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State launches statewide broadband network for public schools

First wave connects 30 schools, paving the way for enhanced learning and collaboration

ALBUQUERQUE—Today, New Mexico’s Statewide Education Network (SEN) became operational, connecting the first public schools in what will eventually become a comprehensive statewide broadband network, linking public schools with their own school-centric high-speed internet across New Mexico.

Three charter schools in Albuquerque—21st Century Public Academy, Mark Armijo Academy, and Mountain Mahogany Community School—and all 27 schools in the Gadsden Independent School District in Santa Teresa, NM, are the first to be plugged into the new broadband network.

Nearly 15,000 students in these schools will be the first to access the new network.

“This is an important milestone for New Mexico education and broadband,” said **Drew Lovelace**, Acting Director of the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE). “Schools will have endless possibilities to enhance learning and engage students. This breakthrough not only means students will have access to all kinds of content, but it will also connect people—students, teachers, superintendents and other personnel—who can collaborate to achieve goals. This exemplifies how New Mexico is improving education through technology.”

The newly developed network creates an internal system that will link the 30 New Mexico schools, enabling them to share classes and meetings and to provide high-quality educational resources for teachers and students.

State officials say by connecting schools, students could share outside courses, clubs and link to sites that could help them address social and health issues. The new system could also provide tutoring assistance, mental health access and college preparation materials.

SEN will oversee the daily operations and cybersecurity of the system.

“This has been a mammoth undertaking, and we’re very excited that the network is finally alive,” said **Ovidiu Viorica**, SEN’s Broadband and Technology Manager. “This is an extraordinary achievement that will see productive returns for our children and our state. What’s happening today is a signal that New Mexico is truly looking to the future.”

SEN’s role is to establish broadband connectivity between schools as it aims to provide educational opportunities and promote collaboration among educational institutions through internet services. SEN worked with the Public School Facilities Authority to create and build the broadband system.

“This SEN is optional for schools, but we are excited to take the administrative burden of procuring internet off schools around New Mexico, and let them focus on education,” said **Lovelace**.

Dozens of public schools across New Mexico have committed to being a part of the internal school network. SEN plans to interconnect all New Mexico schools by 2027. Since 2016 the federal government has invested \$100 million in infrastructure and school upgrades toward that goal. The state has invested \$5 million through the NM Public School Capital Outlay Council.

Nearly 900 miles of fiber have been delivered as part of the statewide initiative.

A state advisory committee will develop prospective content for the school-centric network.

A ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the first connected schools is scheduled for August 15 in Albuquerque.

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The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE’s mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state’s rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.