

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: December 18, 2020

Subject: Happy Holidays, COVID-19 Screening Protocols, and Return+Learn Reminders

The holidays have arrived! But they come upon us this year with mixed emotions – joy with sorrow, togetherness amid isolation, and hope with tinges of concern.

The holidays will be tough for the Herring family this year. As you may know, my father – the Rev. Wallace B. Herring, Sr. – passed in the days before the break. The loss of this compassionate man with unwavering faith has brought unbearable sadness upon my family and our friends.

This man with his love, kindness, and grace greatly informed the person I would become. That’s why, amid my grief, I hold onto so many blessings about my father. One of the most recent memories that stands out was when he gave the invocation when I officially became superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools this July. I embrace and cherish that moment and remain ever thankful to have that memory and thousands more.

In these moments, I sometimes feel alone in my heartache and grief. But, your messages of comfort and condolences have meant so much. It helped remind me that I’m hardly the only one feeling sorrow, isolation, and concern. Amid pandemic and protest, so many of us have lost loved ones and friends, experienced injury and harm, and felt alone and forgotten.

That’s why we need to bind together as a school district and as a community – more than ever – to not only get through the holiday break – but create momentum and motivation for a new year. As I wrote to you earlier, a new year may have its own challenges – reopening our schools and buildings among them – but it also brings new hope. With your continued support and engagement, we shall rise up and overcome.

In that spirit, let me provide a few important updates and reminders.

COVID-19 Screening Protocols

As we near the date when students who have elected to return for face-to-face learning will be entering schools and buildings, we must make you aware of the current student health screening protocols. If your child will return for in-person learning, you are encouraged to get into the habit

of daily screening your student for health symptoms. For the safety of your child and others, please consider the following as an indication of when you should keep your child at home.

Has your child had any signs or symptoms of a fever in the past 24 hours such as chills, sweats, or an elevated temperature of 100.4 F or greater? Has your child taken fever-reducing medication within the last 24 hours or experienced symptoms such as a new cough, shortness of breath, chest tightness, sore throat, nasal congestion, body aches, runny nose, loss of taste and/or smell, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or fever/chills/sweats?

If the answer to any of these questions is YES, **STOP!** The APS Department of Health Services advises that you keep your child at home, and **immediately contact your child's health care provider for the next steps**. Also, please make sure to contact the school administrator and school nurse for guidance on when your child can safely return to school.

Additionally, you should also keep your student home and notify your student's school and school nurse if your child has:

- Engaged in close contact in the last 14 days with someone with a diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Taken a COVID-19 test and is awaiting results based on potential exposure to a known case or other high-risk exposure.
- Taken a COVID-19 test and is awaiting results based on mild symptoms or overall feeling unwell.

Isolation Guidance:

If you or your child are diagnosed with COVID-19, please notify your child's school and the school nurse. Your child will NOT be able to attend school or school activities in-person until the recommended isolation period has been completed. The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) requires isolation for individuals diagnosed with COVID-19. You may find detailed DPH Isolation Guidance [here](#).

Quarantine Guidance

If your child has been around a person who has been confirmed as having COVID-19, you must follow quarantine guidance from public health officials. DPH recommends a quarantine timeframe of 14 days for anyone who has been in close contact with persons who have tested positive for COVID-19. During the quarantine period, your child will **NOT** be able to attend school or school activities in-person until the recommended quarantine period has been completed. You will find detailed DPH Quarantine Guidance [here](#).

APS has compiled information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Board of Health, and other health officials on its Coronavirus webpage at www.atlantapublicschools.us/coronavirus. Just scroll down the page and you will find those resources.

Immunizations:

This is also a good time to remind you about immunizations. Immunization compliance is a state requirement, and your child must be up to date with immunizations or have a valid religious or medical exemption on file to be eligible to participate in face-to-face instruction.

Please contact your school nurse with questions. For more information on required vaccinations or locations where your child may receive a vaccination, visit the APS website at www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/61646.

Thank you, in advance, for taking the necessary steps to help ensure that all students and staff members remain safe and healthy.

Intent to Return Declaration Forms Due Monday, December 21

I want to remind everyone that the deadline to update or complete your [Intent to Return Declaration Form](#) is Monday, December 21. Remember, on this form you are choosing a learning option through the third quarter which ends March 19th. You will have an opportunity to update your choice for the fourth quarter at a later date. A variety of resources are included on our APS Return + Learn Phase II [page](#), and we will continue to update our [FAQs](#) to include your questions.

If you submitted a response during the previous intent-to-return declaration period, you may use this form to update your response. Remember, if you don't complete the form by Monday, December 21st, your student (s) will be placed into an instructional model based on your previous declaration or will remain in their current instructional learning model (virtual instruction with your local school or Atlanta Virtual Academy). You can change your response until the declaration period closes on December 21st. More details are available on the [Declaration Form page](#).

January 2021 Reopening Update

For those of you considering the in-person option for your child, you may be curious about what in-person instruction will look like in the classroom. I can tell you that principals are planning now and need the data from the Intent to Return Declaration Form to understand exactly how it will look. Principals do not know at this time if your student will have the same teacher or if their teacher will be virtual with an assistant in the classroom. Here's what you can expect inside the classroom:

- Everyone will be required to wear a mask for the duration of the school day
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available in each classroom
- Desks and chairs will be arranged to support social distancing recommendations

More district-wide safety measures can be found at [APSprotects](#).

Here's what you can expect during a lesson:

- Instruction in classrooms may include simultaneous teaching as teachers may have to work with both in-person and virtual learners
- Instruction in classrooms will consist of a combination of hands-on and technology-based activities

- All students and teachers will use their own instructional supplies and laptops/tablets as there will be no sharing of instructional materials
- All classroom teachers will have access to an interactive whiteboard
- All students and classroom teachers will have access to MyBackpack, Gsuite, Zoom, and other instructional technology platforms

We strive to keep you fully informed as we prepare to return. Here is a summary of what information parents will know prior to returning and what information will not be known prior to returning.

What Parents Will Know Prior to Returning	What Parents Will Not Know Prior to Returning
Safety guidelines <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health screening process 2. Mitigation measures (PPE, Social Distancing, Hand Hygiene) 3. Care Rooms (Isolation Rooms) 4. Cleaning schedules 	Teachers assigned to their students (some current teachers may change based on conditions)
Transportation routes by school	Teacher instructional model for their student (face-to-face, simultaneous teaching while virtual)
District procedures for reporting and managing COVID cases	Percentage of students electing to return for face-to-face instruction
School schedules - length of the instructional day, start and end time	Final instructional model for schools that exceed the 60% intent to return
School operations - school routines and procedures (arrival, dismissal, transitions, lunch procedures, etc.)	
Courses students are currently taking - they will continue to have access to those courses	
Purpose and function of asynchronous Wednesdays	
Meal delivery - day and times for distribution	
Nutrition (meals provided to students)	
Recess plans for schools	

Attendance procedures for synchronous and asynchronous days	
After school care providers and schedule	
Expectation for students to bring their devices each day of instruction	
Intervention plans to address learning loss	

Key Dates

As you know, APS has developed a phased-in approach for reopening schools as we prepare for January 2021. I wanted to remind you about several key dates currently in place. These 2021 dates include teacher preparation days leading up to reopening with the option for in-person learning.

- Monday, January 4 – Teacher Professional Work Day (no school for students)
- Tuesday, January 5 - First day back for students and Virtual Early Release Day
- Monday, January 11 – Central Office staff return to work in person
- Friday, January 15 – Last day of the first semester
- Monday, January 18 – Martin Luther King Day (no school)
- Tuesday, January 19 – First day of the second semester
- Monday, January 25 – Students phased in beginning with PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence – PreK -12)
- Monday, February 1 – Students in grades 3-5, 6, 9, and 10 return
- Thursday, February 4 – Students in grades 7, 8, 11, and 12 return

Our plan includes three instructional delivery models: 1) Site-Based Virtual Learning, 2) Face to Face and 3) Atlanta Virtual Academy. Remember, students return on January 5 and have two weeks of virtual instruction remaining in the first semester. The second semester begins on January 19.

We are grateful for your understanding that there is not a one-size-fits-all plan or perfect process. Just as each of our students is unique, so too, are each of our schools and clusters. We need your continued support as we move forward together to reopen our schools for in-person instruction in late January and meet the needs of the entire District.

For more details about reopening, please visit our Return+Learn page at www.atlantapublicschools.us/reopen.

Enjoy the Holiday Break!

And so the holiday break begins! I am so proud of our young scholars, who have braved the year so far immersed in a virtual setting. We are looking forward to the day next year when we can see all of them in our schools safely face-to-face. For now, I hope that each and every one of them and their families finds ways to rest and enjoy the blessings of the season.

This is the time to take extra care to cherish moments with your family and friends and to take care of yourself. Enjoy the holidays, and we will see you in the New Year!

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring