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Sandra Quintanilla
Donna Independent School District
Office: (956)464-1600 Ext. 1105
Cell: (956)457-1862 sandra.quintanila@donnaisd.net

Donna ISD Invests Millions in Free WiFi Service for Students District-wide

The Donna Independent School District Board of Trustees has given DISD Superintendent Dr. Hafedh Azaiez the green light to proceed with spending approximately 3.7 million to bring wireless internet access to students across the district. The Board unanimously approved the proposal brought forth by Superintendent Azaiez at a regular board meeting held Tuesday, July 21, 2020. The proposal calls for R-US Telecommunications Services to install 12 WiFi communication towers in areas where there is little or no internet service within DISD's jurisdiction. Each communications tower will provide wireless internet within a one-mile radius.

Superintendent Azaiez commended members of the board for their support. "We want to sincerely thank our school board members for supporting this very important initiative," Dr. Azaiez said. "They understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many challenges, including the inability to reach students who live in areas where internet service is limited or does not exist. This project will have a profound impact on our students' education as we move forward with online instruction this coming new school year."

Because the district anticipated being placed in this situation early on, Donna ISD administration began working diligently behind the scenes researching ways in which to provide free WiFi service. "Fortunately, our district is in good financial shape and we were able to identify and designate the necessary funding to invest in this project," Dr. Azaiez said.

Students, who live in outlining areas, including those who attend Runn Elementary located off of 281 Military Highway South of Donna, are among those who will see the positive effects. "We need internet because sometimes we have to do some of the work online," 5th-grade student Joshua Tarawinga said. "If we don't understand something, we can look it up or we can watch videos to get help."

Parents are also grateful to hear the news. "DISD providing WiFi to all our students would help facilitate learning and guarantee online instruction is available to all families," Parents of Julius and Jalie Cazares said. "Now, it's up to us as parents to make sure our kids are focused on doing what they are assigned to do."

Parent of Imani Gomez said, "It would be great to have internet available for all students. My daughter could work on technology programs without getting frustrated."

As a bonus, the district will also provide every student with a district-issued device to help with the technology gap. Kinder-2nd grade students will be getting iPads while 3-12 grade students will be assigned Chromebooks. The devices are expected to arrive in the next couple of weeks and delivered to students in time for the start of the school year. "The distribution of these devices will allow students to

remain at home, in a safe and secure place, while receiving online instruction,” Superintendent Dr. Azaiez said

If everything goes as planned, the communication towers project will be completed in late September or October.