

## Navajo Nation and Central Consolidated Schools sign historic school resource agreement

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SHIPROCK, N.M. - The Navajo Police Department and the Central Consolidated School District have signed a memorandum of agreement to assign two full-time school resource officers to the northern New Mexico public school system.

The signing ceremony was held Aug. 26 with Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice-President Myron Lizer finalizing the school resource agreement, a historic partnership for both the Navajo Nation and Central Consolidated School District.

“The partnership increases the safety of the learning environment for students and educators. The presence of SROs will help to reduce crime and bullying and lead to educational and mental health benefits of students. Most importantly, it gives the police officers the opportunity to serve as positive role models for the students and to help re-instill respect and honor for law enforcement and authority,” Nez said.

The primary goal of the School Resource Officer program is to reduce the incidences of crime, promote a better understanding of the law enforcement officer’s role, and to create a better learning community through positive role models in an educational system.

The agreement details that school resource officers will be assigned to Newcomb High School and Shiprock High School. Each will work with school administrators to provide a secure learning environment for students and staff.

The Navajo Police Department initiated a one-year SRO pilot program with the Central Consolidated School District during the 2018-2019 school year. During this time, two officers

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were placed in the school environment and the results yielded a 37 percent reduction in infractions in the elementary school and a 24 percent reduction in infractions among high school and middle school. Infractions ranged from drug and alcohol violations, weapons possession, fighting, and threats.

The results demonstrated the importance and value of having an SRO program in community schools and a formal agreement was pursued for the current school year.

“Having school resource officers on campus is a great opportunity for our officers to make a positive impact by providing crime prevention education to students, families and school faculty,” Phillip Francisco, Navajo Nation Police Chief said. “We look forward to this partnership and want to thank everyone who worked collectively to get this agreement in place.”

“This has been a two-year labor of love that will provide a safer learning environment in our schools on Navajo Nation soil, as well as a closer relationship with the Navajo Nation. This agreement will ensure school safety, which is one of the district’s main priorities. Our students will benefit greatly with the presence of law enforcement, and will feel secure during class and school activities,” Terrian Benn, Superintendent of Central Consolidated School District stated.

The agreement, signed on Aug. 6, will remain in effect until May 2020.