



<https://www.krqe.com/health/coronavirus-new-mexico/ruidoso-schools-bringing-in-uv-robots-to-sanitize-classrooms/>

RUIDOSO, N.M. (KRQE) – A New Mexico school district is using robots to keep kids safe when they return to school as the robots are designed to clean the classroom. Ruidoso Municipal Schools is taking a drastic approach to be germ-free this school year.

“The year before was a heavy flu season and we just know that as things closed down in March, things are extremely tense right now,” said Dr. George Bickert, superintendent of Ruidoso Municipal Schools. “What could we do for our students, teachers, and staff in our buildings, from a building perspective, to make them safer in the long-run.”

Dr. Bickert says the district saw hospitals across the country using [Xenex LightStrike robots](#). They use UV light to kill live viruses like [COVID-19](#).

“If they’re using them in their hospital settings, these are probably really good devices to work,” said Bickert. “If this virus was on one of our surfaces, this would be the best way to keep our students and staff safe.”

The Ruidoso school board made the decision to bring in six of these robots. They will keep their four schools sanitized, but they come with a hefty price tag. KRQE News 13 was told the six robots were paid for using bond funds, not operational funds.

“Each one is over \$100,000, but when we break it down and we broke it down, it only costs over two years, 83 cents a day, per student,” said Bickert. “In the long run, it’s a big purchase up front, but when we look at and as we go down the road, we purchased these

back in July. What we've seen around the country is more schools open, they run into a number of cases of students and staff having COVID-19. We just think we made a really good decision for our facilities so that should something happen, we're able to really deep clean and sanitize classrooms and get kids in there and staff in there."

Bickert says most of the time, the robots will be placed in classrooms after students are gone, sanitizing each room in about five minutes. He says it's the best decision to keep more than 2,000 students and their staff safe, used along with the PPE the district has bought for staff and students.

"When we heard from the Xenex company, we were the first and the only school district in New Mexico to purchase the robots," said Bickert. "We're trying to make decisions that will keep our students and staff absolutely as safe as possible."

Right now, select special education classes are back in session at the school. Pre-k through the fifth-grade return to school after Labor Day, alternating weeks at home and in-class. Middle and high schoolers will go hybrid after Indigenous Peoples' Day. Bickert says the hope is for students to be back in the classroom full-time by the end of the year or by January at the latest.