

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Meria Joel Carstarphen, Superintendent

Date: May 1, 2020

Subject: Budget Outlook for FY2021 and Other Updates

Team, I cannot thank you enough for continuing to work through these past several weeks of tele-schooling and teleworking challenges, including difficult moments in virtual learning, and going beyond our academic mission by helping our community with food, health services and other wraparound supports. We have indeed lived through interesting and unprecedented times that can sometimes feel overwhelming.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for not only staying true to our APS mission, but for living that mission every day through your actions and the work that you do.

Continued Operations

As many of you have heard, Governor Kemp issued an executive order yesterday evening that allowed many more businesses to resume operations and lifted the shelter-in-place requirements for most Georgians. However, the executive order does not change anything for APS. We can continue only our essential operations as we have throughout this crisis, but we must continue to faithfully implement social distancing and other safety measures, such as wearing personal protective equipment. So, life for us (and our stakeholders as they interact with us) remains unchanged for now.

Budget Outlook

Given that many economists are predicting a sharp economic decline ahead, we will need to implement cost-cutting measures across the District for Fiscal Year 2021. I am committed to doing everything I can to prevent staff cuts or furloughs. Based on a memo issued today by State School Superintendent Richard Woods to all Georgia school districts, we are anticipating a 14% reduction to Quality Basic Education (QBE) allotments for Fiscal Year 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19 on our state's economy. These numbers can change, but this translates into a reduction of approximately \$60 million from our current budget request.

We are looking to close that gap in funding for FY2021 by freezing spending in the current year to free up funds to carryover to next year, postponing the 6-12 ELA textbook adoption, sweeping school based reserves, reducing Central Office non-personnel, assuming lapsed salary, and reclassifying eligible expenses to the CARES act funds.

Given this, we are postponing the tentative adoption of the FY2021 budget which was scheduled for the May 4th Board meeting on Monday. However, we will still present the tentative budget at Monday's meeting, and I encourage you to tune in to stay abreast of the current budget situation.

Central Office Hiring Freeze

Effective May 1, 2020, the District is implementing a freeze on all new hires for central (non-school) positions that are not directly related to the COVID-19 emergency response. Continued hiring is automatically allowed for school-facing operations positions, like custodians, bus drivers and police officers. All other requests for hire will require a Chief Officer to submit a hiring freeze exception request.

School-Based Hiring Slowdown

Out of an abundance of caution, the District is also slowing down school-based hiring until at least June 1st, when we will have more clear revenue estimates. Hiring may continue as usual for instructional positions of teacher, administrator, instructional coach, counselor and special education paraprofessionals. Hiring for all other school-based positions is paused until at least June 1st. Offers made to candidates by Human Resources prior to May 1st will not be affected by the slowdown.

APS #MeetUp on Thursday, May 7 on the Budget

I know that you have lots of questions about the budget and the cost-cutting strategies we plan to put in place. That's why I'm hosting an APS #MeetUp on Thursday, May 7 at 4 p.m. on APS XChange at <https://aps.workplace.com> where we will talk in more detail about the budget situation and take your questions. I encourage you to join me on Thursday's Virtual Town Hall and engage in digital dialogue about this issue.

The Call to Unite

Over the past six weeks of our closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have asked our community for patience and understanding as we worked to get virtual learning right and to support our families. I've been in the social emotional learning (SEL) space for over 10 years now, and as SEL initiatives remind us, we have to take a moment every now and then to reconnect and remember that we're in this together. Our longstanding partners such as the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning and its chair, Tim Shriver, helped us rebuild our culture in APS. They, along with many others, including me, will reach out across the world to support each other in this unprecedented time.

[The Call to Unite](#) is one attempt to do that. Starting at 8 p.m. tonight, the Call to Unite is a 24-hour global livestream event that invites people around the world to celebrate hope for a new future together. This livestream event is a global opportunity to stand in solidarity with those experiencing pain, fear, loneliness, and grief – and offer hope and support as we build a new future together. Throughout the event, global leaders — from former presidents to Oprah to Common to Deepak Chopra — will join participants from around the world in sharing practices, faith, songs, reflections, and more to help people turn the pain of this moment into possibility for tomorrow. You are welcome to join us if you would like support by visiting the website unite.us.

APyes! Awards Excellence in Teaching Carryover to Next Year

Due to the uncertainty around COVID-19, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has suspended the 2021 Teacher of the Year program. That means that the reigning Georgia Teacher of the Year – our own Tracey Pendley of Burgess-Peterson Academy – will have her tenure extended through 2021.

In keeping with the direction of the state, we've decided to extend the reign of our existing Excellence in Teaching winners from the APyes! Awards through the 2020-2021 school year. This includes all of the winners in all of the award categories! To refresh your memory of all our winners, [click here to visit my blog](#).

APS Receives \$1.3 Million Donation from Intercontinental Exchange

I am beyond excited to share that we received a \$1.3 million donation yesterday from Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) to help the District and Comcast bridge the digital divide for students and their families through our [Get Our Kids Connected](#) campaign. With this gift, we will be able to get closer to getting thousands of APS children connected at home and equipped for distance learning. We are so grateful to ICE for this donation, and it demonstrates our corporate community's dedication to helping APS provide a quality education for our children.

Please keep up the great work! You all have been working incredibly hard for the betterment of APS, and I am so proud to be doing this work by your side. Rest up this weekend, and remember to #justbreathe. Be safe and stay healthy!

Love to you all!

Meria