

Board weighs in on energy drinks in district schools

Written by By Chrissy Largo Sun Correspondent
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The question as to whether energy drinks should be completely prohibited at district schools was discussed at the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education's regular meeting Oct.19.

According to Interim Superintendent Carmen Moffett, a recent survey of all Gallup district schools revealed that out of the 19 of 35 schools that participated, Thoreau High School allows energy drinks to be consumed even though the school "discouraged it because of health reasons."

District 5 board member Lynn Huenemann said there is a district-wide wellness policy that states that schools cannot supply energy drinks to the students such as selling them on the lunch menu or at school events, however, it does not stop students from bringing them on school grounds.

"The policy that is now constituted prohibits schools from providing energy drinks but it doesn't say that the kids cannot drink it," Huenemann said. "Again, as I said before, energy drinks once in awhile, are not my concern. My concern is that kids drink it and it displaces their nutritional meal so they don't eat lunch. I think we should do this as a health policy and also as a teaching

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policy.”

The survey also found that there are 17 district schools that do not have a policy in place that prohibits the consumption of energy drinks; however, there are two district schools that have a policy in their school handbooks that prohibit the use of energy drinks. The names of the district schools were not disclosed at press time.

“From information that I have received, most individual schools do not have an individual policy [regarding energy drinks]” said Huenemann.

Board of Education Secretary Priscilla Manuelito said that if the Board is planning to support this issue, the proper education to our children needs to be addressed.

“We have got to tell them ‘why’, what can happen and those kinds of things,” she said. “I think that we need to build the education part for our children.”

Moffett mentioned a community member in previous years, named Gloria Begay, who has done groundwork and advocacy in changing health across the Navajo Nation. Begay is the member of the Dine’ Community Advocacy Alliance which promotes health and food education to Native communities.

“One of the things that Begay shared with us is we had Navajo youth within the Navajo Nation die as a result of energy drinks, and I think that the Board taking this step is an important one for the health of our children,” Moffett said.

Moffett added that research is underway to study the language and wording of district school policies regarding energy drinks.

District 4 board member Joe Menini said that he would like to have this topic as an action item

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at the next school board meeting, Nov. 1, to discuss the matter further.