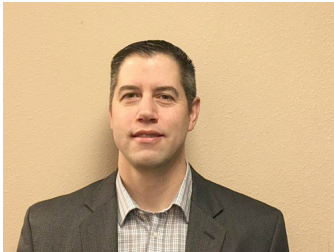


## With costs soaring, GMCS to purchase school supplies

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 02 June 2017 03:32

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### Long-time supply-buying plan to change in fall of 2017

It's getting more and more expensive to send a child to public school.

And that reality is no more apparent than when it comes to school supplies in poor school districts. The cost of outfitting one child with the necessary array of pens and pencils can go as high as \$70 per student. And some students require extra supplies.

Not anymore – at least not at Gallup-McKinley County Schools thanks to a very welcomed cost-savings initiative implemented by district officials.

“I spend more at back-to-school than at Christmastime,” Gallup-McKinley County school parent Crystal Kee said. Kee has two kids that attend Navajo Pine High School in Navajo, N.M. “And nothing is getting any less expensive.”

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Big and small school districts everywhere around the country expect students to bring their own pencils, pens, erasers, notebooks, rulers, folders, art supplies and, in some cases, hand soap and paper towels. The latter is not in place at Gallup-McKinley schools, but when teachers compose supply lists at the beginning of the school year, the cost of those lists add up. To relieve some of the costs, administrators at the Gallup school district won't put the burden of costs on parents ever again.

"This takes the cost factor of parents having to buy school supplies and basically puts that cost factor in the hands of the district," Interim Gallup-McKinley County Schools Superintendent Mike Hyatt said. "It's a cost-savings measure. And there are no strings attached to it."

Starting next year, parents and guardians of students attending Gallup and McKinley County schools won't have to purchase school supplies. That's because the district has come up with a plan to buy them for the students. The measure, believed to be the first time implemented by the Gallup district, aims to save parents close to \$1 million annually.

Along the same cost-savings lines, GMCS won't allow schools and teachers to require lab, art, vocational and other fees to participate in specific courses and activities.

"The practice of putting the costs of necessary general supplies and fees on the backs of our parents and guardians has traditionally been a part of the GMCS system, and we are eager to eliminate that burden," Hyatt said. "With the district's purchasing power, GMCS will be able to acquire these supplies using operational funds at a significant cost reduction."

In a collective sense, Hyatt said upward of \$500,000 is spent annually by parents on school supplies. He said a lot of parents at Gallup's schools simply can't afford that cost year in and year out. The move to allow the school district to buy the supplies didn't require a formal Board of Education vote, but was, nevertheless, welcomed by school board members.

"I think it's a good move, a good thing to do," school board vice president Kevin Mitchell said. "It's going to save families, especially in the rural areas of the district, a lot of money. This is a very good thing to do."

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Hyatt said the district has received “a 99 percent positive reaction” since announcing the new cost savings measure about two weeks ago. “Nobody is against it,” Hyatt said. “Nothing is coming out of the pockets of students or teachers.”

The annual operating budget of Gallup-McKinley Schools is about \$100 million, Hyatt noted.

***By Bernie Dotson***  
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