

Grants schools to continue online through October

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
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GRANTS — The Grants Cibola County Schools will continue instruction completely online through at least mid-October.

The GCCS school board voted Sept. 1 to continue instruction on an online platform. The district oversees schools in Bluewater, Casa Blanca, Cubero, Grants, Milan, San Rafael and Seboyeta.

“The crux of the plan is based on flexibility because in a crisis or a pandemic, we have to be ready, flexible, and adaptable to the unknown, which I think we have done. We’ve been methodical in not moving too fast, but at the same time, moving forward,” GCCS superintendent Max Perez told the *Gallup Sun* Sept. 8.

Administration from the district office, along with principals from school sites, routinely do walkthroughs on the school campuses, checking in with teachers and students.

“I think it’s safe to say, the teachers I have talked with the last couple of weeks remain positive about their work and where they are taking their students,” Perez said.

The superintendent said teamwork, and the challenges of infrastructure of technology have

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been some of his biggest lessons during the era of virtual learning.

“The biggest thing I’ve learned is how our educators and our support staff remain fully intent on still delivering instruction to all the students without hesitation,” Perez said.

At Grants High School, a school with over 800 students and 50 staff members, teachers and students are using online platforms for their hybrid model.

“We’ve got two days a week where kids are on Zoom, [Google] Meets. They’re having [virtual] face-to-face interaction with their teachers, so they’re in the meeting for a lecture. And then, we have two days of the week where they’re working in Google Classrooms, which is the classroom platform, so they’re doing their assignments and completing their work based on the lectures,” GHS principal Lane Widner said.

The other school day is allotted for “office hours,” where students can get one-on-one virtual tutoring and help with specific teachers.

“We have a number of our staff that are working from home. We have a number that are [at the school.] I can walk into classrooms and physically see what’s going, or I can log into Google Classrooms and see what’s going on,” he added.

Widner said the feedback he is getting from students and parents is mostly positive during the pandemic.

Other school districts around the state have announced long-term plans, like the Albuquerque Public Schools, which is going to remain fully virtual through the end of the semester.

Will GCCS follow suit?

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“We don’t want to get locked into a corner. We want to check our data, check our resources, checking the landscape, environment, and the Department of Health, before making any kind of commitment,” Perez said.

The superintendent said data will be presented to the school board at a future board meeting, which will include the results of community and staff surveys.

Over 31 percent of families surveyed said they would like to have their child(ren) remain at home through the first semester, according to an Aug. 28 survey conducted by GCCS.

In a staff survey given during the same time period, 62 percent of GCCS staff said they would prefer virtual learning through the end of the semester.

“Do we step out and work our way back to normalcy, or do we stay totally isolated? There’s unknowns on both sides, and that’s why it goes back to being very careful and being thoughtful, and ear to the ground, listening to all the health experts and psychologists,” Perez said.

“We’ve got to be very aware of every decision we’re making for what’s best for students, and I’ve never said that with more thought and intent in my whole life,” he added.

The district is conducting another round of community and staff surveys through Sept. 14. You can find the surveys at <https://www.gccs.k12.nm.us/>.

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