



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Steve Siañez, ssianez@neanm.org

February 17, 2021

**NEA-NM Files in Court to Ensure Navajo Nation Consultation
with Local School System**

The National Education Association - New Mexico (NEA-NM) and the Central Consolidated Education Association (CCEA) have filed a petition in the Eleventh Judicial District Court asking the court to require the Central Consolidated School District (CCSD) to consult with the Navajo Nation about reopening of schools for hybrid learning and to heed Navajo Nation's decision about remaining in remote learning to protect against the ravages of COVID-19.

NEA-NM President Mary Parr-Sanchez said, "Our petition seeks to have Central Consolidated School District respect the Navajo Nation's sovereignty. The New Mexico Public Education Department has made clear that public schools operating on tribal lands and serving members of the Navajo Nation must respect tribal decisions about the health and safety of its children, educators, and elders during the pandemic. Educators, many of them Navajo, and parents have raised concerns about the District making decisions independent of the decisions made by leaders of the Navajo Nation; thereby, bypassing the authority of the Navajo Nation. These concerns have been raised repeatedly with CCSD, NMPED and NEA-NM.

"Central Consolidated School District has not met its obligations to consult with the Navajo Nation and to respect their decisions of online learning only. Central is paying lip service to tribal sovereignty, but still insists on moving forward with hybrid learning without meaningful consultation with the Navajo Nation. Real tribal sovereignty means respecting the rights of its people to govern themselves."

CCEA President Michael Moss said, "the union wants schools to expand In-person learning but they want it done safely and in partnership with the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation has suffered during the pandemic like no other group of people. Families in our district know the pain and death this disease can cause. The Navajo Nation has taken the disease seriously. We had to move forward with this petition to protect our employees, students, and their families by making the District honor tribal sovereignty".

The petition seeks a writ to require respect of tribal sovereignty and a hearing at which the District must show that it has complied with the court's orders.

###