

School board discusses results of Parents as Teachers program

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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With many students taking the option to learn from home during the pandemic, parents have found themselves with additional duties in addition to caring for their children. These duties can lead to a greater strain on their wellbeing and resources.

But there are programs, such as Gallup-McKinley County Schools Parents as Teachers, that aim to help parents get their children ready for school from a young age.

The GMCS Board of Education heard a presentation from Ashley Ryan, Ph.D., director of curriculum and instruction for GMCS, on some of the key statistics from the program during their Oct. 6 meeting.

“The purpose of the Parents as Teachers program is for our parent educators to do home visits,” Ryan said.

There are three main goals for the PAT program, where enrolled families receive information and support on:

Engaging in daily literacy activities

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Safe breastfeeding

Safety planning and safe sleep practices

Between July 1, 2019 and June 16, 2020, over 40 new families enrolled in the program and PAT served about 148 families in total with home visiting sessions and then virtual visiting sessions once the pandemic hit.

According to the presentation, 98 families of GMCS students are enrolled in Parents as Teachers and meet with certified parent educators to receive parenting tips, resources and referrals to support agencies, prenatal and early childhood guidance, and activities to promote brain and motor skill development.

Pregnant women and new fathers can participate in the program, along with teen parents and any families in McKinley County with children under the age of five.

“Gallup-McKinley County Schools is actually the model for the state,” Ryan said. “We’re often highlighted by the state to go to the federal level for the [Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting] funding for the program. The state shares our data and model as a program to say we need this money.”

Per their website, the MIECHV program gives pregnant women and families, particularly those considered at-risk, necessary resources and skills to raise children who will be ready to go to school.

“At the end of every year, we gather data from families who participated in this program and let us know how we did,” Ryan said. “[Going by their comments,] our coordinators do an amazing job.”

Superintendent Mike Hyatt said the PAT program has been very effective and is fully funded by

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MIECHV, which is what the district should be supporting.

Dist. 3 Board Member Priscilla Manuelito was curious to know if virtual visits and training are being provided with the ongoing pandemic.

“To make sure we’re giving the right support to families, we made sure we had enough proper supplies from the start of the pandemic, and our educators deliver those resources to the parents and then we set up a phone call or virtual meeting and then a follow-up to make sure the family can continue with what they are learning in the program,” Ryan said. “We’re excited for the future of this program.”

The item involved just the presentation, so no action or further discussion was needed.

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