the District Office upon request.

### **Bullying:**

The School District is committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment. Acts of physical bullying or verbal bullying in any form including texting, posting on social media sites, or instant messaging by either an individual student or group of students is prohibited on school district property or at school-related functions. All acts of bullying should be reported to the Program Administrator.

### **Controlled Substances including Tobacco:**

Controlled substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other controlled substances are not allowed. Students may use and possess prescribed medication under the supervision of a licensed healthcare professional and must register their medication with the School Nurse.

### **Administrative Discretion:**

Not every situation, circumstance, or event can be predicted. Therefore, the School Administration reserves the right to use discretion in determining the course of action(s) that may be taken in response to an event. All factors will be taken into consideration when determining the action taken.

### **Weather Closings:**

The Aitkin Alternative School will correspond with any closure of Aitkin Public Schools and in the event that school closes early or after school activities are canceled, the Alternative School will be closed. Students should use these days as e-learning days (work from home if possible).

### **Vandalism:**

Vandalism of any school district property is prohibited. Students who vandalize school property will be disciplined and will be reported to law enforcement.

### **2025-26 Alternative School Calendar**

September 8	First Day of Classes: (3:30-6:00 pm)
September 9-May 26	Every Monday and Tuesday (3:30-6:00)
May 26	Last Day of Classes

### **School Will Not Be In Session On The Following Days:**

*December 22-31 January 19, February 16, April 6, May 25*