



# RETURN+LEARN PHASE II



## FAQ

### FAQ regarding Return+Learn Phase II Reopening Plan

Updated December 4, 2020

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is preparing for a reopening in January 2021, offering three instructional models: site-based virtual learning, face-to-face, and Atlanta Virtual Academy. The District continues to work with health experts, staff, families, partners, and others as it prepares for this reopening.

## PLAN

### 1. What are Atlanta Public Schools' reopening factors and considerations?

Our decision making for reopening will be driven by two key areas:

- Levels of community transmission of COVID-19.
- Our ability to implement health and safety mitigation strategies as recommended by the CDC.

The key considerations for reopening include the data regarding community transmission of COVID-19 but that will not serve as the only indicator. Given the current surge in COVID cases, APS will also keep stakeholders informed of any need to adjust for January 2021.

### 2. Has APS been following guidance from the CDC?

Yes. The CDC recently provided updated guidance on October 29, 2020, and APS continues to follow that guidance. This includes promoting behaviors that reduce COVID-19's spread (securing additional PPE including face shields in addition to masks for teachers, specialized PPE for special populations, securing nurses for every school, etc.). We are also maintaining healthy environments in our buildings (facilities preparations, Legionnaire testing, etc.).



We are maintaining healthy operations (added portable sinks to further increase hand hygiene in campus spaces where sinks were not available), and preparing for when someone gets sick (training staff and securing isolation/CARE rooms for every school). APS is poised to implement the needed strategies and have expanded them to include COVID testing.

### 3. Why is APS planning for a reopening now?

APS is considering a number of factors in planning now for a reopening in January 2021:

- Current research regarding children and community spread in schools
- APS Comprehensive Covid-19 Testing Protocol (in partnership with Health Care Experts)
- Future vaccination efforts
- Risks and well-being considerations of students for not reopening
- Effective launch of **in-person targeted intervention supports**, which have allowed us to evaluate our mitigation strategies and strengthen health and safety protocols.

### 4. What is the District's plan for reopening in January 2021?

To fully and completely understand the course ahead, let's review where we have been so far in 2020-2021.

- The district began Day One – August 24 – by opening with 100% virtual learning.
- In November 2020, APS provided expanded academic, wellness, and engagement interventions across all schools to address the neediest students, as well as in-person learning opportunities for students with disabilities, enrolled in low-incidence programs.
- Currently, the district is moving toward offering in-person learning options for students to attend classes in their local school while also maintaining the virtual offerings.

While APS will operate virtually until the end of the semester, we are continuing preparations for the next phase of our Return+Learn plan. Our January 2021 reopening plan will provide three instructional delivery models: 1) Site-Based Virtual Learning, 2) Face-to-Face, and 3) Atlanta Virtual Academy.



## 5. How does Atlanta Virtual Academy operate?

Atlanta Virtual Academy (AVA), our comprehensive PK-12 virtual program, is designed to provide students with an engaging model of instruction that includes live virtual instruction, interactive lessons, and participation in a thriving virtual community. Students can remain enrolled in their zoned neighborhood school and still engage with school sports. AVA will now offer a virtual option for PK-5 students.

Atlanta Virtual Academy has a full-time counselor and Academic Support Specialist. AVA's Academic Support Specialist will assist the school counselor in preparing the student for online instruction and develop a planned program of study. This program of study will guide the students from start to graduation. Additionally, AVA's counseling staff provides academic as well as Social and Emotional Learning support services. Our wraparound services are inclusive to ensure we support the whole child.

Students will have 24/7 access to their online courses and parents can expect to have regular communications sent via email that outlines student progress. A partnership between AVA and families is critical to ensure student success for the full-time virtual student.

Atlanta Virtual Academy offers a complete suite of virtual courses. AVA Jr. (Elementary) will offer core content online and elective courses will be taught by APS teachers. AVA provides middle school students with all core courses, world language, health, and PE. AVA offers high school students core courses, World Language, Health, PE, Personal Fitness, Honors, AP, CTAE, and a variety of elective courses. The flexibility of virtual instruction allows for any time, anyplace, and anywhere learning.

