

ELEVATE

NOVEMBER 2025 | ISSUE 8

Celebrating Academic Growth and Excellence



GALLUP-McKINLEY
COUNTY SCHOOLS



4



16

In This Issue

- 4 GMCS Board Scholars on the Rise
- 16 Serving Up Success:
GMCS Volleyball
- 18 Honoring Leadership and Culture
- 22 Investing in Our Students:
GMCS's CAT Simulators



22



GALLUP-McKINLEY
COUNTY SCHOOLS

ELEVATE

NOVEMBER 2025
ISSUE 8

640 Boardman Avenue
Gallup, NM 87301

PUBLISHER

GALLUP-MCKINLEY
COUNTY SCHOOLS

EDITOR

JVANNA HANKS

WRITER

KATHY POLICH
JVANNA HANKS

PHOTOGRAPHERS

JENNIFER BACA
KATHY POLICH

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

NAOMI CHEE

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

JENNIFER BACA

*Front Cover: Graphic depicting growth of
GMCS Board Scholars from 249 to 1099
awards.*

*Back Cover: 2023-24 Board Scholar
Recipients receive their awards from
Turpen Elementary.*

Celebrate
**NATIVE
AMERICAN
HERITAGE
MONTH**

NOVEMBER

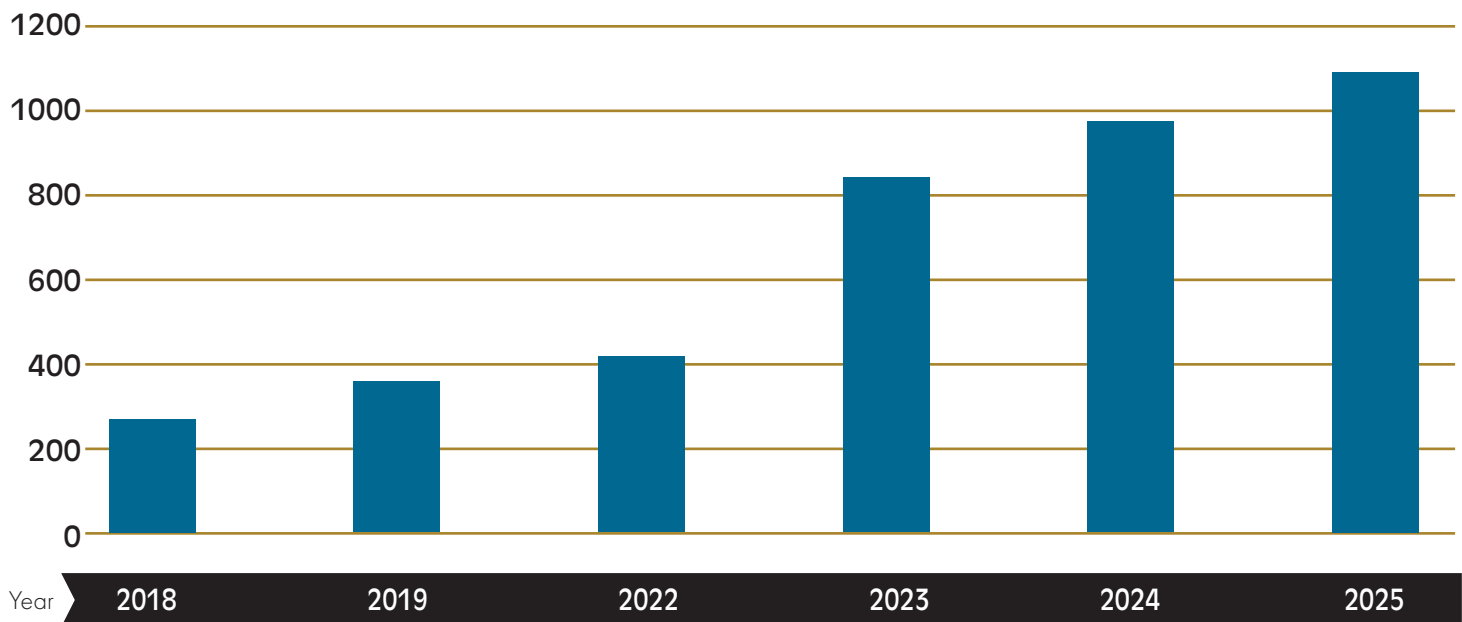


GMCS Board Scholars

Gallup-McKinley County Schools is proud to recognize the tremendous growth of our Board Scholars program. Since 2018, the number of students excelling in ELA, Math, and Science has increased steadily, with totals rising from 249 scholars in 2018 to more than **1,090** in 2025. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our students have demonstrated remarkable resilience and achievement, reflecting the hard work of our educators, families, and community. This growth highlights our ongoing commitment to academic excellence and preparing every student for future success.

Number of
Awards

Board Scholars through the years



No Data for the years 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Total Awards Given

GMCS Board Scholars on the Rise:

A Decade of Growth and Purpose

Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) is proud to celebrate the growing number of Board Scholar awards—students recognized for academic excellence by the GMCS Board of Education. This year, 1,090 board scholar awards were earned by GMCS students, reflecting the districts continued commitment to student success. Over the past seven years, the number of Board Scholar awards has risen more than 400%, highlighting the district’s sustained focus on academic achievement.

The increased number of GMCS Board Scholar awards is no accident. Over the past nine years, GMCS has transformed itself through intentional action—focusing on the needs of students, creating equity in educational opportunities, empowering staff, and ensuring the quality of instruction in every classroom. This transformation has been supported by new programs, policies, and practices designed to help students and families thrive.

While the GMCS community faces social, economic, and geographic challenges, district leadership remains steadfast in its belief that by focusing on our diverse strengths, we can provide every student the opportunity to become a self-reliant, productive citizen ready to compete locally and globally. Everything that we do is to ensure that every student in our district can be successful.

The work at GMCS is centered in core values—The Whole Child, Cultural Diversity, Excellence, Prosperity,

Community Engagement, and Equity, Equality, and Access—not just in words, but in consistent, measurable action.

