

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Happy New Year from everyone at Portales Municipal Schools. I know that we are already half way through January, but we still hope your new year is looking better than the last one.

If you have a child in Pre-K to third grade, then you should have already been contacted by your school regarding their return to school in the 5:1 small group instruction. Pre-K to third grade students may return to school in small groups beginning January 19th. Although this is not an ideal situation, it does provide students time to work with their teachers in person each day and have some peer relationships which are also important to the growth of children. Certain Special Education students may also return beginning the 19th. If your child qualifies to return, you will be notified by the school.

Athletics and Activities will start once again on January 18th in small groups of 4:1. Coaches and sponsors have been working to schedule these practices and activities. If you haven't been notified, please contact your school about how these will be scheduled. Each of the athletic groups and activity groups will meet in 4:1 pods after school. This includes athletics, band, choir, theatre, MESA, FFA, BPA, Rocketry, and maybe some I haven't noted here. You or your child will be notified how and when the first meetings will be held.

I have attached a brochure to this e-mail. Please take a look as it provides important information about the upcoming Special Bond Election that will begin on January 19th. The Special Bond Election is a "mail-in" election. Ballots will be mailed to all registered voters who reside in the Portales Municipal Schools District. The bond revenue raised by a successful result of this election is very important to maintain the capital infrastructure of the District. Funds generated by this bond will ensure that the District has the financial ability to replace roofs on buildings at our schools, replace end of life HVAC systems across the District, repair or build parking lots where needed, create a media center at Portales High School, upgrade athletic fields at Portales High School and Portales Junior High School, and begin a needed remodel at James Elementary School. Please note that passage of the bond question will not raise property tax rates. Past bonds have been used to upgrade and maintain our buildings so that they will last for years to come. You can see some the completed projects on the brochure. It is important that you support this bond election and be sure to vote when your ballot arrives. Ballots must be returned by February 16.

I believe the State and Public Education Department (PED) are moving in a direction to get schools started in the hybrid model across the state. On Thursday, January 14, our District completed a required COVID Reentry Readiness inspection by the Fire Marshall. Passing this inspection is the final step in the process to begin opening our schools for the hybrid model. The Public Education Department is currently completing guidance for reentry for higher elementary and secondary schools. It is my understanding that schools may be able to open even if they are in red counties. From conversations I have been involved in with the Secretary of Education and the Assistant Secretary who is the PMSD contact, I am optimistic that we will be able to get kids back to school sooner than later. PMSD will be ready to begin in hybrid operation within a week of being notified by PED that school may resume. Although the COVID positivity rate and

cases per hundred thousand will still be factors, it appears that a show of decline in those numbers will be factors in opening our schools.

Finally, I would like to let you know that the COVID vaccine is available for educators. I think it is good news that many of our staff have been getting the vaccination this week and will continue to do so over the next couple of weeks. Having staff vaccinated should provide for a much safer transition to the hybrid model of school reentry. As a reminder, the hybrid model will mean that schools will open with one-half of students coming two full days a week and the other half coming the next two days. Online content will still be delivered to students on the days that they are not in school. However, getting kids back to school to be with teachers and having the structure of a school day will help us to move kids forward in their education.

Thank you so much for your continued patience and support as we continue to move forward with this very unusual and trying school year.

Sincerely,

Johnnie S. Cain
Superintendent