

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 15, 2021

Subject: Phase II of Return+Learn Begins and Other Updates

With a lot of planning, hard work, and determination, we got off to a bold start to the new year. Thank you for continuing to work with us as we provide virtual learning for our students and prepare to welcome some students back for in-person learning later this month. In preparation for that, district employees began returning to work in person this week, and our school-based staff will return to our buildings next week.

I always want to be clear that health and safety remain our top priority, and our principals, school leaders, teachers, and others have worked hard to develop unique school plans to support in-person learning. We continue to monitor the level of community spread daily and are implementing strategies to manage all factors involved in providing face-to-face learning.

Much of the reminders and updates today focus on our efforts this month to expand our instructional models to include the in-person learning option. I also share a few reminders about our health and safety measures, including our mitigation strategies and protocols around COVID-19.

Video Updates on Return to In-Person Learning

In preparation for teachers, staff, and students returning to our schools and buildings, we have prepared several videos to help our school community get a better sense of what returning to our district buildings and schools will look like. Please view this video geared toward our parents, caregivers, and families [here](#).

Timeline for Return to In-Person Learning

Now that district employees began returning in-person this week, here's the remaining timeline for our school-based staff and students:

- Tuesday, January 19 – School-based staff return to work in person
- Monday, January 25 – Students who elected to return will be 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

School Plans and Mitigation Strategies

Our principals and school staff have been preparing their schools to meet social distancing recommendations and health and safety requirements provided by the Centers for Disease

Control. To that end, they have used the Atlanta Capacity Dashboard to create models on how classrooms and shared campus space can be configured. [Schools expecting 60% or greater return for in-person instruction](#) had the flexibility to modify the instructional model while implementing the necessary mitigation strategies and safety protocols.

Each of our schools posted their unique plans on their websites this week, so our staff, families and the community can better understand exactly what to expect when students return for in-person learning in our school buildings. All schools are expected to adhere to district health and safety guidelines, which include screening measures and temperature assessments, use of masks and face shields, social distancing, and other hygiene and cleaning equipment and procedures. The district has distributed personal protective equipment for our students and employees to use when in our buildings.

To be more specific about 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 have been established to ensure that workplaces, workstations, equipment, and facilities are clean. Hand sanitizer stations have been installed in common areas.
- Students and employees will also participate in daily temperature checks and screenings and complete a daily questionnaire if they are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19. Parents have been 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.

Please remember to get into the habit of daily health assessments for your child/children.

COVID Health Updates

We have several updates regarding our strategies to mitigate COVID-19 in our schools and community.

Testing Strategy:

We have adopted a Comprehensive COVID-19 Testing Strategy in collaboration with public health officials, community partners, universities, and healthcare organizations. This strategy works with our school-based health clinics and community resources to provide testing for the following groups:

- Students, teachers, and staff with symptoms identified through the 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

As part of our testing strategy, we have testing options available for students, teachers, and staff at these school-based health centers and clinics:

- Dobbs Elementary - 2025 Jonesboro Rd SE
- Hollis Innovation Academy - 225 James P Brawley Dr. NW
- King Middle - 545 Hill St. SE
- Miles Elementary - 4215 Bakers Ferry Rd. SW
- Toomer Elementary - 65 Rogers St. NE
- Whitefoord Early Learning Academy - 35 Whitefoord Ave. SE

The Community Organized Relief Effort (C.O.R.E.), the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Emory University are also providing free COVID-19 testing.

Case Tracking:

We have employed a deliberate case tracking process as part of our mitigation strategy. In the event a student or staff member receives a positive test result for COVID-19, they must first notify the school or workplace.

Upon receipt of the reported positive COVID-19 case at an APS school or office location, we work directly with our local boards of health (Fulton County and DeKalb County) as they conduct contact tracing. Based on the guidance provided by the local board and our APS Health Services department, notifications are sent to impacted staff, students, and families.

If an individual is found to have had close contact while contagious, those who were in close contact will be required to quarantine. For more details about this process, please visit section 1.6 of the [APS OnCourse Guide](#).

Determinations about outbreaks and whether school closures become necessary are determined on a case-by-case basis with direct consultation and guidance from the Department of Public Health. Atlanta Public Schools provides a daily update on COVID-19 cases within the district on our website [here](#).

Vaccinations:

Working closely with the local Boards of Health, Atlanta Public Schools has been striving to make vaccinations for employees available at the first opportunity. Our safety and security officers, school nurses, and staff 65 and older are currently eligible as part of Phase 1A. All APS staff will be eligible as part of Phase 1B. We are working closely with the Boards of Health on the timeline for the administration of the vaccine as it relates to the health and well-being of all APS employees.

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act Funding (CRRSA)

During the Atlanta Board of Education meeting this week, I was happy to report that Atlanta Public Schools expects to receive about \$89.6 million in federal funds as part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act Funding (CRRSA). We should get the official notice by next week.

This is in addition to the nearly \$23 million the district received last year and is part of the \$1.8 billion Georgia will receive. We plan to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that includes input from various stakeholders (including, principals, teachers, community leaders, and family engagement representatives). We will then develop a cross-functional task force to prioritize the needs and determine funding parameters. I will be sure to update you as more details become available.

Partner Use of APS Facilities

Even though we are opening our schools to students who have opted for in-person learning, we will continue to restrict third party use of school buildings during the school day. Additionally, general public use of APS facilities through the District's "School Dude" rental/usage process will not be permitted at this time.

Principals may consider afterschool third party use of building space that directly serves APS students.

We continue to restrict third party use of our parking lots and playfields, although exceptions may be made to serve the best interest of the community, such as COVID testing and food distribution. However, any activities of this nature must be approved by Larry Hoskins, our Chief Operating Officer, and Anita Williams, our Chief of Schools. The district will continue to review and update these guidelines, as appropriate.

Resources for Conversations about the Events in Washington, D.C.

National politics remains in the spotlight as Inauguration Day approaches on Wednesday, January 20. I know that our students may continue to have questions and maybe even more curious about our democracy and governmental processes. It is appropriate at any grade level to have conversations about these topics. Please visit [my blog](#) for helpful resources.

Thank You and Be Well!

As we move through Return+Learn, I want you to know that it is very important that you remain connected and engaged with us along the way. We need your involvement and support and we want to hear your voice throughout the process. Our focus continues to be on doing everything we can to keep our students and staff safe as we expand our learning options.

Thank you for being our partner in meeting our mission of ensuring that every student graduates prepared for college, career, and life.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring