

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Meria Joel Carstarphen, Superintendent

Date: June 26, 2020

Subject: My last Friday staff memo — Current Health Conditions, Staff Survey, Graduation, and More — my love and deepest appreciation!

Team, we are at the end of another week in APS, and close to the end of June! What a week this has been! It is with a heavy heart — filled with love and appreciation — that I send my last, albeit still boring :-), end of week work memo. (Yes, I'm crying like a big baby. Only I would get emotional over a work memo...SMH!) Moving on...I wanted to be sure to say THANK YOU, Team APS! It's been quite a wild ride but an amazing one because of the 6,000 resolute leaders, educators, and support professionals dedicated to the mission that every student graduates ready for college, career, and life. Your tireless efforts consistently motivated me, and witnessing your heroic efforts these past couple of months under COVID-19 only reinforced why I'm so proud to have been on this team. I will sincerely miss you!

I want to send a big shout out to all the members of the District's COVID-19 Task Force led by Dr. Katika Lovett! This task force was formed quickly in response to the pandemic in mid-February, and it has successfully guided the District's response to the impacts of COVID-19 on our school system since that time. This challenge was unprecedented, and there was no roadmap to follow. Despite the obstacles, the task force stepped up, and through great leadership, worked through every issue we faced to a positive resolution. That work brought out the best in all of us and kept us focused on our students.

The COVID-19 Task Force held its last meeting this week and is completing its many deliverables as it passes the baton to the District's Reopening Task Force led by Dr. Danielle Battle. That team will lead APS through a safe reopening in August, keeping public health guidelines at the center of the decision-making.

I can't thank these teams enough for the amount of work they have done and continue to do in the best interest of APS. We appreciate you and applaud the yeoman's job you've done!

Now, here are a few important updates I need to share with you.

Review of Current Health Conditions

District officials are monitoring the local health conditions on a daily basis in the planning process for school reopening. The Georgia Department of Education (DOE) has recommended that Districts rely on current data from the Department of Public Health (DPH), among other

sources. So that you may also stay informed, the current county-level trends can be seen by selecting individual counties in the COVID-19 Cases Over Time graph found [here](#).

Designations correspond to the guidance from [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools Report](#). This report was designed by the DOE as a framework to inform decision-makers about the degree of spread of COVID-19 in a county, but is not designed to be a definitive determination of school opening/closing/learning modalities. It uses simple 14-day incidence rates per county mapped to the three categories listed in the DOE School Recovery Guidance (no/low, minimal, moderate, and substantial spread). These sources are just one-way school districts are staying informed about the COVID status in their areas, but APS will continue to consult with the local DPH about other factors that may contribute to localized case numbers (such as mass testing at a worksite, outbreaks, etc.)

Staff Survey on District Reopening Strategy

There's still time to complete the staff survey on the District's reopening strategy! The survey is available until June 30. Reviewing input from staff will be an important part of the District's decision-making process. If the public health guidance informs the District that we are in a phase of low to no spread of COVID-19, APS would move forward with a traditional face-to-face reopening. However, the most likely scenarios for the start of school include remaining fully virtual or moving to a hybrid model. Please take the time to share your feedback on the District's reopening strategy by completing this anonymous employee survey by June 30: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WVHGD7D>.

Graduation 2020: #WorththeWait!

We said all along that the Class of 2020 is #WorththeWait! Well, the wait is over! I'm so excited to share that we have scheduled in-person graduation ceremonies for our beloved students of the Class of 2020 from July 20th through 24th at Lakewood Stadium. In anticipation of the hot and humid weather at that time of year, we have scheduled the ceremonies in the early morning and late afternoon. We don't want anyone to melt! And, of course, given current public health recommendations, social distancing and other safety guidelines will be enforced. We want our ceremonies to be exciting and safe for our students, families, and staff.

Mark your calendars! Here is the schedule:

Monday, July 20

Carver Early College and Carver STEAM, 9 a.m.

Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy and Business Engineering Science and Technology (B.E.S.T.) Academy, 6:30 p.m.

KIPP Atlanta Collegiate, 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 21

Henry W. Grady High School, 9 a.m.

Frederick Douglass High School, 6:30 p.m.

Booker T. Washington High School, 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22

Benjamin E. Mays High School, 9 a.m.

Alonzo A. Crim Open Campus High School (Phoenix Academy), 6:30 p.m.

South Atlanta High School, 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 23

North Atlanta High School, 9 a.m.

Maynard H. Jackson, 6:30 p.m.

Daniel McLaughlin Therrell High School, 8:30 p.m.

Friday, July 24

Drew Charter School, 10 a.m.

We have reserved Friday, July 24 as a make-up day for any ceremonies that may be impacted by inclement weather. Get all the full schedule and the latest graduation details online at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/gradnation>.

Resources for Employee Wellness

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, Deer Oaks, continues to provide several resources for staff health and well-being, even through the summer. Employees can tap into several COVID-19 support resources in the “News for You” section of the [Deer Oaks website](#) (the username and password are both aps in lowercase). Deer Oaks also offers meditation exercises, including yoga, walking meditation, and mindfully engaging in daily activities. Here’s another one for everyone entitled, [Controlling Anxious Thoughts During Difficult Times](#). I have also provided access to the recent [Supervisor](#) and Employee Newsletter from Deer Oaks that are both great resources as well. Lastly, don’t forget our employee discount program at <https://aps.sparkfly.com/> with savings on technology purchases, gym memberships, home improvement, and more.

Please note that this guidance may change daily. Check email frequently for updates, as well as the district’s [health alerts page](#). All of my past employee memos are posted there as well.

Thank you again for your commitment to the work of APS. Please take time this weekend to reset and recharge, and remember to stay healthy and safe! Best wishes to you all! I’ll forever be cheering you on!

Air hugs to you all!

Meria