

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: November 6, 2020

Subject: Return+Learn, Fireside Chat on Special Education, Don't Miss Your Shot, and More!

I appreciate the opportunity to connect with you again and share the latest updates and information on activities and events around Atlanta Public Schools (APS). November is a very busy month, and I want to make sure you are kept up to date.

Return+Learn Plan – January 2021

When APS moved into virtual learning to address the growing COVID-19 pandemic, our teachers, staff, and district leaders dedicated themselves to protecting our community's health and safety while striving to provide a high-quality education in a virtual environment.

We recognize that many of our students have lost invaluable learning time since March, placing them at a greater risk of not being prepared for college, career, and life. Many have experienced the loss of loved ones; others have grappled with racial injustices and police brutality; and others still face food and income insecurity.

While we continue to operate virtually until the end of the semester, we are preparing for a proposed January 2021 reopening which maintains three instructional delivery models: 1) Site-Based Virtual Learning, 2) Face-to-Face Options and 3) Atlanta Virtual Academy. In preparation for our eventual reopening, our phased-in approach includes teacher preparation days and phasing in elementary students first followed by secondary students over the first several weeks in January 2021.

In support of reopening, the District is launching the following activities in preparation for our Return + Learn Plan:

- Expanded academic interventions across all schools to address the neediest students
- Special Education in-person instructional support as assessed by staff
- Launching an Intent to Return Form for all students to select or change their previous declaration for January 2021
- Monitoring APS Athletics and identifying potential opportunities for APS Arts to perform/practice in-person in small groups
- Launching Independent Learning Days on Wednesdays beginning in December

Each of our schools and clusters will develop their plans to meet the unique needs of their students, but all of our schools must offer face-to-face intervention for their highest-need students to ensure equitable outcomes for students.

Leadership at each school will determine what interventions are offered, how interventions are staffed and delivered, and when interventions are offered, whether they are before school, during school, or after school.

To be clear, the expansion of intervention services will allow for appropriate support and identification of need in preparation for the Return+Learn reopening plan. Colleagues from both the Schools and Academics and Student Support teams have worked collaboratively with school-based leadership to create these additional opportunities and supports to address specific needs for our students.

I must stress: The implementation of interventions has been ongoing since the start of the school year. The effort to intensify interventions does not replace core instruction, and interventions will be scheduled around the instructional model. CARE teams will help to assess student referrals, assign appointments, and appropriate interventions.

More information and details are forthcoming regarding these activities and our proposed reopening plan. I encourage you to review [my latest blog post](#) to learn more about our plan, and I truly do look forward to your continued engagement as we prepare for January 2021 together.

Fireside Chat on Special Education – Thursday, November 12 at 6 p.m.

Students with Disabilities attending Low Incidence Programs are eligible to participate in intervention programs as recommended by the Screening Team. However, Students with Disabilities in Low Incidence classes may receive additional face-to-face instruction as part of our academic interventions. We will be discussing this topic and providing more details during our Fireside Chat on Special Education scheduled for Thursday, November 12 at 6 p.m. on Zoom at this link: <https://zoom.us/j/98723861600>. Parents of our special education students are encouraged to join us to learn more and get answers to their questions. We look forward to engaging with you.

Family Engagement Month/National Parent Involvement Day

November is Family Engagement Month and we will also celebrate National Parent Involvement Day on Thursday, November 19. There's no question the parent and family are a child's first teacher. Parents help students realize their power-filled potential by equipping them with the tools needed to be productive contributors to our society.

The Office of Family Engagement will host its second annual Parent and Family Engagement Conference from November 16 through November 19 with the theme of "Together We Are One Family." During the week, APS will host sessions for grandparents and parents of special needs and young children, programs addressing grief and mindfulness, and even a virtual Family Game Night!

Please visit the Office of Family Engagement website for more information and a full list of session topics at www.atlantapublicschools.us/familyengagement. We look forward to seeing you at the virtual conference!

Immunizations: Don't Miss Your Shot!

As we inch closer to the possibility of resuming face to face instruction in January 2021, remember that 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, or for more information on required vaccinations or locations where your child may receive a vaccination, visit our website at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/61646>.

National College Application Month

It's National College Application Month, and our high schools are planning lots of activities to encourage our high school seniors to apply to college. We are encouraging our seniors to apply to at least three schools by November 30. Students who have applied to at least three schools will be entered into a school drawing for gift cards. Also, seniors should apply to college using GAfutures.org, which is focused on assisting first-generation and underrepresented students as they navigate the college application process.

Superintendent's 2020 Winter Card Contest

In keeping with an APS tradition, I am thrilled to invite all student artists across the district to submit their designs for the official 2020 Winter Card, which I will distribute to the APS family before Winter Break. The contest doesn't have too many rules. What the card design and medium look like is completely up to the student artists. But here are a few tips:

- Your design – no matter the medium – should show well when reproduced, so paintings, drawings, cut paper, markers, collages show best. Printed card size will be 3"x 5".
- Winning designs should incorporate APS in some manner and also reflect winter in the school district; Atlanta, Georgia, holidays, etc. All ideas are welcome; however, only nonreligious themes and languages will be considered to be inclusive of our diverse student body.
- Be creative!

Full details and a submission link are available [here](#). I have made one change to this year's contest. We will select 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners for elementary, middle, and high school. I will announce those winners during the December meeting of the Atlanta Board of Education. Please encourage your students to get out their paints, markers, pastels, scissors, or whatever they need to create the next great Winter Card for Atlanta Public Schools. We can't wait to see their designs!

Thank you for your attention and involvement, and please continue to stay in touch with your school and with the District. Through our *Let's Talk* tool on the homepage of our website, www.atlantapublicschools.us, you can submit your questions and comments. Let's continue to work together to ensure that we are preparing every student for success in college, career, and life. We count on your partnership and engagement in helping us meet that goal. Stay healthy and safe, wear a mask, wash your hands, and continue to practice social distancing.

Have a great weekend and please be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring