

HOS Office Hours 10/6/2020

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to join HOS Office Hours. Olana will moderate our Q & A after my presentation, so please feel free to send her a question along the way. She will work hard to group them by theme so that we can get to as many questions as possible. If you have a question specific to your family, I urge you to be in touch directly with us so we can focus on clarifying questions during our Q & A.

Tonight, I want to focus on our teachers and the terrific job they are doing at PBS in the midst of doing school differently than ever before. I said back in June that this is about educating students. We are very fortunate to have a faculty whose passion, expertise, and lifework is all about educating students. Thank you to them. This focus on our teachers has three underlying intentions:

1. **We are all in this together:** Faculty, staff, students, families, school leaders, and school supporters. We have a duty to do everything we can to keep ourselves and each other safe.
2. **Assuming positive intent:** As Board Chair Nikhil Behl and I have discussed, we all want to assume positive intent. Our plan to reopen campus for K-5 is detailed. Perhaps it feels a bit prescriptive. Our planning represents many efforts and discussions by faculty-staff, school leadership, the Reopening School Task Force, and the Board. I want you to know that we weighed, discussed, and debated everything, including different approaches and differing points of view. As we reopen campus for K-5, we want our community to assume positive intent with all of our planning.
3. In the spirit of transparency, I want you to have an **increased understanding of curriculum delivery** in these new, different, and challenging circumstances.

So, with these three intentions in mind and as we anticipate reopening campus for K-5, it is important:

- To thank and acknowledge our K-5 faculty, who are working tirelessly to make on-campus instruction happen for our students in addition to our distance learning program.

- To thank and acknowledge our preschool and pre-K teachers, who have also been working tirelessly. They have some good insights and experiences since they have been doing school in-person since August 27.

I feel so fortunate to work with the PBS faculty. They are inventive, hard-working, and engaged. We have heard from many of you about how thankful you are for the faculty's care for each student, determination, hard work, and innovation.

The first note about our teachers tonight is that, like you, our teachers have concerns about their own health as well as the health of their own families. It is important for you to know this because it's the context within which teachers are teaching and planning. This is why it is essential to follow the good and important health practices we have put in place: Face coverings, hand washing, physical distancing, care and good judgment about travel and interactions outside the community, and more. We know that what we do off campus is equally important to the good health measures we are taking on campus. As one ELC teacher said, I've shared the "skills" (that we are teaching the children at school) with the parents and have informed them that it helps if these "skills" are practiced and supported both at school and at home.

Our goal and efforts supporting as safe a campus environment as possible is also why we have put in place a Surveillance Testing Plan. This plan supports the good health practices with an additional layer of protection. It reflects current science on COVID transmission dynamics. It applies a surveillance approach so we have regular information about the aggregate health of our community. And our plan balances what's practical for families with a robust approach for the school. Thank you, PBS families, for following this plan and for supporting our teachers with this additional layer of protection and information.

- One ELC teacher framed it like this: I was reminded that I can simultaneously feel many things about a situation. COVID-19 continues to pose real danger in our world and it's normal (and, arguably, good) to feel some apprehension about returning to school. I learned that I really missed being around children and I am the most happy I have been since we closed school...back in March ;). We're reminded [in the ELC] that children naturally have a "stretchy" mindset and they

are leading the way in flexibility and resiliency around what is necessary to remain at school.

- Another ELC teacher said this: The children have demonstrated an understanding of why we are wearing face coverings and physically distancing. They help remind each other of what they need to do to keep each other safe (for example, give bubble space, cover your nose). As a teacher, despite having to wear face coverings and physically distance, I feel deep connections with my students.

The first note is concern about health and safety. The second note about our teachers tonight is that they are doing a different job this year. This means we need to be upfront about our expectations. Our teachers have a high level of expertise for the craft of teaching, which also means they set high expectations of themselves and their students, too. I have heard from so many parents just how beautifully our teachers are delivering the curriculum this year in the midst of many obstacles, in addition to the fact that our K-5 distance learning program is only in Week 16 overall.

Now, as we turn towards the future, it can be hard to sustain high expectations in light of the marathon that this pandemic presents to us. We are shifting from one K-5 learning mode (full distance learning for everyone) to a blended model. This means that we are going to be focused on students who rotate on-campus for two weeks, then distance learning for one week. We are also going to be focused on those students who are 100% distance learners.

This is complex. It requires keeping many different students in different learning modes in mind at the same time. Our teachers are constantly going the extra mile to make this work. They are constantly adapting to evolving circumstances. They are constantly required to collaborate with each other because of the various learning modes they are delivering. This is the marathon that I mentioned, and it is hard and a lot of work to sustain.

