

# Project Connect

**Working together to break down internet disparity and provide internet to ALL students.**

## Overview

In March 2020, almost overnight, the Coronavirus Pandemic forced New Mexico schools to go completely online. This left many schools rushing to provide students with electronic devices and internet access. This was an easier task for some schools than others. This crisis has brought to light the inequities and the digital divide that most of our students and their families face. Just as education is a right not a privilege, so is access to the internet.

### **The Numbers:**

For the West Mesa cluster, it was/has been a very difficult task to provide internet access. At West Mesa High School alone, 243 students reported having issues with their internet.

### **Why do so many students not have access to the internet?**

One factor could be the large percentage of at-risk youth and homeless students in the West Mesa Cluster. During the West Mesa cluster's online registration, approximately 400 families indicated that they were living in homeless situations, such as "my utilities are off", "I'm living with another family", or "I'm not with my parents."

In the West Mesa Cluster alone, we have 154 students that qualify for Title I McKinney-Vento Program, formerly the Homeless Project. As of 11/6/2020 832 students qualified for MVP. That means that almost 20% of all the students that qualified for MVP in APS come from the West Mesa Cluster alone.

### **West Mesa is a Title I school:**

West Mesa, and many of its feeder schools are Title I schools, and qualify for 100% free breakfast & lunch for all students who attend. This determination is due to the high numbers of families who qualify for free & reduced lunch, and shows the great need that exists in this community; when families are struggling to put food on the table, providing the internet is not likely to be something they can fit in their monthly budget.

### **How has this started to affect our students?**

Failure rates have skyrocketed since schools moved to a virtual learning model. In October, 2019 WMHS reported having 1,568 "F's", which was the highest number to date. This October, WMHS reported having

4,301 “F’s”. That is almost 3X the amount. Many of these students reported having issues with the internet and technology.

**“Just as education is a right not a privilege so is access to the internet.”**

## How can we work together to break down these barriers?

**Our goal is to help our students and their families struggling with internet access. Funds will be used to provide internet service, needed technology, and to help overcome non-academic barriers for students for the remainder of the school year.**

## How can this be done?

Comcast Internet Essentials is \$10/month and you can help support our students in two ways:

1. **One time \$60 donation:** This one time \$60 donation will sponsor a family for the remainder of the school year (6 months).
2. **\$10 Monthly donation:** This monthly donation will help one student afford their internet one month at a time

## What you will get in return:

1. A receipt you can use on your taxes.
2. Your name/business will be listed on our website

## HOW DO I START GIVING BACK?

1. **Pick a specific number of families your group/organization would like to sponsor.**
2. **Raise the money in your organization.**
3. **Contact us and we will collect the money.**

- Elisabeth Serna
  - (323) 487-1149
  - elisabeth.serna@aps.edu
- Jess Selbee
  - (505) 933-5377
  - jessica.selbee@aps.edu
- Alyssa Romero
  - (505) 750-8565
  - alyssa.romero2@aps.edu

### Donations will benefit the West Mesa Cluster. This includes:

- West Mesa High School (WMHS)
- Alamosa Elementary School
- Chaparral Elementary School
- Jimmy Carter Middle School (JCMS)
- John Adams Middle School (JAMS)
- Lavaland Elementary School
- Mary Anne Binford Elementary School
- Painted Sky Elementary School
- SRMarmon Elementary School
- Tres Volcanes CC