

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: September 11, 2020

Subject: Health Data Checkpoint, Learning Pods, Use of APS Facilities, and Other Updates

We are at the end of the third week of our 2020-2021 school year, and I'm happy to share that there are no major issues across Atlanta Public Schools (APS). The work we are seeing in our virtual classrooms is a direct result of a lot of planning, a lot of preparation, and a lot of heart from Team APS! Our ongoing success is dependent on your continued engagement in our virtual instructional model.

I want to acknowledge the stress we've all felt working up to and through these first few weeks of school. The anxiety is real, but I know you agree that our students are worth it!

Student Login Rates

After the second week of school, our district-wide student login rate improved from 90.2% to 93.7%. This represents an increase of 3.5% over the login rate from week one. The data sources for this information include several instructional and technology tools and platforms designed to track student login and activity. These platforms include Active Directory, Google Classroom, Google Drive, Google Console, Cylance, MyBackpack, Seesaw, Zoom, and Securly.

Here are a few key highlights:

- 93.7% of students logged in at least once during the second week of instruction (3.5 percentage point increase over week one).
- 61 schools surpassed 80% student login rate; and 43 of these schools exceeded 90% for the week.
- The lowest percentages were for the primary grades (Pre-K to 1), while grades 2-12 all exceeded 90% (grades 3-12 exceeded 95%).
- The average daily student login rate was 81.9% for all grade levels, an increase of 2.4% over the prior week.
- There was a noticeable drop in student login rates on Monday (8/31) and Friday (9/4); This was due to grade levels (Pre-K to 2) that had lower than normal student logins on those days.

Health Data Checkpoint

APS is committed to monitoring the public health data as it relates to COVID-19 and providing health data checkpoints with our employees, parents, and community members. Our first checkpoint during these first nine weeks of school was provided at the [Atlanta Board of](#)

[Education meeting](https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/64352) on Tuesday, September 8. You can access our full presentation here: <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/64352>.

While we are continuously monitoring the health status of Atlanta, Fulton, and DeKalb (and are encouraged by the positive trends we are seeing in some of the health metrics), we do not plan to bring any students back for face-to-face instruction before Monday, October 26th at the earliest. We are, however, working at this time to identify the groups of students who would be our priority for in-person instruction once we have emerged from substantial spread. Given the challenges faced by our early learners and special needs students in the virtual environment, it is likely that these populations would be our Tier I focus for coming back into our schools.

We will continue to provide these checkpoints every month as part of our effort to keep you informed about our decision-making process. Our next public health checkpoint is at the Board meeting on October 5.

Guidance for Families regarding Learning Pods

Some APS families have created home-based learning communities in conjunction with neighbors and classmates, often referred to as “learning pods.” We understand the desire to recreate some of the collaborative and social aspects of the traditional school setting that these learning pods can provide. However, it’s important to note that family learning pods must be completely independent of District staff, resources, or facilities. [Click here](#) to read some of the frequently asked questions we have received about this topic and our answers.

Guidance on the Public’s Use of APS Facilities

Now that we have reopened in a mostly virtual format, you may see an increase in activity on school grounds as our staff, contractors, and community partners access our facilities for work-related reasons. We know some of you may have questions about when you can use our school facilities again, including using our athletic tracks. Please see below for our current guidelines:

- APS is not allowing the rental of school facilities at this time. However, the District will reassess this situation at the end of our first nine weeks of school in alignment with the reassessment of the District’s instructional model.
- Beginning on September 21, 2020, individuals walking and exercising are welcome to use tracks and playgrounds on school properties accordingly:
 - Tracks - 6:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
 - Playgrounds - 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
 - Remaining hours are reserved for APS programming and athletics. Group sports or group events are not allowed. We expect the following in all cases:
 - Individuals will maintain all proper social distancing protocols
 - Individuals will maintain proper hygiene, including the use of masks
 - All minors will be accompanied by an adult
 - Maintain cleanliness and use trash receptacles.
- APS reserves the right to revoke access privileges at any time due to damage and/or failure to comply with posted safety guidelines.

- Upon the beginning of Phase II reopening of schools (tentatively October 26), APS properties will return to restricted status.
- Weekend access is not permitted.

K-1st Instructional Time Change and K-2 Benchmark Assessments

Effective Monday, September 14, the instructional hours for students in Kindergarten and First Grade will be reduced from four to three. Principals will maintain autonomy to structure the schedule for grades K-1 that is best for their school community as long as it operates within the three-hour requirement. Exceptions will be made for specialty programs (such as Dual Language Immersion, etc.) as they may require additional time and/or support. The instructional hours for students in grades 2-12 will remain the same.

In addition, benchmark assessments for grades K-2 will remain optional for schools. The administration of F & P (Fountas and Pinnell) assessments for students in grades K-5 will be optional during this season of virtual learning. The administration of this assessment is expected to resume upon our return to in-person and/or hybrid instruction. The administration of the STAR assessment will remain in place.

Nutrition Update

Thanks to the recent U.S. Department of Agriculture waivers, beginning Monday, September 21, APS will provide free meals to all children (ages 1-18 years) in communities throughout the city of Atlanta. APS will continue to offer students the 5-day meal kits (5-breakfast meals and 5-lunch meals) and these meals will be provided via middle school bus stops and curbside pick up from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. each Monday at designated schools listed on our website. Our Tuesday Express meal service will be discontinued.

Vote Today for GO Teams!

If you haven't already cast your vote for GO Teams, do so today! Voting is open through September 20. You should have already received your household's unique voting link in two of the following ways: text, email, and/or mail, based on the primary information on file with the district. Make sure your contact information is current and use your unique link to submit your vote.

Candidate profiles and additional information are available at www.apsstrongschools.com. If you need assistance or have questions, please e-mail goteam@apsk12.org or call 404-802-2885. For assistance in Spanish, call 404-802-7580.

Census 2020

There's still time to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census if you haven't completed yours yet. You can shape the future for yourself, your family, and your community for the next 10 years by [clicking here to respond to the Census](#). If you have any questions, contact the Atlanta Regional Census Center at 470-889-6800.

Thank you for continuing to support the efforts of the District, and we appreciate your ongoing input and engagement. Remember, you can reach us online through [Let's Talk](#) on our website to ask questions or share your comments. As always, stay healthy, and be well.

Yours in service,

Dr. Lisa Herring