

# COVID RESPONSE PLAN

## *COVID Grants Priorities* SAU 24 - Fall 2021

### **Continuity of Services: Meeting All Students' Needs**

The pandemic has disrupted learning for all students and impacted the social emotional health of our students and staff. The disruptions have led to challenges that will need to be addressed, as well as opportunities that we want to carry over to the post-pandemic learning environment. Across SAU 24 we have focused on essential competencies and leveraging the 1:1 technology now available. Providing interventions and additional support and specialized instruction to students has been challenging throughout the pandemic due to staffing shortages and covid safety protocols. In response to these challenges and opportunities, SAU24 is developing a roadmap to address the learning needs of all students.

### **Creating Safe and Healthy Learning Environments**

***Meeting Basic Needs:*** During the 2020-2021 school year, schools across SAU24 provided free lunch to all students, including students learning remotely.

***Meeting the Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs of Students:*** prior to the pandemic schools were seeing an increasing need for social emotional and mental health needs of our students. Through the pandemic those needs have been amplified in many of our students. Students in SAU24 have access to School Counselors, Social Workers, and School Psychologists through a tiered response to need. SAU24 plans to respond to this need in three ways, increasing professional development opportunities for staff, strengthening our core SEL curriculum, and expanding our Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to include academic and behavioral support.

### **Addressing Lost Instructional Time**

***Accelerating Learning:*** SAU24 has been closely monitoring the learning of all students prior to and through the pandemic. Universal screening and diagnostic testing for students in K-8 is completed using iReady, and at the high school all students take the PSAT and SAT in grades 9-11. Through instructional approaches such as Universal Design for Learning, 1:1 and small group tutoring, and expanded learning time, SAU24 will strive to meet the needs of all students.

***Supporting Equitable Access and Effective Use of Technology:*** all students in SAU24 in K-12 are issued a Google Chromebook. During the pandemic, when the need for remote learning arose, Chromebooks were sent home with students and teachers were able to provide live, synchronous instruction. As we transition out of the pandemic, SAU24 will use these devices to fully develop a blended learning environment. Additionally, technology will allow us to personalize instruction for students and accelerate learning in response to academic loss and enrichment.

***Using Data to Target Resources and Support:*** prior to the pandemic SAU24 used the Response to Intervention model to address the needs of students needing academic support. Efforts to expand our support to a full Multi Tiered System of Supports that includes academic and behavioral support were starting prior to the pandemic but stalled due to staffing shortages. As we transition out of the pandemic, resources will be targeted to continue this work and develop a fully articulated Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to include academic and behavioral support.

***Addressing Resource Inequities:*** SAU24 serves a wide range of students and families with varying access to resources. Responding to the needs of our student population is a primary goal. Many of our families have experienced financial hardship during the pandemic, as a result we will continue to offer free lunch to all students during the 2021-2022 school year. In addition, when individual student materials are required, SAU24 will provide them at no cost to the student's family. We also have plans to support students who may not have adequate access to the internet, see below for more details.

## **Supporting Educator and Staff Stability and Well-Being**

***Stabilizing a Diverse and Qualified Educator Workforce:*** SAU24 struggled to fully staff our schools during the pandemic, from custodial staff to educators in specialized areas, we had positions go unfilled during the 2020-2021 school year. At the time of this report, hiring for open positions has indicated that there is still a shortage of staff, however, positions have been filled for next year with high quality candidates despite losing some finalists to other districts. It has become apparent that the salary structure in some of the districts is making us less competitive with neighboring districts. SAU24 is planning to create short term positions with the goal of accelerating learning in response to the pandemic while also addressing the need to reduce turnover in our long term positions.

***Supporting Educator and Staff Well-Being:*** The pandemic has created a significant increase in stress for educators and administrators. During the pandemic SAU24 supported educators through professional development, covid protocols designed to increase safety, and additional sick days to use in response to Covid. As we transition out of the pandemic, the stressors related to personal safety will decrease, however the

stressors related to meeting the social emotional and mental health needs of students and responding so learning loss will remain. SAU24 is committed to meeting the needs of educators and staff through providing targeted professional development, increasing short term instructional positions, and leveraging resources to target specific needs. SAU24 has engaged in regular surveying of students, staff, and families to determine needs, plan, and evaluate decisions and will continue to do so as we respond to covid.

## **Special Education and Students with Disabilities**

We will continue to put forth our best efforts to support all children PreK-12, including those with disabilities, during reopening. We will continue to follow our approach to adapt, plan, innovate, and partner along with families to meet the unique needs of their children. Through ongoing planning and implementation, the District, schools and staff will work to support individualized educational needs as well as ensure access to an appropriate education.

## **Technology and Connectivity**

### ***Student Devices***

Elementary students will each be assigned a device. Devices will remain at school during in-person learning and be sent home with the student if it becomes necessary to transition to remote learning.

Middle and high school students will continue to be issued a device as part of the 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Students at these levels will be expected to bring their device to and from home daily.

### ***Internet Access***

Should the need arise, the District will work with local cellular vendors to procure cellular hotspots. The hotspots can use a cellular signal to create a WiFi network to which laptops, Chromebooks, and other devices can connect. These devices will be made available to families who have inadequate Internet access at home to support remote learning.