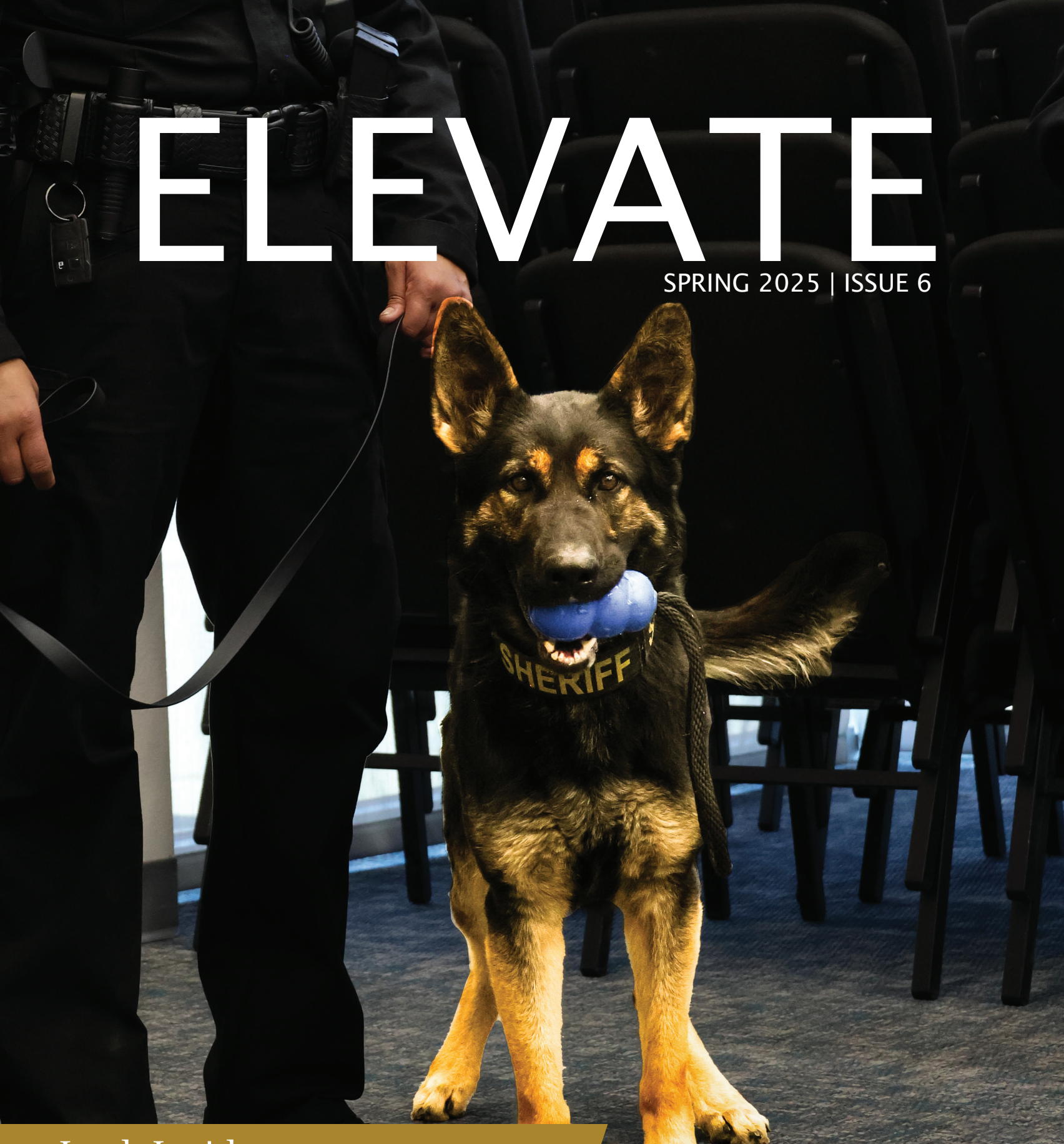
ELEVATE

SPRING 2025 | ISSUE 6



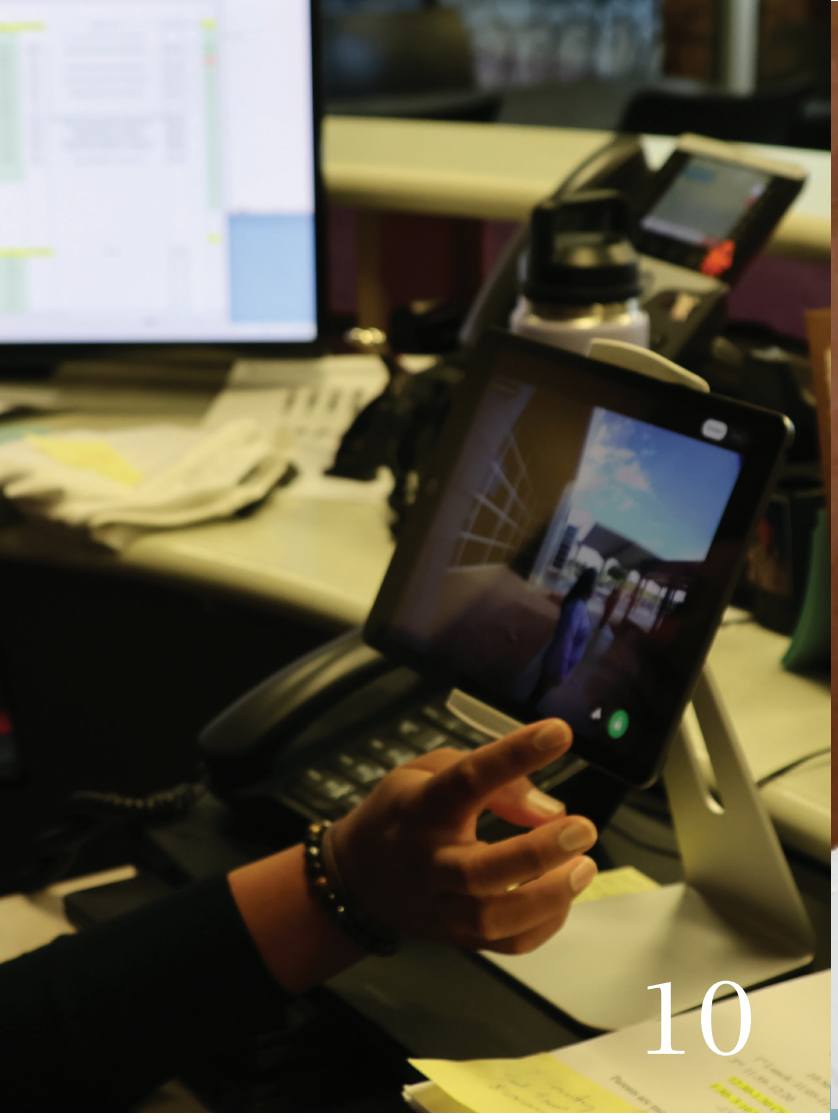
Look Inside:

