

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 29, 2021

Subject: Return of PreK-2/Special Education Students, Health and Safety is our Top Priority, and Other Updates

Successful Return to In-Person Learning

We were excited to welcome our PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence K-12) students who opted for in-person learning back to our schools this week. It was a joy and an inspiration to see our wonderful young scholars again.

I want to thank our APS parents and community for working with us throughout this process and contributing to a successful first day back for our students. While visiting several schools across the district on Monday, I saw eager and curious students ready to learn and who were following our health and safety protocols as I did.

Talking to Your Children about Our Updated Schedule for In-Person Learning

We announced last week that we would slow the pace of return to in-person learning for students in Grades 3-12 who selected the in-person learning option. Here are a few helpful messages to share with your children when explaining the schedule change:

- APS is focused on keeping everyone healthy and safe as it begins to allow students to return to school for in-person learning
- The District has decided it is best for students to return in phases
- Some PreK-2 and Special Education students were the first to return on January 25 because virtual learning was more of a challenge for some of them
- Next, some students in Grades 3-5 will return on February 8, and then some students in Grades 6-12 will return on February 16
- Phasing students back into schools will help APS make sure our safety measures are all in place. This plan also allows the District to add even more layers of safety over time

COVID-19 Surveillance Testing FAQs Available Online

We are moving forward in offering COVID-19 Surveillance Testing, making APS the first school district in Georgia to offer this test. “Surveillance” testing refers to regular, frequent testing for individuals who are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. We will begin a soft launch in the coming days at Barack and Michelle Obama Academy, Burgess-Peterson, Morris Brandon, Cleveland Avenue, Humphries, Hutchinson, M.A. Jones, and Sarah Smith. Please note that we are still working with school leadership at these schools and our vendor to finalize logistics and protocols.

While participation in surveillance testing is not required for students, it is strongly encouraged. Parents who want their children to be tested must sign a consent form that will cover their child for weekly testing for one year. I ask for your patience during our soft launch and districtwide implementation. Schools will communicate directly with you regarding the next steps as testing becomes available. In the meantime, take a moment to learn more by [reviewing the FAQs on our website](#).

Metro-Area Superintendents Urge Governor to Accelerate COVID-19 Vaccine Availability

I was pleased to join several other metro-area superintendents earlier this week in sending a letter to Governor Kemp urging him to accelerate the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine for teachers and education staff by moving them into the 1A category. We have been meeting with the Governor's office and the Georgia Department of Public Health over the last few weeks advocating for vaccine access for educators. In our letter, we stressed the urgency of accelerating the availability of the vaccine. I will keep you updated as the Governor considers our request.

'Here Comes the Bus' Website and App

On Monday, our Transportation Department launched "[Here Comes the Bus](#)," a user-friendly website and app that enables families to locate their child's school bus on a smartphone, tablet, or personal computer. With this service, families will know when the bus is near its designated stop, so they can send their children out at just the right time. Here Comes the Bus tracks students who ride APS buses to and from our traditional schools, including students in grades Pre-K – 12, who live outside the walk zone, and qualify for transportation. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Health and Safety Remains our Top Priority

Keeping our students and staff safe is always our top priority. We remain committed to adhering to our mitigation protocols in schools through the implementation of our Return+Learn plan. As a reminder, here are few health and safety mitigation efforts already in place:

1. We have [implemented the recommended health and safety protocols](#) in our schools and buildings, including daily health screenings, providing PPE for teachers, students and staff, and other health and safety materials and equipment
2. We have adopted a [Comprehensive COVID-19 Testing Strategy](#) districtwide that includes locations throughout the APS community where our students and staff can access testing
3. We have developed [protocols for tracking, monitoring, and reporting COVID-19 cases](#) in our schools and district offices and provided an improved online dashboard for our community
4. We are working with the [Fulton County Board of Health](#) and our healthcare partners to accelerate the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine for all APS staff.

Helpful Tips To Boost Your Immune System

We can all work to improve our health and boost our immune systems daily. Here are a few helpful tips suggested by our Health Services team:

- [COVID-19: Prevent Getting Sick \(CDC\)](#)
- [5 Ways to Arm Your Immune System Against COVID-19 \(webmd.com\)](#)
- [Can Supplements Fight Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)? 15 Immune Boosters \(healthline.com\)](#)
- [How to boost your immune system - Harvard Health](#)
- [15 Ways to Boost Your Immune System During COVID-19 \(msn.com\)](#)

Thank You and Be Well!

All of us at APS are grateful for our students and families. We look forward to your continued support throughout this school year to ensure the success of every student. Please be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring