



FAQs regarding Intent to Return Declaration as part of Return+Learn Phase II in Atlanta Public Schools

Updated 10.2.2020

Atlanta Public Schools recently announced that the district will be starting a return to face-to-face instruction. As part of the process, APS needs all parents and guardians to review and complete the Intent to Return Declaration Form. The form is available at: <https://dig.apsgraphs.com/ITR/>

Superintendent Lisa Herring plans to present Phase II of the Return+Learn reopening plan at the Board meeting on Monday, October 5. At this time, APS plans to begin allowing certain students to return for face-to-face instruction on Monday, October 26, which is the start of the second nine weeks of school. Families are asked to submit their choices for their students to return for face-to-face instruction or resume virtual instruction for the rest of the first semester.

Why do I need to complete the Intent to Learn Declaration form? How will you use the data? What if I don't complete the form?

We need all of our families to complete the form so that we have accurate numbers about students planning a return to in-person instruction. This data is critical in creating schedules, assigning students, and developing plans for the rest of the school year.

The form defaults to virtual instruction; therefore, if a parent declines to fill out the form before the October 12 deadline, the form will indicate the student(s) will remain in the virtual instructional model they are currently participating, whether it is with their school or with Atlanta Virtual Academy, for the remainder of the first semester.

After the deadline, the district will ask all families again about their intent to return before the start of the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year on January 19, 2021.

Which students are being considered for a return to in-person learning first?

With the phased approach of Return+Learn, the district identified students who would likely return first to in-person learning if COVID-19 numbers trend down and allow for some form of face-to-face instruction within our schools. Below are the students who would likely have the opportunity to return first during our next phase:

- Students from PreK through fifth grade in the district's traditional schools

- Students in Special Education Low Incidence classrooms, which includes students attending regional, self-contained classes as follows:
 - Preschool Special Education
 - Autism Functional and Social Communication (all grades)
 - Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (all grades)
 - Severe/Profound Disabilities (all grades)
 - Deaf/Hard of Hearing Self-Contained (all grades)
 - GNETS (Georgia Network Educational Therapeutic Services – Oglethorpe Campus)

My student doesn't fall into any of these categories. Should I fill out the Intent to Return Declaration Form?

We ask that all parents complete the form even if their students are not a part of this initial phase to return to in-person learning. If you do not complete this form by October 10, your student(s) will remain in their current instructional learning model (virtual instruction with your local school or Atlanta Virtual Academy). Responses may be changed until the declaration period closes on October 12. For students who may have an opportunity to return during a later phase in the reopening plan, we plan to ask them to submit their intent to return forms again.

Can families choose different options for different students?

Yes. Families can choose the best option they see fit for each individual student.

When can we expect these students to return to in-person learning?

We continue to monitor the health status of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and DeKalb County. At this time, we do not plan to bring any students back for face-to-face instruction before Monday, October 26, which is the start of the second nine weeks of school.

Will we know who our children's teachers are before we declare our intent to return?

Atlanta Public Schools cannot guarantee that families will know their children's exact teachers before completing the declaration form. The district is currently surveying teachers across the school system to understand their intent on returning to in-person instruction or remaining in a virtual capacity. Classes and schedules will be determined based on the numbers of educators, as well as students, who choose to return for in-person learning.

What instructional models and timelines are under consideration?

The instructional model and amount of time for in-person learning are being finalized, but the district is considering an approach toward in-person instruction that involves three additional stages. NOTE: For each phase, virtual instruction will continue to be available for those students who have not explicitly declared their intent to return for in-person instruction.

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For Phase 2, the district plans to bring students in grades Pre-K through 5th grade and those in Special Education Low Incidence classrooms back for four days of in-person instruction starting Monday, October 26. All other students would remain in site-based virtual learning.

For Phase 3, the district, starting on November 16, will bring in students from grades 6 through 12 for four days of in-person learning.

For Phase 4, the district, starting on January 19, 2021, will resume five days of in-person instruction for all students.

For more details about each instructional model, please click [here](#).

Return + Learn: Phase Two Plan

What are my options? As a parent, you will be asked to choose one of the following options that best suits your and your student's needs:



Designed for families who don't feel comfortable sending their children back to school but ultimately plan to rejoin their enrolled school in the future. Based on the number of parents who choose this option, the local school will work to provide a virtual option for students.



Designed for families who feel comfortable with returning their students to a face-to-face, in-school environment. It provides the opportunity for students to return to campus and interact directly – but safely – with their teachers and classmates.



Designed for families who wish to remain in the virtual environment regardless of shifts in delivery models at the local school.

Will teachers teach in-person and virtual simultaneously?

