



# RAM COUNTRY NEWS

Winter Edition

CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

FEBRUARY 2022

## Casaus, Delgado advocate for all students on Equity Council

January 29, 2022

The Equity Council at Cuba Independent School District meets monthly to discuss how the school district can “better support students from a racial standpoint,” says Adriana Casaus, a senior student that serves on the council.

Casaus is one of several students on the council, along with Andrea Gouripaga and Sophia Isabella Delgado, a freshman, who considers it “an honor” to be involved. Adriana Prieto also served on the council and she graduated last year.

Casaus adds that it is important for students to be on the council because “the admin is over there making the decisions, but we see it in the classroom and with our peers.”

Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego agrees with Casaus.

“I feel like the adults get more wrapped up in the issues, and the kids really understand the issues and come up with solutions,” said Griego. “And they’re always honest, and it always feels good to be able to go back to the kids.”

Casaus and Delgado may be eager to make their voices heard, but they recognize that not all students feel as

comfortable sharing their opinions. Casaus acknowledges, “A lot of our students won’t go talk to the admin, and they won’t speak up.” She sees students like herself and Delgado as being “a voice” for their peers.

Delgado praises the fluidity of these meetings, which sometimes revolve on certain topics and other times, she says, “we just need to bounce ideas off of each other.”

Casaus explains how remote learning has been a particularly important issue due to the school district’s diversity.

“We have so many different minorities in our school that it really brings a need to have that Equity Council,” said Casaus.

Specifically in terms of remote learning, the Council has concentrated on how they can better support students

with their social and emotional needs.

While Delgado has several more years to share her voice at the high school level, Casaus, a senior, is hopeful her voice has made a positive difference in the school district as she plans to continue her education to become a psychiatrist and continue working in advocacy. 🐏

*“We have so many different minorities in our school that it really brings a need to have that Equity Council.”*

*- Adriana Casaus*

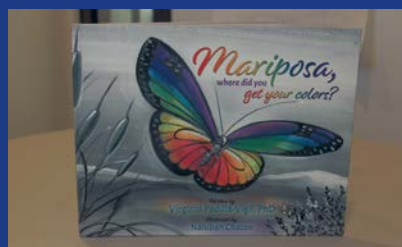


Adriana Casaus, senior



Sophia Isabella Delgado, freshman

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## Mariposa, where did you get your colors?

January 29, 2022

*Mariposa, where did you get your colors?* is a new book written by Virginia Padilla-Vigil, Ph. D. and illustrated by Nanibah Chacon, a local born in New Mexico.

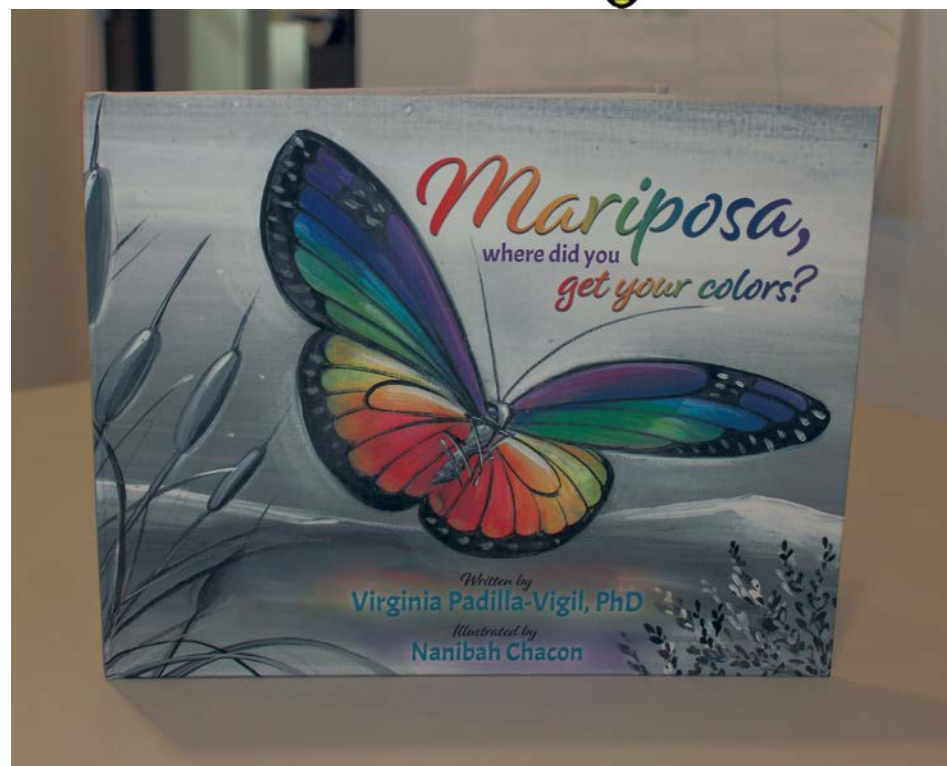
Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego enthusiastically praised the creators of this book and brought the book to Cuba Schools for students to enjoy.

Griego is eager to share the book widely with kids growing up in the community of Cuba. She wants to show kids that “there are these amazing artists and writers [who come from New Mexico] and look what they’ve created!”

The Children’s Book Review said, “Mariposa, Where Did You Get Your Colors? Is a beautiful story with the lilt and feel of a traditional fairy tale or myth.”

D. Donovan, senior reviewer at Midwest Book Review said, “Any who work with children will find this an absorbing, revealing, and thought-provoking story that holds a bigger message within a simple tale.”

Griego hopes the book provides inspiration for creativity, goal setting, and knowing anything can be achieved. 🐏



## Therapy dogs providing social emotional support to Cuba students

January 31, 2022

Jackie Barron has worked 15 years with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, a certified organization that uses dogs in a therapeutic context to cheer people up. Jackie and her canine companions go to many different forums, from medical settings to disaster areas and schools, all for the purpose of providing support to individuals who may need it.

Jackie has worked with the Cuba Schools for several years. She first began working with the school district after a student was involved in an accident and passed, which was a very traumatic event for the community. Jackie provided support by bringing one of her therapy dogs to the elementary school for eight hours, allowing students and staff to pet the dog.

To this day, she continues to go to each of the schools in the district once a week to welcome the students with a therapy dog. She has been involved with a summer school program as well.

Jasmine Greene, a senior at Cuba High School, says, “It’s amazing what Jackie is doing!”

Jasmine is impressed with Jackie’s commitment to the program.

“She’s been doing this since I was a little girl. It’s fun to see that she’s still doing the same thing,” Jasmine said.

Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego agrees with Jasmine’s praise.



“It’s just peaceful,” said Griego. “I feel like it’s been very fruitful and supportive to have another life that is a loving animal that kids love.”

Jackie currently has four dogs: 15-year-old Naomi, 13-year-old Athena, 10-year-old Barney, and 4-year-old

Oso. However, as per regulations, only one dog can go on deployment at a time. 🐏

*Photo: Jackie Barron holds onto Naomi’s leash as she visits with Jasmine Green, a senior at Cuba High School, on January 28, 2022.*



## Starlink internet service helping students in rural areas of the school district

February 6, 2022

Cuba Schools is in the process of setting up Starlink internet service at homes in rural areas of its school district to provide internet to its students, a project funded by ESSER funds.

Raphelita Phillips explained Starlink is a product from Elon Musk's company which is designed to provide reliable internet service to areas that do not normally get decent coverage.

"We tried it out first at our Ojo Encino Pre-K to see how it works, because Ojo Encino is on the eastern border of the Navajo Nation," she said. "We live in a checkerboard area, and that means that the [Navajo Nation] is peppered with private land and federal land, mostly BLM. And so, it's really difficult to get anything out there."

When the pandemic forced schools to go to remote learning, Ojo Encino Pre-K suffered because the teacher was not able to communicate with

her students due to the poor internet connection.

"Starlink would help us navigate all of that. Because it's really just putting a single satellite in one area that will communicate with the satellite in the sky," she said.

Phillips said so far, the experiment has been a success. As of last week, the Pre-K teacher, Ms. Jewellyn, was holding classes with Zoom up and running.

"On average, they're running probably 5-6 devices at a time on that internet [service], and she did not report any glitches, nothing was slowing down," Phillips said.

Starlink installations continue and the school district is doing what they can to educate its students and to keep them engaged. 🐾



Photos, top: Students interact with teacher during a reading lesson at Ojo Encino Preschool. Bottom photo: a satellite sits outside on the ground and is fenced in so no threats of damage occurs. The satellite would eventually be mounted to a pole as well within the fenced area. (Photo submitted by Raphelita Phillips)

## Cuba Schools receives \$150,000 W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant

February 4, 2022

Cuba Independent School District recently received \$150,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation intended to support equity in rural New Mexico. The grant will help to elevate student voice in school decisions, to improve and expand dual language, expand educational activities and food systems that will impact healthy meals and educational outcomes for children. The grant runs from February 1, 2022, to January 31, 2023.

Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego explained that “dysfunction and interracial strife has occurred for several years, and it had detrimental effects on the Pre-K through 12th Grade system. The money from this grant is meant to find solutions to these problems.”

The mission of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is to “support children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors of the larger community and society.”

“Communities in Cuba come from a rich heritage of Diné (Navajo) and Spanish languages, yet they receive very little voice in student input and community communication concerns, in their children’s education, food service systems, and home language development,” Griego said.

Griego further explained the purpose of this grant is to figure out how to give students a voice. Specifically, the money from the grant will pay students \$12 an hour while they work as student researchers.

“[The student researchers] role, over the course of a school year, is to collect information and give input on what they think their school and community really need,” Griego said.

There are two key questions Dr. Griego wants students to consider:



*Cuba Independent School District initiated a new food service program and will plan to eventually incorporate a food-to-table program where food grown on campus will be served in the cafeteria. (USDA via Flickr)*

“What’s going on with your education? What kind of things do you see outside of education that are affecting your educational learning?”

Griego explained, through this research and project-based learning, students will ideally embrace and support one another’s language and cultural differences by developing a student platform of issues to be addressed in school in the three languages: Diné, Spanish, and English.

Food is another major area of focus. Griego said students and families have raised complaints that the food being served at school is not healthy. As a result, Griego said they changed the food service company.

“In changing [food service] companies, we said that 80% of the cooking would be done in our kitchens. So, we hired a new [food service] team,” said Griego. “We

[also] just built a greenhouse. The greenhouse is an especially exciting addition as it’s run by students and teachers.”

Griego explained the food grown in the greenhouse will not only be served in the cafeterias as part of a food-to-table program, but it will also be sold at the farmer’s market over the summer, thereby creating a business out of food.

Griego acknowledges that Cuba Schools feels like they have not done a lot of work to hear student voices in the past, but with this funding, they hope to do so.

“We really need to get in and talk to our kids, and see what that have to say,” she said. “This grant provides an exciting opportunity for students to direct the growth of our community.”

Cuba Schools’ demographics of its 672 students in pre-K to 12th Grade includes 71% Navajo

students, 26% Hispanic students, and 3% other students that are not Navajo or Hispanic. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department’s at-risk indicator of 2021, Cuba is the highest “at risk” population of students in New Mexico.

In 2018, a district-wide systems change ensued with much of the work focused on students’ home language and culture.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 by entrepreneur W.K. Kellogg for the purpose of “administering funds for the promotion of the welfare, comfort, health, education, feeding, clothing, sheltering, and safeguarding of children and youth, directly or indirectly, without regard to sex, race, creed, or nationality,” according to their website. 🐏



Photos, top left: the exterior of the greenhouse on the campus of Cuba Schools. Middle left: the interior planting beds with helpers assisting construction. Bottom left: a student planting seeds. Top right: house plants in the greenhouse. (Photos submitted by Raymond Sisneros)

## Greenhouse scheduled to open by spring

February 18, 2022

Cuba Schools will soon have a fully functional greenhouse on its campus, which is currently being constructed and prepped for growing plants and food items. The project is being led by Raymond Sisneros who recently taught history at the middle school but was recently re-assigned to help lead the development of the greenhouse.

Sisneros started teaching in Cuba in 1975. He has taught horticulture for years and helped to build other greenhouses at other school sites. He taught on the Navajo Nation at rural communities served by Cuba Schools in Torreon, Pueblo Pintado, and Ojo Encino in years past.

"In every school that I went to, I built a greenhouse for the kids and taught horticulture," Sisneros said.

Last summer, Sisneros conducted a horticulture program at Cuba Schools.

"We planted beds, we planted small gardens... some at the middle school and some at the elementary school," he said.

Since being back in Cuba since 2000, several people have encouraged him to build a greenhouse on

the campus. It was not until last year, Superintendent Karen Sanchez-Griego contacted him about building one on the Cuba campus.

"She asked me what my background was, and I told her I taught history and I've taught horticulture before," he explained. "She responded, 'Well, we really want to do something with the kids that is vocational in nature. Would you be interested in starting up a horticulture program?'"

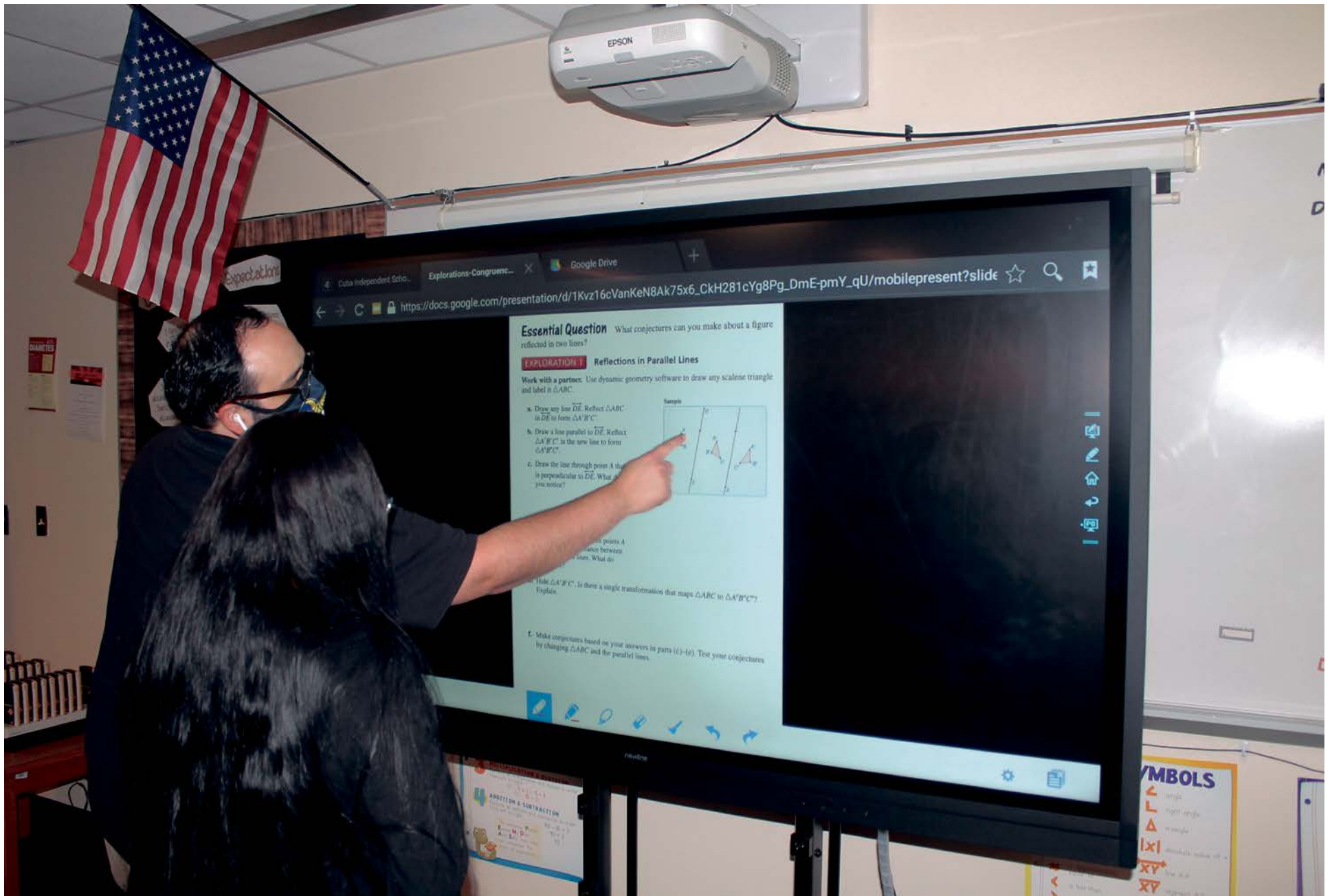
Sisneros agreed and was eager to help with the project of building a greenhouse and so plans were put together.