The Whole Child

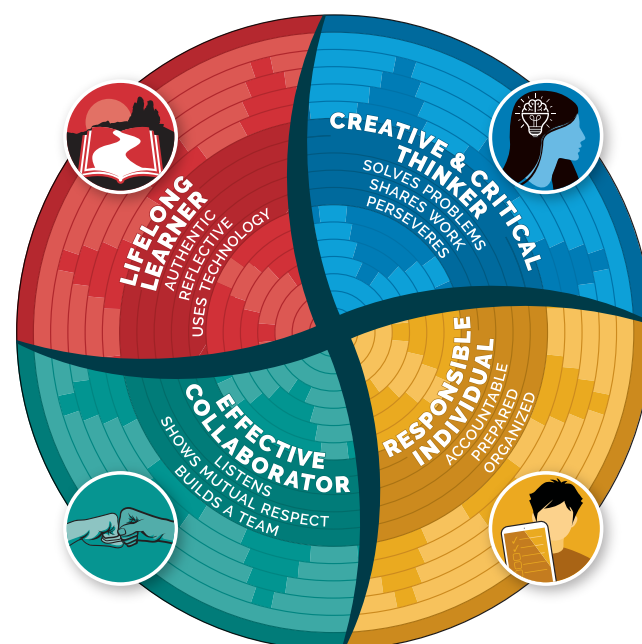
At GMCS, supporting a student’s full academic, social-emotional, and physical development is essential. GMCS’s “Whole Child” approach ensures that every student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. This vision is reflected in initiatives that strengthen well-being, build confidence, and promote empathy and community connection.

GMCS has ensured that all schools, at the same grade level, are teaching the same standards at the same time to ensure that students who are highly mobile within GMCS continue to learn the same content. GMCS has also invested in teacher supports including the following: standards aligned assessments, classroom level supplies so they do not have to pay out of pocket, free printing of educational materials, exemplar lesson plans by subject aligned to state standards and at the high school level lesson plans have college and career learning opportunities embedded in the plans. This, in addition to multiple professional development opportunities, has helped us to ensure our educational staff are prepared to deliver a quality educational experience to every student.

GMCS has also provided training and support to our counseling and educational staff to help meet the many social

and emotional needs of our students. Empowering our students to make positive choices makes school safer for all. GMCS has also created programs like Teen Court, D.A.R.E, the Vape Task Force, Middle School Bike Clubs, free admission to all GMCS athletic events, and appropriate use of technology to help students to be responsible, learn how to self-regulate and promote digital citizenship. In addition to these programs, GMCS has recently redesigned the student experience for middle school students and sixth grade students. Sixth grade students are being prepared for the challenges and independence of middle schools, and middle school students are being provided more individualized attention as they begin to choose their college, career and civic pathways. These are a few examples of the intentional, multi-pronged activities for supporting students' social and emotional learning which have helped to dramatically reduce discipline referrals.

GMCS also values parental and guardian involvement in their students' educational experience. GMCS works hard to strengthen academic partnerships between families and the classroom by utilizing positive interactions with every student and their family. GMCS Student-led conferences are intended to encourage students to take accountability and responsibility for their learning. Giving a student the opportunity to present their own progress to parents builds confidence and communication skills, both critical components of the GMCS Graduate profile. Additionally, these conferences strengthen partnerships between students, parents, and teachers. They provide all stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the student's educational experience and challenges a student may face. Building these relationships is essential to ensuring trust and continuous communication.



Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is one of GMCS's greatest strengths. GMCS celebrates and integrates the cultural backgrounds of its students into the educational experience through curriculum, festivals, and partnerships. This includes bringing in many different types of support to help students find relevance in the instructions they receive.

A shining star with GMCS is our Heritage Language and Culture Department. The GMCS HLC and Instructional team has developed a first-of-its-kind Navajo Language and Culture curriculum with the goal of helping to preserve Navajo language and culture. In educational interactions, a well-prepared environment successfully intertwines with the students' experiences, interactions, and academics fostering students' love of learning and inviting students in. GMCS has incorporated wonderful shifts in our instruction, curriculum, and pacing to show the use and learning of the Navajo Language embedding the cultural teachings of the Diné Way of Life. In

response to these investments, GMCS students, particularly Native American students, have shown significant growth in proficiency, demonstrating the impact of culturally responsive education.

Dr. Ophelia M. Sanchez, Director of Cultural Education, shared, “Many of us and our students no longer speak our Diné language, though we may still understand it. While cultural teachings remain, the true strength, meaning, and wisdom of our Diné identity can only be fully expressed through our language. Culture and language are inseparable; they are deeply connected and cannot exist without each other. Our work in language revitalization is vital—once lost, a language takes generations to restore. As language warriors, we are leading this effort to preserve and pass on the Diné language to future generations, who will become the leaders, elders, and ancestors of tomorrow.”

Excellence

GMCS’s pursuit of excellence is rooted in the belief that every student can succeed. GMCS is committed to providing every student with a high-quality, comprehensive educational experience. It is a holistic philosophy that encompasses far more than just high-test scores, focusing on developing students’ academic skills, character, and well-being, so they are prepared for a successful future. Excellence is inseparable from equity. Achieving excellence requires providing all students with the resources, instruction, and support they need to succeed. Providing district wide guidance as well as support is essential in ensuring every student has an equitable opportunity at GMCS.

This commitment to excellence has helped our students shine. In person, graduation rates now exceed state averages. While

we are proud of this statistic, we also want to be sure our students are ready for the next steps in their lives. GMCS leads the state in College, Career, and Civic Readiness, preparing students not only for graduation but for success in life beyond high school. In elementary school, students begin to explore different types of careers and get to hear from industry-level speakers. In middle school, students begin taking employability skills, another GMCS developed curriculum, and they learn more about what they want to do in their futures through field trips and other opportunities.

In high school, students have the opportunity to join a program of study, take dual credit courses, or join our early college high school. Over 95% of high school students participate in Career Pathway programs, more than 600 high school students are enrolled in our early college high program with the opportunity to receive an associate’s degree in addition to a high school diploma, our civic readiness opportunity allows student to explore military, police, EMT and other opportunities.

Our students’ experiences don’t stop in the classroom. GMCS has also created a paid internship program for our high school students. GMCS is utilizing state funds to pay our students to intern at local businesses, governments and within the district. These opportunities allow students to utilize employability skills they learned throughout secondary schooling and workforce responsibility. GMCS also pays for students to participate in local, State and National competitions like Business Professionals of America, Skills USA, Career and Technical Student Organizations, and HOSA-Future Health Professionals to name a few.

Prosperity

Prosperity at GMCS means investing in both people and purpose. GMCS understands that empowering staff and students creates sustainable growth and opportunity.

Investing in our students starts with our most important resource, our staff. In addition to the training, support, supplies and services we have provided to staff, GMCS has implemented the largest salary increases in the district's history, ensuring competitive pay and stability for employees. In addition to these raises, GMCS has offered retention incentives, ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 annually, to acknowledge the dedication of every staff member. GMCS also offers the best benefits package in New Mexico, attracting and retaining top educators. This includes paying 90% of insurance premiums, housing for our county school educators, and additional pay for our specially licensed staff. This combined with dedicated resources, training, and focus on customer service shows our commitment to ensuring our staff's success.

