

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Families

From: Dr. Meria Joel Carstarphen, Superintendent

Date: March 23, 2020

Subject: Important COVID-19 Updates for APS Families and Stakeholders

Aggressive efforts to halt the spread of COVID-19 in our community continue as Atlanta Public Schools (APS) begins our second full week of teleschooling and teleworking. Last week, we rose to the challenge and used our creativity and technology to connect in virtual spaces to continue the teaching and learning in our District. Additionally, APS staff and volunteers eagerly greeted many of you at our 10 APS food distribution sites around the city.

COVID-19 Update

As of now, there remains one confirmed case of COVID-19 in APS. As I shared in my memo to you on [March 19](#), that one confirmed case yielded no exposure to students and there was no close contact with employees based on the Fulton County Board of Health's investigation. We strongly encourage you to continue to practice the preventative measures provided by health officials to stop the spread of COVID-19. Those measures and other resources can be found on our [coronavirus webpage](#).

Closure Dates, Spring Events, Community Meetings, and Graduation

We've previously shared that APS would remain closed for teleschooling and teleworking through at least March 31 and possibly through Spring Break (April 6 – 10) and beyond. Given recent guidance from health officials and governmental actions from various elected officials, we anticipate that APS will remain closed at least through Monday, April 13 and possibly beyond. I want to share this information with you now to allow you as much time as possible to prepare for this length of closure.

During our closure, all previously planned community meetings and events have been cancelled. We are evaluating future events on a case-by-case basis and will make decisions in the near future. To the Class of 2020, I'm sure that we cannot offer any definitive words on what the rest of this school year and graduation will look like. I'm going to take everything one day at a time.

APS District Town Hall: A Virtual Conversation, Thursday, March 26

I know that parents and staff have a lot of questions for APS given our closure for teleschooling and teleworking. To help answer those questions and to hear feedback from our stakeholders in real time, I'll be hosting an APS District Town Hall on Facebook Live this Thursday, March 26 at 4 p.m. Please join us on Facebook ([@AtlantaPublicSchools](#)) for our virtual discussion. It's a great way for us to stay connected with you. See you there!

No Social Gatherings on School Grounds during Closure

To the community at large, remember that 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.

Weekly Groceries Available

Beginning today, the Atlanta Community Food Bank will provide families with a bag of shelf-stable groceries for the week. Each Monday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., families can pick up one bag of shelf-stable groceries, while supplies last, at one of these four APS food distribution sites:

- Cleveland Avenue Elementary School | 2672 Old Hapeville Road, SW
- Frederick Douglass High School | 225 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, NW
- Phoenix Academy (formerly Alonzo A. Crim High School) | 256 Clifton Street, SE
- Sylvan Hills Middle School | 1461 Sylvan Road, SW

In addition, each Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., families can pick up one bag of shelf-stable groceries, while supplies last, at Ralph Bunche Middle School, 1925 Niskey Lake Road, SW, another APS food distribution site.

These weekly groceries are in addition to our emergency meal distribution and bus delivery of food, which we began last week. As a reminder, [APS has 10 food distribution sites](#). For the list of APS food distribution sites, a list of food pantries, and our bus delivery schedule of food, [click here](#). Meals are available to children 18 years old or younger, or 22 years old or younger for those with special needs. Children must be present to receive the meal and be counted for required state and federal recordkeeping. Families are encouraged to pull up with their children in a drive-thru style for service, and should remain in their vehicle while receiving their food. Walk-ups are welcome.

Keep in mind that the Atlanta Community Food Bank has more than 50 sites for food distribution. *(APS does not manage the hours or service at these food distribution sites. Families should contact the food distribution sites directly for information about their hours, service, and any other requirements for food).* [Click here to see the full list](#) of food distribution sites through the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

Uber Discount for Families Riding to APS Food Distribution Sites

Uber has partnered with APS to provide discounted rides to or from APS [food distribution sites](#) for as long as we can continue to sustain these services up until April 10. Uber is providing a 25 percent discount (up to \$10) for trips taken to or from those locations to assist with continued access to free meals. The code “**APS2020**” will be available for use Monday through Friday during meal service times, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., for any UberX or UberXL trip to or from the pickup location. To use it, riders should enter the promo code “**APS2020**” in the Payment section of the Uber app. Anyone under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

To redeem the ride discount:

1. Open your app and tap “Payment” in your app menu
2. Scroll down to Promotions
3. Tap “Add Promo Code”
4. Enter code **APS2020** then tap “Add”
5. Select the address of any [APS food distribution site](#) as your destination

Be sure you read this important disclaimer from Uber:

- *Maximum discount of \$10 per ride. Maximum of 2 rides per rider per day on UberX and UberXL. Discount is valid for rides to and from the pickup locations linked above through 11:59 p.m. ET on April 10, 2020. To activate the promo code, apply it in the Uber app prior to requesting your ride. Discount does not apply to surcharges, government fees, tolls, or tips and cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Offer is non-transferable. Offer and terms are subject to change without notice.*

State Suspension of Assessments, Evaluations

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. Mr. Woods said school leaders need to be focused on the safety of students and staff and on creating flexible ways to keep virtual learning going. That is exactly what we plan to do.

Laptop/Device Distribution to APS Students and Distance Learning Support

This school year, APS distributed more than 7,500 iPads to 1st and 2nd graders as part of the Tablet2Read program and over 8,000 laptops to nearly all students in grades 6-8. That made APS “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 most vulnerable students. We are doing our very best to provide devices to our students. If your child needs a device and you haven’t heard from your child’s school, please contact the school directly.

The safety and health of our employees’ and the community is of utmost concern. Therefore, during this process, we continue to follow CDC and Department of Public Health guidelines. In addition, as we work through the distribution of devices, our Technology and Human Resources teams are partnering with our school principals to ensure that we limit the direct contact of employees, volunteers, students, and parents/guardians. We also know that, in many cases, parents/guardians will have difficulty coming to their school to pick up devices. We are currently exploring all possible safe avenues to ensure students receive a device.

Wi-Fi Connectivity – Through partnerships with Sprint and T-Mobile, APS has already distributed over 9,000 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

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 or [by clicking here](#).

Instructional Support for Distance Learning - Distance Learning is well under way, and APS students and teachers are adjusting to the new reality of distance 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 reading. APS students have read over 11,000 books in the first four 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.

- 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 that 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.

Additional Partnerships – APS is continuing to develop new partnerships to try to ensure every family has access to a student device and internet connectivity. We are launching a partnership with Comcast where families will be able to sign up for a free personal device and at least 12 months of WiFi. Additionally, we are acquiring more devices through partnerships with Google and other providers. More information on how to access these home devices and packages (not issued by the district) will be forthcoming.

Whitefoord Health Clinics Still Open

Whitefoord Clinics will be open again 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>.

I appreciate the positive emails and messages on social media from many of you as we teleworked and teleschooled through our first week of closure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As always, if you have questions, please contact us through *Let's Talk* on our website at <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us>.

Have a safe and healthy week!