

# Coach reports compromise reached after baseball class canceled

[Gabrielle Burkhart](#)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (KRQE) - Parents and players cried foul earlier this year when they learned a longtime high school baseball class was no longer an option at school. The coach claimed the class helped students academically, but the principal disagreed.

So how has the change impacted students?

"We've been able to produce over 140 college baseball players since 1996," Rio Grande High School baseball coach, Orlando Griego, told News 13 in an interview back in March. "We've graduated over 99 percent of our kids, and so those are things that I'm proud of."

For years, Griego has taken pride in his team's success both on and off the field.

"What's there not to love about the sport?" student-athlete, Mario Armendariz told KRQE News 13.

Rio Grande High School's baseball program has produced players like Ken Giles, now a World Series champ with the Houston Astros.

Back in March, [students told News 13 they were surprised to learn](#) their seventh-period baseball class was no longer offered; a class they claimed helped them stay eligible and on the path to graduation.

"Seventh period does, it really does help a lot," said Armandariz. "I mean grade issues became a problem for the baseball program, we had a few people miss out to be on this team because of grade issues."

This spring, Principal Amanda DeBell told KRQE News 13 the reason for the schedule change was simple.

"Quite frankly, with the budget and with my graduation rate and with our scores of proficiency, I had some incredibly hard decisions to make," DeBell said.

One of those decisions was doing away with the three-day-a-week baseball class she says had low enrollment, and instead placing athletes in an elective athletic class.

There, she said coaches would still have access to their students.

Now well into the school year, News 13 asked how the change has impacted student-athletes.

"It makes it a little bit more challenging but at least I have access to my kids three times a week," said Griego.

Coach Griego said he now has roughly 65 students in his sixth-period athletic class with baseball, basketball and football players.

With that big of a class, one-on-one mentorship is cut a little shorter these days.

"I have a one-on-one with each kid even if it's just for a couple minutes to go over their grades so, it does allow me the ability to do that,"

Griego added.

News 13 reached out to Principal DeBell to ask about class size and how she thinks students are doing with the change, but she didn't respond.

Griego said there are more students signed up for baseball this year. Staying on top of their grades all year-round helps everyone, he said.

"I'm happy with the outcome," said Griego. "I believe it's a compromise, but it's a fair one."

The New Mexico Activities Association recently tightened up eligibility requirements for student-athletes. They can now be booted from teams for a single 'F.' Students used to be allowed one 'F.'

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