

Tse Yi Gai extends opportunities to grades 6-8

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
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Middle school students in the Pueblo Pintado area have a new option for school this year with the addition of grades 6-8 at Tse Yi Gai school.

Gallup McKinley County Schools decided to expand enrollment after a community survey indicated support. The school has space for 891 students, much larger than the high school population it has recently served. As a high school only, it ended the last term with 67 students. To date, 14 middle schoolers have enrolled for this term.

Adding younger grades will fill some of the excess capacity while making attendance easier for some students and their parents.

“Adding grades 6-8 will allow students to attend school with their siblings,” Principal Kelly Morris said. “The [Bureau of Indian Education] schools in the area have a different school calendar and a different school day. Having siblings attend the same school will help parents when child care is needed for younger siblings.”

It also creates opportunities for student athletics, she said. With enough enrollment, the school could field middle school football, basketball, volleyball and track and field teams. Until then, eighth graders can petition to “play up” – on the high school teams.

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“Academically, students who attend Tse Yi Gai in grades 6-8 will have exposure to the rigorous curriculum that their peers will be taught from,” Morris said. “It will help to improve the overall education of the students in the area at a younger age.”

The school is also transitioning to an engineering school in the district’s relatively new pathway system. Last year, courses were Introduction to Engineering and Design, and Civil Engineering. Morris plans to have a third level course ready next year, when enough students have completed the first two courses.

“A pathway is a three-course sequence and internships in whatever engineering path we have available,” GMCS Director of Instruction Wade Bell said, noting that soft skills are just as important as job training. “They will be taught those skills, and how to interview, how to work in a partnership and how to explain your work to a prospective boss.”

Students not only get courses designed to prepare them for futures in engineering or mechanical trades, but can be placed in paid internships at the end of the sequence. The district works with businesses in the region to take on interns, and pays students’ wages.

Internships will be new this year at Tse Yi Gai. There were 20 interns across schools and disciplines last year, Bell said, and the program is growing. “We’re going to have 80 this year. We’ll keep expanding as we learn.”

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