Just yesterday, we got the results of the family questionnaire. Thank you for completing it over the weekend. The percentage of K-5 students doing on-campus

instruction dipped down to 72%. It was over 85% in early August. And the range of students in 100% distance learning is now as low as 3 students in one grade and as high as 20 in another grade. That's a big variance. The largest number of students in a color cohort is 13. All of this new information requires us to make sure we review our plans with this updated information in mind so there can be a thoughtful approach for each grade.

Indeed, it does not work to have one size fits all. And we also know that what works well in Kindergarten is not the best approach for 5th Grade, for example. Lunch and recess protocols for one size of student group would need to be honed for a different size of student group. This is not insurmountable, just want to have an appreciation that this new information is something we need to focus on. We are fortunate to have teachers who are experts in child development because it allows them to focus on these nuances. Focusing on these nuances comes with some stress because our faculty really wants to get it right.

Teaching this year is not easy. It feels like a different job -- different curriculum delivery, different health and safety protocols, different modes to deliver the program. I suspect that even our most veteran, experienced faculty members feel like it's their first year of teaching. I remember my first year of teaching -- being handed books with no syllabus and no scope and sequence. It was stressful, and I was worried that I would not live up to the expectations.

In the spirit of transparency, I want to name up front how we all can help each other by having some reasonable expectations:

- We will not compromise on safety measures.
- It is not a normal year because there are disruptions, changing circumstances, and various requirements for curriculum delivery.
- We need to be kind to each other by modeling our core value of kindness.
- Things will not always be as seamless as we would like.
- We cannot expect the same exact outcomes as in a normal year without COVID.
- And, finally, even though we will not compromise on safety, there may be other foot-faults or mistakes or imperfections. You can expect transparent

communication from us when we believe it is warranted. We need transparent communication from you, too.

The second note is about teachers doing a different job this year. The third note about our teachers tonight is a recognition that we are all doing our best, given the parameters and under the circumstances. This means we need a strong and healthy school-home partnership -- now more than ever.

One ELC teacher put it this way: I have seen our PBS community come together and genuinely support each other. I have also seen the benefit of teachers sharing their differing beliefs and experiences regarding Coronavirus. In these conversations, we have had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of each other's perspectives and then show compassion towards each other.

I have talked a lot about school-home partnership in the past at PBS.

Partnership:

- Assumes positive intent
- Recognizes that things will be bumpy and not always seamless, with a commitment to dialogue about it
- Means doing the best we can, given the parameters
- Emphasizes that how we communicate is as important as what we communicate.

[SLIDE PARTNERSHIP @ PBS]

Partnership @ PBS is evident in our Community Statement of Responsibility. The statement reflects our core value of community, as well as our duty to keep ourselves and each other safe. It is a framework to put good judgment into practice. I know that our community can exercise this good judgment, and that we recognize that our partnership this year means that what we do off campus in our everyday life is equality important to the health measures we are taking on campus. As one teacher said: In order for all of us to thrive and be the wonderful community we are, we need to be aware and compassionate towards the family members of the faculty and staff.

Thank you, teachers, for your partnership with PBS families.

Thank you, parents and guardians, for your partnership with PBS teachers.

In the spirit of partnership, and before we get to our Q & A, I want to mention an upcoming engagement opportunity. You will receive calendar information about grade-level coffees, or meetings, that will focus on delivering our curriculum in the blended academic model. You will have an opportunity to hear from Leslie, Jon, and teachers about what it is going to be like in “The Day in the Life of the PBS Student.”

- October 15 at 3:45: K and 5
- October 19 at 3:45: 1 and 4
- October 22 at 3:45: 2 and 3

These are good sessions for you if you want to know more about the program and how the timetable, or schedule, plays out in the blended academic model.

In the meantime, please continue using the Family Planner. It is how we help organize ourselves and our children. It’s the roadmap for the week coming up. We recognize that the home support required is different now that a year ago: Both for what we have been doing in 100% DL for everyone, and what we’re about to do for our blended academic model. Thank you for your partnership in providing this home support.

I want to close my talk with another insight from an ELC teacher: Today, I was interviewing the children about how their first weeks of school have been going and one question I asked was if there was anything that they didn’t like about school so far this year. [They] replied, “Nothing! I love everything about school.” Verbatim. I think it’s common for us as adults to mourn the loss of “normal” and the addition of extra precautions like physical distancing for our children. It was an adjustment to see everyone in face coverings, but when we check in with the children, they’re “Excited and happy!”; they’re happy to be together again.

As we continue to prepare for October 19 when we begin reopening campus for K-5, I want us to keep our students in mind. I want us to keep our faculty in mind. We are taking one step at a time, focused on all the important stuff, as well as learning, refining, and adjusting based on changing circumstances. A school like PBS -- learning, refining, and adjusting based on changing circumstances -- is the school we need at a time like this. Thank you for your partnership!