McKinley Academy

Leading the County in Academic Standards

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GALLUP-McKINLEY COUNTY SCHOOLS





In This Issue

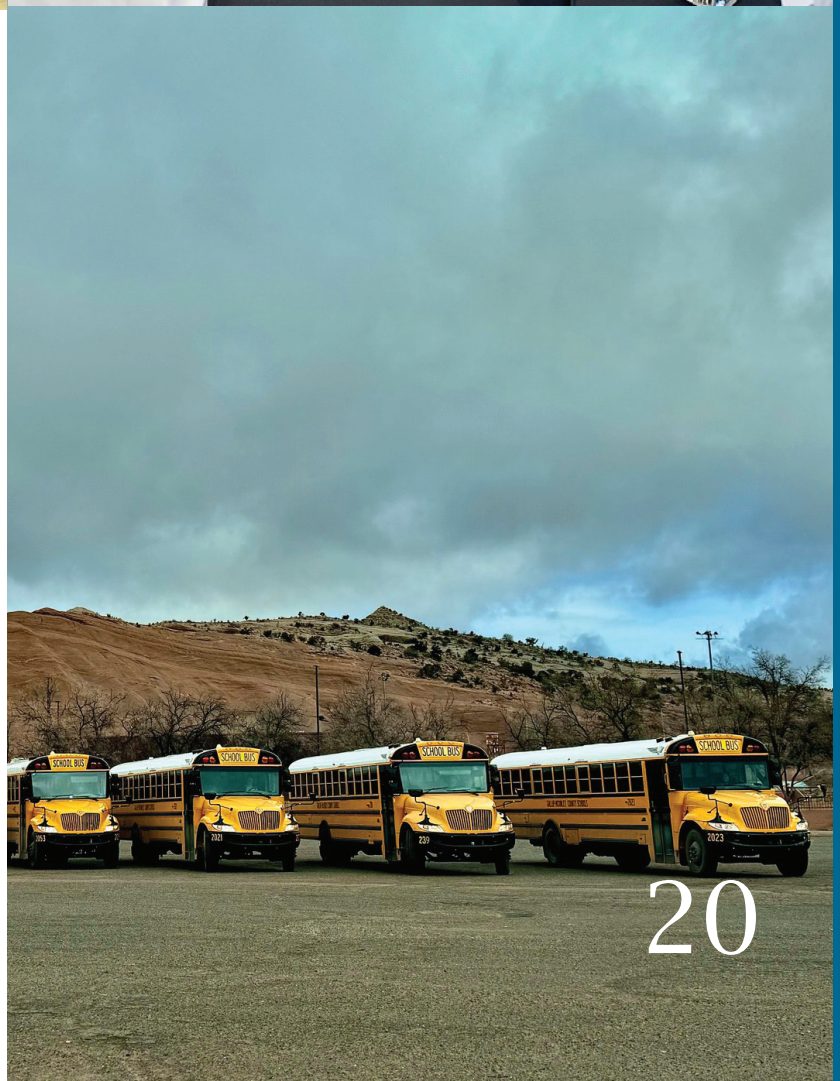
4 McKinley Academy Students Score Above to State Average

6 Communities, Parents & Students

8 Safety Partners

16 Vape Task Force

20 Transportation Safety



GALLUP-McKINLEY
COUNTY SCHOOLS

ELEVATE

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EDITOR
JVANNA HANKS

WRITER
KATHY POLICH

CONTRIBUTING
WRITER
JOSHUA STEPNEY

PHOTOGRAPHERS
JENNIFER BACA
VANESSA DUCKETT

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
JENNIFER BACA

Front Cover: Deputy Melanie Padilla with K-9 Zelle and Lt. Tammy Houghtaling

Back Cover: Comparative Reading Scores highlighting McKinley Academy.

Congratulations Class of 2025!

GMCS GRADUATIONS:

Wednesday, May 21, 2025
at 6:30 pm
Tse' Yi' Gai'
Navajo Pine

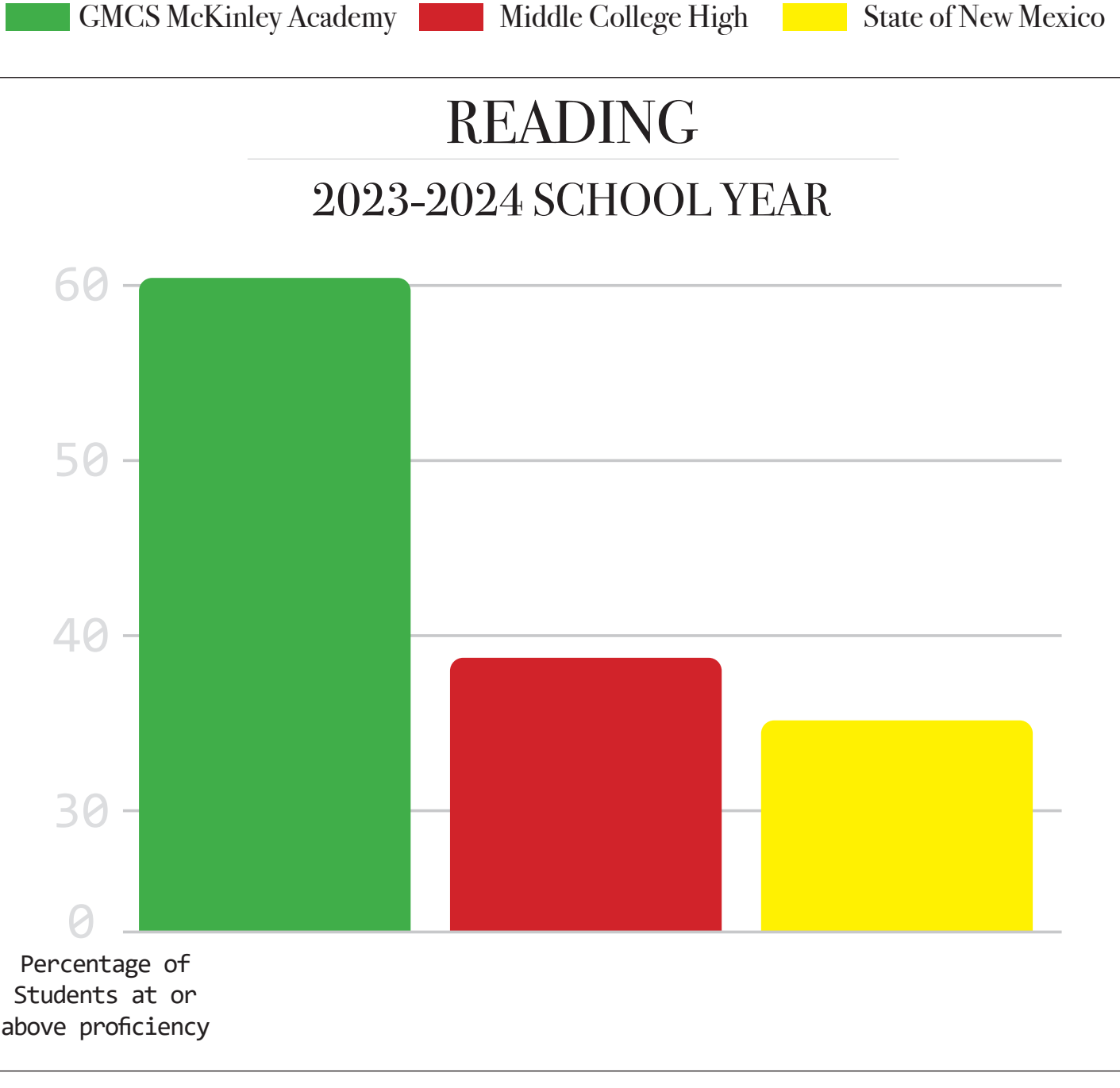
Thursday, May 22, 2025
at 6:30 pm
Tohatchi
Ramah
Miyamura

