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# Portage Area School District

## *“Home of the Mustangs”*

August 13, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

It is with a sad heart I write to inform you of yet another change in the reopening of the Portage Area School District for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

With cases of COVID-19 spreading across the country, the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and of Education, recently released a new recommendation to assist schools in their reopening efforts. Relying on county incident and positivity rates of diagnostic testing, that recommendation calls on schools within Cambria County to utilize either a blended hybrid or full remote learning model for educating our students.

Despite months of planning and preparing for a traditional return to school for students and staff, we find ourselves forced to reconsider that model. Knowing the importance of student to teacher interaction and student to student interaction, we are electing to move to a blended hybrid learning model.

That means students will complete parts of their learning in the traditional classroom and in an on-line learning environment. Our youngest students in Grades K through 8 will attend school five days per week with Wednesday being a half day. Students in Grades 9-12 will attend school two and a half days per week and have two days of on-line instruction. Half of each of these upper grades will attend school on Monday and Tuesdays with the other half attending school on Thursdays and Fridays. Grade 9 through 12 will attend school Wednesdays for half a day on alternating weeks. All Grade 9 -12 students will participate in on-line learning on days not scheduled for in-school instruction.

Through the blended hybrid learning model, class sizes will be reduced to meet the six-foot social distancing mandate placed on school districts with a moderate level of community transmission of COVID-19. While certainly not my preference, this blended hybrid learning model allows us to educate your child in the safest way possible.

Transitioning from a traditional school schedule to that of a blended hybrid learning model is no easy task given the short notice. To give the school district time to plan and adjust schedules we will extend summer break. Instead of returning August 27<sup>th</sup>, **the students' first day will now be Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>**. Staff members will be returning on Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup> to prepare for this new, exciting learning model.

Likewise, parents also need time to make accommodations for their child not being at school to receive their education, especially for those with younger students. Ensuring your child has access to the Internet is essential.

As we move forward during these uncertain times, please know we are doing everything within our powers to see that every child receives the education they deserve. Please check the school's web site at [www.portageareasd.org](http://www.portageareasd.org) for more details as they become available.

Sincerely,

Eric A. Zelanko, Superintendent of Schools

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