



July 29, 2020

### **Introducing SOLA: The K-12 Southmoreland Online Learning Academy**

The opening of the 2020-2021 school year will be the first of its kind in the history of the Southmoreland School District. Committed to mitigating the educational impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on its students, the district has expanded its existing Online Academy to include a rigorous and robust program for virtual learning for ALL K-12 learners. This option will be offered for those families who believe that returning to the traditional school setting (even under the proposed hybrid model) may not meet their personal or health related needs.

Southmoreland utilized data from student/family surveys as well as our dedicated community forum email address to gain user insight relative to online learning experiences during the spring school closure. That information has been utilized to intentionally adjust the framework for delivery of K-12 online instruction offered through the Southmoreland Online Learning Academy (SOLA). In addition to restructuring the educational components, including increased direct teacher contact time, the district is dedicated to promoting equitable access to all students. Key SOLA features include:

- Alignment with District Curriculum
- All K-8 courses taught by highly-qualified Southmoreland teachers
- Increased synchronous learning opportunities to interact directly with teachers in real-time
- Individualized and customized instruction that meets the needs of all types of learners
- Daily schedules that mirror what is followed in school, to the maximum extent possible
- Digital integration in the instructional setting that allows for a seamless transition between physical and virtual setting with all students using common tools
- Students may opt to return to the physical school setting, if desired
- Increased social opportunities at all levels and the ability to participate in athletics or extra-curricular programs
- SOLA students may continue their learning through graduation and receive a Southmoreland diploma

SOLA (K-8) will utilize Google Classroom as a learning management system for virtual instruction. Teachers can create, share, and assess academic content and manage an online

classroom. It also offers a common communication platform that allows teachers to connect with students and parents. Our teachers are being certified as Google Educators, and will continue with professional learning to ensure the highest quality of instruction.

In prior years, students attending Southmoreland Middle and High School were able to elect to participate in a select number of district offered online courses in specific content areas or explore expanded options for elective and core courses through the WIU eAcademy. In the 2020-2021 academic year, high school students will still have the opportunity to participate in over 300 WIU eAcademy courses through the SOLA program.

Elementary and Middle School SOLA will offer the same grade level curriculum, delivered by a Southmoreland teacher. Additionally, students will be able to experience special classes such as music, art, physical education, whether enrolled in SOLA or the brick and mortar platform.

The administration and staff of Southmoreland are diligently working this summer to finalize our program offerings and work out the varied logistics and details needed to provide its students with the high-quality education they deserve. Community members are encouraged to follow district communications in the upcoming weeks for ongoing updates by frequently visiting the district website, following district operated social media accounts, and watching for upcoming media releases.

The Southmoreland School district is a community partner that strives to be responsive and adaptive to the ongoing needs of its students. The district values the strong interpersonal relationships that our faculty and staff have forged with our students and families over the years and remains dedicated to providing the best educational experience for all children, no matter the delivery mode. Families are encouraged to choose SOLA for their child, if returning physically is a concern, in order to remain a part of the Southmoreland Family.