



Honorable Governor Lujan Grisham
490 Old Santa Fe Trail #400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

February 22, 2021

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham:

The Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education supports the decoupling of New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) athletic participation from the required implementation of the return to school Hybrid Model. We support allowing local school districts to make such decisions during the spring 2021 school year.

School districts across the state of New Mexico are responsible for providing the best educational opportunities for students and for responding to the COVID-19 health crisis. Students are often engaged in extracurricular activities through the NMAA as an essential part of their school experience.

APS is implementing the return to school option that allows small groups to return to in-school education, mostly face-to-face, and primarily focusing on K-12 students that might be at-risk for concerns such as special education needs, learning loss, mental health concerns, and on-line access issues. APS students will be identified over the period February 22 to March 8 for in-school small group participation, although additional students may be identified and groups added over time.

The requirement for coupling athletic participation to a district's implementation of a Hybrid Model appears to be based on the need to focus on education as a first priority and athletics being allowed only if student athletes are being successfully educated. The Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education agrees completely that the primary role of the student-athlete is to first be a student.

The question is: "Why does the student need to be in a Hybrid Model in order to be successfully educated?" In fact, athletes are more focused on succeeding in their education when they are allowed to play their sport. With the pandemic and lack of sports, significant numbers of athletes are depressed and are not doing well academically. Coaches can and will enforce academic success as well as required safety precautions, even in a pandemic-shortened season, if allowed to control NMAA

participation at the local level. However, if sports are not allowed because the school district cannot immediately implement an approved Hybrid Model, then these student-athletes will not be able to participate, and hence may well not succeed in their education. And, with the correct incentive to be able to play their sport, only if they are successful educationally, these student athletes will indeed be successful. They want to play their sport and the coaches want them to participate.

All students across the state would benefit from being allowed to participate in NMAA sponsored activities, not only sports. Under the current guidelines more than 11,000 students across the state of New Mexico may not be able to participate in NMAA extra-curricular activities. A large percentage of those students attend APS.

The Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education is advocating that school boards across the state of New Mexico be allowed to make their own determination of whether or not local plans for increased in-person learning opportunities should allow for required participation in NMAA-sponsored activities. In particular, the APS plan for implementing small group in-school education should qualify for allowing our athletic programs to participate in NMAA-sponsored activities.

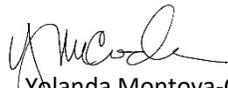
Please consider decoupling athletics participation from the Hybrid Model, and approving our targeted small group in-school education plan to include athletic participation.

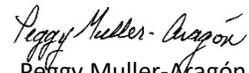
Adopted in Open Session on February 22, 2021 by the Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education.

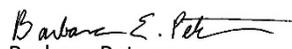
Sincerely,


Dr. David Peercy
President
APS Board of Education

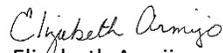

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CC: Dr Ryan Stewart, Secretary of Education, New Mexico Public Education Department
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