"We hired a contractor to come in and construct the greenhouse," he said. "Since mid-January, I've been getting the greenhouse ready for operational status. We've been building... planting beds... we've been building benches."

"I think it's really important for kids to learn how to grow their own food," he said. "And how to take care of the land."

Sisneros explained it will take him another month or two to have the

**CONTINUED PAGE 9 /  
Greenhouse**



Alejandro Ortega, geometry teacher at Cuba High School, demonstrates the use of a touchscreen monitor used to help students solve problems. Ortega incorporates various technological devices and techniques to teach his classes. He is pictured with student Makayla Pinto.

## Mr. Ortega incorporates technology use in his math classes

February 7, 2022

Alejandro Ortega is a fourth-year teacher at Cuba Schools and a self-described “techie,” and he has always been a big proponent of utilizing technology in the classroom.

“I’ve always been a big proponent of utilizing technology,” he said.

This belief likely stems from his background in statistics and engineering. Ortega explained he has a minor in distributed engineering, so he did a lot of mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering classes while in college. This coursework cultivated a true love for technology, which he has strived to incorporate in his math classes.

With the advent of the pandemic however, the use of technology became more crucial than ever.

“I really had to lean into it,” he said.

Still, it was not easy. Having students both in-person and remote posed

several challenges, but Ortega is grateful the school supported his endeavors by providing different technologies, like a full license for Pear Deck, an interactive presentation tool commonly used by teachers to engage students individually or in groups.

“I use [Pear Deck] almost every day in class,” he said. “The cool thing with [Pear Deck] is that it allows you to have interactions with the students virtually. It transforms your slide deck into an interactive slide deck. So, I can pose questions... the kids can answer... I can see their answers in real time.”

“It’s really useful for the kids who are remote because I can provide feedback directly to one student, there’s

channels to respond to students,” he added. “Even [with] in-person [learning], it’s nice because the kids all have laptops, so they can respond, I can send them feedback, and I don’t have to single them out.”

One of the greatest benefits of using technology in the classroom is that it allows for anonymity, as Ortega

has observed.

“I think a lot of kids have a fear of missing questions, and it leads to this hesitancy to participate, because they don’t want to feel looked down on if they get answers wrong,” he said.

*“He is a whiz at using the tools and technology in the classroom.”*

*- Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego*

Ortega explained with private responses and feedback over technological platforms, this public pressure is eliminated, allowing students to take intellectual risks that are crucial for learning.

Ortega is also enthusiastic about an online graphic calculator called Geogebra.

“[Geogebra] allows you to do all kinds of really cool geometric-based stuff, rather than just algebra,” he said. “It really gives you control over shapes and transformations. It’s the stuff of my dreams.”

Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego has nothing but praise for Ortega’s skills and engagement with his students.

“He is a whiz at using the tools and technology in the classroom,” said Griego. “And his kids just flow through it. He’s a really awesome teacher.” 🐝

# CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Pictured left to right: Jeanette Marie Paiz, internship director; Carol Chavez, teacher; and Liliana Maestas, sophomore at Cuba High School.

## Paiz, Chavez encouraging, inspiring students to become teachers

February 7, 2022

Jeanette Marie Paiz and Carol Chavez both teach child development at Cuba Schools, and one of the goals of this practical course is to inspire students to become teachers. Besides learning the theory of child development, students enrolled in the class also go to the elementary school and provide tutoring.

Chavez explained the high school students are well prepared.

“They’re going to have to do some prep stuff, so they have to get a book ahead of time, prepare questions, prepare other readings, showing them

how to read fluently and with expression, and all those things that are going to be helpful for these kids to learn,” Chavez said.

Liliana Maestas, a sophomore, is enrolled in the course and she is considering a career in nursing.

“I’ve just always liked to help people,” said Maestas. “[I enjoy] learning about children, the needs that they have, and the attention that they need to have in order to get to where they need to be.”

Chavez considers this program to be a “grow your own” approach for the school district. By that she means, “It’s very difficult to get teachers to come

out to Cuba and stay here. And if you ‘grow your own,’ they tend to stay a lot longer. I’m one of those.”

In fact, Chavez is a proud product of the Cuba school system, she was a student from kindergarten through 10th grade. She reflected on her own motivation to become a teacher.

“I came back to work with the people in the community, my family, the people that I’ve always been around, and where I feel most comfortable,” she said.

Paiz has a similar story, and she also comes from a small community, and she believes this is why she understands the culture at Cuba Schools. She

agrees with Chavez.

“If we can inspire kids to come back to their communities and teach there, it is so much better for everybody. Believe it or not, culture makes a big difference in education, and sometimes we forget about that,” said Paiz. “We try to put in our own values and everything into that... and sometimes that’s where we have the dropouts and people not being interested. And I also believe that most of us do want to give back to our communities.”

Paiz has certainly given back, she returned to help small communities and after 34 years of teaching, she is still at it. 🐏

### ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego, Ed.D  
*Superintendent*

Bruce Hatch  
*Principal, Cuba High School*

Gilbert Dominguez, Jr.  
*Principal, Cuba Middle School*

Judy Atencio  
*Principal, Cuba Elementary School*

Arsenio Jacquez  
*Director of District Initiatives*

### SCHOOL BOARD

Dianna Maestas  
*President  
District 4*

Vivian Keetso  
*Secretary  
District 1*

Taylor Pinto  
*Vice President  
District 2*

Elizabeth Martin  
*Member  
District 3*

James D. Casaus  
*Member  
District 5*

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Safety Officers Robert Dilley and Jonathan Salazar pose for a photo in front of Cuba Middle School while patrolling the campus.

## Safety Officers helping to create a safe school environment

February 9, 2022

Officers Robert Dilley, Jonathan Salazar, and John Paul Trujillo are the three new safety officers circulating around Cuba Schools.

As retired police officers and members of International Protective Services, their job is to keep students and members of the school community safe.

Officer Dilley explained they are on campus just prior to the students arriving daily.

“We watch them come in safely, and each day we assign ourselves to each school,” said Dilley. “We pa-

trol the schools, we make sure that everything in the school is safe, the students are safe, the staff are safe, and we keep a high visibility so that they feel comfortable with us being here.”

Dilley explained it is important safety officers bring significant security experience, while also being approachable to students and staff.

Officer Salazar believes their efforts at Cuba Schools is going very well.

“I’ve had a bunch of compliments from the superintendent, teachers, staff, and students,” Salazar said.

Dilley served as a police officer for 36 years, Officer Salazar worked in juvenile corrections in Albuquerque for three years before joining the New Mexico State Police where he worked for 24 years and retired as a captain. 🐍

“We patrol the schools, we make sure that everything in the school is safe, the students are safe, the staff are safe...”



Officer Robert Dilley



Officer Jonathan Salazar





## Former Navajo Nation President speaks to Cuba students

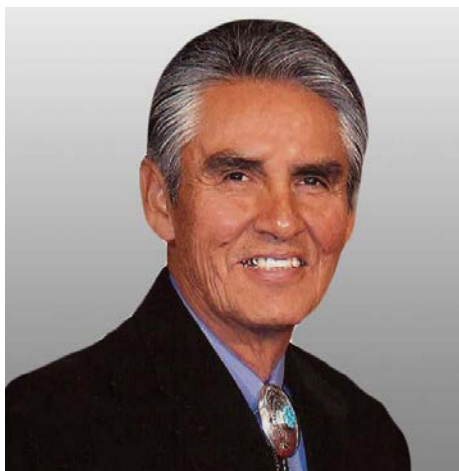
February 9, 2022

Former Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and current Apache County Supervisor took time out of his busy schedule to travel from Chinle, Arizona, to Cuba to visit with students and staff during Red Ribbon Week.

Shirley initially came to speak about drug and alcohol use, but his talk proved to be even greater than that.

Superintendent Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego explained he told the students he was here to speak as a Navajo leader and as a father, and he wanted to talk to them about “our human-ness.”

“He said we all have the beauty of culture, language and differences, but we have to remember that we’re



human, and this humanity in us is what brings us together,” explained Griego. “This idea resonated deeply with the students. The whole time he talked, you could just hear a pin drop.”

Shirley often speaks at schools in support of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in support of his daughter who was killed by a drunk driver in 2001. During his administration as president of the Navajo Nation, he made MADD a focus of his advocacy. 🐏

## Greenhouse CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

greenhouse fully ready.

“Come April or May, we will have enough plant material to plant some major gardens outside around the greenhouse and throughout the school... [and] do some landscaping with it... and just get the kids involved in everything that’s involved in growing plants,” he said. “We’ve got some fruit trees coming in that we’ll be planting. We’ll be planting grapes... we’ll be planting all kinds of gardens.”

Another plan to sustain the greenhouse is teaching the students the economic benefits of working in a greenhouse.

“We’ll be selling bedding plants and house plants to help defray the cost of operating the greenhouse,” Sisneros said.

Students will also sell their grown food products during the summer at the local farmer’s market.

There are eight students currently involved with the greenhouse.

“Come next fall when the greenhouse is completely operational, it looks like I’ll be teaching two high school classes, two middle school

classes, and one elementary school class?” he said. “Then in the evenings, I’m going to offer a class for community members for people that are interested in horticulture.”

Sisneros said he already has 10 to 15 students that are interested in the program.

“I have to limit the number of students that I have in the class because it just gets too crowded,” he explained. “It’s too hard to control... I limit the number kids in the class to about 10.”

Dr. Griego is thankful to receive the expertise of Sisneros in building the greenhouse.

“We had a lot of complaints from students that the food they’ve been getting is not healthy,” she said. “So, we changed [food service] companies. In changing companies, we said that 80% of the cooking would be done in our kitchens.”

Griego explained this change in food service ties in with the greenhouse project, and it will encourage moving a food-to-table program with the school cafeteria.

“The kids will be growing products in the greenhouse that we’ll then move to the cafeteria,” Griego said.

There will be many benefits of the greenhouse and there is excitement for its full opening and operation. 🐏



## Students enjoy martial arts club, learning Japanese language, culture

February 7, 2022

Elias Alonzo and Chandler Joe, both eighth graders, are just two students of several involved in the martial arts club at Cuba Middle School.

Alonzo explained he has been practicing daily for two years and said he loves the self-defense aspect of the club. Joe has also been practicing for two years and he “enjoys the culture of self-defense.”

Both indicated they appreciate being able to protect themselves if

attacked.

For Alonzo, he explained that there is an interesting cultural element to learning martial arts.

“We learn Japanese vocabulary [words] and teachings,” he said.

Both students anticipate many more years of learning martial arts, and they are eager to heighten their ability to protect themselves and others when needed, while also deepening their appreciation of Japanese culture. 🐏

**CUBA HIGH SCHOOL  
TUTORING**

**WHEN:** Tuesdays and Thursdays  
3:45 - 5 PM

**WHERE:** Cuba High School

**Transportation:** Students will be able to ride the activity bus. Drop off points are Ojo Encino Chapter House, Torreon Store, and Counselor Store.

## Coach Dominguez praises Middle School Girls Basketball team

February 6, 2022

Gilbert Dominguez, Sr., has coached basketball for 30 years, but his middle school girls this season were “the girls that every coach dreams of,” because they are “the girls that don’t give up.”

Coach Dominguez acknowledged that the season got off to a rocky start because “our girls didn’t play very much last year, so we lost a whole year of experience. They lost the first two games badly.”

Dominguez explained by the end of the season, the team eventually made it to the championship game in the tournament. In Coach Dominguez’s opinion, they got there because “they have a lot of heart [and] they don’t give up.”

Ultimately, the championship was a positive experience for the team.

