

## MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: May 7, 2021

Subject: National Teacher Appreciation Week, Val/Sal/STAR Awards, and Other Updates

As we come to the end of National Teacher Appreciation Week, I remain humbled and inspired by the hundreds and hundreds of teachers we celebrated this week across the district.

### **Delta Airlines Honors Teachers**

As superintendent, I was privileged to join with representatives from Delta Airlines at Benjamin E. Mays High School as they recognized nine of our deserving teachers with a special gift: Round trip tickets and a hotel stay for them and their families at any location where Delta flies in the United States, Mexico, or the Caribbean!

What a gigantic, thoughtful, and fun way to honor our teachers!

At Mays, we surprised Sonja Lewis, a special education teacher who has 41 years of service in APS. Mrs. Lewis could have retired years ago, but she always says she is “on assignment” and sees her continued service as a gift to others.

Other teachers recognized by Delta include:

- Larry Alford, the culinary arts instructor for Washington High
- Emily Backus, a music teacher at Mary Lin Elementary
- Bevin Carpenter, a behavior specialist at King Middle
- David Galban, bilingual parent liaison at North Atlanta High
- DaShunda Gates, a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher at Deerwood Academy
- Cheryl Jamison, ELA and Social Studies teacher at Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy
- Nathan Stone, an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math teacher at Long Middle
- Melissa Vaillant, an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math teacher at Sylvan Hills Middle

### **Equity Office Launches Annual Equity in Action Awards**

As part of our appreciation this week for teachers, our new Center for Equity and Social Justice, led by Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones, traveled across the district this week, surprising our first cohort of Equity Champions! Ten educators were recognized and awarded a \$1,500 stipend to launch equity initiatives in their schools and classrooms.

These educators were nominated by their peers and selected because they have earned the reputation of catering to the individual cultures, identities, abilities, and languages of every

student. They challenge the status quo to remove barriers to success and work hard to ensure that every child receives the necessary opportunities and resources to meet their unique needs and aspirations.

They are:

- Teruko Dobashi-Taylor, assistant principal of Toomer Elementary
- Ursula Gordon, math teacher at South Atlanta High
- Benita Grant, principal of Fickett Elementary
- Larry Guilford, assistant principal of B.E.S.T. Academy
- Shiron Jelks, kindergarten teacher at Cascade Elementary
- Marsha Leverette, special education lead teacher at Brown Middle
- Kevin Maxwell, principal of Howard Middle
- D'Andra McPhail, AP English and American literature teacher at North Atlanta High
- Dione Simon, principal of Harper Archer Elementary
- Victoria Weaver, science teacher at King Middle

Congratulations to all of these educators! Although the week comes to a close, it's never too late to say #ThanksAPSTeachers!

### **Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and STAR Student and Teacher Awards Ceremony**

This week, we also celebrated students; more specifically, 37 valedictorians, salutatorians, and STAR students, plus 14 STAR teachers, from 15 high schools during a beautiful luncheon sponsored by Georgia Power at Zoo Atlanta. We honored them for their academic achievements and saluted them for their perseverance during pandemic and protest.

We will forever remember the Class of 2021 as the fighters, the survivors, the winners. I invite you to learn more about them at [talkupaps.com](http://talkupaps.com)! We are so proud of them!

### **Bell Schedules for SY2021-2022**

Due to the pandemic, we know that our students experienced unfinished learning last school year and some levels of learning loss over the course of this school year. Research, however, suggests that extended learning time can exponentially help to address learning gaps and levels of learning loss.

Our Academic Recovery Plan includes the implementation of school-based intervention. To ensure that all elementary schools have time and can effectively implement these interventions, we are extending the elementary school day by 30 minutes for the next three school years.

Working with our Operations and Transportation team, we have reviewed our bell schedule to accommodate the needs of our tiered transportation schedule. For the 2021-2022 school year, our bell schedule will be as follows:

- Elementary 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (changed from 8 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.)
- Middle School 9:05 a.m. – 4:05 a.m. (no change)
- High School 7:45 a.m. – 2:40 p.m. (changed from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.)

We will provide additional updates, including transportation pick-up and drop-off schedules soon.

**Deadline Extension for Summer Academic Recovery Academy**

Our families have more time to enroll in our Summer Academic Recovery Academy, which addresses learning loss over the pandemic and provides much-needed credit recovery and enrichment opportunities for our children. We have extended the enrollment deadline to Friday, May 14! The academy is a full-day program from June 2<sup>nd</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup> for all grade levels. Learn more at [www.atlantapublicschools.us/summeraps](http://www.atlantapublicschools.us/summeraps).

**Atlanta Virtual Academy Registration Deadline is May 15**

I also want to remind everyone about the upcoming deadline for Atlanta Virtual Academy (AVA) for the 2021-2022 school year. While our default teaching method for the new school year will be face-to-face instruction, we are providing virtual learning pathways through AVA and AVA Jr. The deadline to enroll in either AVA for middle and high school students and AVA Jr. for kindergarten and elementary students is Saturday, May 15. Visit [www.atlantapublicschools.us/AtlantaVirtualAcademy](http://www.atlantapublicschools.us/AtlantaVirtualAcademy) for registration and more information.

**Get Out the Vote!**

Don't forget to cast your vote for your school's GO Team. Elections continue through Sunday, May 16. Candidate profiles and more information can be found at [www.apsstrongschools.com](http://www.apsstrongschools.com). If you need assistance or have questions, please e-mail [goteam@apsk12.org](mailto:goteam@apsk12.org) or call 404-802-2885.

As always, I want to thank everyone across our community for the support and engagement. Please stay healthy and be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring