

## No more snow days

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 05 November 2021 04:42

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### With remote learning, full attendance is possible

Snow days may soon become a thing of the past for Gallup-McKinley County Schools students.

COVID-19 showed districts around the world that remote learning is possible, and now GMCS is taking what it learned and applying it to other situations where students may not be able to be in the classroom in-person, as in the case of snow days.

During the Oct. 25 school board meeting, the district's superintendent, Mike Hyatt, introduced the idea of Virtual Days to the board.

"We're looking at ways in which we can provide an online [experience] or learning happening at home during those days that's appropriate and fits what's happening in their classes at that time as far as instruction," Hyatt explained.

He stated that the concept would ensure that the district wouldn't have to add days onto the school calendar, which pushes the school year into summer vacation when families have made plans. This idea would also prevent any gaps in the students' learning because of missed days.

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School board member Priscilla Benally supported the idea of the Virtual Days, but voiced her concern about the students who do not have internet access and wouldn't be able to receive the online lessons.

"I would not have a problem with [the Virtual Days] if Mr. Hyatt and our staff can reassure us that 100 percent of our students do not have any difficulties with internet or computer issues," Benally said. "I would just hate for them to not get the grades or the meaningful lesson if there's issues."

Hyatt assured Benally and the other board members that other options would be provided for students who do not have internet access.

"There are obviously still students who do not have the internet access that they are required under the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit now, and so we're being very careful to make sure it's equitable," Hyatt said.

In the Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico case, families and school districts sued the New Mexico Public Education Department for failing to provide a sufficient and uniform system of education to all New Mexico children, especially low-income, Native American, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

On July 20, 2018, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled that the state had failed to provide students with programs and services that would prepare them for college and careers. The state had until April 15, 2019, to make sure that New Mexico schools had the necessary resources, including technology.

Other schools across the country are also doing away with snow days in favor of virtual learning.

One example was reported in a May 5 "USA Today" article, which stated that the New York City

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Department of Education canceled snow days when it announced its 2021-2022 school year. New York City is the nation's largest public school district.

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