

What to do about masks at school

Written by Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Mexico Public Health Department recommend that unvaccinated people continue to wear masks, while vaccinated people can remove them.

What that means for Gallup-McKinley County Schools has yet to be determined. At the June 12 board meeting, GMCS Superintendent Michael Hyatt said he would pass along the guidelines from the New Mexico Public Education Department for the upcoming school year as soon as they became available. He also said the CDC may be changing the mask directives again.

Hyatt said the district would address issues about students' return to school in the fall by sending out a survey to parents about in-person learning.

"We need as many students as possible to return to school," Hyatt said.

Hyatt also responded to discussion about teachers leaving the district. Hyatt said that isn't the case. He said the district saw a 36 percent decline in resignations in 2020.

"More teachers are staying in the district than leaving each year," Hyatt stated. "So the façade that there's some sort of drastic number of people leaving the district as far as teachers, is simply not true."

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Hyatt thanked members of the board for their participation in retaining teachers and recruiting new ones.

“I think what the board has done to recruit and retain teachers has gone a long way,” he stated. “Also, although we’re not perfect, we’re getting better at making sure we have a better environment for staff to work and grow in, as a professional and as employees.”

He pointed to the pandemic as a significant obstacle to recruitment.

“Obviously this year is a tough year for recruitment,” he acknowledged. “People, as I mentioned before, are hunkering down where they’re at across the country, but we’re working really hard,” he said.

Hyatt believes he will have more data on how many teachers need to be hired for the next school year by the time of the next board meeting Aug. 2.

By Molly Adamson
Sun Correspondent