



FAQs from APS Virtual Town Hall Regarding the District Response to COVID-19

Updated 4.24.2020

When will Atlanta Public Schools reopen?

By an order of Governor Brian Kemp on April 1, 2020, all K-12 schools in Georgia will remain closed through the end of the school year, in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. APS will continue to follow the guidance of the state and local officials to determine when we return to school.

Academics

When is the last day of school?

For the rest of the school year, we will continue to use the current APS student calendar, with the last day of school on Friday, May 22. As is custom, seniors typically end the school year two weeks in advance. In order to provide ample time to clear seniors and ensure transcript/records accuracy, seniors' last day will be Friday, May 1. Some school districts in Metro Atlanta have opted to shorten their school year, but we believe it in the best interest of our students to maximize the instructional time we have.

Have you made any changes to the school week?

We are making a significant change starting next Monday, April 20, in that we will move to a four-day week for instruction that will start on Monday, April 20. We will maintain a five-day work week for staff. That means that students will receive new assignments and graded work for only four days. Friday would allow teachers to work with students needing review or remediation and allow students to catch up on assignments, complete make-up work, or engage in other learning activities. Schools may also choose to use a portion of Fridays for professional learning for staff.

Will seniors have a graduation ceremony?

Yes, Grad Nation 2020 – #WorthTheWait is officially on! We will celebrate the Class of 2020 with both virtual celebrations and an in-person graduation ceremony later in the year!

With respect to social gathering restrictions in Georgia due to COVID-19, we plan to hold virtual celebrations for the Class of 2020 in May, delaying traditional ceremonies until the summer or a later safe date that adheres to Georgia Department of Health guidance. The district reached this

decision based on input from graduating seniors across all 14 high schools that significantly favored a traditional ceremony and the fact they themselves originated #WorthTheWait.

As part of the proposal, we will conduct a virtual celebration during the regular graduation season between May 18 and 21 and plan for a traditional program for each school when State and Department of Health guidelines allow. We will work with our schools to help our families get creative at home for the virtual celebrations, and we hope to deliver diplomas – through a safe manner – next month as well.

For the traditional ceremonies, APS is considering dates in late July using Lakewood and Grady stadiums as possible venues. If ceremonies must be delayed further, the district is considering other venues or ticketed ceremonies at each school, possibly scheduling them during the Thanksgiving or winter breaks to maximize attendance of graduates and their families.

It is all about safety, so whatever we do later will take place only if state health officials deem it to be safe.

How are you addressing parents who are not prepared to handle and assist with the homework and assignments students are expected to complete during the closure? Many are stressed because they are not familiar or used to home-schooling their children.

Virtual Learning has posed unique problems in the educational landscape, and APS teachers have handled it with tenacity. APS has an Instructional Technology team that provides training and on-time support for all of our teachers.

What should a day in the life of a virtual student look like?

Schools being sensitive to their communities, and while exercising autonomy, have established a schedule for students to provide structure to their day and establish routines. The goal is not to duplicate the classroom, but provide engaging, appropriate home learning opportunities for students. The table below reflects guidance for interactive virtual instruction and independent practice or completion of assignments.

Grade Band	Guidance for Interactive Virtual Instruction	Recommendations for Independent Practice/Assignments
K-5	Not to exceed 3 hours daily	Not to exceed 40 minutes daily
6-8	Not to exceed 4 hours daily	Not to exceed 60 minutes daily
9-12	Not to exceed 5 hours daily*	Not to exceed 90 minutes daily

**Due to course requirements and required student support, daily interactive virtual instruction may reach five hours*

What are some ways teachers will be engaging students through virtual learning?

Within this new reality you may see your student talking with their teacher and other students through our Google Meet platform, participating in live teacher-led lessons, and reading a host of online books through MyON Reader. APS students have read more than 27,500 books in the first eight days. Teachers are still preparing their Google classrooms, but many have already posted assignments and sent video messages to assist students in understanding what to expect. Our high school students are using content through our Virtual High School and have access to all core content areas, Health, and World Languages.

Where can students find additional learning resources?