## 6. What can I expect from your AVA Teacher?

Teachers will provide virtual support and live instruction via the Live Virtual Learning Classroom. Students who need additional support are just a click away from their online instructor. Additionally, teachers will use a multi-tiered approach to support student learning and ensure academic success. Teachers will conduct virtual huddle sessions with students to create community and



momentum in their online courses. For our elementary students, the AVA, Jr. teachers will provide daily synchronous learning sessions.

## PROCESS

APS is planning for a phased-in approach to reopening. This approach includes teacher preparation days and bringing students back in a phased-in approach beginning with PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence – PreK -12) on January 25; grades 3-5, 6, 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> on February 1; and grades 7, 8, 11, and 12 on February 4.

### 7. Where can I find the Intent to Return Declaration form?

You can access the Intent to Return form here: <https://dig.apsgraphs.com/ITR/>

### 8. What is the deadline for completing the Intent to Return Declaration form?

Beginning on December 3, 2020, parents will have the option to select a learning model for their students for the third quarter of the academic school year. The dates for the third quarter are January 19 through March 15. The deadline for the form is December 21, 2020.

Form responses may be changed until the declaration period closes. Parents do not have to go back and edit the form if they made a selection earlier this year that they wish to maintain. Parents who do not complete this form by the deadline will remain in their current instructional learning model (virtual instruction with your local school or Atlanta Virtual Academy).

### 9. What are Asynchronous or Independent Learning Days on Wednesdays?

All Wednesdays are Asynchronous (independent learning) beginning December 2nd until the end of the semester-May 2021. Activities on Asynchronous Wednesdays include:

- Teachers/Staff- Professional Learning Student Intervention
- TeacherPlanning and prep for simultaneous teaching
- Students - Independent learning and intervention

Also, health and operations protocols will occur on Wednesdays:



- District- Meal Delivery
- Deep Cleaning
- COVID Testing (ongoing)

## 10. What is the process for students returning in January 2021?

APS is developing a phased-in approach for reopening district schools for January 2021. This approach maintains the three instructional delivery models and includes the following options: **1) Site-Based Virtual Learning, 2) Face to Face and 3) Atlanta Virtual Academy.**

The phased-in approach includes teacher preparation days and phasing in elementary students first followed by secondary students. Students will be phased in as follows:

- January 25<sup>th</sup> - PreK-2 and Special Education (Low Incidence -PreK-12) students in-person learning option begins
- February 1<sup>st</sup> - Grades 3-5, 6, 9, and 10 in-person learning option begins
- February 4<sup>th</sup> - Grades 7, 8, 11, and 12 in-person learning option begins

## 11. What is the elementary reopening Plan student schedule?

Students will be phased in as follows:

- January 25 - PreK-2 and Special Education (Low Incidence PK-5) in-person learning option begins
- January 27 - Asynchronous (Independent Learning) Wednesday
- February 1 - Grades 3-5 in-person learning option begins
- February 3 - Asynchronous (Independent Learning) Wednesday

## 12. What is the Special Education (Low Incidence 6-12) Reopening Plan-Student Schedule

Students will be phased in as follows:

- January 25 - Special Education (Low Incidence 6-12) in-person learning option begins
- January 27 - Asynchronous (Independent Learning) Wednesday
- February 3 - Asynchronous (Independent Learning) Wednesday



## 13. What is the Middle and High School Reopening Plan Reopening Plan-Student Schedule

Students will be phased in as follows:

- February 1 - Grades 6, 9, and 10<sup>th</sup> in-person learning option begins
- February 3 - Asynchronous (Independent Learning) Wednesday
- February 4 - Grades 7, 8, 11, and 12<sup>th</sup> in-person learning option begins

## 14. Will school schedules change in January 2021?

Remember that Wednesdays are Asynchronous or Independent Learning Days. A reopening in January 2021 would mean returning to our traditional school hours on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.:

- Elementary 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- Middle 9:05 a.m. - 4:05 p.m.
- High 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

## 15. What is the Atlanta Capacity Dashboard?

The Capacity Dashboard tool provides models for our school and district leaders on how classrooms and shared campus spaces can be configured to meet the social (physical) distancing recommendations provided by the CDC. The tool features the following components:

- Classroom Layout Generator Tool
- Classroom Capacity Model
- District Summary
- Cluster Summary
- Capacity Detail
- The Capacity Dashboard can be viewed here:  
<https://www.cannondesign.com/atlanta-capacity-dashboard/>

Schools with a 60% or greater return for in-person instruction will have the flexibility to modify the instructional model.