Friday, May 23, 2025
at 10:30 am
Gallup Central/OCC

Friday, May 23, 2025
at 6:30 pm
Thoreau
Crownpoint
Gallup



MCKINLEY ACADEMY STUDENTS SCORE ABOVE THE STATE AVERAGE

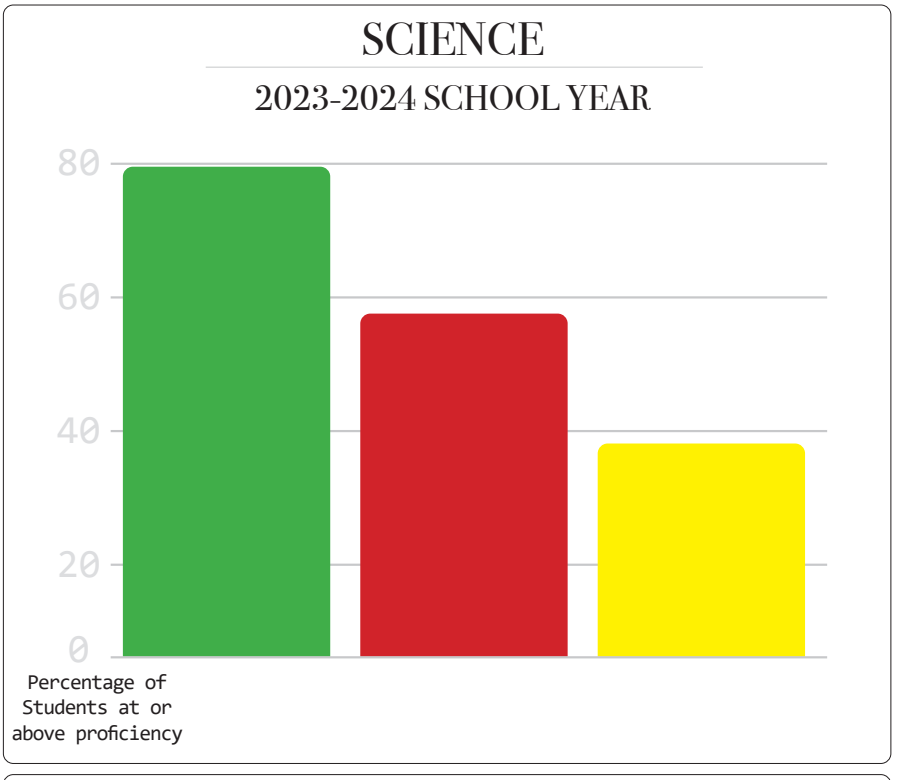


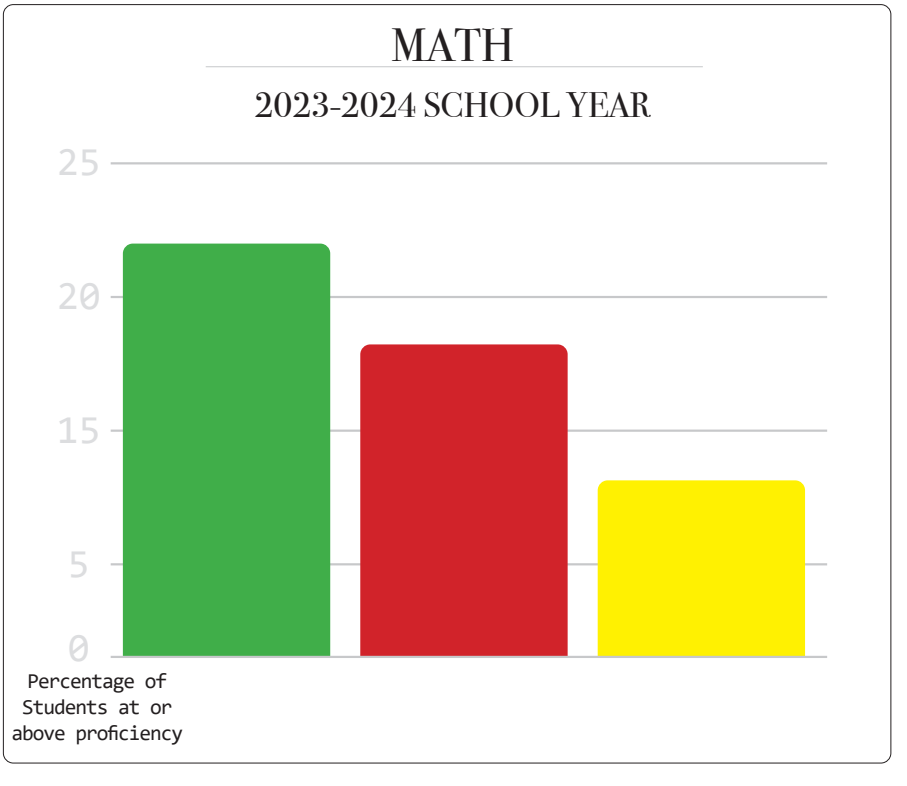
Data compiled for this graph was obtained by the following entities: 2024 NM-Vistas (Middle College High School), 2024 College Board Raw Score Data (State of NM and McKinley Academy) and GMCS Internal reporting.

McKinley Academy is the premier early college program in McKinley County. At McKinley Academy, students get the best of both worlds: they earn college credits while still in high school and stay connected to their home schools through sports, clubs, activities and special events. With free tuition, transportation, meals, and all supplies provided, students are set up for success—academically and beyond.

McKinley Academy students are raising the bar in academic excellence. Gallup-McKinley County Schools proudly celebrates McKinley Academy's outstanding performance on the 2023–2024 state assessments—scoring above the state average and outperforming Gallup Middle College in every subgroup!

Applications for the Fall 2025 are being accepted until July 9th for current 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th graders. Ready for a brighter future? Discover McKinley Academy today!





MCKINLEY ACADEMY
Brittainy Garro, Principal
505-721-4200
bgarro@gmcs.org

COMMUNITIES, PARENTS AND STUDENTS: *OUR PARTNERS IN SCHOOL SAFETY*

Ensuring school safety requires a collaborative effort with communities, parents, and students serving as vital partners in recognizing and reporting potential threats. Being vigilant and proactive can prevent incidents before they occur. If something seems unusual or concerning—whether it is suspicious behavior, concerning social media posts, or unfamiliar individuals on campus—reporting it immediately can make a significant difference.

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) strives to provide a safe and secure environment for all students and staff. Covering almost 5,000 square miles (about the area of Connecticut), GMCS spans a vast and diverse region, requiring a collective effort to maintain safety across its many schools. This effort includes vital partnerships with the Gallup Police Department, New Mexico State Police, McKinley County Office of Emergency Management, the McKinley County Sheriff's Office, and the Navajo Nation Police, each providing protection and support to specific areas within the district.

In addition to the support provided by law enforcement officers and GMCS security teams, the District



GMCS Security, Technology, Sheriff's office and student converge on school security at Student Support Center

encourages open communication between families, school staff, and law enforcement. By fostering a community that prioritizes awareness and action, we can create a safer learning environment for everyone. Remember, safety is a shared responsibility, and every report contributes to the well-being of our schools.

Superintendent Mike Hyatt underscored the district's commitment to student safety, stating, "Ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for every student remains our top priority. Through proactive education, advanced technology, and strong community partnerships, we are taking decisive steps to protect and empower our students."

If you see something, say something! Together, we can protect our schools and provide a safe, welcoming environment for all. students and staff.

SCHOOL STAFF SUPPORTS SAFETY!

GMCS is dedicated to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all students and staff. All school site personnel and support staff are fully committed to following the Standard Response Protocol (SRP).

Every staff member has completed the "I Love You Guys" Standard Response Training, ensuring they are well-prepared to respond effectively to various emergency situations. This comprehensive training equips staff with clear, consistent actions to enhance safety and security across the district.

By prioritizing preparedness and consistent response procedures, GMCS continues to foster a safe learning environment for everyone.

SRP K12 2021 STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Student Safety

A critical ingredient in the safe school recipe is the classroom response to an incident at school. Weather events, fire, accidents, intruders and other threats to student safety are scenarios that are planned and trained for by students, teachers, staff and administration.

Standard Response Protocol (SRP)

The SRP is based on the response to any given scenario. The benefits become quickly apparent. By standardizing the vocabulary, all stakeholders can understand the response and status of the event. The protocol also allows for a predictable series of actions as an event unfolds.

The SRP is based on five actions: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. Each has specific staff and student directives that are unique to the action.

The Standard Response Protocol is a program of the "I Love U Guys" Foundation. More information and detailed materials can be found at https://iloveuguys.org

i love u guys FOUNDATION

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SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) has developed strong partnerships with local and regional law enforcement and emergency response agencies.

Collaborating closely with the McKinley County Office of Emergency Management, the McKinley County Sheriff Department, the Gallup Police Department, the Navajo Nation Police Department, and the New Mexico State Police, has helped GMCS to strengthen and improve its safety protocols and emergency preparedness. These partnerships ensure coordinated responses to potential threats and emergencies, enhancing the district's ability to provide a secure learning environment.

Each agency plays an essential and valued role in protecting GMCS schools. From implementing safety drills to responding swiftly during emergencies, their expertise and support are crucial to the district's comprehensive safety measures. GMCS deeply appreciates the dedication and collaboration of these agencies, recognizing their significant impact in maintaining a safe and secure atmosphere for all students, staff, and families.



Community Emergency Training at Kenneth Holloway Auditorium, with GMCS Staff and All Local EMS agencies.

EMPOWERING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY WITHIN GMCS!

by Joshua D. Stepney

Gallup McKinley County Schools is committed to ensuring a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for all students. Our dedicated support team of counselors, student success advisors (SSAs) and social workers guide our holistic approach to help students thrive. We focus on nurturing the growth of our future leaders by offering a safe space where students can share their thoughts and struggles without fear of judgment.

Our comprehensive support services aim to enhance mental health and well-being, offering both individual and group counseling sessions, as well as social-emotional lessons. We are proud to offer services like Gaggle Therapy, an online therapy platform, alongside our in-person social workers and Teen Health Clinic who are always available to assist students. Through these resources, we provide wrap-around services that ensure every student has access to the support they need.

Our structured practices establish a standard level of care that fosters growth, safety, and development, empowering students to succeed in their educational journey and beyond.

COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK
Joshua D. Stepney, Coordinator
Counseling, Student Success Advisors, Social Work & McKinney Vento Liaison
jstepney@gmcs.org

GAGGLE THERAPY
gaggle.net

TEEN HEALTH CLINIC
Gallup High School Counseling Department
505-721-2500




STATE WINNER 2005
EXIT
COUNSELING
OFFICE

TECHNOLOGY SAFETY



Visitor doing an immediate background check using the Verkada Kiosk

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) have state-of-the-art technology integrated across its campuses. With over 2,000 cameras covering 98% of school campus square footage, GMCS ensures comprehensive surveillance and security. The district utilizes the advanced VERKADA system, featuring facial recognition and motion detection capabilities, providing proactive monitoring and rapid response to potential safety concerns.

Most exterior doors across the district are equipped with keyless entry systems, granting secure access for staff and support personnel while preventing unauthorized entry.

Additionally, bathrooms in various locations are fitted with environmental sensors that detect vaping, monitor air quality, and identify changes in humidity, allowing for immediate intervention when necessary.

To further enhance security, GMCS employs mobile EVOLV concealed weapon detectors that can be deployed throughout the district as needed, adding a flexible layer of protection during events and daily operations.

The VERKADA Guest system requires all visitors to present a valid ID upon entering school buildings during operational hours. Instant background checks are conducted to ensure that only approved individuals gain access to school premises and check out students.

Avery Kesner, Network Supervisor and the district's lead for technology safety, emphasizes the significance of these measures: "All of our schools and offices are fitted with technology that streamlines our ability to promote safety."

FROM CLASSROOMS TO COMMUNITIES:

Inspiring Youth Through Education and Law Enforcement Connections



Sheriff James Maiorano educating Student Support Staff with ALICE Training.

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) have taken a significant step forward in enhancing student safety and educational support through a growing partnership with the McKinley County Sheriff's Department. Spearheading this initiative is Sheriff James Maiorano III, whose lifelong dedication to law enforcement is deeply rooted in his own childhood experiences.

Sheriff Maiorano's passion for public safety was sparked during his time as a third-grade student when he was inspired by a 6-foot-5-inch Pennsylvania State Trooper who served crosswalk duty near his school. This early interaction planted the seed for a career in law enforcement that would follow him across the country as his family relocated to the Gallup area. Now, as McKinley County Sheriff, Maiorano is committed to fostering partnerships with educational stakeholders to create safer learning environments.

A key component of this collaboration is the implementation of ALICE Training® (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training across GMCS schools. Sheriff Maiorano's dedication to standardized safety protocols has been instrumental in aligning schools in the region with best practices for emergency response.

His commitment extends beyond county lines; he has even traveled as far as Omak, Washington, to provide ALICE training, demonstrating his belief in widespread community safety.

Furthering this commitment to student well-being, the Sheriff's Department has revitalized the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program. Sheriff Maiorano has allocated resources to support a full-time DARE Officer, Deputy Melanie Padilla, who will be accompanied by her K9 partner, Zelle. This dynamic duo will play a crucial role in delivering drug prevention education and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and students.

Sheriff Maiorano emphasized the importance of consistency and relevance in safety practices, stating, "Making sure each of our staff goes through the same training as every school staff is a step towards efficiency. Everything we do and promote has to be relevant to the safety of our community."

Through these collaborative efforts, Gallup-McKinley County Schools and the McKinley County Sheriff's Department are working together to ensure that schools are safe, supportive environments where students can thrive. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to proactive safety measures and educational enrichment, reinforcing the district's dedication to student success and community well-being.



School Board President, Chris Mortensen meeting K-9, Zelle with Deputy Padilla.

SAFER SCHOOLS, BRIGHTER FUTURES:
HOW GMCS PROTECTS OUR STUDENTS EVERY DAY



In recent years, Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) has made significant strides in enhancing campus security by employing a dedicated team of in-house security officers. Today, GMCS proudly staffs 30 full-time security officers, each bringing specialized training and diverse experience to safeguard students and staff. The district has maintained a strong partnership with Red Rock Security as they conduct after-hours security services and provide security for athletic events.

All GMCS security officers hold a CPR-certification and have at least a Level I Security Guard certification. A large percentage hold either a Level II or Level III certification. Beyond these qualifications, they have completed over 80 hours of specialized training through a partnership with McKinley County Emergency Management. This comprehensive program includes Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training and Stop the Bleed training. These specialized training courses are equipping officers with essential life-saving skills. Additionally, all officers are certified in Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) and have undergone the "I Love U Guys" Foundation training and ALICE standard response protocol, ensuring consistent and effective emergency responses.

This robust security program was developed under the leadership of Darren Soland, Personnel Investigator at Central Office. With 23 years of experience with the New Mexico State Police and service as Chief of Police

in Ramah for the Navajo Nation, Mr. Soland has implemented strategic safety measures that have transformed school security across the district. “It is imperative that we have a uniform understanding, knowledge, and procedures across the district to make each campus as safe and secure as possible,” Mr. Soland emphasizes. GMCS Security teams meet weekly and conduct monthly meetings with Red Rock Security to ensure that a collaborative security service is being provided.

Supporting this initiative is Joe Mangum, Lead Security Guard, who brings valuable experience from corrections and security roles. Mr. Mangum believes that regular meetings with safety teams and school administrators foster trust and strengthen the security program. “We have a great team of motivated individuals who want the program to succeed. Everyone brings an asset to the job through their various backgrounds and experiences,” Mangum shares.

The GMCS security team is composed of veterans, retired law enforcement officers, and professionals with backgrounds in corrections and security. This diverse team works collaboratively to create a safe and secure learning environment, reflecting GMCS’s commitment to prioritizing student and staff safety.



THERE'S NO 'I' IN TEAM.



NEXT LEGENDS

VAPING CAN EXPOSE YOU TO TOXIC CHEMICALS THAT CAN DAMAGE YOUR LUNGS. AND THE TEAM.

FDA

Paid for by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

VAPE TASK FORCE

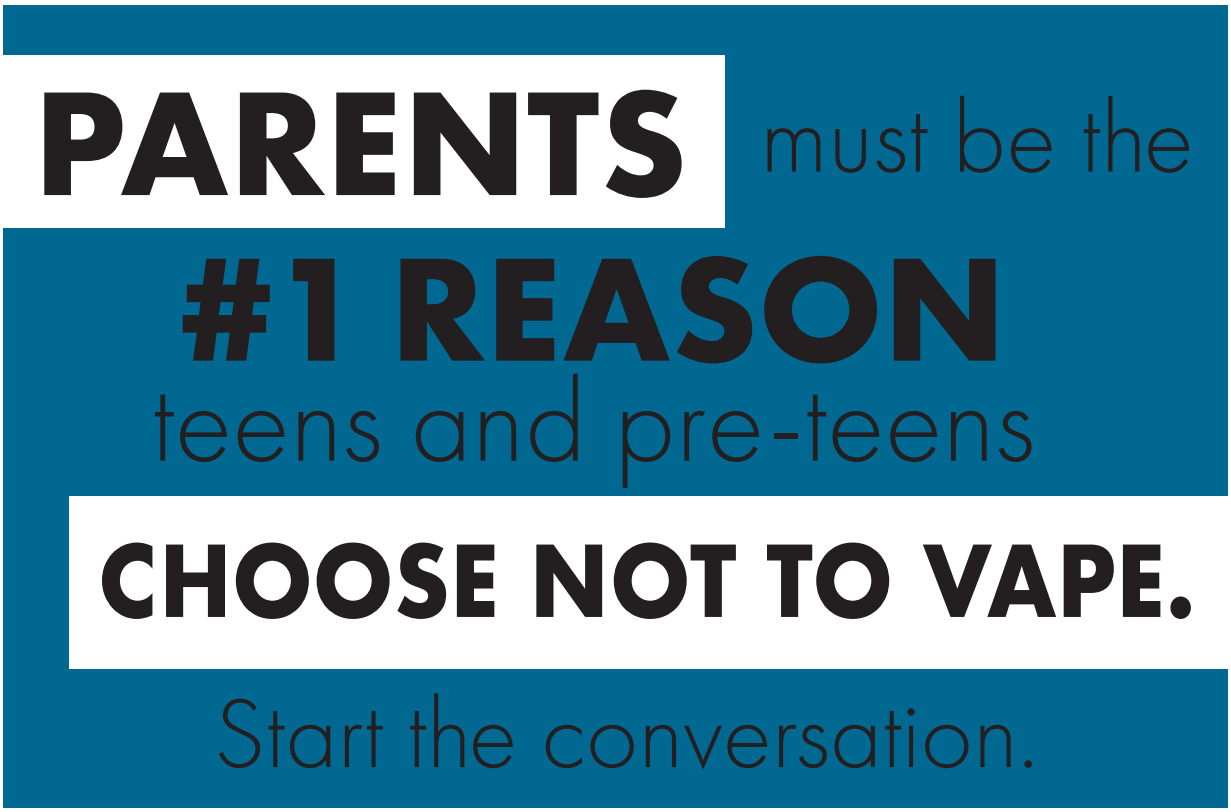
In a proactive effort to combat the rising trend of youth vaping, GMCS has established a dedicated Anti-Vaping Task Force. This comprehensive initiative aims to safeguard student health and well-being through a multi-faceted approach involving education, prevention, and intervention.

District-Wide Social Media Campaign the Anti-Vaping Task Force will spearhead a district-wide social media campaign designed to raise awareness about the dangers of vaping. Utilizing engaging graphics, informative videos, and impactful messages, the campaign will target students, parents, and the broader community. Posts will highlight health risks associated with vaping and provide resources for quitting.

Educational Resources and Curriculum Integration In collaboration with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) "Next Legends" and "The Real Cost" campaigns, GMCS will provide curriculum and educational resources to parents, students, and teachers. These materials will be incorporated into classroom lessons and made accessible through the district's website. Teachers and principals will also receive support in integrating anti-vaping content into school activities and discussions.



Vape devices currently on the market.



Installation of Vape Detection Devices To deter vaping on school grounds, GMCS will install advanced Bull Horns vape detection devices in restrooms across all middle and high schools. These devices detect vape emissions and instantly notify school security, enabling swift intervention and reinforcing a safe, vape-free environment.

STOPit App for Anonymous Reporting The district will also promote the STOPit app, a free and anonymous online reporting tool that empowers students to report bullying, cyber abuse, and other inappropriate behaviors. By providing a safe and confidential platform, GMCS encourages students to speak up and contribute to a supportive school climate.

SNAPSA Strategic Networks Advocates for Suicide and Substance Abuse The Mckinley County SNAPSA Coalition will be providing educational seminars and presentations to GMCS high school and middle school students focusing on vape prevention.

Jacob Stokes, Director of Hearing Authority and Personnel is the committee chair for the Vape Task Force. Stokes commented, “We have taken into consideration information we have gathered through referrals, observation and stakeholder input, and lasered in on strategies to promote safety and wellness for our students.”

GMCS invites parents, students, and community members to join the fight against youth vaping by staying informed and supporting this vital initiative. For more information and resources, visit the district’s website or follow GMCS on social media.

MCKINLEY ACADEMY

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

FOR FALL 2025 SEMESTER

Enrollment is open to all current 8th - 11th grade students

Deadline to apply:
July 09, 2025

APPLY NOW!



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) Transportation Department is dedicated to ensuring student safety with a well-equipped fleet and highly trained staff. With nearly 140 buses in operation, each vehicle is outfitted with cameras to monitor and enhance security.



GMCS Bus Driver welcoming a student passenger.

Every GMCS bus driver holds a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and is a certified professional driver. In addition to their driving credentials, all drivers are CPR and First Aid certified, ensuring they are prepared for emergencies.

To maintain safety standards, drivers conduct thorough pre- and post-trip safety inspections of their buses. They also implement seating charts and have evacuation plans in place to manage student safety effectively.

Quinton Tso, the Transportation Safety Officer, emphasizes the importance of training and preparation. He states, "Don't learn safety by accident! We stress the importance of learning safety to avoid the accident!"

In the event of an emergency

where evacuation is required through the Standard Response Protocol, the Transportation Department will play a key role in reunification. In conjunction with the schools and community safety partners, evacuation and reunification drills are conducted. Tso said, "We have plans in place and are ready to execute them if needed."

Through continuous training and stringent safety protocols, GMCS Transportation remains committed to providing a secure and reliable environment for all students.

A COORDINATED COMMUNITY EFFORT

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) has developed strong partnerships with local and regional law enforcement and emergency response agencies. Collaborating closely with the McKinley County Office of Emergency Management, the McKinley County Sheriff Department, the Gallup Police Department, the Navajo Nation Police Department, and the New Mexico State Police, has helped GMCS to strengthen and improve its safety protocols and emergency preparedness. These partnerships ensure coordinated responses to potential threats and emergencies, enhancing the district's ability to provide a secure learning environment. Each agency plays an essential and valued role in protecting GMCS schools. From implementing safety drills to responding swiftly during emergencies, their expertise and support are crucial to the district's comprehensive safety measures. GMCS deeply appreciates the dedication and collaboration of these agencies, recognizing their significant impact in maintaining a safe and secure atmosphere for all students, staff, and families.



Teachers and Staff lining up students during a reunification drill at Lincoln Elementary.

MEET ZELLE: McKinley County Sheriff's Office's Newest (and Furriest) Deputy



K-9 Zelle

Name: *Zelle (but you can call me Officer Z)*
Breed: German Shepherd
Age: 3 years young
Handler: Deputy Melanie Padilla
Partnered Since: 3 months ago, and we've been inseparable ever since
Current Assignment: D.A.R.E. Program & School Visits
Special Skills: Bite work, obedience, teaching humans how to make good choices.