There is a possibility that teachers will be teaching both in-person and virtually. The district will not make such a determination until it has received all of data from Intent to Return Declaration forms.

What's the benefit of "losing a day of instruction?"

Although the proposed phased approach involves four days of in-person instruction, students will not lose the fifth day of school. This day will be used for independent study, individualized instruction, and interventions as necessary.

What about other students? What happens to students from grades 6 through 12?

As part of Phase II of Return+Learn, all other APS students will remain in virtual environments. In accordance with public health data and the feasibility of school operations, we will then move to transition other students back into the face-to-face environment and eventually resume full school operations in future phases.

Please note: 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 which are the same or similar to the district's. Therefore, once a district decision about the transition to Phase II is announced, families of students in charter and partner schools should expect soon thereafter to hear directly from their schools as their plans may differ.

What other steps will APS take to develop these plans?

Our Schools and Academics Team continues to develop the specifics of our Phase II reopening instructional plans for each grade band (elementary, middle school, and high school) by working collaboratively with school leaders, teachers, and other staff to develop hybrid and face-to-face instructional plans.

Currently, we are revisiting our initial plans to address potential changes given our experiences from the first few weeks of school along with feedback from our building leaders, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.

Do schools and clusters have the autonomy to select their reopen model?

No, they do not have the autonomy to select, but they will have the autonomy to build the class schedule using the data collected from the intent form.

What's the plan for COVID-19 outbreak after students return for in-person instruction?

When a student, teacher, or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and has exposed others at the school, classrooms and office areas may need to close temporarily as students, teachers, and staff isolate, and the area is cleaned. In consultation with the local public health department, the school district may also decide whether school closure is warranted, including the length of time closure may be necessary.

In the event of an identified positive case of COVID-19, all close contacts (as identified by case investigation in collaboration with health services) must be advised to quarantine until 14 days after last contact with the identified individual.

If a close contact becomes ill and is diagnosed with COVID-19, they must remain excluded for their isolation period and until told they are no longer contagious (following the guidelines from the CDC and local departments of public health).

In regards to an actual outbreak, the Georgia Department of Public Health has stated: “A COVID-19 outbreak in a school setting is defined as: Two or more laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases among students or staff with illness onsets within a 14-day period, who are epidemiologically linked (e.g., have a common exposure or have been in contact with each other), do not share a household, and were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting during standard case investigation or contact tracing.”

If an outbreak is confirmed, schools closures will be implemented for the timeframe designated by local public health officials.

What steps has APS taken to ensure school buildings are safe?

The goal has always been to strive for a return to in-person instruction as soon as the public health data indicates that it is safe for students, teachers, and staff to return to school buildings. From the start, our Facilities Department has been diligent in cleaning, sanitizing, and preparing our classrooms and buildings for in-person teaching and learning. Some of these efforts include:

- Cleaning and sanitizing our schools and buildings
- Adding hand sanitizing stations in common areas
- Installing wall-mounted sanitizer and paper towel stations in each core classroom
- Adding disinfectant towels in each classroom
- Increasing pre-occupancy and post-occupancy HVAC run times from two hours to three hours
- Initiating a weekly water flushing plan during building low occupancy periods
- Conducting high touch common area wipe downs for at least two cycles daily and monitoring hand soap and paper towel stocks throughout the day
- Conducting facility wipe downs during nightly cleaning
- Implementing restorative cleaning operations conducted post-COVID-19 exposure
- Taking water fountains offline and installing water bottle coolers

Additionally, teachers and staff have been working in our buildings – while maintaining social distancing and adhering to proper health standards – so that classrooms will be ready for students.

What are ongoing measures APS is taking to safely return students to school?

Nothing is more important than safeguarding the health, well-being, and safety of our APS students, families, and staff. All of our decision-making is and will remain, grounded in the public health data and the associated guidance issued by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Georgia Department of Education. Our plans are designed with flexibility in mind so we are well-positioned to pivot our decisions if necessary due to changing public health guidance.

Health and Reopening Updates and Plans

UPDATED: 10/2/2020 5:30 p.m.

When APS announced that the district would start the year with a virtual instruction model for at least the first nine weeks, the district explained that Superintendent Lisa Herring would provide health data checkpoints every month to guide whether APS would remain virtual or move into some form of a face-to-face instruction or a hybrid model.

Superintendent Herring presented the first checkpoint at the Atlanta Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, September 8. The full presentation is available at www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/64352.

The final Phase II reopening plans will be presented during the regular scheduled Board meeting on Monday, October 5, 2020, which can be watched live or on-demand on the [Board's Facebook page](#).