

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: November 13, 2020

Subject: Holiday Travel Guidance, Water Testing, Honoring our Veterans, Changes in Office of Engagement, and More!

Team, I want to thank you for all the emails, texts, and phone calls with well wishes and prayers for my speedy recovery from COVID-19. I truly do appreciate that many of you took the time to send encouraging words and offer support. It was refreshing to be on the receiving end of that support. It's so important that we take care of ourselves, be intentional about boosting our immune systems, and take time to check on each other. Those encouraging words went a long way for me in my recovery and I truly do appreciate it.

I continued my quarantine all week under CDC guidelines and expect my quarantine to continue through early next week. But, I am feeling much better, and I look forward to a full recovery!

The complexity of COVID-19 and the impact it has on our lives and the lives of so many around us demands that we take it seriously and make careful decisions as a District. I am confident that we have been doing that and will continue to do that as we move closer to our proposed reopening in January 2021.

Honoring Our Veterans

I want to take a moment to honor our many veterans, some of whom are part of our APS family. The country celebrated Veterans Day this week on Wednesday, November 11. I want to thank our many veterans for their selfless service to this great nation, their bravery and untold sacrifices. We honor every one of you.

Give Thanks...But Stay Safe

With Thanksgiving just a couple of weeks away, you may be planning to travel to see family and friends. Because I want you to be well amid this pandemic, I'd like to share a few helpful tips. Remember that if you're thinking about being with family and friends, then today should begin your 14-day period of self-quarantine. In other words, be mindful and aware of your activities and movement in these two weeks prior to connecting with your loved ones. Here are a few other reminders:

- Wear a mask, social distance, practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and monitor your health (if you are ill stay at home).
- Adhere to the Department of Public Health (DPH) isolation guidance if you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and follow DPH contact guidance if you have been exposed to a known case.

[Click here](#) for more travel guidance from the state, and be sure to contact our Human Resources department if you have any questions about the District's travel reporting policies outlined in the [Human Resources FAQ document](#).

Expanded Student Supports Begin Next Week

A big “thank you” to our Schools and Academics teams, our school principals and leaders, teachers, and others for working diligently over these past few weeks to ensure we launch our intervention programs for students beginning on Monday.

Many of our students continue to face a myriad of challenges. They 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.

Through in-person interventions, we will be working to address students' needs in the areas of academics, wellness, social-emotional learning, and positive behavior supports. I encourage you to learn more by [reading my latest blog post](#).

Sanitizing and Cleaning our Buildings – Legionella Pneumophila Testing

Recently, our Facilities team began proactively conducting random water tests around the District for Legionella pneumophila, the bacteria that causes Legionnaires disease. Water was tested in a sample of our buildings since they have been unoccupied or under-occupied due to COVID-19 for several months and to test the effectiveness of our weekly water flushing program.

Legionella pneumophila can grow in stagnant or standing water or in water systems that are not consistently used. Of the 27 facilities tested, eight (Archer HS/Westside Charter, Brown, Crim/Phoenix Academy, Fickett, F.L. Stanton, Garden Hills, Heritage Academy, and Scott) have at least one water source that came back positive. Out of an abundance of caution and so that our Facilities team can disinfect, and retest water systems, we closed four school buildings today (Brown, Crim/Phoenix, Fickett, and F.L. Stanton) and will await updated test results. The other four school buildings are safe to occupy. Our Facilities team will continue proactive testing of water sources in all schools and buildings throughout the district.

Organizational Changes in Office of Engagement

I want to make you aware that I am shifting the Communications & Public Engagement department from the Office of Engagement to the Chief of Staff's office. Ian Smith, the Executive Director of Communications, will now be a direct report to Jerod Bishop, Chief of Staff. In addition, to align our focus on managing the implementation of our new five-year strategic plan, including renewing our charter system model and strengthening our family and community partnerships, the Office of Engagement will be renamed the Office of Strategy. Dr. Angela King Smith, who leads the division, will have a title change from Chief Engagement Officer to Chief Strategy Officer.

Please continue to contact Dr. Smith and her respective departments for the following types of work: Partnerships and Development (led by Rachel Sprecher), Family Engagement (led by Keasha Copeland), Charter System and School Governance (led by Carolyn Barnett), and Strategy Management and Culture (led by Travis Norvell). Please continue to reach out to your usual contact(s) in the communications department as needed, or request communications services through Ian Smith, Executive Director of Communications & Public Engagement.

Families First Coronavirus Relief Act

The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) currently provides expanded leave options to individuals who are unable to work for a COVID-related reason. (See APS [Administrative Regulation EBB-R3](#) for more details.) The FFCRA is set to expire on December 31, 2020. The District is closely monitoring these potential changes at the federal level that could impact our local telework and leave procedures. Anyone who has been approved for leave or telework prior to December 31 will not be impacted. Staff who have not been approved for telework may be asked to work in person (with extensive safety measures) in December for student interventions or to prepare classrooms/facilities for students. As the District makes decisions about potentially reopening for more students in January 2021, any changes to telework or leave procedures will be shared in a timely manner. For questions, contact the Employee Relations Department in Human Resources at OffEmpRelations@atlanta.k12.ga.us.

Thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to APS. That work and commitment is what keeps this District functioning at such a high level during these unpredictable times. Enjoy your weekend, stay healthy and safe, be encouraged and please be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring