

FAQ

FAQs about School Reopening

Updated 6.26.2020

What is the timeline for preparing school reopening plans for Atlanta Public Schools?

Our district has been working for weeks on plans for a return to school in some fashion on Monday, August 10, which is the first day for the 2020-2021 school year as designated by the Board-approved calendar.

In alignment with public health guidelines and the data available, we are currently preparing for three potential reopening scenarios: virtual, traditional, or a hybrid of both. We will announce a final decision on our reopening plan in early to mid-July, in accordance with the public health determinations available at that time.

Have we considered pushing the school date back? When is the first day of school? As I mentioned earlier, Monday, August 10, stands as the current date of return for students for the 2020-2021 school year. Our top priority remains the health and safety of Atlanta Public Schools' students and staff. Every decision will be made through the lens of public health and safety. That requires the district to be flexible and able to move from one scenario to the next, depending on the spread of COVID-19 at any given time. That includes at the start of the school year, and any time during the rest of the year.

So, yes, we will consider pushing the first day of school to a later date if health and safety concerns require that.

How will you make the decision?

Our approach to decision-making is based on the guidance and recommendations of local, state, and national public health officials. It is intended to prioritize the safety and well-being of our students and staff as we start the 2020-21 school year. These recommendations also provide the opportunity for responsive planning to ensure our preparedness to address the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Atlanta Public Schools, we created both internal and external task forces to gather information, weigh the situation, and inform decisions around academics, co-curricular activities, operations, and more.



The internal task force, led by Dr. Katika Lovett, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, comprises the district's top leaders and guides the work to maintain teaching and learning, wraparound supports, operations, and nutrition throughout the pandemic.

In addition to our internal task force made up of district leaders including the incoming superintendent, Dr. Lisa Herring, we have also formed an external community stakeholders task force and several advisory groups including a principal advisory, teacher advisory, and parent focus group representing each cluster and every grade band (ES/MS/HS), all of whom provide critical insight into the needs of our students, staff, and families through their unique perspectives as leaders, educators and parents living through this pandemic.

Our Community Stakeholders Advisory Task Force is composed of external, community partners from public health, mental and behavioral healthcare, civic organizations, non-profit and workforce/labor organizations, universities, as well as representatives from several educational organizations. The purpose of the task force is to provide guidance, resources, ideas, and feedback to the district as we continue our recovery efforts and develop a comprehensive, actionable plan for reopening schools in August 2020. In order to accomplish that goal, the taskforce is set to over convene four work sessions during the months of June and July 2020.

The district also maintains continuous communications with city, state and officials, public health officials (including the GA Department of Health, Fulton County Board of Health and CDC) to keep track of the latest updates and coordinate responses.

What are the three potential reopening scenarios for Atlanta Public Schools?

Again, the decision on a reopening model will be based heavily on current public health guidelines, but the district is also considering best practices for instruction and effective ways to bring students back to school with a combination of academic, social-emotional, and wraparound supports.

Here are the potential options:

Traditional Face to Face

If public health guidance informs the district that we are in a phase of low to no spread of COVID-19, we may move forward with a traditional face-to-face reopening. That means students and staff would report to our school buildings on Day One, but the district would implement proactive, preventative practices and protocols in our buildings to keep everyone safe.

Virtual

However, if public health guidance informs us that we remain in substantial spread of COVID-19 in our community, we would implement a full virtual reopening for our students and staff with no use of schools and buildings. We would continue to monitor the guidance of health officials on the spread to determine whether a closure would be short- or long-term.

Hybrid

Finally, if public health guidance informs us that we are in minimal to moderate spread of COVID-19, we would be looking at a hybrid model for reopening. This would include a combination of virtual and face-to-face learning. Under this scenario, there would be limited, staggered use of schools and buildings, alternating schedules for students, and targeted virtual learning available.

Dr. Katika Lovett, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, who has been leading the work of the APS COVID-19 Task Force, provides more details in the video. [Please refer to COVID-19 question for explanation about spread.](#)

In the Hybrid model, how will you decide which students go on A day vs. B day in the Hybrid model? Will siblings get to go to school on the same day?

The hybrid model will operate on a cohort system. In the cohort system, students are divided into smaller learning groups who attend for face-to-face learning on designated days to support social distancing efforts while the remaining students attend virtually. Several options for determining cohort groups are being explored including last names, grade levels, programs of study/pathways and others. In the event we select an A/B Day schedule, schools will work with parents to ensure that siblings and other children who share a family household, such as cousins, are assigned to the same schedule to the greatest extent possible.

In the Hybrid model or in the full virtual model, how will the learning be structured for students?

If we were to implement the hybrid and virtual models, both would have a similar learning structure. To best position our students for success and ensure consistency, both models would utilize a similar schedule that would provide a routine for our students. Meaning, the virtual schedule would reflect the same blocks of learning as the hybrid, but with less time. Both models would also gauge students' social emotional well-being, deliver new content with teachers modeling, assign specific learning activities, assess and monitor student learning, and provide time for small group or individual support. In addition, the virtual model, by its nature, would rely more on technology to facilitate the learning and engage students, chunk the content into smaller pieces, and establish specific 'office hours' for teachers to provide additional support to students.

Will the district provide transportation? How will the district handle social distancing on the school bus?

School transportation is critical for our families. That's why APS intends to provide transportation for students to the safest extent possible. Therefore, APS will implement appropriate safety measures by encouraging all bus riders to wear masks and maintain physical distance while on the bus. However, given current realities, it is likely not possible to consistently maintain social distancing on school buses. As a result, some families may elect to



pursue other transportation options. APS encourages them to make transportation decisions that they believe are best for their children.

If APS elects to select a reopen model that has an in-person component or doesn't address my child's needs, what are my options?

For our families, Atlanta Virtual Academy remains an option available for all of our students. In the wake of COVID-19, we expect many more to use this option no matter the reopening model we choose.

Atlanta Virtual Academy is our comprehensive PK-12 virtual program designed to provide students with an engaging model of instruction that includes live virtual instruction, interactive lessons, and participation in a thriving virtual community. Students have the ability to remain enrolled in their zoned neighborhood school and still engage with school sports. Because of the pandemic, AVA will now offer a virtual option for PK-5 students.

Parents who choose AVA for their children will be asked to commit to keeping their students in the virtual model for a set number of weeks, in order to provide for instructional consistency for the students.

How will you practice social distancing in the school building?

Social distancing has two main goals: (1) Keeping individuals at a safe distance from one another (6 feet) and (2) minimizing the number of face-to-face interactions between people. Some examples of how we will practice social distancing in our schools include the following: Markings and signage will be posted on floors and walls to ensure that students and employees remain six feet apart when waiting to enter the building, standing in line for elevators, walking in hallways, etc. Adjustments will be made to seating and desks, when necessary, to allow for employees to maintain a six-foot distance when completing work. In-person class size will be reduced and adjustments to seating/desks will be made in support of social distancing practices when feasible. Students will be required to wear masks while in the building. For transitions, schools will adjust schedules as needed in order to limit student traffic in the hallways during certain times of the day. For breakfast and lunch, tables and chairs will be distributed in order to ensure 6 feet of distance between students.

Will students and staff be required to wear masks at school?

The District plans to procure and distribute personal protective equipment for students and employees to use when in buildings. This equipment will include a mask, hand sanitizer, thermometers, and gloves. Guidance will be provided to employees regarding the specific PPE needed based on their role and responsibilities. All PPE will be purchased centrally and delivered to locations before students and employees restart school and work.

Additionally, the Atlanta Board of Education's Policy Committee recently recommended that it change the district's student dress code to allow APS to require students to wear PPE such as

face coverings and masks. Parents should prepare to purchase masks for their children as a part of the school uniform and school supply lists.

What are the screening and safety measures that the district will use when students and staff are in the building?

All students and employees will be required to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose at all times. Daily cleaning protocols will be established to ensure that workplaces, workstations, equipment and facilities are clean. Hand sanitizer stations will be installed in common areas. We're also planning to have students and employees participate in daily temperature screening and complete a daily questionnaire if they are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 (parents will be asked to assess students before sending them to school each day) . The results of the self-assessment will determine if the individual should go to school/work or remain at home. Conducting regular screenings for symptoms and ongoing self-monitoring will help reduce exposure and limit the risk of spreading the disease.

Which health agencies do you work with?

National Level: Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization (WHO)

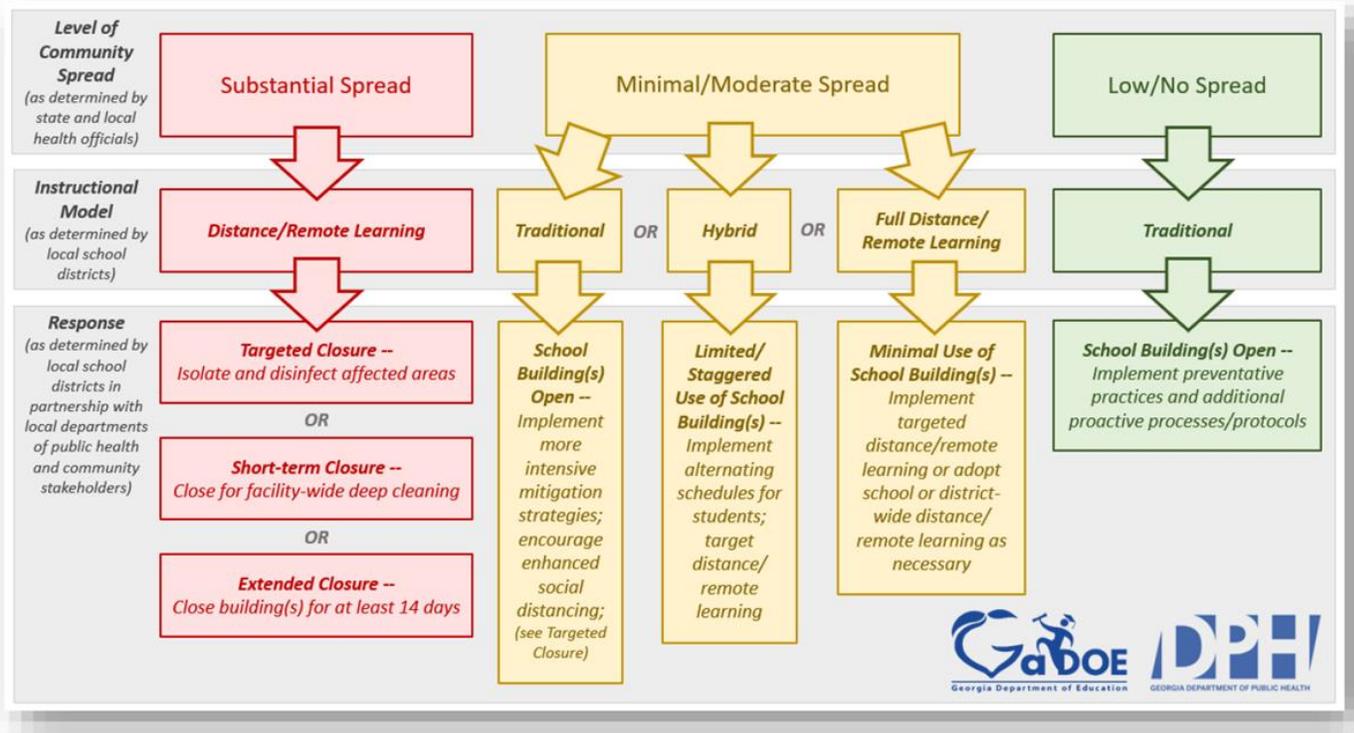
Local Level: Georgia Department of Public Health, Fulton County Board of Health, DeKalb County Board of Health, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Our External Stakeholders Committee includes:

- Dr. Lynn Paxton, District Health Director for Fulton County Board of Health
- Dr. Carla Smith-Demps, Emergency Medicine Doctor at Atlanta VA Medical Center
- Dr. Veda Johnson Professor, Department of Pediatrics & Managing Director of the Lindbergh and Women Health Clinic at the Emory University School of Medicine
- Dr. Jean O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer of Whiteford, Inc.
- Meshell McCloud, Georgia Department of Public Health Liaison for the Fulton County Board of Health

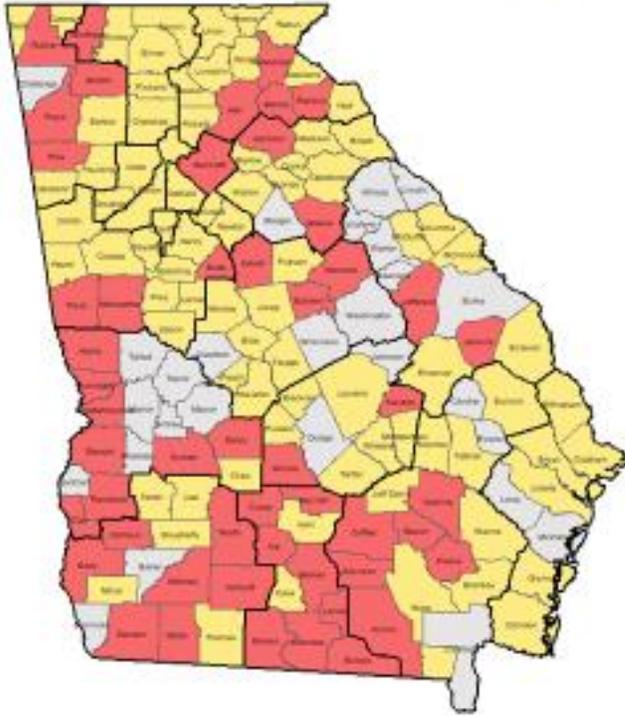
How are you examining a COVID-19 spread? How do you know if it's minimal or substantial?

The district's decision regarding how we reopen schools in the Fall is heavily driven by the public health data regarding the COVID-19 virus coupled with an instructional model that best provides us the opportunity to meet our students' academic and social emotional needs, as well as their need for access to more wrap-around services and intensive supports. The image below shows– "Level of Community Spread". The chart is color coded to reflect the instructional model recommended based on the level of community.

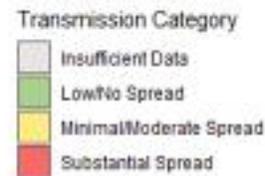


The map below shows the levels of community spread as determined by the Georgia Department of Health as of 6-10-2020 for all counties within state of Georgia. The designations follow info from the previous slide and denotes “levels of community spread” as low/no, minimal/moderate and substantial spread. According to this information, the counties of Fulton and DeKalb are currently designated as “Minimal/Moderate Spread”. The district is using a combination of the state and city data to inform the district’s planning process.

Levels of Community Spread



These designations based on 14-day incidence rates may also assist school districts in determining the level of community spread and recommended instruction model as defined by the Georgia Department of Education in [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#).



Note: Data as of 6-10-2020 as reported to Georgia Department of Public Health



How are you working with SWD and their unique, distinctive needs?

SWD attending low incidence regional programs (MOID, AUT, SID/PID, DHH S/C, etc.) may benefit from attending school in a face-to-face format as opposed to other models, regardless of the district's reopening decision. The district will consider alternatives to best meet the needs of these students based on the recommendations of IEP teams. Similar considerations are suggested for supporting newcomer English learners.

How will IB/Dual Enrollment/AP classes work in a virtual or hybrid model?

In regard to Dual Enrollment, our partnering colleges/universities dictate the instructional setting (virtual, hybrid or face-to-face) and course schedule (subject and time) offered for Dual Enrollment. We will ensure students are scheduled to their high school courses at times that will avoid conflict with their Dual Enrollment schedule.

As it pertains to AP and IB, teachers will continue to deliver the required content and will modify the instructional delivery to fit a hybrid or virtual model based on guidance from the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and the CollegeBoard. Regardless of our



returning model, we will make a considerate effort to ensure students' schedules of such courses will position for success on the aligned program exams in the spring. Announcements regarding any changes will be communicated to our students and parents via school-based communication platforms.

Lastly, students will continue to earn applicable weighted credit in their high school GPA as well as post-secondary credit pending their AP/IB exam scores and final grades in Dual Enrollment courses.

How is the district assisting parents who might have child care issues if the district selects a model that includes a mix of traditional and virtual options?

We recognize the challenges that a hybrid model will mean for working families. While there is no easy solution, we will support families by collecting and sharing a list of resources and providers that will be able to offer programming for families on hybrid days. Additionally, we plan to continue to work with partners to identify potential funding streams to support families in accessing options.

Noting that, most of our After School Care and After School Enrichment providers are positioned to support the District's reopening models, where child care is needed.

Will APS buildings and grounds be open this summer?

With athletics slowly returning to APS starting on Monday, June 15, the district continues to maintain the facilities usage policy created amid COVID-19.

Because APS places the highest priority on the health and safety of its students, families, staff, and community, all APS buildings, facilities, properties, fields, tracks, and parking lots are closed for public use this summer. APS has already granted limited use of its properties for voluntary student athletic conditioning for six fall sports, to be conducted under very controlled circumstances.

Although we have also granted access to some contracted partners who are following all APS safety protocols to operate COVID relief and response initiatives, such as food and technology distributions, our facilities and grounds are otherwise closed.

If you believe your proposed use of APS property should be granted an exception, please contact Rachel Sprecher (rsprecher@atlanta.k12.ga.us or 404.802.2812) to fill out the required paperwork. Please note that this process does not apply to APS partners with prior lease agreements in place for APS facilities, but we are asking those partners to keep us notified of all summer plans.



What's the status of athletics or other extracurricular activities in Atlanta Public Schools?

In an effort to balance the health and preparation of strong athletics for fall sports and the safety of everyone amid COVID-19 pandemic, Atlanta Public Schools has reopened sports activities for high school athletics on Monday, June 15, as part of Phase I – Summer Conditioning. The district will at a minimum adhere to guidelines as set forth by the Georgia High School Association (GHSA), which allowed for sports activities to resume as early as Monday, June 8.

GHSA most recently expanded group size from 20 to 50 and also now allows for balls and equipment use. It has mandated a halt to conditioning from June 29 through July 4. The GHSA has not yet announced whether fall competitive sports will be held as scheduled.

There has been no determination as to how other extracurricular activities will take place. The District will continue to monitor COVID-19 data in order to best determine the implementation of activities outside the school day.

Please click [here](#) for the Athletics FAQ.