Q: *Zelle, welcome to the force! How are you liking your new role in McKinley County?*
Zelle: *Thank you! I'm loving it. I get to work every day, ride in a patrol car, sniff out fun, and now—I get to hang out with students and help teach them important life skills. Plus, I get belly rubs from like 50 students a day.*
Q: *What's your partnership with Deputy Padilla like?*
Zelle: *She's awesome! Super smart, calm under pressure, and she gives me treats almost every time I ask. She's been an officer for a long time, but she's new to the McKinley County Sheriff's Office and to handling a K-9… so I'm training her. It's going well—she learns fast.*
Q: *What does a typical day look like for you two?*
Zelle: *We're together 24/7—like, literally. I ride with her, sleep near her, train with her, and even help her pick out snacks. We do daily training to keep my skills sharp, and now we're spending a lot of time in schools for the D.A.R.E. program. I love the attention, and she loves how excited the kids get.*
Q: *You used to be a bite dog, right?*
Zelle: *Yep. I used to do serious bite work with another team—chasing suspects, helping with high-risk calls, all the adrenaline stuff. Now I'm learning how to be a bit gentler… most of the time. But don't worry—I still look intimidating when I need to.*
Q: *What do you enjoy most about your job now?*
Zelle: *Easy. The kids. They ask the best questions and always want to know if I like snacks (yes), if I can do tricks (yes), and if I'm faster than their gym teacher (double yes). And I get to show them that police dogs aren't scary—we're here to help.*
Q: *Any message you want to share with the students?*
Zelle: *Stay drug-free, work hard, and always be kind. Also, if you see me in the hallway, give me a smile—but ask my handler before you pet me. I'm a working dog, but I'm also a softie.*
Q: Last question—*favorite off-duty activity?*
Zelle: *Naps. Big, glorious, sprawled-out-like-a-starfish naps. And chewing on squeaky toys while staring into Deputy Padilla's soul until she laughs.*
Keep an eye out for Deputy Padilla and K-9 Zelle at a school near you. They're the perfect team—one teaching the lessons, and the other making them unforgettable.

QR CODES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS:



iloveuguys



Alice Training



FEMA



Crisis Prevention



Stop the Bleed



Verkada



Evolv



Gaggle

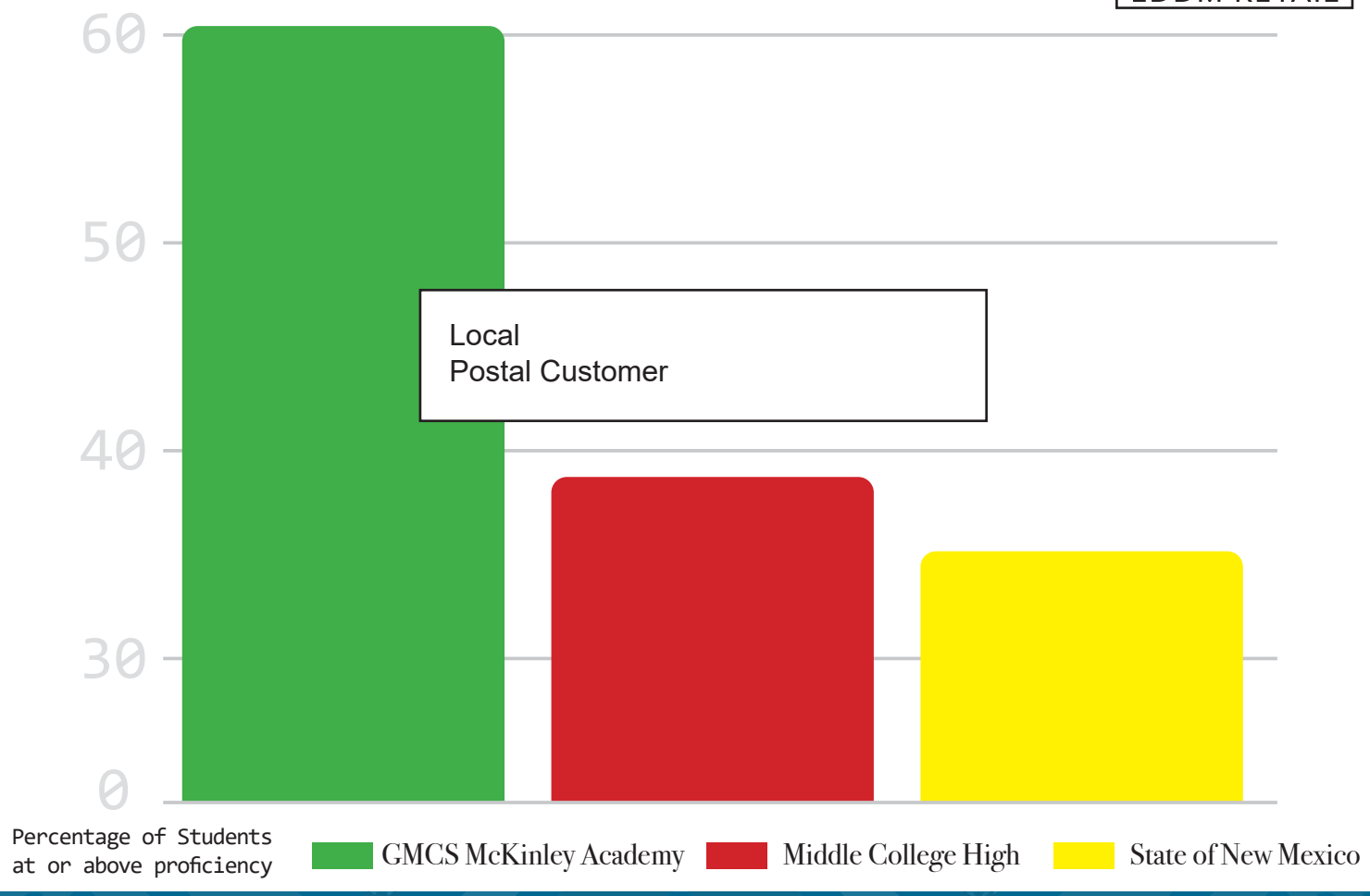


Stop it!

READING

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
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EMPOWERING OUR FUTURE

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