

Sleepy Eye Public Schools
District # 84
Sleepy Eye, MN

As with so many schools all over the country, Sleepy Eye Public Schools was without a doubt not alone with all of the challenges and difficulties that schools faced in 2020. How could anyone prepare for something that they had never had to experience before? The biggest obstacle we faced was providing some families with the internet that would be needed in order for their children to do virtual classes. Sleepy Eye Public Schools provided “hotspots” for some of those families, but thanks to Mediacom, who provided “free internet” until the end of May 2020 to families that qualified for Free/Reduced lunches, that problem was thankfully resolved. All students of Sleepy Eye Public Schools had been provided an iPad, since our school started in August 2019, so that was not an issue. The other issue we faced was that our school has a small number of families that are limited English and who needed assistance with all of the technical instructions that were being provided to all families, but thanks to the very concerned teachers who went above and beyond to help the school liaison by providing guidance, instruction and support, that issue was also dealt with and resolved. The limited English parents received one-on-one help by text, email and phone calls from the school liaison. Any materials that were required (ie..paper worksheets, books, supplies, etc.) were also provided by the teachers and sometimes delivered by the “lunch buses”, the school liaison or other school staff members. From the end of March when the virtual classes were required till the last day of school in mid-May, Sleepy Eye Public Schools provided free home delivered lunches to all students that requested it, those were the “lunch buses”. When the new school year started at the end of August 2020, the Spring experience we had was instrumental in having a successful start of a new school year. It has not been perfect and there are other issues that come up, but thanks to everyone, school leadership, teachers, counselors, staff, parents, students and the community, Sleepy Eye Public Schools continues to turn lemons into lemonade. Another issue that was highlighted through a Region Nine Program called “Welcoming Communities Project” was that our town of Sleepy Eye has not had adult ELL classes in Sleepy Eye for a number of years now, despite the fact that it is needed and wanted by the ELL adults that live in Sleepy Eye. It was finally going to be addressed, until COVID-19 hit. It is an issue that is not going to be forgotten though and as a matter of fact, there have been many ideas given by some community members, like for example providing computer English Language Programs like Rosetta Stone at school and possibly having college students that are studying to become ELL teachers come to our school and work with the ELL adults. I believe that this issue will too be resolved as soon as we tackle the COVID-19 Pandemic first. In conclusion, the community of Sleepy Eye is a Wonderful community and like many communities in Minnesota they have their share of problems, but when you have caring community members, the problems are without a doubt challenging, but when faced together, they can be overcome because many in this community believe in what the late Paul Wellstone said: We all do better, when we all do better.