

Cultivate Achievement Series

Spotlight on Portales Municipal Schools, Portales, New Mexico

One of the biggest challenges school districts face is consistently raising educational achievement of historically underserved students such as students with disabilities, who are economically disadvantaged, and who are minorities. One exceptional district in New Mexico, Portales Municipal Schools, has managed to create an educational system that is capable of consistently closing these educational achievement gaps for all students.

Portales Municipal Schools is a mid-sized district in Eastern New Mexico. Serving just over 2,700 students, Portales Municipal schools is demographically similar to much of New Mexico, with a slightly higher percentage of Caucasian Students and Students with Disabilities, and a slightly lower percentage of Economically Disadvantaged and American Indian Students.

What really sets Portales apart from most other school districts in New Mexico, is their consistency in outperforming state averages in the English Language Arts (ELA) State Assessments, specifically when it comes to Students with Disabilities.

The chart below illustrates the remarkable success that Portales has achieved over the last five years. While the *All Students* and *Economically Disadvantaged* groups in Portales have consistently performed better than the state averages for the last five years, the *Students with Disabilities* subgroup has scored substantially better than their peers across New Mexico. When averaged over the last five years, there are nearly 11% in ELA and 6.5% in Math more *Students with Disabilities* reaching Proficient in Portales than in the rest of the state.



Portales Percentage of Students Proficient on the Annual State Assessment, as Compared to State Average of Same Subgroup

Year	ELA			Math		
	All Students	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	All Students	Economically Disadvantaged	Students w/ Disabilities
2015	+ 0.6	+ 2.5	+ 10	- 1.3	- 0.8	+ 3.2
2016	+ 3.6	+ 3.6	+ 17.9	+ 2.2	+ 3.1	+ 7.4
2017	+ 4	+ 4	+ 11	+ 1.0	+ 3.0	+ 9.0
2018	+ 2	+ 3	+ 10	+ 3.0	+ 3.0	+ 6.0
2019	+ 5	+ 5	+ 6	+ 2.0	+ 2.0	+ 7.0
Average	+ 3.04	+ 3.62	+ 10.98	+ 1.4	+ 2.1	+ 6.5

* Data adapted by Cultivate Education from New Mexico Public Education Department's 'Achievement Data' webpage

Portales Municipal Schools was kind enough to sit down and share with Cultivate Education about their journey of school improvement. Through their intentional efforts, Portales has followed an emerging pathway towards comprehensive school improvement and closing of achievement gaps. For schools that have been successful in achieving similar results, intentional and committed efforts fall into three distinct categories:

- **Cultivate Vision and Beliefs,**
- **Cultivate Leadership and Capacity, and**
- **Cultivate Instruction and Supports**



For over 10 years, Portales has been dedicated to aligning efforts in order to achieve success for ALL student.

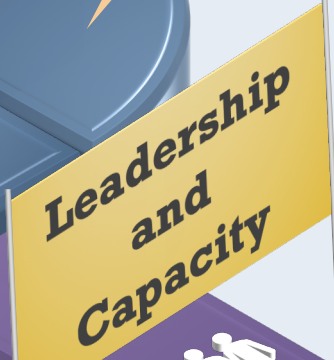


1. Create a Vision that Prioritizes Improved Achievement for all Students
Cohesion and stability in direction, professional development, hiring, funding, and coaching support has helped to create a district culture in which staff understand where they are headed and why, and are provided the tools to get every student there.

2. Align Resources to Achieve this Vision
Achieving this vision required resource allocation, scheduling changes, and strategically braiding funding streams such as Title I, Special Education Funding, and Comprehensive State Development Grant.



3. Recruit, Develop, Retain, and Sustain Talent
In an effort to keep the very best educators, Portales has promoted leaders from within by offering a wide variety of leadership positions such as administrators, instructional coaches, and interventionist. This has led to a veteran staff, who are highly trained, interconnected, knowledgeable, critical thinkers, and capable of achieving exceptional results for the community.



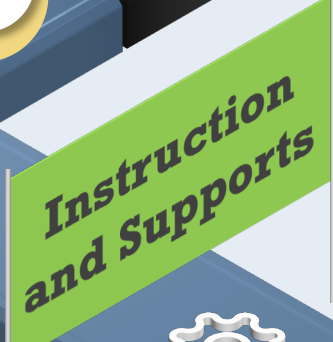
4. Build Collaborative Relationships and Empower Staff
Through a sophisticated and coordinated effort, all teachers are involved in horizontal (ex. grade level) and vertical (ex. content area teams) collaborative teams, which enables swift adjustments. Each team has representation on a district-level Instructional Council, which works to adjust curriculum and instructional practices as the needs of their students continuously evolve.



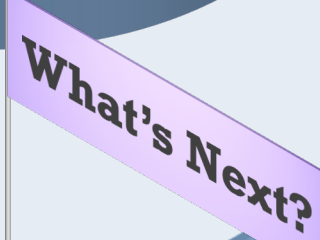
5. Instruction and Supports are Matched to Diagnosed Student Needs
There is an emphasis on strong, whole-group instruction, along with differentiation and small group instruction which is oriented around specific areas of student needs as derived by their data.



6. Deliberate, Data-Driven Approach to Instruction
Portales uses an wide range of data to inform instruction. From diagnostic and formative assessments, to normed and non-normed data sets. This diverse data set allows the staff to pinpoint where a student is struggling, and provide support through intensive instruction and differentiation.



Deepening school improvement efforts with a partnership with the New Mexico Public Education Department's Multi-Layered System of Supports, utilizing grants, and continue towards their long-term vision for educating ALL students in their community, and creating productive and successful citizens.



Spotlight on:

Portales Municipal Schools

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Learn More

To learn more about Portales Municipal School's journey, contact Sara Hunton at shunton@portalesschools.com.

For an in-depth analysis of your district's state assessment data, please visit Cultivate Education at www.cultivateeducation.org

Bibliography

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