GMCS believes that no student should pay a fee for quality education. This is seen in our commitment to providing school supplies, waving fees to participate in clubs and classes, providing paid internships, providing quality technology, and paying fees for academic associations like National Honor Society. Our students face many challenges and ensuring that they have access to top-tier instruction, experiences, and opportunities helps them to see a prosperous future.

Equity, Equality, and Access

GMCS's mission to ensure equal opportunity for every student is reflected in its work to remove barriers—financial, geographical, and systemic. GMCS Board

and leadership have fought relentlessly to ensure opportunities for our students.

GMCS is a lead plaintiff in the successful Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit which has put more than \$1 Billion into public education in New Mexico. This has created more opportunities to help our most at-risk students. In addition to the successful litigation with Yazzie-Martinez, GMCS staff successfully overturned the State's taking of Impact Aid. The return of Impact Aid has provided the District with up to \$24 Million more per year, from 2020 on.

These courageous fights have helped GMCS to secure vital funding for Native American education, improved the resources we are able to provide to our students, helped to implement college and career opportunities, and provided raises for our staff. Additionally, these funds have allowed GMCS to provide all students with supplies, waiving fees, providing technology, the opportunity to enroll in early college high opportunities, and Career Pathway opportunities.

GMCS has been working to receive Capital Outlay funding to improve our school facilities. GMCS has received more than \$300 million through our Capital Outlay litigation to improve facilities and learning environments district wide. The district has upgraded 9 school heating and cooling systems, is making investments in drainage and paving and has provided upgraded security.

The District is currently building an unprecedented number of new school facilities, including Red Rock Elementary, Tohatchi High School, Crownpoint Middle School, Crownpoint High School, Thoreau High School, McKinley Technical School, Navajo Pine High School, Gallup High School, and a new McKinley Academy Facility. GMCS is also remodeling David Skeet Elementary School and providing housing at that location.

The District has also made transportation investments, including small buses and all-wheel-drive vehicles, to ensure safe, equitable access to education for students in remote areas. We have purchased vehicles for all school site liaisons to help reduce attendance barriers and provide materials directly to chapter houses and homes. Our Transportation department is the backbone of our Career Pathway and Career Technical Opportunities, transporting students every day across the county to colleges, career tech programs, and internships. Our staff drive more than 2 million miles every year!

Community Engagement

GMCS recognizes that success comes from partnership. GMCS continues to deepen its connection with families, local organizations, and tribal communities through open communication and collaboration. Our students need all our communities to support, mentor, and encourage them to success.

GMCS has expanded the information we provide to our communities, parents, and staff. GMCS provides regular, transparent updates and seeks community input through surveys and advisory councils. Our Community, Budget, Parent, and Student surveys provide thousands of responses to help us improve our educational services. GMCS also has Advisory School Councils (ASC) and Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) providing a direct line between families and district decision-makers.

Local businesses and governmental entities have also stepped up to help our students. The District engages with these entities to help provide internship opportunities for our students. These mentors help students learn specific and soft skills to help them succeed. Law enforcement partners are helping implement our Safety Response Protocol and providing student training

and support to help us remain drug and alcohol free. Students' interactions with community members give them the chance to see success in their communities and form bonds with local leaders.

Looking Ahead

As GMCS celebrates the accomplishments of its students and staff, GMCS remains focused on continuous improvement. The progress of the past decade proves that strategic investment, equity, and empowerment work—and that the best is yet to come.

Every student, every school, and every success story adds up to something greater: a community united in the belief that education transforms lives.

As the number of GMCS Board Scholars continues to rise—reaching 1,090 this year—the district's vision of excellence, equity, and cultural strength becomes even more evident. Superintendent Mike Hyatt reflected, "The incredible progress our students have made over the past decade is a direct reflection of the commitment, courage, and heart of the entire GMCS community. Our students are achieving levels never seen before thanks to the strong, unwavering support of our Board of Education. Their vision and investment in our students, staff, and programs have made this transformation possible. The success of our Board Scholars and the academic growth we see across GMCS are not by chance, but they are the result of years of intentional work by a dedicated staff and a School Board that believes deeply in our students and their potential. I am truly honored to be part of this work with my administrative team and to serve alongside so many devoted individuals who put students first every single day."

2024-2025

GMCS Board Scholars

THIRD

Rose Acosta
Hazel Bachman
Chase Bahe
Paityn Bebo
Tyberius Begay
Chandler Begaye
Noah Benally
Mackenzey Benjamin
Albertina Bitsuie
Tyla Bowman
Willow Bowman
Lyla Bradley
Myka Therese Cagalitan
Sueisen Castaneda
Jayceon Charley
Ismael Chavez
Yanabah Chewey
Ray Chinchillas II
Isaiah Christian
Adeline Cole
Samuel Colon
Armando Contreras-Amador
Adam Cordova
Hayden Curley
Ariah David
Alexander Dela Cruz
Ian Ebright
Nicholas Echeverria
Cruz Escajeda
Ryan Escamilla
Gage Garcia
Willow Garrison
Julia Goodwin
A'marion Grenier
Charlie Groten
Briara Hannah
Samuel Haswood
Colton Hillyer
Taro Hoover
Keshawn Hoskie
Reeham Illafe

Christopher Irvin
Ayanna James
Jayden Jim
Terrelyn Johnson
Kaleb Johnson-Higdon
Willow Joiner
Juniper Jones
Reuben Kemble
Jack Langsam
Johnnie Largo
Amaziah Lee
Noel Lee
Tessa Lee
Hayden Livingston
Lael Long
Nabahe Manygoats
Aria Martinez
Malaya Martinez
Elorah McCaleb
Isaac Mingus
Evelyn Mohrhauser
Timia Molina
Raphael Murillo
Kian Muskett
Akaiden Naswood
Santiago Ortiz
Lj Peterson
Alanna Quintana
Emily Ramos
Dion Rascon
Penelope Rascon
Romy Rascon
Skyler Rodriguez
Johndavid Salinas
Alexia Sanchez
Leia Sandoval
KazCidy Smith
Daniel Stokes
Josiah Swan
Umme Sadia Tabassum
Abby Terrazas
Julia Thomas

Laniah Thomas
Hunter Touchine
Leviathon Tso
Liam Tsosie
McKannon Tsosie
Bailey Vasquez
River Verburg
Da'na Waseta
Abel Washee
Dallas Watchman
Robert Welborne
Wyatt Whitney
Ricki Williams
Aiden Willie
Xaiden Willie
Kahlianna Wright
Angel Yazzie
Ashleigh Yazzie
Brody Yazzie
Karriann Yazzie
Raymiah Yoe

