

Hello Palmetto Scholars Academy Community!

The PSA Board and Administration would like to provide an update to you regarding the plans for the 2020/2021 school year. We are going through an unprecedented state of affairs with the COVID-19 pandemic. As you are aware, there is a tremendous amount of available information regarding the situation. To navigate all of this information and provide the Board with accurate and actionable data in order to ensure the safety of all members of our community as well as demonstrate compliance with all district, state, and federal requirements, the Re-Entry Sub Committee of the Board was formed. The committee consists of multiple stakeholders in our PSA Community. Each person has brought his/her expertise to the committee to ensure the best plan for PSA is developed. Not only have they been tasked with a large scale project, but one with a rapidly approaching deadline of the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. At last week's Board Meeting, the committee made recommendations, which the Board approved. There remains much work to do over the next several weeks, and the Board and Administration would like to recognize the extraordinary effort already put forth by the committee for their hard and diligent work.

The first and most important recommendation of the Re-Entry Sub Committee is to focus efforts to begin the school year using a virtual teaching/learning model that utilizes best practices in gifted education through the first quarter. This recommendation was largely due to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) recommendation that schools follow the published new incident case rate as reported by the South Carolina Department of Health. The guidance includes the following:

DHEC Rating	Department of Education Response
Low	In-Person learning permitted with Social Distancing measures implemented accommodation for increased absences
Medium	Hybrid model of In-Person and Online learning with Social Distancing measures implemented and accommodation for significant and prolonged absences
High	Campus closed, Full Distance Learning with all classes online

The current DHEC new incident case rate for Berkeley, Dorchester, and Charleston Counties are all well above the "high" threshold and based on the best evidence we have right now will not be falling below the threshold in time for our plan for 2020/2021 to be submitted to the South Carolina Public Charter School District by August 1st. The data is updated on a biweekly basis and we will continue to work towards our goal of eventually resuming in-person learning

By approving the Committee recommendations to focus efforts to begin the school year using a virtual teaching/learning model now, this allows the sub-committee and PSA to focus current efforts to craft the best possible gifted learning environment moving forward given the very real time limitations and safety considerations. The educators at PSA did a phenomenal job of adjusting to the disruption of having to shift from in-person to online overnight. Intentional planning takes time and unfortunately that did not exist in March. The PSA Faculty is working hard to ensure that the beginning of the 2020-

2021 school year is the best that it can be! The input from surveys given to faculty and families is being taken into consideration as planning occurs for the new school year. We want to assure you that the virtual model we implement in the first quarter will be significantly different from what you experienced in the spring. The Board is committed to funding all necessary software, tools, and training for our educators while the Administration and educators are working on implementing best practices for online education to ensure that the experience your student has in the first quarter is fantastic. The Re-entry Sub Committee, Board, and Administration continue to work on developing strategies for all COVID pandemic learning and more information will be conveyed in a timely manner.

Every single one of us is facing unknowns at this time. We are working hard to seek your input as a community, evaluate resources, and develop the plan that best meets the needs of the PSA Community as a whole. Please email questions directly related to PSA's response to Covid-19 to covidquestions@psaschool.org. While this is certainly not how any of us would like to begin a school year, we are excited for a different challenge. We are confident that PSA's program will be well-planned and well-implemented. In addition, we are looking forward to meeting this challenge in the PSA way—with excitement and creativity based on the data and research.

Sincerely,

The PSA Board of Directors and Administration