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Portales Municipal Schools
501 S. Abilene
Portales, NM 88130
Phone: 575.356.7000 Fax: 575.356.4377
www.portaleschools.com

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Henry Montaña Assistant Superintendent
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August 21, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

School has started at Portales Municipal Schools. As you are aware, Portales High School and Portales Junior High School began classes on August 18 in the virtual environment and are holding classes daily. We are only at the end of the first week, but I want to commend you and our students as the attendance has been great and although different, instruction is happening and kids are learning.

The COVID-19 crisis has been a challenge to everyone since March of 2020. Since that time every school district has made plans, changed those plans, created new plans, and has had to make even more changes. As I have told you in the past, this crisis and the planning for it is fluid and we are all having to be able to make change quickly and improvise even more than ever. **Therefore, out of an abundance of caution and watching and learning from other school openings around the country, we have made a decision to start our 1st to 6th grade schools in a hybrid model with an alternating A/B type schedule. This will mean one-half of the students in these school will attend on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and the other half will attend on Thursdays and Fridays. Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten will begin as previously scheduled.** On Mondays and the days your child is not at school, he or she will receive instruction and school work through Google Classroom. If you do not have internet at home, we are loaning parents AT&T hotspots that will provide your child with internet. We will also loan you a Chromebook if you do not have a computer at home. We want every child to have his or her own device so that they can log-in each day to participate in their classes.

I understand that this is an inconvenience to many families. However, as we see schools across the nation opening one day and closing the next, we want to lessen the risk of that happening here so that we can hopefully maintain some continuity in our school schedules. It is our hope that when we are allowed to start bringing Portales Junior High School students back to the classroom in the hybrid A/B model, that we can start to bring all of our elementary children to school for a four-day week until this crisis is behind us.

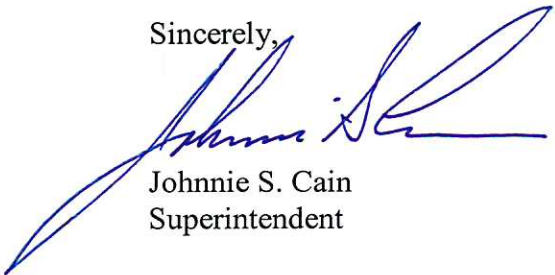
As of the writing of this letter, according to information from the governor's office and the NM Department of Health, New Mexico is on track to reopen schools in the hybrid model on September 8. But as you well know from past experience, this could quickly change and the governor may not allow schools to open even in a hybrid model on that date. If that decision is made, PMSD is ready to open virtually even in our elementary schools. We will do this and offer as much support as possible and hope to bring in small groups of students daily so that every student will get some one-on-one time with their teachers at least weekly. Although this may be a bit premature, please know that we are planning for such an eventuality and will work to meet the needs of all of our students even in a virtual setting.

The Portales Municipal Schools will provide all students a Quality Education.

As we continue down this path of virtual learning, I ask for your continued patience and support for your kids and our teachers. To make distance learning a valuable method of teaching, your continued support and attention to your child's attendance is more important than ever. Teachers cannot do this alone. You, your child, and your teacher(s) must be a team. Please also remember, we have other supports available for you and your child. If your child is becoming overwhelmed, depressed, or despondent and you feel like you need some help, please feel free to call on one of our counselors, principals, or teachers. If one of our staff can't offer the assistance you need, we can certainly put you in touch with someone who can.

Again, thank you for your continued support and patience as we move through this crisis together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Johnnie S. Cain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Johnnie S. Cain
Superintendent