FORTH

Eugene Alexeev
Aalyiah Arreguin
Cree Ashley
Stevieray Ashley
Ruqayyah Ayeshe
Owen Bebo
Luciana Becenti
Destinee Begay
Enzo Begay
Hailee Begay
Jezrahiah Begay
Luke Begay
Sophia Begaye
Ayiana Benally
Zoey Benally
Esther Bernal
Casen Berry
Juniper Billiman
Zakk Borbon

Jocelyn Cadman
Liam Cadman
Hailey Calvin
Sriyansh Chaudhary
Emilio Chavez
Kaylie Chee
Zacheriah Chee
Laylah Cisco
Eli Clark
Rebecca Collins
Matthew Connell
Samuel Connell
Naabaahii Cordova
Quinoah Davis
Jeremiah Desiderio
Rhiannon Duboise
Dezmah Eddie
Finnegan Foley
Harley Foster
Cody Francis
Quincy Gail
Marrcel Gleason
Aubriella Gonzales
Kayleigh Gordo
Braxton Goseyun
Meeka Grey
Audrey Hancey
Jayden Hankins
James Harmon
C.J. Harrison-Delgado
Raining Haskie
Keion Hayes
Hope Hellekson
Royce Holyan
Calia Hoskie
Milo Hosteen
Manar Hussen
Rayam Illafe
George Jackson
Arica James
Trayden James
Mariana Jaramillo

Taraji Jim
Madison Johnson
Deondre Jones
Paige Kahn
Shakila Kelewood-Clair
Ashlynn Lawson
Keanu Lee
Mykailo Lee
Paula Lee
Crystal Leslie
Cheyenne Lingayat
Kyle Littlefield
Colter Littleman
Owen Livingston
Payton Livingston
Yalaina Livingston
Peyton Long
Jacob Lynch
James Mahooty
Miles Mallette
Marc Jehan Manuel
Charlie Martine
Zeddidiyah Martinez
Tegan McCray
Wyatt Miller
Kiara Mitchell
Phoenix Montague
Kaleb Mullins
Julia Murphy
Cayden Nash
Delilah Nevarez Duarte
Deeondra Nez
Ariel Parks
Gilbert Parra
Tyler Pat
Celena Perez
Sadie Perez-Desiderio
Ceo Peterson
Daylen Peterson
Orion Pierce
Javen Pinto
Chase Plummer
Elijah Plummer
Quentin Pouges
Elena Ray
Anthony Rocha
Lucia Ruehl

Brynlee Rybacki
Trinity Sam
Avery Sanchez
MyeAnna Sanchez
Isabel Sandoval
Lilliana Sandoval
Monroe Saucedo
Athena Sisti
Aurora Smith
Riley Stacey
Darcine Stevenson
Alivya Succo
Maleak Tapia
Logan Tennison
Carmichael Thomas
Connor Tom
Nathaniel Tom
Octavia Torrez
Jet Tree
Bill Truong
Kaitlyn Tso-Henio
Abigail Tsosie
Darius Tully
Isidro Vasquez
Danielle Velasco
Harlie Villanueva
Jaylissa Viola
Harper Watson
Titan Whitman
Evelyn Whitney
Ceria Williams
Leyaniyana Willie
Maggie Willie-Nez
Amia Yazzie
Carter Yazzie
Easton Yazzie
Kaleb Yazzie
Kaylin Yazzie
Keleigh Yazzie
Niah Yazzie
Shaden Yazzie
Miles Yellowhorse

FIFTH
Jinan Abbad
Brielle Alonzo
Faith Alonzo-Chavez

Jb Antez
Ethan Apachee
Amaya Ashley
Nevaeh Becenti
Brooke Begay
Connor Begaye
Noah Begaye
Cael Belone
Akira Benally
Nakoah Benally
Mykal Billy
Bryden Bitsilly
Hannah Bitsuie
Logan Blackgoat
Jace Boggs
Aidan Philip Bokingkito
Maliya Briggs
Susan Brown
Dominic Burns
Reign Capillo
Jayden Charley
Blake Charlie
Huthlezy Ciocco
Audrey Clyde
Evette Cole
Seleste Collymore
Jacob Dallas
Megan Dejolie
Giada Deweese
Mieah Diaz
Connor Dineyazhe
Deva Dodson
Elena Dolfin
Lania Duboise
Jade Ebright
Ashtrid Elkins
Kaytie Ellis
Kylie Escajeda
Juelz Estrada
Trinity Fields
Alexandria Francisco
Quinntinna Francisco
Amarile Garcia
Penelope Garcia
Vanessa Garcia
Mason Gee-Samora
Mason Gibbons

Jazmyne Gill
Abigail Gonzales
Jacob Gonzales
Aubrae Halwood
Alonzo Hernandez
Jaelynn Herrera
Dylan Holyan
Dawnrae Hosteen
Kayley Hubbard
Janay Jennings
Kaylee Jones
Sanna Jones
Zamarious Jones
Nicole Larios
Kaitlyn Larsen
Cassius Lee
Julia Lee
Colton Livingston
Hunter Livingston
Joel Livingston
Tyrell Livingston
Eli Lovato
April Lynch
Allee Manuelito
Jaliyah Martinez
Nicholas Martinez
Kevin Martinez-Whiterock
Ameerah Matthews
Dallas Mazon
Shyne McCabe
Hope Mccarthy
Arianna McGraw
Sophia Mejia
Manuel Montoya
Cyri Mooney
Anthony Morales
Allison Morris
Callyopi Nez
Stanford Nez
Frances Norzagaray
Sophia Beatriz Ognayon
Madison Olivar
Rafael Angelo Paz
Annabelle Pena Steele
Damon Perez-Desiderio
Paige Peterson
Laurence Pimentel

Elias Pinto
 Thea Ponce
 Phillip Ramirez
 Genesis Robles
 Jayden Romero-Daniel
 Dominick Sarracino
 Madison Skeets
 Mia Solis
 Charles Soto Iv
 Brentley Spencer
 Cannon Stoops
 Ammon Stratton
 Ralph Swan
 Karyssa Tan
 Michael Taylor
 Maribel Terrazas Hernandez
 Sonia Thomas
 John Thrasher
 Anika Tom
 Nevaeh Tom
 Khloe Torres
 Lexie Tsalate
 Jacob Valdez
 Hunter Vargas
 Aria Ward
 Jase West
 Tiara Whitman
 Trent Whitman
 Tuff Williams
 Jordan Wilson
 Aengus Wommack
 Aubrey Yazzie
 Ethan Yazzie
 Kendall Yazzie
 Kwan Yazzie
 Vayda Yazzie

