

## MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: December 4, 2020

Subject: APS Cares Stipends, Quality Care for Children, and January 2021 Reopening Summary

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you had a wonderful week and are having an even better day today! It was a pleasure engaging with you during our [virtual employee town hall](#) on Workplace. To have so many of you online together at the same time, engaging during our reopening presentation and sending those school shoutouts, was uplifting. I could feel the energy in the (virtual) room. This really speaks to the power of connecting, and I want to thank you all for being a part of that moment.

### **APS Cares Stipends**

Be on the lookout for the “APS Cares” stipend of \$1,000! This stipend is a token of our appreciation for you and all that you do. It’s also our way of helping you offset personal costs for internet, supplies, materials, childcare, and other costs you may have incurred over the past few months. The stipend will be part of the next paycheck for our regular full-time and part-time/hourly employees who work during the school day and at least 29 hours per week.

### **Quality Care for Children**

I’m pleased to share that thanks to our partners at Quality Care for Children and PAACT: Promise ALL Atlanta Children Thrive, there is now a hotline that APS teachers can use to help find options for child care. Quality Care for Children provides referrals to parents seeking Georgia Childcare, after-school programs, Georgia PreK, Early/Head Start, and summer camps.

Just call 470-426-2610 to explore your childcare options. Identify yourself as an APS staff member, and ask for Anna Buchman! Also, you can visit [www.qualityrated.org](http://www.qualityrated.org) to search options online. We also encourage you to see if you qualify for a [SOLVE grant](#) by visiting the [Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning online](#).

In addition, for any staff members experiencing financial hardship in accessing learning and care options for their students, financial assistance may be available. Please contact [Rachel Sprecher](#) in our Office of Partnerships and Development, if you need support.

### **January 2021 Reopening Summary**

To recap our conversation during yesterday’s employee town hall, based on the advice of public health officials and healthcare professionals, we are preparing for a January 2021 reopening of

school buildings. Our decision-making is driven by two key areas: Levels of community transmission of COVID-19 and our ability to implement health and safety mitigation strategies as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control.

APS will reopen with the option for in-person learning in January 2021. As APS moves into the second phase of Return+Learn, we are basing these efforts on four concepts: Plan, Process, People, and Protect.

**Plan** involves three learning models: 1) Site-Based Virtual Learning, 2) Face-to-Face, and 3) Atlanta Virtual Academy.

**Process** involves a deliberate schedule in how we bring staff and students back into our buildings. The phased-in approach includes teacher preparation days and phasing in elementary students first followed by secondary students.

School-based staff return to work in person on **Tuesday, January 19, 2021** to prepare for in-person learning according to the proposed schedule (4 days per week in person, Wednesdays virtual). District office staff return to work in person on **Monday, January 11, 2021**. Students will be phased in beginning with PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence – PreK -12) on January 25; grades 3-5, 6, 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> on February 1; and grades 7, 8, 11, and 12<sup>th</sup> on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

In support of reopening our schools, we expanded academic, wellness, and engagement interventions, we implemented independent learning on Wednesdays in December to provide teachers with preparation time, and we launched an Intent to Return Form yesterday for all families to select or change their previous declaration for January 2021.

**People** involves providing our teachers and staff with the guidance, work conditions, and information on health and safety measures that will prepare them for a successful reopening in January. We shared updates and timelines for staff during our virtual employee town hall yesterday, and I encourage you to [watch that presentation on Workplace](#).

**Protect** means we will continue to work proactively to keep our students and staff safe in this COVID-19 environment. We have taken extraordinary measures in this area. You can learn more about it at [www.atlantapublicschools.us/APSProtects](http://www.atlantapublicschools.us/APSProtects). Here are just a few highlights:

- Air – we’ve invested \$68 million to upgrade our heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems
- Water – we’re conducting proactive testing and continuous flushing and disinfecting of our water systems and providing bottled water
- Buildings and Buses – we’re using fogging machines for cleaning our buildings and buses and have operationalized consistent cleaning, wipe downs and other measures in schools and buildings.
- People – we’re providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for students and staff and have implemented key mitigation strategies, including social distancing, temperature

screenings, limiting campus capacity, use of masks, and other hygiene and cleaning procedures.

We are working toward our reopening together, and I want you to know that we are doing everything we can to support you and balance the needs of our young scholars. I also want to acknowledge that I know these reopening conversations can bring on a sense of nervousness or stress. This COVID-19 environment has created difficulties for many of us in our personal and professional lives. I hear you, and I see you. I also care about you, and I encourage you to reach out for support. You can start by talking with your supervisor or by calling our Employee Assistance Program at (888) 993-7650.

Have an enjoyable and restful weekend. I look forward to reconnecting with you next week and continuing our conversation about reopening in January 2021. Stay healthy, wash your hands, wear a mask, and please be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring