



May 7, 2020

To the Princeton Day School Community,

While searching for a letter I had read but not yet responded to, I came across some notes I made in late February. Having just returned from a trip to California, where I attended a very successful alumni gathering hosted by Dr. Andy Fishmann '68 (recently featured in our news posts) and visited a member of the Princeton Country Day School Class of 1962 (whose generous gift to financial aid endowment we have put to immediate and good use), I was looking forward to spending a week in New York City during spring break and a bit of a break from time in the office.

Two months on, these notes seem written a lifetime ago, as we have marked time less with events celebrated and achievements won than we have with masks and screens and six-foot distancing. Not quite the *brave new world* of which Shakespeare wrote, it is, nonetheless, a world that has summoned more bravery from us than we needed in that bygone world or knew we had within us. Somewhat bowed and battered, we rise a bit each day, worrying less about the challenge that awaits us than we do a friend or neighbor in need. It is epic stuff; and we in it are heroic, each in our own way.

Just a bit ago I shared with you what I am working on with the faculty and staff, administrative colleagues, and the Board of Trustees. Informing all of our planning are two promises: Princeton Day School will **continue to place the health and safety of its community members above all other priorities**; and, through the efforts of an outstanding faculty, it will **engage its students in a program that challenges, supports, and reveals their talents and makes real their aspirations**.

End-of-Year Planning

Classes will conclude during the week of June 1, with final class days for Lower (June 1), Middle (June 2), and Upper School (June 3). The following week will be dedicated to completing the tasks of the year: grading and academic and advisor reports.

Three September Environments

My goal is opening school in September. As the outlook for the fall will change quickly and often in the coming months, it is incumbent upon us to plan for these three environments:

- Traditional Instruction: students and faculty return to class and resume their pre-pandemic lives
- Remote Instruction: students and faculty work together in a remote-learning environment
- Hybrid Instruction: as conditions allow, students and faculty work together in their Princeton Day School classrooms; as conditions warrant, they return to the remote-learning environment

As noted above, the decision about how and when we open school will be **guided by our commitment to the health and safety of our students and faculty.**

The Summer Student Experience

I am assessing the viability of our traditional Summer Programs offerings, although it is looking less and less likely that we will be able to offer a significant portion of the scheduled courses. However, we are creating the **Panthers Summer Session**, a catalog of on-line courses, seminars, and other offerings. A bridge from the close of one school year to the beginning of the next, it will be **offered free of charge to all current and new families.** As faculty and staff design a range of offerings, we'd like to know what programs you'd like to see. **Please complete this [brief survey](#), results of which will help guide our efforts.**

(Copy and paste the survey url below if you are unable to access it above:)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQQC8kqpXXyMD7oVRUxztmgufVR5x_QzZC2mNjNY2uwVQg/viewform?usp=sf_link

The Summer Faculty Experience

As noted above, Princeton Day School will prepare for each of three school scenarios for the fall. I cannot say which of these is most likely, although my guess is that we may cycle through each during the course of the next year. Based upon that assumption, I have a **set a core expectation of the faculty and staff: to be fully prepared to serve our students equally well in all three environments.** To do so, we must first define how we will teach in remote and hybrid environments. In truth, all the work of the summer flows from the ways in which we resolve this single consideration.

To achieve that goal, we are engaged in a broad-based professional development initiative, one that readies us to move among the three environments above. We will take what we have learned from

the last eight weeks and marry it to what we will learn this summer. I have charged the chair of Academic Affairs, Renée Price, and the division heads and department chairs to **define classroom expectations** for the fall; to **build a calendar of professional development opportunities**; and to make available a **catalog of resources** from which the faculty may choose.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a significant piece of the hybrid and remote-learning environments, as we want to make certain that our **technology enhances and expands our opportunities to engage our students in a meaningful, productive way**. Chief Information Officer Jon Ostendorf and his colleagues have begun an analysis of this critical component, and his outcomes will be informed by the answer Academic Affairs provides to the charge stated above: defining how will we teach in remote and hybrid environments.

The Finances of the School

While the **short-term financial health of the School is very strong**, this downturn is affecting Princeton Day School, just as it is affecting all of you. Having awarded more than \$5 million in need-based financial assistance, **the School remains committed to supporting its families** through this difficult period. Together with the Board of Trustees, I am thinking through **the implications of this economic reality** on the School's finances. As those implications and our responses to them become clearer, I will return to you with more information.

From Today to Tomorrow

I feel keenly the many sacrifices you have had to make in the time since we were last together. Opportunities have been narrowed, friendships interrupted, and celebrations delayed. The bright promise of spring has been dimmed, and, in that diminished light, it may be difficult to see where we are headed. Still, every step forward is a step toward renewal, to restoring our rightful place in the hallways and classrooms and playing fields and gardens of Princeton Day School. We are set now on that path and must travel it together. In doing so, we will arrive sooner and more fulfilled than may now appear possible. With me, leave today where it is and look to tomorrow. It will not disappoint.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PJS', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul J. Stellato
Head of School