Students can also visit hundreds of digital resources in our one-stop-shop digital portal MyBackPack. Students can access this platform with their APS Network ID and password. All students should know their usernames and the password is their lunch number. Within this portal your students can click through Discovery Education and virtual field trips, view online textbooks, and participate with live virtual tutors from 9 a.m. - 11 p.m. through our TutorATL platform available to all grade level students.

How is APS handling grading during this time frame?

Learning is continuing, but we have come up with the following guideline for grading. The final grade for all students should be determined using the grades earned during the time period of August 12 through March 13. Grades earned after March 13 should be used to improve the final grade but not lower it.

How will APS handle promotion of students to the next grade level?

The district's promotion policy has not changed and will continue to be applied within the context of reduced instruction/grades during this extended closure. Students who were in danger of being retained prior to the closure who have not demonstrated mastery of the standards may still be retained based upon the unique circumstances of each student. Students who lack technology access during this closure will not be punished for lack of access by being retained based solely on lack of access.

Will seniors be able to meet their graduation requirements?

We are continuing to support our seniors to graduate. The expectation to complete coursework still stands, but we are implementing some waivers to support kids for whom our graduation requirements may be difficult to complete now that we are shelter-in-place. For example, I have authorized Associate Superintendent Dan Sims to provide a blanket waiver of the graduation requirement for community service hours to seniors who are otherwise graduation-eligible. The community service requirement for graduation is specific to APS, not the State of Georgia, so we can waive it to provide that flexibility to seniors now that community service opportunities are limited.

Now that schools remain closed for the rest of the school year, how will that impact the current summer learning schedule?

We have suspended the PowerUp program this summer to direct resources to regular instruction. With the uncertainty of COVID-19, we would probably require our vendors to perform their work virtually. A vast majority told us that they could not do their programs from a distance. So we determined it was best to use the PowerUp money to supplement the work we are doing now and the start of next year.

We have also canceled our traditional Xanadu program that is geared specifically to students who participate in our Gifted and Talented program.

We will hold out all hope for Summer Bridge, which is in July and may still be possible to implement. We are pleased that Atlanta Virtual Academy will be offering a summer program for high school students, which allows them to take courses for credit recovery, initial credit, or even advancement.

Why are all APS playgrounds and gyms closed? Why can't the community use the school buildings and grounds during the closure?

During this closure, all APS facilities are closed for health and safety reasons. This includes parking lots, playgrounds, gyms, basketball courts, athletic fields, etc. Please practice the social distancing measures recommended by health officials and ensure that neither you nor your children are coming onto school grounds to congregate for any reason during this time.

Will there be any testing this year? Will students' EOC test results still form 20% of their grades?

In response to COVID-19, State School Superintendent Richard Woods on Monday, March 16, announced the suspension of state assessments, including the Georgia Milestones, as well as teacher evaluations and attendance accountability measures until further notice. He followed up that announcement by requesting, and receiving, a full waiver of state testing requirements and accountability measures for this year from the USDOE, which has been granted.

What is the district doing to ensure that students in special education are learning during the closure?

APS is working diligently to stay abreast of all updates, mandates, and recommendations from the Georgia Department of Education and the US Department of Education. We are also utilizing guidance and resources from the Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Administrators of Special Education, and the National Association of Special Education Directors. Our primary focus is the health and safety of our students while providing educational, speech, and related services in ways that are reasonable and appropriate under the current circumstances. We are providing our SWD with access to the same resources as their non-disabled peers where appropriate. Additionally, special education teachers and paraprofessionals are continuing to provide direct support to students while collaborating with parents.

Will APS start counting attendance?

Both state and federal officials have granted waivers from attendance accountability for the school district. However, APS is looking at ways to take attendance in Infinite Campus to gauge participation in teaching and learning each day. Such an attendance record will also provide us an indicator about which students have access and are engaging in the work.

Student Enrollment

How can parents complete enrollment for students new to the District?

Atlanta Public Schools has a online enrollment and registration system. The online enrollment system allows parents to enroll new students online, when and where it is most convenient for them, and in just a few minutes. Parents will have the ability to enter the student's enrollment information and securely upload the requested documents. Atlanta Public Schools will finalize enrollments via email so that parents will not have to visit their child's school in person. If additional information is needed, the parent will be contacted by APS staff members. To begin enrollment online, visit our Student Enrollment website at www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/enrollment.

How can parents complete registration requirements for current APS students?

If you don't have a Parent Portal account set-up, please be sure to set it up today! Our Infinite Campus Parent Portal tool allows parents to provide updated contact information. Parents can also complete registration requirements using Parent Portal for students that are rising 6th graders, 9th graders, or families that have changed addresses. Atlanta Public Schools will finalize registration with via email so that parents will not have to visit their child's school in person. If additional information is needed, the parent will be contacted by APS staff members. To begin the registration process or to create a parent portal account, visit our Student Enrollment website at www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/enrollment.

Is the deadline being extended for parents to apply for a general administrative transfer to another APS school for SY2020-21?

Yes, the general administrative transfer application window is still open on our website at www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/transfers. The deadline to apply for another APS school has been extended to May 1st. The list of schools and grade levels accepting transfers is also posted to our Student Transfer website.

NOTE: In line with the city and statewide shelter in place orders issued for Atlanta and Georgia, we are temporarily waiving the requirement for affidavits of residency **to be notarized** for parents completing initial enrollment and enrolling students in 6th grade, 9th grade or as a result of a change of residency. Parents can complete a Declaration of Residency that will not have to be notarized. This waiver will be in effect until August 1, 2020, at which time the requirement for a notarized affidavit of residency will resume.

Operations

What is the cleaning process for schools?

APS facility crews are doing two things: First, they are cleaning and restoring schools to a “Day One” look, which is a comprehensive cleaning. Second, APS crews are cleaning and disinfecting all furniture and high touch points in the schools, consistent with CDC guidelines. When APS schools reopen, they will be thoroughly cleaned and ready for our students and employees.

What is the nutrition plan for the rest of the closure?

Since we’ve been closed for teleschooling and teleworking, APS has prepared and distributed more than 160,000 breakfast and lunch meals to our families each week. We also provided thousands of bags of shelf-stable groceries and produce to families. Presently, our food distribution network includes eight APS school sites, 622 middle school bus routes, and volunteers with GOODr, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Hands on Atlanta, Zifty, and Uber.

On Monday, April 13, we streamlined our meal distribution from a daily schedule to providing meals one day a week each Monday from 10 a.m. to Noon. Students will continue to get five-day meal bags, containing five breakfast meals and five lunch meals each Monday **AND** the bag of weekly groceries will also be available. As always, all of this information is available at our website at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/fooddistribution>

Our nutrition program will end with the school year as usual. We will not distribute meals during the summer.

Accountability and Information Technology

When will my child get a device?

This school year, APS distributed more than 7,500 iPads to 1st and 2nd graders as part of the Tablet2Read program and more than 8,000 laptops to students in grades 6-8. That made APS almost “1-to-1” at those grade levels.

As a result of the closure of our schools in response to COVID-19, it is necessary to distribute many more devices that are normally used in classrooms every day in order to put computers in the hands of our students. All schools have scheduled digital distribution dates, and parents and guardians are already being scheduled one-at-a-time to pick up a Chromebook for their children. **If your child needs a device and you haven’t heard from your child’s school, please contact the school directly or send an email to getourkidsconnected@apsk12.org.**

We still do not have internet service. How are we supposed to teleschool?

Through partnerships with Sprint and T-Mobile, APS has already distributed over 9,500 hotspots to students in grades 7-11. Through an additional partnership with Xfinity, many families now have access to a free ‘XfinityWifi’ network. For our employees and families who need internet access, Xfinity is also offering a \$9.99/month package called ‘Comcast Essentials.’ This offer includes two months of free service. In addition, APS is aggressively exploring other avenues with APS partners, internet service providers, and four foundations to provide additional devices and internet connectivity. Several internet providers have special offers for accessing the internet. You can access those resources at www.atlantapublicschools.us/coronavirus.

How can I help APS kids get connected to digital resources?

APS has partnered with Comcast to support low-income families through our Get Our Kids Connected campaign. This campaign is an opportunity to dramatically impact the lives of some of our most vulnerable APS scholars. A tax-deductible donation of \$300 will provide a student with a laptop and high-speed Internet connection for 12 months.