SIXTH

Lilianne Arconeda
 Isabella Arreguin
 Gabriella Bebo
 Connor Begay
 Dacie Begay
 Daysha Begay
 Deondre Benally
 Eli Benally
 Makaliah Benally
 Drae Blanco

Lillian Castanon
 Cooper Charley
 Dakota Charley
 Amias Chavez
 Leyah Chavez
 Adelina Chavez-Teran
 Miya Chee
 Chloe Clawson
 Everett Cox
 Myles Curley
 Hannah Delara
 Matthaius Dennison
 Jaxon-Carter Deskins
 Katherine Dickens
 Dillinger Embry-White
 Cheyenne Emerson
 Sofia Flores-Cruz
 Barron Fuchs
 Yuri Garcia
 Aiden Grant
 Micah Groten
 Adriano Guerrero
 Layla Gutierrez
 Jakyn Haley
 Serenity Herndon
 Trinity Herndon
 Emma Huckabay
 Jessiah Hudson
 Gunner Hunt
 Royandria Jewelryman
 Alec Johnson
 Alexandria Johnson
 Daisy Landry
 Marley Lastyona
 Jordynn Leech
 Kayiden Leekya
 Rhyann Lementino
 Vera Lemmon
 Micah Livingston
 Lauryn Lopez
 Devaye Lozano
 Noah Lucero
 Jesus Magdaleno
 Paul Mallon
 Leona Malone
 Jazelle Martinez
 Aleshanae Matthews
 Matthew Maynerich

Noah Maynerich
 Dakota Morris
 Abby Mundo
 Cayvin New
 Kaprice Nez
 Izabella Nunez
 Kayden Orillie
 Danny Pixley
 Steven Ponce
 Catalia Poulin
 Olivia Quiroga
 Tyrese Randles
 Giselle Reyes
 Paisley River
 Alexia Romero
 Violet Rubio
 Gage Salazar
 Dravon Sam
 Kyler Sam
 Diego Sanchez
 Jonnie Sanchez
 Julian Sanchez
 Mateo Sanchez
 David Saucedo
 April Shorty
 Alyssa Sisneros
 Kazee Smith
 Jacob Stewart
 Audey Taylor
 Michael Teran
 Juan Torres
 Casiah Tsosie
 Grace Tsosie
 Edy Varela
 Payton Vigil
 Raiden Washburn
 Elana Watson
 Dashiel Whitney
 Aiden Wilber
 Remy Wiley
 Nickolas Wilson
 Ezri Wright
 Jaxon Yazzie
 Nevaeh Yazzie
 Jocelyn Zarate

SEVENTH

Mark Acosta

Hadeel Aldhooh
 Aaliyah Alexander
 Brayden Alonzo
 Victor Alvarado-Soto
 Serenity Ancira
 Ema Anderson
 Caleb Arviso
 Hunter Avery
 Star Bahe
 Io Zephaniah Balagbagan
 Monet Baldonado-Bentley
 Wesam Baste
 Rayen Becenti
 Aviah Begay
 Ethan Begay
 Faith Begay
 Hayden Begay
 Isaac Begay
 Montaya Begay
 Brandon Belmont
 Aiyana Benally
 Keanu Benally
 Noel Benally
 Abbylee Berry
 Deliliah Bowie
 Raileigh Bowman
 Christian Brown
 Jacy Brown
 Matilda Bryant
 Rellian Joy Capillo
 Danika Carey
 Julian Chacon
 Autumn Charley
 Elias Charley
 Luna Chee
 Brauviyo Chischilly
 Tempestt Coby
 Ishana Colahar
 Brianna Daniels
 Scarlett Day Chief
 Aubrianna Dean
 Vanessa Descheny
 Harmony Dooley
 Eli Embrey
 Genesis Escarcega
 Brydin Etsitty
 Adela Evans
 Karl Ferreras

Baylee Fisher
 Brandon Francisco
 Myron Francisco
 Trevor Franklin
 Gideon Gallegos
 Dakodah Gandert
 Christine Garcia
 Lyla Garcia-Sanchez
 Maison George
 Ofelia Gonzales
 Marian Grassie
 Silas Gregory
 Austin Harrison
 Ryelea Hewnneke
 Rosalee Hickey
 Olivia Hunkus
 Jaykobe Jaye
 Sophia Jeffress
 Desean Jennings
 Erwin Joe
 Lucius Johnson
 Aaliyah Kemp
 Logan Kindred
 Kaylee King
 Miles King
 Niyah Lambson
 Shanoah Largo
 Arum Lee
 Denaliah Lee
 Harper Lee
 Lilly Lee
 Troy Lincoln
 Sydney Livingston
 Liadan Long
 Ivy Lopez
 Kaitlyn Mann
 Jennifer Manson
 Marion James Manuel
 Harlow Manuelito
 Sikoya Mark
 Kerri Martin
 Kenlie Martine
 Shane Martine-Mescal
 Iverin Martinez
 Sadye Martinez
 Seth Martinez
 Sawyer Matkovich
 Owen McClelland

Calionna McCoy
 Sean Mcpherson
 Kia Mike
 Aja Morgan
 Brayden Morgan
 Tyvin Morgan
 James Mortensen
 Bailey Nez
 Tyler Notah
 Tristian Orillie
 Gabryle Ortega
 Anthony Padilla
 Connor Parker
 Presley Peterson
 Kester Pimentel
 Izayah Pinto
 Caleb Plummer
 Yaretzi Ramirez
 Payten Ramone
 Aaron Ray
 Ammon Ray
 Raelynn Redhair
 Xavier Rizzo
 Jeremiah Roman
 Azariah Romero-Daniel
 Adaya Royal
 Arianna Salcido
 Gavin Sarracino
 Skyler Scoopmire
 Calvin Shack
 Mikhail Shikhin
 Xander Silentman
 Christian Silversmith
 Asher Simons
 Belle Smith
 Malachi Starbuck
 Dawson Stewart
 Ivaya Succo
 Michael Swatzell
 Russell Swatzell Lujan
 Aiden Temmer
 Ava Teran
 Chevyleen Thomas
 Logan Thomas
 Della Thompson
 Emery Thompson
 LaRyah Thompson
 Guadalupe Toledo

Chase Tom
 Kenzi Tom
 Kourtney Tom
 Azmi Tottarro
 Tavian Totus
 Sara Touati
 Wes Tsosie
 Madison Tullie
 Roman Turk
 Keisuke Valentino
 Manuel Varela
 Levi Vidales
 Juniah Walking Eagle
 Layla Watson
 Journey Wommack
 Aaron Wood
 Mario Yamutewa
 Issiah Yazzie
 Lyrach Yazzie
 Tauriah Yazzie
 Trish Yazzie
 Raylijah Yoe

EIGHTH

Jaziah Abrigo
 Alexander Alexeev
 Lyla Apachee
 Keira Arviso
 Daisey Astorga
 Mahmoud Ayeshe
 Elizabeth Baker
 Aniyah Barnes
 Kayden Barnhurst
 Jade Bear Eagle
 Arianna Beasley
 Tyius Bebo
 Chloe Becenti
 Clarissa Becenti
 Jacob Becenti
 Luke Begay
 Zerryan Begay
 Anna Belone
 Jace Benally
 Jaelyn Benally
 Phoebe Betom
 Aubrey Billie
 Nevaeh Billie
 Miley Bitsie

Autumn Bitsoi
 Jacob Bitsoie
 Chea Bitsue
 Norrin Blood
 Lucas Bohannon
 Zayden Bond
 Analysia Bonilla
 Jack Boyd
 Raegan Brett
 Darren Brown
 Johnathan Brown
 Summer Brown
 Mrogatien Buan
 Juanito Burrola
 Jade Castillo
 Nayeli Castillo
 Drake Charley
 Nevaeh Charley
 Gabriella Chavez
 Madison Chavez
 Chiron Chee
 Talila Chuyate
 Avery Clawson
 Jaiden Coho
 Peyton Converse
 Deyon Cowboy
 Natalie Curley
 Layla Dajani
 Wynter Dale
 Arianna Damon
 Auryanna David
 Deion David
 Destiny Dawes
 Jaydyn Delgarito
 Leanna Delgarito
 Akkadea Denny
 Kylie Dixon-Skeets
 Sariah Duncan
 David Dyess
 Tajay Edwards
 Molly Ellis
 Esmeralda Escarcega
 Jessica Etcitty
 Tyreiona Etcitty
 Carlee Etsate
 Nasira Fizer
 Rayne Fousek
 Jade Gaddy

Landen Gamet
Ciara Garcia
Milania Garnand
Jaxon Garro-Self
Jaxon Gibbons
Mackenzie Gleason
Shane Gleason
Jaylee Gonzalez
Kaylen Gordo
Marquis Goree
Aaliyah Guerrero
Asia Gutierrez
Natalia Guzman
Griffin Habedank
Ciara Hale
Ryden Hardy
Aden Harrison
Wesley Harrison
Serenity Henio
Landen Henry
McKenzie Henry
Charlie Herbert
Karen Hernandez
Ariyanna Herron
Shalva Hershcopf
Damarion Hooper
Zacharia Hoskie
Ryan James
Tatum James
Anaebelle Jarrott
Dominique Jim
Luka Joe
Jaiden John
Kody John
Landen John
Jaden Johnson
Terell Johnson
Jordan Johnston
Shelby Jones
Izaiah Juan-Yazzie
Keidra Kenneth
McKayla King
Zhelem Kinsel
Ace Kiyite
Joni Kline
Trestan Lambson
Noah Lange

Zoe Lansing
Tinaya Lantana
Teagan Lee
Tiarah Lee
Eliza Lesansee
Haylen Livingston
Rosalina Lopez
Ava Loretto
Donovan Lovato Jr
Estebon Lucero
Dayton Lunn
Zachariah Madrid
Chloe Mallon
Avery Malone
Vanessa Marianito
Andrew Marlowe
Adrian Martinez
Michael Martinez
Melika McCabe
Glenn Mcfadden
Jacob Melikan
Raeanna Mike
Ocean Miller
Jiovani Molina
Aaron Montano
Aiden Morris
Hailey Morris
Robert Mortensen
Raine Christian Murillo
Justin Murphy
Dreamy Nelson
Mauricio Nelson
Caitlynn Nez
Mattheu Nez
Annabella Norzagaray
Maryum Oweis
Autumn Pablo
Jayden Pablo
Elena Pacheco
John Paradise Jr
Azaley Parish
Angel Perez
Turquoise Sky Peshlakai
Chad Peters
Adam Phillips
Arrow Plummer
Luke Pozernick

Savana Prettyweasel
Nathaniel Ramirez
Taio Retan
Gianna Reyes
Landen Rivera
Orion Rogers
Anjelica Rosales
Brayden Rosenberger Koerner
Cheyenne Roybal
Delilah Rubio Perez
Phelony Salazar
Angelina Sanchez
Jesusita Sanchez
Chandler Sandoval
Daniel Sarinana
Caitlin Sarracino
Sebastian Saucedo
Jayden Scott
Nevaeh Scott
Carper Sexton
Jasmine Shirley
Kalenia Shorty
Notah Silversmith
Anthony Situ
Sitarah Smiley
Madison Smith
RaeLee Smith
Ilyana Spencer
Moroni Steele
Shyanne Stygles
Chinmayi Sudharsan
Alayna Tavarez
Chayse Thomas
Lovlie Thompson
Charlexus Tillman
Xavier Todacheeny
Aaliyah Tom
Hailey Tom
Sierra Tom
Waeray Tom
Sariah Tome
Destiny Trimble
Genesis Trujillo
Aaron Tsosie
Elyse Tsosie
Leray Tully
Bear Turk

Daijah Turner
Kealanie Tyquiengco
Jordan Ugarte
Macie Valdez
Samaria Velazco
Layla-Yannahbah Vesper
Carlos Villanueva
Valeria Viramontes
Arianna Wagner Landry
Brooke Welch
Ronan Welch
Riley White
Benver Whitegoat Jr
Eden Williams Gomez
Alexus Willie
Zoey Woody
Cherish Yazzie
Micah Yazzie
Railanda Yazzie
Roshawn Yazzie
Amariss Yoe
Madelyn Zamora

ELEVENTH

Olivia Allen
Alex Azure
Karrah Beckman
Justin Chee
McKinzy Eddie
William Harmon
Alivia Hayes
Chloe Lambson
Zhin Nez
Adam Pozernick
Katherine Starr
Lauryn Trimble
Angelo Tsosie
Srikar Venigalla
Adrianna Yazzie



MCKINLEY ACADEMY

ACCELERATING FUTURES

WWW.GMCS.ORG
505-721-4200

FOR MORE INFORMATION

MCKINLEY ACADEMY IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH ACADEMIC EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM FREE TO ALL GALLUP MCKINLEY COUNTY

If you are interested in gaining college credits while still in high school or earning an associate degree at the same time you graduate from high school, this is the program for you!

