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Technology Update: Increased Access and Opportunity for 2014-2015 School Year

Last year, I provided substantial information and communicated my excitement about the District's continued focus and commitment to Increased Access and Opportunity through Technology for all Sauk Rapids-Rice children, regardless of their socio-economic status. I also commended students, staff, and community members for their efforts to successfully integrate technology into daily learning.

Students are expected to be post-secondary and/or career ready upon their graduation, and we believe that being ready includes expertise and knowledge in the use of technology. It also means being able to successfully use technology to learn.

What We Know

Last spring, our Board of Education approved the Increased Access and Opportunity through Technology Plan for all Sauk Rapids-Rice students in three deliberate phases. As a result of their support, the first phase will begin in the High School this upcoming school year and will provide MacBook Air laptops with 13" screens (<https://www.apple.com/macbook-air/features.html>) for all students in Grades 9-12. Our current schedule of implementation will provide every High School student a laptop by the start of the Second Trimester. This schedule will allow for a more thoughtful and deliberate roll out, which will include training and support for students, staff, AND families. Providing this tool for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, will level the playing field and increase opportunities and access.

What Does This Mean for Families

All students in Grades 9-12 will have a laptop to utilize during the school day in their classes free of charge. The laptops will be used to access information, support, and enhance curriculum efforts. Students may also choose to take the device home with them for the school year if interested. However, if they choose to take the laptop home, they will be required to pay a \$60 fee annually. This fee will be utilized

- PAGE 2 - **Technology Update: Increased Access and Opportunity for 2014-2015 School Year**

to protect the District and Community's initial investment and help support and maintain the devices.

Written differently, for approximately \$7 each month or \$1.75 each week, students/families will be able to utilize their laptop and have access anytime throughout the school year at home or at school. Families will receive training and have an opportunity to ask questions about the laptop and its use prior to obtaining a device and will be able to pay the fee online if they choose. School districts that have provided laptops for students previously have indicated that nearly all students/families have taken advantage of the opportunity and that doing so has provided many benefits not only to the student, but to families as well. In fact, parents have noted their appreciation for not having to purchase a device on their own, how backpacks have become lighter, and how students are more engaged and prepared for education and life after High School. Consequently, while protecting the community's investment is essential, making the fee affordable remains a priority.

While the initial fee will be the same in Sauk Rapids-Rice as the fee in a neighboring school district (and less than many others), it is important to note that if families choose to take the laptop home and the laptop is damaged or in need of repair as a result of misuse or negligence (i.e. liquid spill), additional charges may apply.

Proposed Deductibles in SRR

These proposed costs would apply for students who took the laptop home and/or whose devices needed to be repaired and/or replaced as a result of misuse or negligence (i.e. liquid spill). The District recognizes that devices used during the school day are less likely to be damaged and/or in need of repair.

- Charger: First Damage \$25
Subsequent Incidents or Lost \$80 (replacement cost)
- Screen: First Incident \$100
Subsequent Incidents \$500 (replacement cost)
- Liquid Spills: First Incident \$100
Subsequent Incidents \$275 (replacement cost)
- Replacement: First Lost / Stolen Incident \$450
Subsequent Incidents \$900 (replacement cost)

In researching practices in other school districts, staff learned that there have not been many issues related to damage / repair regarding MacBook Air laptops. Most school districts provide the device, but ask that families cover the entire cost to replace the device or repair damage if needed. In some cases, families pay tuition, which covers the cost of the device and maintenance. The Sauk Rapids-Rice

- PAGE 3 - Technology Update: Increased Access and Opportunity for 2014-2015 School Year

Committee is proposing students/families only be required to pay a portion of the repair/damage if something were to happen the first time, but that the total costs to replace / repair the device be paid if something were to occur a second time. Since the District plans to insure the devices, the majority of these costs will be less than what families would typically pay if they were to purchase a device on their own. For example, in the current proposal, if a charger is damaged at home or lost, a child would pay \$25 to replace it the first time instead of the \$80 it would cost to buy one. If a second charger were lost, the child would pay \$80, which would be the cost to replace it. These recommended deductibles are being discussed and considered now and will be communicated to families when finalized. Regardless, the District wants to make sure that families are not charged more than what it will cost for the devices to be replaced and/or repaired and is committed to keeping costs as low as possible.

Regardless of whether a child chooses to take the device home or not, each child will receive the MacBook Air (13" Screen), a protective carrying case, and charger to support his/her learning. In addition, each child's laptop will be his/her responsibility to use throughout his/her time at the High School. In other words, while each child will return the device at the end of each day or school year so that it can be updated, cleaned, etc.... he/she will get the same laptop back when they begin the next day or school year. Bottom Line: Each child will be responsible for his/her laptop, just like he/she is responsible for a band instrument, textbook, etc.

School Board members, administration, and various community representatives have researched experiences and procedures in other school districts over the last two years to learn best practice and to implement policies that are expected to work well for students, staff, and families. However, every school district is different so we look forward to working with and learning from each of you. Regardless, because of your continued support and engagement, our students will be better prepared for their lives after high school and will have similar opportunities to students in school districts throughout Minnesota and the nation, including, but not limited to, those in Central Minnesota (i.e. Becker, Cathedral, Little Falls, Sartell, etc.).

Much planning has taken place already, and there is so much more to do. Our leadership team, which includes parents, technology staff, teachers, administrators, and both Board and community members, has considered many different aspects of such a roll-out and is working hard to ensure a smooth implementation. In addition, teachers have begun thinking about and planning for increased access for students, and members of our technology team and Business Office have focused on the needed resources to implement this plan successfully. A team of High School staff members has also been established to help support and navigate the successful roll

- PAGE 4 - **Technology Update: Increased Access and Opportunity for 2014-2015 School Year**

out. This process includes support for teachers, opportunities to collaborate, and technical support.

Why Now and How will this be Funded?

Through effective fiscal management and some opportunistic legislative changes, our district is in a great position to move ahead with this plan and to be able to sustain it.

Beginning this year, the Legislature will fund all-day every day kindergarten, a program we previously funded in our school budget. In combination with the recent legislative action related to increased location equity aid, our district will receive sufficient dollars to purchase and sustain this endeavor. Sauk Rapids-Rice insists these additional dollars be used to support students directly and knows by providing increased opportunity and access, students and families will be better prepared. Furthermore, levy dollars will not be used to fund this initiative, but will continue to be used to maintain/lower class sizes as evidenced by the more than 25 positions added in the last 12 months, provide transportation without a fee for District residents, and to maintain current courses / electives for our children.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to finalize logistics related to such things as the integration of technology into daily learning, distribution, training, maintenance, and support. Further communications will be provided in School and District newsletters, at student orientations and Open House, and through the District Website at www.isd47.org (Departments / Technology). Moreover, we are always looking for families who are interested in being part of a team to develop, review, monitor, and evaluate the success of the District's efforts. If you are interested in being more involved, please email Laura Mackenthun at laura.mackenthun@isd47.org to discuss the opportunities. These conversations and your involvement will be extremely important before distribution and throughout the next school year so practices can be modified and adjusted and maximum support for children and their families can be provided.

It is Great to be Part of the STORM

Thank you for all you do to help our children, schools, district, and community succeed! Your engagement, support and dedication make a difference EVERY day! Go STORM!

Date: 7/2014