

## Education: Online, Out-of-School Time and At Home

April 27, 2020



On March 16th, Governor Lujan Grisham announced that schools would shift to a learn-at-home model for the rest of the academic year. Each School District and public charter school was instructed to develop a [Continuous Learning Plan](#) that meets the needs of their community.

Internet access will be an issue for many families in New Mexico. Staff and students may lack the resources to connect remotely. So far, over 400 internet providers have signed the FCC's "[Keep Americans Connected Pledge](#)" to not terminate service to any customers because of their inability to pay their bills and to waive late fees that customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic. These companies also have agreed to open their Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them. Information about several of these options is available [here](#).

Cynthia Nava, former superintendent of Gadsden Public Schools and a board member of New Mexico First, calls on New Mexicans to step up and “take control of the situation. We need to be innovative and agile in reaching our kids even if we don’t do it through traditional means. The goal remains the same: for our students to have rich and robust academic progress that will enable them to learn and thrive. We have an opportunity right now to reexamine what we’ve been doing and creatively respond to children’s needs.”



Traci Curry, speaking for [New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom](#) (NMAIC), agrees that “we’re all educators ... it takes a village to educate our children.” NMAIC is helping teachers work with families to take stock of the materials students have at home. One teacher had planned for her students to grow something from seed. NMAIC worked with her to make that part of the lesson. Teachers and families together could organize a seed

hunt to find seeds already in the house, such as beans or seeds from apples. Or parents could go outside with the children and ask, “Where do we find seeds? Where do seeds come from?”

Numerous sites have learning activities that can be done at home, with or without access to the internet. The New Mexican Out-of-School-Time Network (NMOST) has a list of lists for educational activities at home.

## What About Food?



It’s a fact of New Mexican life that many of our students rely on school for their meals. Before COVID-19 shut down our schools on March 12th, New Mexico was on track to serve more than 13,500,000 school breakfasts and 19,500,000 school lunches to low-income students. So how are our students getting these meals?

In response to the Governor’s directive, school districts throughout the state developed food distribution plans. These meals are distributed on a “grab and go” basis at food sites in every school district. However, specific dates, times, sites, and other details differ for each school district. The [NM Out-of-School-Time Network](#) is keeping an updated list of [pick-up sites, day, times, and details](#). Some school districts are opting to deliver food to students along established bus routes. The page also has links to Roadrunner Food Bank [special distribution sites](#) and to [Presbyterian Free Healthy Meals for Kids](#).

## Out-of-School Time Programs are Taking Care of Kids



Many out-of-school time programs have been forced to cancel programming for the duration of the emergency closures. But this doesn't mean that these organizations are sitting on the sidelines. Some are applying to serve as emergency

childcare centers, providing childcare for children of essential workers. For more information, click [here](#).

Other out-of-school time programs are working with their school districts to add pick-up food sites for families. [Moving Arts Española](#), an out-of-school time program, was forced to close its programming for the remainder of the Spring semester. Roger Montoya, Moving Art's Artistic Director, quickly organized the Northern New Mexico Emergency Food Network, which includes nine other organizations focused on providing food and necessities to those in need. The purpose of the network is to work together in serving the community while reducing overlap and waste of resources. The organization is partnering with the Española Public Schools to be a curbside pick-up site for breakfast and lunch. Breakfast can be picked up at 8:00 am and lunch by noon, Monday- Friday. Also, Moving Arts is serving hot vegetarian suppers. These are also for pickup only and can be picked up at Moving Arts Espanola between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm Monday-Friday.

## Resources for Families

Families aren't just learning how to home school. Many are also holding down jobs, either working in or outside the home; figuring out how to safely take care of essential activities like shopping or keeping up with health care, including [vaccinations](#), paying the bills; dealing with frustrations and fears. [Ngage New Mexico](#), home of the Doña Ana County, prenatal to career, SUCCESS Partnership education initiative, is offering a series of webinars for caregivers in English and Spanish. Register to watch them on-demand.

- Apoyando a los Niños Durante la Pandemia del Virus Corona. [Register](#)
- Creating Effective Home Learning Environments [Register](#)

## A Tip for Parents and Families



Parents and families are the first and most important teachers in children's lives. While partnerships with school personnel and staff are vital resources for families and communities, those who are parenting children during this pandemic and trying to juggle many other responsibilities are feeling stressed. It's perhaps time to remind ourselves that we serve our children, ourselves and our families best by

building from family's strengths. The catch: there's nothing like a crisis to make it hard to see strengths.

[Positive Parenting](#) is an approach to parenting that focuses on relationships rather than challenging behaviors. It is normal during this time for children of all ages to revisit developmental milestones that you thought they'd outgrown. This is a natural and normal response to stress. If you have questions or concerns about your child's behaviors and how best to support their social and emotional health, please contact your pediatrician or family physician. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has also published helpful tips. Many of these may affirm what you're already doing, so keep at it! You might also find some new and helpful ideas. Be gentle with yourself and your children. These are trying times.

Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director provided the parent and family tips. Connect with Lilly at [lilly@nmfirst.org](mailto:lilly@nmfirst.org).