We offer dual credit courses through the University of New Mexico and highly rigorous and challenging high school courses. McKinley Academy is located on the UNM-Gallup campus in Calvin Hall.

GET A JUMP START ON A PROMISING FUTURE



Scan QR
for more info



**GALLUP-McKINLEY
COUNTY SCHOOLS**

SERVING UP SUCCESS:

GMCS HOSTS FIRST-EVER ELEMENTARY VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT

Excitement filled the Miyamura High School gym as Gallup-McKinley County Schools hosted its inaugural Elementary Volleyball Tournament—a milestone moment for the district and its youngest athletes.

This year marks the first time volleyball has been offered at the elementary level, and the return of 6th grade to elementary schools. The event brought together every GMCS elementary school for a full day of teamwork, sportsmanship, and community pride. Two courts ran simultaneously as families, friends, and fans packed the

stands to cheer on their players.

The tournament featured two divisions—Gold and Silver brackets—ensuring every team had the chance to shine.

Lawrence Sena, Ed.D., GMCS Director of Athletics, shared how meaningful this new opportunity is for students.

“During the season, the elementary schools are split into three regions,” Sena said. “It was great to see teams face schools outside their region. The atmosphere—with two courts running and a gym full of fans—really gives players

a sense of what high school volleyball will be like.”

He added that seeing the 6th grade programs come to life was especially rewarding.

“It’s nice to see the community come together to cheer on their players and schools,” Sena said.





Samentha Platero, who works alongside Sena in the district athletic department, attended as both staff and proud parent.

“My daughter played in the tournament, and it was really neat to watch,” Platero said. “People came and stayed all day. I saw great sportsmanship and people cheering for teams beyond their own.”



She also noted that the Gallup High School volleyball team helped run the courts and officiate games.

“It was wonderful to see the older players interacting with the younger ones and serving as role models,” she said. Each team played three games throughout the day, showcasing both skill and school spirit.

Gold Bracket Results

1st Place:

Red Rock Elementary

2nd Place:

Del Norte Elementary

3rd Place:

Chee Dodge Elementary

Silver Bracket Results

1st Place:

Stagecoach Elementary

2nd Place:

Catherine A. Miller Elementary

3rd Place:

Tobe Turpen Elementary

The day ended with smiles, high-fives, and a sense of accomplishment across the gym. For GMCS, this first tournament marks just the beginning of what’s sure to be a growing tradition—one that nurtures teamwork, confidence, and a lifelong love for the game.

HONORING LEADERSHIP & CULTURE:

GMCS Celebrates Native American Heritage Month

Throughout November, Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) is proud to celebrate Native American Heritage Month — a time to recognize, honor, and uplift the stories, traditions, and leadership of Native American educators, students, and community members who enrich our schools every day.

Our district spans a region rich in cultural heritage, home to diverse Native communities whose values, languages, and teachings continue to shape the identity and heart of our schools. This month, we shine a spotlight on just a few of our Native American leaders whose dedication and cultural pride inspire students and staff alike.



Olivia Lee,
Principal, David Skeet Elementary

Yá'át'ééh. My name is Olivia Lee, and I am honored to serve as the principal of David Skeet Elementary. I am Diné, Navajo, and proudly carry my clans — White Mountain Apache and Red House of the Rainbow People. These clans remind me of who I am, where I come from, and the responsibility I hold to lead with balance, respect, and compassion.

Growing up within Navajo teachings, I learned the

importance of K'é — our way of showing respect, kinship, and connection to others. That teaching continues to guide my leadership every day. I believe that when we understand our roots, we grow stronger branches. In our school, I want every child to feel that same sense of belonging — that who they are and where they come from matters.

I take great pride in my culture and honor the beauty of all cultures represented in our community. Our diversity is our strength, and through shared stories, language, and traditions, we create a learning environment filled with understanding, love, and purpose.

I've always believed that education has the power to change the trajectory of a child's life. My journey began with a deep passion for helping students feel seen, valued, and capable of success, no matter their background. Over time, that passion grew into a mission — not just to teach students, but to empower teachers and build systems where every child can thrive.

As a principal, I've worked to create schools where social-emotional learning, strong instruction, and community partnerships come together to make a lasting impact. Education became not just my career, but my calling — to build spaces where both students and staff grow into their fullest potential.

The value I want every student to carry with them is resilience — the belief that challenges are not roadblocks, but opportunities to learn and grow. Whether it's through perseverance in academics, showing kindness in difficult moments, or owning mistakes and trying again, resilience builds character. I want students to remember that their effort matters more than perfection and that every setback can become a setup for future success.

Dream boldly and don't let fear or comparison steal your focus. Growth takes time — success is built one choice, one effort, and one mindset at a time. Surround yourself

with people who push you to be better and never forget that your voice, your story, and your actions make a difference. Keep showing up, keep learning, and keep believing that you can become whoever you are meant to be.



**Cora Morris, Assistant
Principal, Kennedy Middle School**

My name is Cora Morris. I am originally from Coyote Canyon, NM. I attended a boarding school from 1st through 6th grade, then transferred into the GMCS school system from 7th–12th grade. I attended Tohatchi Middle School and High School. I received my Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Northern Arizona University, my MA in Mental Health Counseling from Argosy University, and my Ed.S. from the University of New Mexico. I am of the Folded Arms People, born for the Waters-Edge People.

I was inspired to become a teacher while in high school. My band teacher at the time, Mr. Footracer, was the one whom I admired most — and like him, I wanted to become a music teacher. Although I did not become a music teacher, I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Social Studies. I taught in Arizona schools for about eight years and another sixteen years in New Mexico high schools. I recently transitioned into an administrative position in January of 2024. Thankfully, GMCS allowed me the opportunity to be an Assistant Principal at Kennedy Middle School, where I still am today.

One traditional value that I would like my students to carry with them for the rest of their lives is K'é. Through K'é — the acknowledgment of their clans — students are able to know who their family is. Within the school environment, I believe that if students learn not only their own clans but also those of their classmates and teachers, this will create a school environment of respect and honor. This does not only apply to Navajo students but to other tribes and races as well.

I believe that through the implementation of the clan system in their own lives, students will have greater respect for members of their clans. By learning about each other's clans, students learn who their grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, mothers, or fathers are. Even those who do not have clans can still be respected as siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents.

Ask yourself where you want to be in ten years. What career do you want? Where do you want to live? In knowing the answers to those questions, you have created a goal for yourself. Now, every day that you wake up, make choices to attain that goal you have set. You have it in you to achieve this goal. Bear in mind it will take commitment and tenacity on your part — but it is possible. Stay focused.



**Ophelia M. Sanchez, Ed.D.,
Director of Cultural Education**

Yá'át'ééh, shik'éeí dóó shidine'é. Dr. Ophelia M. Sanchez yinishyé. Tabaaha nishłį. Naakái Bashishchiin. Tłógí dashicheii. Naakái dashinalí.

Becoming an educator was never something I originally planned; it happened naturally through my ability to connect with children and being an avid learner myself. With 30 years in education, I am dedicated to ensuring Native American students not only succeed but thrive — showing them they can achieve as much as anyone else, if not more. My goal is to continue to be a leader and mentor, supporting their growth by recognizing their strengths and guiding their learning path. I am here to help both students and teachers meet their goals and reach their full potential.

My uncle was my spiritual leader; he always reminded me to be strong, share my wisdom, but be humble — a strong step with a soft voice will take your path far. Knowing who you are brings wisdom and strength. Students are our future elders, leaders, and mentors — they are called to help others and lead with hozho — beauty and balance. At the same time, it's important to remain humble and listen, because everyone has something to learn, and listening is the key to true learning.

Students, knowing your culture and where you come from is a powerful source of resilience. Your presence already makes a difference on Mother Earth. Stay strong, grow your wisdom, and keep learning and listening — your goals are within reach. The universe knows who you are, so live fully into the path it has prepared for you.



**Sasha Blanco Ramirez,
Director of Instruction**

My name is Sasha Blanco Ramirez, and this is my 18th year with Gallup-McKinley County Schools. I am a registered member of the Cherokee Nation and belong to the Long Hair Clan on my mother's side.

My mother was a first-generation college graduate who became a third-grade teacher. I didn't realize it at the time, but she would go on to shape my career path as an adult. When I was a sophomore in high school, I helped her with a pumpkin math lesson focused on estimation. Watching her teach and seeing her students' excitement that day sparked something in me — I knew then that I

wanted to become a teacher.

By my senior year, my mother had arranged for me to work half days at Roosevelt Elementary so I could experience what teaching was really like. Eighteen years later, I'm still doing what I love — and I wouldn't trade the journey for anything.

True integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. It's about staying committed to your values, honoring your word, and taking responsibility for your actions.

Doreen Earle,
Cultural Education Program Coordinator

Yá'át'ééh! My name is Doreen Earle. I am the Cultural



Education Program Coordinator at GMCS. I am Ma'iideeshgiizhnii (Coyote Pass Jemez), born for Honaghaani (One Who Walks Around). My maternal grandfathers are Kinyaanii (Towering House), and my paternal grandfathers are Tach'iinii (Red Running Water).

My background has been primarily in early childhood education, teaching kindergarten and first grade at various schools on the Navajo Nation. For as long as I can remember, I've had a strong interest in education — even as a child, I would organize 'school' for my younger siblings and cousins during summer breaks.

Over the years, I've been actively involved in school leadership and continually seek ways to strengthen my teaching strategies to better serve our Navajo students. What has truly motivated me to both enter and remain in education is the desire to improve educational opportunities for our Navajo children. I have a deep understanding of the unique challenges they face — whether it's living with grandparents, helping with family responsibilities, or simply traveling long dirt roads to get to school. Because of that, I feel a strong responsibility to make school a place where they feel supported, inspired, and capable of success.

One traditional teaching I would like my students to learn and carry with them is K'é, which represents kinship, respect, and our connection to one another. I also believe that K'é carries within it a sense of resiliency — the understanding that knowing who you are and where you come from gives you strength. When our students learn about their clans and the importance of relationships, they begin to build a foundation of spiritual, physical, and emotional resilience.

Celebrating Culture, Leadership, and Community

The stories of **Olivia Lee, Cora Morris, Dr. Ophelia Sanchez, Sasha Blanco Ramirez, and Doreen Earle** remind us that cultural teachings and leadership go hand in hand. Their words reflect the strength and wisdom found across our district — where Native traditions, community values, and educational excellence work together to uplift every student.

As GMCS celebrates Native American Heritage Month, we honor the deep roots of the people who have shaped this land and our schools — and we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that every child's culture is seen, celebrated, and valued.

INVESTING IN OUR STUDENTS: *GMCS'S CAT SIMULATORS PAVE THE WAY FOR HIGH-TECH CAREER PATHS*



Gallup-McKinley County Schools is giving students the opportunity to get hands-on experience with heavy equipment—without ever leaving the classroom. The new CAT Simulator, housed at the Occupational Career Center (OCC) program, allows students to train virtual models of real machinery such as excavators, bulldozers, and loaders.

At a recent School Board meeting, Board Members and Superintendent Mike Hyatt got the chance to experience one of the simulators firsthand. Secretary of the Board Michael Schaaf was the first to

take on the challenge by testing his skills behind the controls, gaining a glimpse into how this cutting-edge tool helps prepare students for future careers in construction, mining, and related industries.

“The CAT simulator is fantastic — it’s a great opportunity for our students to become proficient in operating heavy equipment. The School Board is very excited to help secure funds to offer these kinds of hands-on learning experiences to our students,” said Mr. Schaaf, GMCS Board Member. McKinley County, as

well as national trends, show that jobs in skilled trades are in demand. In September 2025, Forbes Advisor stated “Skilled trades workers are in high demand as well, with nearly 650,000 annual job openings in construction and extraction occupations alone, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics”

The CAT Simulator is part of GMCS’s commitment to expanding Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities districtwide. Through programs like the OCC, students are introduced to real-world job skills and can earn industry-recognized certifications, helping them graduate ready for college, career, or both.

“The realism of this simulator is impressive,” said Superintendent Hyatt. “It gives our students an incredible opportunity to learn safely, build confidence, and develop valuable skills before they ever step into a real machine.”

For students interested in trades or heavy equipment operation, the simulator provides an essential



CAT® Simulators allow students to get hands on experience before operating a CAT® Tractor

steppingstone—allowing them to practice in a safe, controlled environment while learning precision, safety, and efficiency. These simulators are industry recognized and endorsed to help standardize training, move towards regulatory compliance and certification, and recognize the value of technology in growing the workforce.

By investing in tools like the CAT Simulator, GMCS continues to strengthen its College, Career, and Community Readiness (CCCR) Vision, ensuring students are prepared to meet the workforce needs of the region and beyond.

<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/education/trade-schools/quick-to-learn-trades/>

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
DENVER CO
PERMIT NO. 5377

Local
Postal Customer

EMPOWERING OUR FUTURE



Instagram @
GMCSNews



505.721.1000 | GMCS.ORG



Facebook @
Gallup-McKinley County Schools