

## HOS Office Hours 8/4/2020

### Scott's Talking Points

Thank you for joining me again this evening as we return to HOS Office Hours. I missed you during the July hiatus, although that month went by very quickly. These engagement opportunities are very important to me and the rest of my team. Tonight's plan:

First: I will offer some opening thoughts to frame our evening.

Then I have a deck to share survey results → And highlight some essential points from yesterday's email to ensure understanding across the school.

Then some current thinking of PBS in the overall county context.

Then Q & A moderated by Olana. Please send Olana a private chat with your questions along the way. She works hard to combine similar questions so we can get to as many topics as possible.

Two suggestions as you consider your questions:

- First: Consider if it's best to ask a family specific question offline. You can send questions to your grade level directors, Leslie Richardson or Jordan McCarthy.
- Second: We are happy to answer clarifying questions about the schedule, our academics, or health and safety protocols. There is a lot of information that you've received since the start of the week, and as educators, we want to field your questions.
- It's important to have a good understanding and support a collective responsibility on behalf of our children.

Part of my complex summer was having two wisdom teeth extracted 12 days ago. It was a procedure that my dentist prioritized as part of my long-term dental health plan, so I needed to do it before school starts. I was impressed with the health and safety protocols at the oral surgeon's office. I have become an expert in making such an assessment. I recovered quite well, better than anticipated, allowing me actually to work on the day of and the day after.

Yet this procedure was a short pause in my unusual summer pace. As I reflected on the summer environment and background as we head into the fall, here's what came to mind:

- COVID is testing our **resilience and resolve** in every possible way.
- We have been "sheltered-in-place" → a quarantine that has required us to create **new ways to engage with each other**. This has been socially challenging, sometimes intense and exhausting. For many people, it has also been economically challenging.
- The political rhetoric about COVID and everything else is **highly charged and deafening**. It is easy to be upset by conflicting information -- information that we need to protect ourselves and our families. Everything is evolving, and it requires constant change of plans.
- At the same time, we are **rightly protesting** race, class, and systemic racism. There are structures that leave Black and other people of color vulnerable to disenfranchisement, abuse, violence, and this disease.
- And this summer has been **disappointing**. Many of us were not able to visit our loved ones, as hoped. I feel it personally because my parents are 88 and 83, and I missed my Easter trip and my summer trip. Even if I could get to Iowa, they are on full lockdown in

their retirement center. They have taken **only one car drive** since mid-March -- with a special exemption. I miss them.

- My team and I are experiencing ***fatigue because of a complex planning environment***. The goalposts are always being moved.
- I want to take this opportunity to thank the faculty, who has spent countless hours teaching Summer R&R, training, learning, and working on reopening school safely. Our staff works 12 months a year, but our faculty usually gets a break --> And this summer has been like no other in terms of work projects and commitments to PBS.
- **Indeed:** We have not been able to enjoy the fruits of our shelter-in-place diligence. Why? Because COVID has been moving in the wrong direction. July has initially been reported as one of the worst COVID months in California.
- So our ongoing isolation is loaded with ***emotion and anxiety and disappointment***.

The key takeaway from these reflections is this:

This is a very difficult time to be a ***child***. What a complex environment for childhood.

I have been an educator for over two decades, and what I know is this: ***PBS children need our support, care, and constancy now more than ever***.

My fellow PBS educators are top of mind, just like our students. PBS needs our faculty and staff now more than ever.

You as PBS families are top of mind, just like our students. PBS needs your healthy parenthood, now more than ever. It's a difficult time to be a parent. Know that and take care of yourselves.

***What a complex environment for childhood.***

As we think about this complex time to be a child, I want ***to frame our purpose around our beautiful PBS children***. I recognize there are many different views about starting school. I want you to know that I empathize with the concerns and anxieties that have been expressed. These are all valid. I have heard you. I hear your concerns, and I have listened carefully to your feelings about ongoing uncertainties, anxieties, and apprehensions.

At the same time, it is very important -- now more than ever -- that we ***stick together as a community*** → for the sake of our children. I feel fortunate to focus on your children together with you at PBS. I am thankful that our children can count on us for our continued care and support.

So, with this ***backdrop of childhood***, I want to share some slides. It is very important that we are all working with the same information.

## **[PRESENTATION DECK]**

Before our Q & A, I want to talk about PBS in the context of San Mateo County, California's Department of Public Health, and the mandated watch-list.

I suspect there may be two questions on your mind. First: What needs to happen for PBS to be allowed to pivot to the blended academic model? That model brings Kindergarten to 5th Grade families onto campus. This is a ***compliance question***.

Based on current state regulations, it's 14 consecutive days off the watch list. That is, state monitoring has a 14-day window, or tail, ***after*** a county goes off the watch-list. Caution:

Criteria for the watch list could change. And it is conceivable that the county could go on and off, making this a complex and moving target.

The second question is whether or not PBS would, in fact, proceed with that pivot to the blended academic model -- if allowed. We as a school are focused on a **decision-making framework** with a **criteria set** to address this question in a way that can absorb changing circumstances. It's important for a decision like this to be:

- Well-informed
- In the best interest of PBS as an institution
- Balanced and rational
- Well-timed and intentional

As context, it did not seem logical **for now** to make an initial timeline declaration about distance learning for K to 5. I say this because things are changing and shifting, so it seems **wise to approach this with a bit more caution and monitor a bit more first**.

I acknowledge the importance of providing predictability and continuity to our students, families, and teachers. We want to allow for sustainable and uninterrupted teaching and learning in the important first weeks of school. **We are evaluating with this in mind.**

As more context, the added issue for elementary schools is the waiver option. An outline was released yesterday, which initially confirms what I said about the process being complex, lots of things to pull together, hard to predict the outcome and timeline, and potentially cumbersome and not straightforward. In fact, one county in the Bay Area has already stated that there will be no waivers given current conditions. We are investigating and working on it, talking directly with county officials, and collaborating with other elementary independent schools in San Mateo County.

To conclude where I began, I want to frame our purpose around our beautiful PBS children → Especially since it is such a difficult time to be a child. I think that PBS is an awesome and important place to spend childhood, more so now than ever. It is essential that we **stick together as a community** → For the sake of our children. Let's focus on our children together. Let's make sure our children can count on us for our continued care, support, and academic engagement.

Thank you for always engaging with me and my team about our children.

Turning now to Olana to launch our Q & A session