- Flexibility is required to implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies and safety protocols.





- Parents should anticipate the possibility of hybrid schedules for schools with a return for in-person capacity greater than 60%.

## 16. What are the options for partner and charter schools?

The district's charter and partner schools must implement in-person learning reopening plans that are approved by the district and that follow COVID-19 mitigation protocols that are the same or similar to the district's. Families of students in charter and partner schools will hear directly from their schools as their plans may differ.

## PEOPLE

## 17. What does the People aspect of the District's reopening plan refer to?

People involves providing our teachers and staff with the guidance, work conditions, and information on health and safety measures that will prepare them for a successful reopening in January.

## 18. When are APS employees expected to return to work in person?

School-based staff return to work in person on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, to prepare for in-person learning according to the proposed schedule (4 days per week in person, Wednesdays virtual). District office staff return to work in person on Monday, January 11, 2021 with work schedules to be established by each department's supervisor.

We have implemented checklists for school and district office staffing for reopening, outlined COVID-19 exposure reporting procedures, and created workplace safety procedures.

## 19. Are there options for employees unable to return to work?

Employees who are unable to report to work in person may be eligible for a telework arrangement, Family Medical Leave, and/or use of personal/sick leave based on federal law and local policy.



The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) is set to expire on December 31, 2020. The District's telework and leave procedures are being amended accordingly.

Therefore, all employees seeking telework for the second semester must apply or re-apply for telework between December 4, 2020, and January 4, 2021. For more information on teleworking, including how employees can make telework requests and what constitutes a legitimate reason for granting those requests, visit <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/teleworking>.

## APSProtects

### 20. What is the District's Comprehensive COVID-19 Testing Strategy?

In collaboration with public health officials, community partners, local universities, and healthcare organizations, APS is developing a comprehensive COVID-19 testing strategy. Testing will be made available for the following:

- Students, teachers, and staff with symptoms identified through health screening protocols
- Students, teachers, and staff who have had contact with someone with COVID-19 in the school or workplace
- All students, faculty, and staff with possible exposure in the context of outbreak settings

### 21. How is APS protecting its students and staff?

#### Screening Measures

Students, staff, contractors, and volunteers will be screened upon entry at all buildings by trained staff, to include temperature assessment. APS will strictly adhere to illness guidelines.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

APS will follow PPE guidelines recommended by DPH and CDC to assist schools and other locations. The following items will be made available in classrooms:

- Sanitizer station
- Disinfectant spray bottle
- Paper Towels





- Face-masks (limited for replacement)

APS will procure and distribute personal protective equipment for students and employees to use when in buildings (a mask, hand sanitizer, non-contact thermometers, and disposable gloves). All PPE will be purchased centrally and delivered to locations before students and employees restart school and work.

- Care Room
- Mask
- Face Coverings
- Gloves
- Gowns
- Face Shields
- Sanitizer
- Disinfectant
- Access to water and soap

Learn more at [www.atlantapublicschools.us/apsprotects](http://www.atlantapublicschools.us/apsprotects).

## 22. What are the health screening procedures?

All students and employees will be required to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose at all times. Daily cleaning protocols will be established to ensure that workplaces, workstations, equipment, and facilities are clean. Hand sanitizer stations will be installed in common areas.

Students and employees will also participate in daily temperature screening and complete a daily questionnaire if they are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 (parents will be asked to assess students before sending them to school each day).

The results of the self-assessment will determine if the individual should go to school/work or remain at home. Conducting regular screenings for symptoms and ongoing self-monitoring will help reduce exposure and limit the risk of spreading the disease.