

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Meria Joel Carstarphen, Superintendent

Date: April 24, 2020

Subject: Important Updates for APS Employees

Team, we have completed another successful week in APS, and I am so grateful for all of your support! You continue to show how passionate you are about our students and families and that passion goes a long way toward making all of our efforts impactful. Thank you!

As you begin to wind down your Friday and look toward your weekend, here are a few important updates I want you to keep in mind:

Ways to Stay Engaged

We realize it's a struggle to maintain our physical and mental well-being while balancing the requirements of work and family life. There are several ways APS is stepping up to help you with that challenge. We encourage you to take advantage of these FREE supports:

- **"Rising to the Challenge" Series.** Join the Office of Strategy & Change to meet (virtually) for our [series](#) to help you and your team rise to the challenges we face using your own strengths, resilience, and engagement. Register [here](#) to receive calendar invites for the upcoming webinars taking place at 9:00 a.m. on May 8th, May 22nd, and June 5th. Additional tips, tricks, and resources can be found on APS' employee engagement website: www.apsstrong.com/tips.
- **Social Emotional Support with Peers.** Our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) department is hosting Wellness Wednesdays and SELf-care Fridays at 1:30 p.m. weekly for all employees. Please take advantage of this opportunity! Learn more [here](#) and register in [MyPLC](#) for what is sure to be a fun and helpful time together with colleagues.
- **Live Mindfulness Sessions.** Join us for a series of live, web-based sessions facilitated by an Aware specialist, and engage in 10-minute mindfulness exercises that will help you focus, release tension, and reset for improved well-being. To participate, click on the session you'd like to attend on the [Healthy Minds Innovations site](#) and submit your registration (new sessions added each week). These sessions, plus the Healthy Minds mobile app mentioned on the site, are provided free to all APS employees.
- **Assistance with Unique Situations.** Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, Deer Oaks, just released new articles to support employees with ["couples confinement" issues during COVID-19](#) and helping [seniors \(older individuals\) navigate COVID-19 issues](#). Please also remember the rest of our EAP benefits that can help with other life needs like managing change, personal counseling, legal, financial, and other valuable free

services during this time. Visit <https://members.deeroakseap.com/> and enter “aps” for both the username and password.

Staying Healthy

Your health continues to be very important to us, and essential staff and volunteers are key to helping APS support our students and families. In order to keep everyone safe, it's very important that our employees, volunteers, and contractors adhere to the following guidelines at all APS facilities (*These guidelines may be revised as Department of Public Health and CDC recommendations evolve*):

- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (mask and gloves),
- Maintain social distancing of at least six feet,
- Have their temperature assessed and recorded by the assigned nurse upon arrival (at food distribution sites),
- Stay at home if you feel sick, are coughing or sneezing, or are in a high risk category. See [CDC guidance for high risk individuals](#).

Individuals will not be able to work in person or volunteer if any of the following risk factors are identified during the screening process conducted at each site:

- Fever – If an individual has a temperature that is low grade, 99.9 degrees or higher, that individual will not be able to work and/or volunteer and should report home until they are without symptoms for seven days.
- Symptoms - If an individual has symptoms of a respiratory disease (these may include fever, coughing, muscle aches, sore throat, and headache), that person cannot report to work or volunteer for at least seven days, and for three days with no fever and having seen an improvement of respiratory symptoms. (Fever must be gone for 72 hours without using fever-reducing medicine).
- If an individual has been in contact with a known or suspected case of COVID-19, that person cannot report to work or volunteer.

Individuals who are not allowed to work in person or volunteer due to these identified factors should:

- Monitor symptoms and consult their health care provider for additional guidance,
- Contact the COVID-19 Georgia Department of Public Health Hotline at (844) 442-2681 for general questions or eligibility for testing,
- Refer to the APS website at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/coronavirus> for additional COVID-19 information, and
- Refer to Georgia DPH <https://dph.georgia.gov/> for additional COVID-19 information.

Individuals who test negative for COVID-19 may work or volunteer after 24 hours without fever or taking fever-reducing medicine.

Paid Leave Options

Remember that staff who are unable to work due to a COVID-19 related illness of either themselves or a family member, or due to childcare issues stemming from a COVID-19 closure should email LeaveRequests@atlanta.k12.ga.us in order to receive emergency paid sick leave, if

applicable. On April 3, 2020, we adopted two new administrative regulations to provide unprecedented flexibility and paid leave to staff who are unable to work. See [EBB-R\(2\)](#) and [EBB-R\(3\)](#). The district is waiving traditional paper forms that previously had to be filled out and is providing access to the catastrophic “time share” sick leave bank in addition to the new federally required two weeks of emergency paid sick leave and expanded FMLA.

Staff who qualify will have leave days applied in the following order: 1) up to 10 days of emergency paid leave for a qualifying reason, 2) any remaining sick or personal leave days, and if leave is still necessary, 3) up to 10 additional days from the sick leave bank. Additional leave may be available under FMLA or the new expanded FMLA for qualifying reasons, as well. Also, if you would like to donate sick leave days to the Time Share Sick Leave bank, you can do that at [Absence Management / APS Time Share Sick Leave Bank](#).

Hero Pay Reminders

In my [April 3rd memo](#), I shared that we are providing extra support to our staff with the addition of “hero pay” above and beyond what most districts are paying. At that time, we stated the following regarding hero pay: “After spring break, we will be limiting the number of staff reporting to work in person. However, some of our front line workers will still be reporting to work in person, like those who clean facilities, aid in food distribution, or patrol facilities for security purposes. To honor their contributions, we will be implementing hero pay at a rate of time and a half for all hours worked in person beginning April 13 for designated employees working on site.”

Since that time, we have been actively reviewing health guidance and assessing the conditions of our APS facilities. Effective April 16, 2020, we are further defining employees eligible for hero pay as those who “must work in person daily” and are “unable to avoid contact with the public and public areas or practice social distancing as recommended by the CDC, thereby potentially causing hazardous conditions, personal distress, and discomfort.” This adds a few non-exempt positions that were not previously eligible for hero pay, such as police dispatchers and some additional operations staff. A stipend rate will be calculated and communicated for exempt employees. Employees who believe they may be eligible for hero pay should notify their supervisor who can email the request to the Chief Human Resources Officer.

I know I covered a lot of information in today’s memo, but I want to ensure you get this information in a timely manner. You can always access my previous memos online for other important health and workplace updates at www.atlantapublicschools.us/coronavirus.

Thank you for all that you do, and please have a happy and safe weekend!

Air hugs, love and appreciation to everyone!

Meria