“The girls got the exposure, they got the experience of being in front of a large crowd, they got introduced by the commentator,” Dominguez said.



Coach Dominguez anticipates more championships in their future.

“They’re gonna’ be playing hard. I think they have a lot of potential,” he added. 🙌

*Photos, top: The Cuba Middle School girls’ basketball team pose for a photo with Coach Gilbert Dominguez, Sr., at the Striking Eagle Tournament in Albuquerque, N.M. on December 30, 2021. The team finished in second place. Right: Coach Gilbert Dominguez, Sr.*



## Sports Roundup with Bruce Hatch

February 6, 2022

Cuba High School Principal Bruce Hatch had some exciting news to report on Cuba School’s athletic achievements as of January 28.

Hatch said the Cuba Middle School boys’ basketball team went undefeated during their season and the Middle School girls’ team lost only two games.

Despite the school shutdowns and limitations that created challenges for sports during the season, Hatch said both Middle School basketball coaches did a great job and their teams played very well.

“The Middle School girls’ season is over now, while the boys have a couple of more games to go,” said Hatch. “They’re hopeful they can win these final games and finish the season undefeated.”

Superintendent Karen Sanchez-Griego was enthusiastic and proud of the basketball teams.

“We’re so excited about the middle

school boys being undefeated. They really were not able to play last year, and this year just came right out of the box with their coach, and they have just done an amazing job, and have shown every team that they’ve played that they’re the best,” Griego said.

Hatch explained Cuba High School just finished their tournament, the Cuba Invitational. He said the Cuba High School girls’ basketball team finished third in the tournament, while the boys won second place at the varsity level.

The JV boys’ basketball team also participated in the tournament because of a COVID-related dropout of another school’s basketball team, and so they played in a varsity tournament. Hatch said the JV team took fifth place and earned the consolation championship title.

“On the whole, it was a good showing by all three [basketball] teams in the tournament,” Hatch said.

Hatch also explained, district play for basketball started as of January 28 when he was interviewed.

“Our girls are 1-1 in district, and our boys are 0-2 in district,” he said. “This is a hopeful start to the district season by both the girls and boys [basketball] teams.”



On February 18, Hatch provided an update via email and said the Cuba High School girls’ basketball team are tied for first place in district and the CHS boys basketball team are tied for fourth place.

“With the end of the basketball season, track begins in February, and

we’re looking to see if we can have another track season as well,” said Hatch. “All in all, things are going well athletically here in Cuba.” 🙌



## CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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[www.cuba.k12.nm.us](http://www.cuba.k12.nm.us)



Cuba Schools lifted its mask-wearing in schools, but allows students, parents, and community to continue wearing masks. Cuba Schools leaves this decision up to each individual and their needs.



ABOUT THE GOVERNOR OUR LEADERSHIP

Office of the Governor  
**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

### New Mexico indoor mask mandate lifted

Feb 17, 2022 | COVID-19, Press Releases

#### Governing school bodies will decide local masking policy

SANTA FE – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on Thursday announced she has lifted the requirement for face coverings to be worn in most indoor spaces, effective immediately.

The indoor mask mandate remains in effect for congregate settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities and detention facilities. The decision on masking in schools will be left up to governing school bodies, which may elect to keep or suspend masking requirements. An updated public health order, in effect as of Thursday, February 17, can be found [here](#).

"I want to express my gratitude to every New Mexican who has steadfastly worn a mask, gotten vaccinated, and done everything in their power to protect their neighbors, as well as the heroic health care and frontline workers who have courageously supported our communities during this uncertain time," said Gov. Lujan Grisham. "Given the continued drop in hospitalizations and the lessening of the burden on our hospitals, it's time to end the mask mandate. With vaccines, boosters and effective treatment options widely available, we have the tools we need to protect ourselves and keep our fellow New Mexicans safe."

The number of hospitalized New Mexicans dropped by 37% since the end of January, down to 446 yesterday. The state's Crisis Standards of Care declaration will expire March 11, as there has been a significant drop in hospitalizations that has increased the availability of resources at New Mexico hospitals.

... a new way to live with COVID together. Thank you for taking care of your  
... M.D., Acting Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico