

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 8, 2021

Subject: Return+Learn Updates for a New Year

Happy New Year and welcome back! I hope all of our students and their families took advantage of the much-deserved holiday break and returned this week rested and rejuvenated.

Most of 2020 created numerous challenges, hardships, and turmoil for many of us. With those experiences and lessons learned over the past months, I believe this new year will enable us to bring a revitalized approach to our work. By sheer virtue of turning the page on the calendar, we can expect renewed energy, a new enthusiasm ... even a renewed HOPE in the work to graduate every student ready for college, career, and life.

Yes, hope and more can still happen even amid the sad and shameful events that occurred earlier this week at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., which [I wrote to you about earlier today](#).

We all understand too well that so many things changed in 2020. What has not changed is our mission and our vision. What has not changed is our young scholars' need for education, equity, and social justice! And what has not changed – and I've seen this a thousandfold over my tenure as your superintendent – is the unrivaled dedication of the teachers and staff of Atlanta Public Schools to your children and our schools. In fact, their focus, devotion, and commitment have grown toward greater service for you!

I have also been encouraged by the hard work of our students, who have faced these unexpected circumstances of the pandemic by keeping their education a top priority. Please make sure they continue with that hard work as we finish the first semester and prepare for the next phase of our Return+Learn plan.

Let me provide a few updates.

Student Return Schedules and Reopening Summary

As you know, APS has developed a phased-in approach for reopening schools as we near the start of the second semester. I want to remind you about several key dates currently in place. These dates include teacher preparation days leading up to reopening with the option for in-person learning.

- Monday, January 11 – Central Office staff return to work in person

- Tuesday, January 19 – School-based staff return to work in person
- 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.

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 are using data from the Intent to Return Declaration Forms to understand exactly how it will look. Our plans also involve reserving Wednesday for asynchronous or independent learning until the end of the semester in May 2021. On these days, the following activities will occur:

- Students - Independent learning and intervention
- Staff - Professional learning and student intervention
- Teachers - Planning and preparation for simultaneous teaching
- Schools - Deep cleaning
- Nutrition: District meal delivery

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

You can find more district-wide safety measures 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

Intent to Return Declaration Results

Before the holiday break, we asked our families to share their intent to send their children back into our school buildings. As part of the Intent to Return Declaration form, we asked our families to choose the instructional model they feel most comfortable with for the third nine weeks (site-based virtual learning, face to face, and Atlanta Virtual Academy).

NOTE: Students whose families did not complete or update the forms before the break will remain with their initial choice from October or in their current instructional learning model (virtual instruction with your local school or Atlanta Virtual Academy).

We sent the Intent to Return Declaration Form to nearly 38,000 students, which represents the total PreK-12 enrollment of all traditional APS schools. Families of students at charter and partner schools did not participate in the intent to return process, so these results don't reflect those additional 10,000+ students.

I want to thank the more than 24,500 families (or 65% of you) who submitted their forms by the deadline. Of those submitting the forms, more than 13,000 – more than half – expressed their intent for their children to return to school when we resume in-person instruction.

More results, including cluster and school results, are available below:

- [Total Completion](#)
- [In-Person](#)
- [Site-Based Virtual](#)
- [Atlanta Virtual Academy](#)

APS Protects: COVID-19 Screening Protocols

As we near the date when students return for face-to-face learning, I want to remind you of the current student health screening protocols. If you decided that your child will return for in-person learning, you are encouraged to get into the habit of screening your student for health symptoms daily.

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 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 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 are 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:

I also want 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.

Nutrition

With the new year, we resumed our food distribution program on Wednesday with the delivery of seven-day meal kits (seven breakfast and seven lunch meals). APS will continue to distribute food each Wednesday at the curbside pick-up locations listed below from 2 pm to 5:30 pm and from designated bus routes from 2 to 4:30 pm.

1. Carver High School
2. Frederick Douglass High School
3. John Hope-Charles Walter Hill Elementary School
4. Maynard Jackson High School
5. Jean Childs Young Middle School
6. Bolton Academy
7. Garden Hills Elementary School

8. South Atlanta High School
9. Bunche Middle School
10. Booker T. Washington High School

Individual breakfast and lunch meals will also be provided to students participating in in-person learning. Learn more about more Nutrition and Food plans [here](#). If you have any questions, please contact us at 404.802.2540.

Other Things You Should Know

For more details about reopening, please visit our Return+Learn page at www.atlantapublicschools.us/reopen. The site includes numerous updates, FAQs, and other critical information that will keep you informed and help you make the best decisions for your children and your family.

Thank you and Happy New Year!

As we move through Return+Learn, I want our families to know that every teacher and staff member of Atlanta Public Schools strives to keep the education, health, and safety of your children paramount every day. Please continue to Be Safe and Be Well. Happy New Year!

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring