





GMCS overall school grades rise above F's

On Aug. 25, the Gallup McKinley County Schools Student Support Center boardroom at 640 Boardman Dr. was full for a second time in two weeks. This time, though, instead of a room full of tension, the meeting revealed the smiling faces of children and adults, along with frequent outbursts of applause.

The reason for such celebration, Superintendent Frank Chiapetti said, was that "we've raised the bar for our students and they have succeeded."

Chiapetti was referring to the release of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers test scores, which revealed consistent growth in student performance over the whole GMCS school district.

The scores affect the grades given to individual schools. In the past, multiple GMCS schools received “F” grades.

Indian Hill Elementary School went from an F to an A in one year. Applause and cheers erupted when Chiapetti told the audience that the GMCS district had no F-graded schools in the new school year.

“We work in a district that has no failing schools,” he said.

Statistical graphs showed that, among the improved schools, 96 percent of that growth came from students who are classified as economically disadvantaged.

“Everyone is expected to grow. From the bottom to the top,” Chiapetti said about the new way GMCS measures students.

Other speakers joined in the celebration, too. School Board President Priscilla Manuelito greeted the group in Navajo and echoed the sentiment that this was a day to celebrate.

“We are very thankful to our children and the successes they are making and with everyone that is supporting their endeavors,” Manuelito said. “It is awesome!”

The president and CEO of the Gallup McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, Bill Lee, shared words of congratulations on behalf of business leaders in the community.

“Sometimes it’s easy to stand up and point fingers and assess blame,” Lee said, about recent alleged problems in the school district. “But it is even better to stand up and point fingers of praise.”

Lee also called Chiapetti a fair and strong leader.

“These new grades prove that he is the superintendent this community needs,” Lee —who also commended the hard work of administrators, teachers, and students — said.

“What we know at the Chamber is that each and every one of you [students in attendance] will be our future workforce, the entrepreneurs and starters of businesses that will take our community farther than we ever dreamed of,” Lee said. “I see a room full of hope and potential.”

After the meeting had officially concluded, high-fives and hugs were exchanged between principals, students from the top-growing schools, teachers, and even the superintendent himself.

One school said they planned to celebrate the improvements the following morning, Aug. 25, with what they claimed would be the longest conga-dance line in Gallup’s history.

The Sun witnessed the dance line in action at Rocky View Elementary School, 345 Basillio Dr. After the regular morning announcements, the intercom played music from artist Katy Perry roaring in every classroom, hallway, and even the recess field outside. Every grade level came out in its own line, slowly combining with other classes until all the lines converged on the playground with confetti in the air.

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