

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Meria Joel Carstarphen, Superintendent

Date: May 12, 2020

Subject: Important Updates for APS Families

Welcome to another great week of tele-schooling and telelearning in Atlanta Public Schools, and thank you again for your ongoing support and partnership in helping our students succeed.

Our Virtual Student Celebrations Continue

Special Student Recognition

We decided not to let COVID-19 block the shine our outstanding students deserve for their achievements this year in academics, arts, athletics, service, and other areas. At this time of year, we would normally honor those students at the annual Special Called Board Meeting for Student Recognition. Our auditorium at the Alonzo A. Crim Center for Learning and Leadership would be filled with hundreds of students and their families along with our teachers and staff, celebrating student achievement.

Because of social distancing in light of COVID-19, we've gone virtual with this year's celebration! We launched a celebratory webpage to honor the achievements of our deserving students. I invite you to view the list of this year's student honorees and watch the celebratory videos at www.atlantapublicschools.us/studentrecognition. I want to thank and celebrate all of you — our APS parents, caregivers and families — who have worked hard to support our students this school year.

GradNation 2020: #WorthTheWait

We plan to hold virtual graduation celebrations for the Class of 2020 May 18 through May 22 on Facebook Live (<https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaPublicSchools>) with on demand viewing available on our APS YouTube Channel and on Channel 22 on Comcast Cable. Please join us to celebrate our graduating seniors as only Atlanta Public Schools can! Be sure you mark your calendars for these important viewing dates. Here is our virtual celebration broadcast schedule:

Monday, May 18

- Coretta Scott King 4:00 p.m.
- Best 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 19

- Crim 1:00 p.m.
- KIPP Atlanta 4:00 p.m.
- Therrell 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 20

- Grady 1:00 p.m.
- Jackson 4:00 p.m.
- Washington 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 21

- Mays 1:00 p.m.
- Douglass 4:00 p.m.
- South Atlanta 7:00 p.m.

Friday, May 22

- Carver (STEAM) 1:00 p.m.
- Carver Early College 4:00 p.m.
- North Atlanta 7:00 p.m.

For more information, including the diploma pick up schedule for each high school, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/gradnation. #APSGrad2020 is #WorthTheWait!

Cost-Cutting Measures in light of Economic Downturn

I shared recently with you that we anticipate a 14% reduction to Quality Basic Education allotments for Fiscal Year 2021. This translates into a reduction of \$60 million for APS to our current budget projections. To mitigate this impact, our central office is working to make a 5% overall reduction and schools are working to rebalance with a 1.8% reduction and a postponed textbook adoption. We have been running multiple scenarios to help us identify and implement the most effective strategies to balance the FY 2021 budget in light of the reduction.

Our hope is to make the heavy cuts now and put APS in a position where we would be able to add dollars back in the future if and when there are better revenue projections. In planning for next school year, we have made a number of non-personnel reductions:

- pulling back the proposed pay raises and keeping salaries the same as this year
- postponing the grades 6 to 12 English Language Arts textbook adoption
- cutting school-based reserve accounts, which are like their rainy day funds
- reducing the per-pupil allocations (SSF) to schools by 1.8% to account for some assumed savings to non-personnel accounts, like reduced employee travel
- truing-up state health plan benefit assumed costs based on actual usage of insurance
- asking central office divisions to make percentage cuts to non-personnel budgets, like planned purchases and travel
- implementing a freeze on all new hires for non-instructional positions that are not directly related to the COVID-19 emergency response, and
- reclassifying eligible expenses to the CARES Act funds

I will continue to keep you updated and look forward to your input as we work toward preparing a balanced budget to be approved by the Board of Education in June.

Summer Virtual Activities

I want you to know that we are already planning ahead and identifying virtual activities our students can take advantage of this summer. Our eResources and eBook shelf will still be available to provide teachers and students with databases, information, and books that support learning and independent reading for pleasure. Our eBook shelf is a robust collection of both fiction and nonfiction titles that are aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Also, our school media specialists share a weekly newsletter with teachers and parents that highlights resources in MyBackpack.

Now that APS and Fulton County Library System have combined their efforts to build a city that reads, we are pleased to launch a tandem Beanstack account, where both APS and Fulton County Library patrons are encouraged to link their accounts and join the Race2Read reading campaign. All minutes read as a library patron or an APS student will help to reach our reading goal.

Students are encouraged to read and log 20 minutes every day in Beanstack even in the summer. Fulton County Library will continue to offer live streaming story time for children and adults via Facebook, and will add a teen book talk program which will be held via Instagram. Additionally, Fulton County Library System has a number of other virtual programs scheduled to come online just in time for summer reading.

Don't forget that MyBackPack, which your student currently has access to, offers a wealth of digital resources for practice, review or even enrichment. Through MyBackpack, our students have access to all programming through our CLASSPass partnership. Also, all APS students have access to myON Reader, a digital eBook platform that provides Lexile-appropriate books for students.

We will be launching a myBackPack for Summer resource webpage in the coming days where parents can learn more about all of the digital resources available for summer use. Please be on the lookout for that communication and start planning for ways your children can remain engaged in summer virtual activities.

Re-Entry into School

We are developing a plan for how and when students and staff can return to our schools and buildings. But, I want you to know that safety is our first priority. We continue to monitor federal, state, local, and health department guidance. Based on the information we have now, we don't foresee school buildings being used as work sites until school reopens in August, and we don't foresee allowing students, families or staff to return to school buildings to retrieve items before August either.

We know there may be exceptions. To manage those requests, we have developed the following process to allow for exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Students and staff seeking access to buildings based on a critical need prior to August 2020, but no later than May 29, 2020 may

submit a request at <https://forms.gle/PP1jZ9Ckk9zcbvH66>. These requests will be routed to principals, associate superintendents and health services for approval. Only the following scenarios will be considered: (1) teacher/staff retrieval/return of personal or district items due to resignation or transfer, (2) breakdown of classrooms for school-wide relocations or individual classroom moves, (3) retrieval/return of student materials and belongings due to out of district transfers, (4) other: circumstances described in the request that necessitate access to personal items or materials stored in classrooms or office spaces.

These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be submitted 72 hours prior to the date of requested entry. Requests involving groups of larger than five persons will be subject to legal review prior to approval. Please Note: Individuals who are approved to access buildings early will be asked to sign a written acknowledgement and waiver. As we move forward, our decision-making will continue to be heavily driven by guidance from state and local public health officials and published recommendations from the CDC regarding school re-entry.

Health Resources for our Families

The Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) in partnership with the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation is providing free COVID-19 testing in Atlanta at the Home Depot Backyard (1 Backyard Way, Atlanta, GA 30313) at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To learn more and to sign up to get tested, please visit www.coreresponse.org/covid19-Atlanta. For registration assistance, please call the COVID hotline at Good Samaritan Health Clinic at (404) 523-6571 ext. 4298.

In addition, Whitefoord Health Clinics are a valuable resource to our families for most routine and urgent health needs, including COVID-19 testing. Call their hotline number, (470) 427-2634 ext. 123, or visit them online at <https://www.whitefoord.org/covid19>. The Whitefoord Teen Thrive Line is available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (470) 427-2624 ext. 305. This is a resource line and not a crisis hotline. Anyone who is in danger or worried that someone else may be in danger should call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

You can always reach out to us 24/7 on *Let's Talk* at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us> with any questions or comments you have. Let's continue to work together to ensure our students succeed. Have a great week!

Meria