

State of New Mexico to provide internet to at-risk students

Written by Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
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The Gallup-McKinley Community Schools district has something to celebrate after a judge ordered the State of New Mexico to make sure at-risk students have access to the internet.

During the May 3 GMCS school board meeting, Superintendent Michael Hyatt announced that the judge had decided in favor of New Mexico schools on April 30. He explained that the state would finally be in charge of providing students with technology.

“The pandemic really illuminated the problem we faced as a school district with adequate funding for such things as technology in the classroom; devices and those types of things that we need to not only provide a sufficient education – but during a pandemic event to provide an education when students weren’t allowed to come to school,” Hyatt said.

Hyatt explained that about 1,500 students in the district couldn’t access the internet at home, despite the district’s effort to provide hot spots. But now finally the state will be responsible for providing students with reliable internet service.

Hyatt then turned to the district’s calendar to clear up some confusion on when the last day of the 2020-2021 school year would be. He reminded the board that the district had to start classes later than they usually would, because of state requirements. The calendar had been set for an August 20 start date and the last day of school was set as June 16. But Hyatt reminded everyone that the district had experienced six snow days, which pushed the end date

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back to June 24.

Hyatt told the board that this new date allows the district to comply with the state law that requires students to have a certain amount of instructional time. In New Mexico, high school students are required to have 1,080 instructional hours in a school year.

Another factor that affects the district's last day of school is the district's application for extended school year funding last year. Hyatt said that funding is approximately equal to 3.5 percent of a nine-month employee's salary.

"If we stopped school early for some reason, we would not qualify for the funding, which would reduce people's pay," Hyatt stated.

During the executive session at the end of the meeting, the superintendent's contract was discussed. The board decided to give Hyatt a one-year extension with a salary of \$190,000 for next year.

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