Press Release
For immediate release
June 16, 2020

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Regional Schools Collaborate on 2020-21 School Year Plan

As local school teachers and school families close an unusual school year centered on rapid response distance learning, Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) and regional school leaders are already at work planning safety and multi-dimensional academic learning plans for the year ahead. Though the Michigan Department of Education has yet to make decisions on schools re-opening, one thing is for certain, the re-entry to the 2020-21 school year will look different than it did before the coronavirus pandemic.

In advance of directives by state officials, local school administrators and educators are working together to develop fundamental components of a shared Return to Learn Plan that focuses on six priorities to guide school health and safety standards, and provide multiple pathways for learning no matter what challenges schools might face in the future. The planning group includes educators from across Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties divided into six teams that will drive the work behind each priority. Each group will be focused on developing regional standards and dedicated resources that will inform school leaders as they address their individual district reopening plans.

The six components of this regional plan include:

- **Wellness** factors guided by the CDC, state and local health departments; updated cleaning and disinfecting protocols; clarity of school policies and guidelines, as well as student, parent and school staff preparedness.
- **Common learning platforms** that guide curriculum, instruction and measured progress; support student engagement; align best practice and provides multiple pathways for learning and demonstrating knowledge.
- **Technology infrastructure and access** components informed by state-wide collaborative efforts, provisions for both high- and low-tech learning tools, and supports for home connectivity and equitable access for all students.
- **Instruction and social and emotional learning** resources to provide quality meaningful instruction that meet the needs of the student, parents and educators; and the ability to measure progress over time.
- **Professional development** opportunities that encourage collaboration; supports curriculum, instruction and assessment; provides a personalized approach to learning that supports the whole
child/whole person; and establishes meaningful learning in the classroom or remote learning world.

- **Facilities and operational** considerations including building preparation, transportation, safety and childcare needs.

The school closure in March was unexpected, but our schools and teachers rose to the challenge and brought creativity, innovation and grit to their teaching in very short order,” says TBAISD Superintendent Dr. Nick Ceglarek. “This regional collaboration will bring benefits of shared knowledge and planning to support our teachers and students and guide learning and safety standards across the region.”

School leaders throughout northwest Michigan hope to be able to open doors and welcome students back in September, but for the present, they are planning for a variety of scenarios knowing that the learning environment could change at any given moment throughout the school year. Whether learning is face-to-face, distant or something in-between, schools across the Traverse Bay region will be prepared to provide and support a quality learning experience for all students and families.

The Regional Return to Learn Plan is posted online at [www.tbaisd.org](http://www.tbaisd.org) and local districts will continue to communicate school re-opening plans as state guidelines are established.