Do I have to return any school-issued device before the end of the school year?

We have been asked about the plan for students to return school-based technology already distributed. At this point, it is not among our most pressing concerns, so we will likely allow students to keep those devices at least through the rest of the summer.

Will there be a refund of student dues and senior fees?

APS is looking into what refunds, if any, need to be made regarding student dues for the year. We are coordinating with individual schools to determine a process, if needed, to reimburse certain dues and fees.

Other

What does “shelter-in-place” mean for essential employees who reside in the city? Is APS an essential function that continues to operate?

Essential employees residing in the city are still permitted to report to work when necessary, so the Governor’s order does not affect them. Essential employees should be prepared to explain their role and that they work for the school district in an essential capacity in case the city begins active police enforcement of the Governor’s order. APS as an educational institution is considered an essential business for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible, and therefore our current operations are approved under the Governor’s Order.

What is “hero pay?”

Hero pay, the district’s version of hazard pay, is our way of recognizing those front line workers who continue to have to report to work in person, specifically those who clean our facilities, help distribute food to our families, and patrol our facilities for security purposes.

How much is hero pay and when will it start?

Designated workers will receive hero pay at a rate of time-and-a-half for all hours worked in person on site, beginning April 13.

Workers have been reporting in person before. Why don’t you make it retroactive and give them extra pay for the last three weeks too?

Our state constitution prohibits APS from giving what’s called “gratuities,” or gifts. Giving extra money for work that’s already been performed and compensated (like retroactive pay)

would be a violation of this prohibition against gratuities. APS wants to do what it can to recognize these workers, so we're starting here pay the very first day back from Spring Break.

We recently received a survey in the mail from APS? Can you provide more details about this survey?

Amid the closure, we have continued to work diligently to do more to help our students achieve. But we need more support from home and from our community. Research demonstrates an urgent need to improve the stability of our families, and stable families mean even better outcomes for our students. While APS cannot do everything, we can make connections with tried and true partners who provide key services that can help our families.

The survey card you received will help us determine these needs and identify community partners who can help. We need our families to take a moment to complete the survey and send it back to us as soon as possible. There is a QR code on the survey you can use to take the survey online or simply drop the completed card in the mail.

Please note: This survey was produced before the COVID-19 crisis and can no longer be returned to your school. Please complete the survey online or return the prepaid card by mail. We will share the information collected with our generous partners who match our community's needs.

When can students retrieve personal items from the school?

Students and families will not be allowed access to the school at this time. We continue to follow the recommendations from public health and safety officials on this topic and will communicate with the APS community when we can arrange reentry into our schools in a safe manner.

What else is the district doing to help the community?

Whitefoord Clinics have stayed open this week, March 23 - 27, and observe the same hours as last week. The clinics will continue to see most routine and urgent health needs. They will also begin offering telehealth behavioral health appointments for children and adults this week. There are some visit types, such as immunizations or strep throat tests, that can be done while patients wait in their cars!

Whitefoord Health clinics have established this hotline number, (470) 427-2634 ext. 123, to assist patients and members of the community with respiratory symptoms, and testing for COVID-19 and flu. Information is also available on their website at:

<https://www.whitefoord.org/covid19>.

What will happen to APS Rocks & Runs 5K?

The district created APS Rocks and Runs 5K last year as a benefit for APS educators during National Teacher Appreciation Week. Because of COVID-19 concerns, instead of running the race through Atlanta's Historic West End, participants may now complete the three-mile run/walk on their own between Saturday, May 2, and Friday, May 15, at the location of their own choosing!

All registrants will receive a race bib, commemorative T-shirt, and finishers medal! Packets will be mailed to the address provided during registration. All proceeds will go towards an appreciation gift for APS educators. Registration will end Wednesday, April 22.

These questions and answers are based on major themes posed during the March 26, April 3, April 17, and April 23. APS District Town Hall events. If further questions exist, please feel free to visit the COVID-19 resource page at www.atlantapublicschools.us/coronavirus or reach out to us by submitting a question on Let's Talk.