

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 22, 2021

Subject: Slowing the Pace of Return to In-Person Learning for Students in Grades 3-12

Dear APS Team,

It is important for me to speak candidly with you about modifications to our plan for in-person learning. I want you to be among the first to learn of my decision.

Implementing a Tiered Approach

Our PreK-2 and Special Education students will still return as scheduled on Monday, January 25. However, I have decided to slow the pace of return to in-person learning for students in Grades 3 through 12 as follows:

- Grades 3 through 5 will now return on Monday, February 8
- Grades 6 through 12 will return on Tuesday, February 16.

This tiered approach will enable us to gradually return students to in-person learning as we intensify and add to our current mitigation strategies in anticipation of COVID-19 surveillance testing to be provided in our schools.

As you returned to our schools this past week, I hope that you saw we have made every effort to provide you with the materials and equipment you need. During my visits to our schools, I've been impressed with the way our school leadership teams, teachers, and other school-based staff have prepared our buildings for in-person learning. If you still have concerns, please reach out to your school principal, so they can contact District administration.

I also understand the emotions you have expressed. I'm aware that some staff participated in the We Demand APS survey and protested outside the CLL building to further express your concerns about our return to in-person learning. I want you to know that I hear you, and I plan to work with the leaders of those groups to secure your feedback.

The decision to return to in-person learning is not an easy one. And in my conversations with superintendents all around the country, there is no clear-cut answer that suits every school district. This has been frustrating, challenging, and yet it is our reality.

In preparation for our return to in-person learning, we adopted a comprehensive COVID-19 testing strategy in collaboration with public health officials, community partners, universities, and healthcare organizations.

Go to <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/COVIDTesting> for the locations where our students, teachers, and staff can get tested, whether they have symptoms identified through our screening protocols or have come in contact with someone with COVID-19 at school or the workplace.

Introducing COVID-19 Surveillance Testing

We are preparing to implement COVID-19 surveillance testing of employees in all of our schools and buildings. This weekly testing will allow us to be proactive and identify the presence of the COVID-19 virus, even in individuals who may be asymptomatic. Stay tuned for more information to come on this effort.

In addition, you can view reports on the number of positive COVID-19 cases and exposures in our schools and buildings on our [COVID-19 dashboard online](#).

I am diligently working on accelerating the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine for all APS employees. Right now, our employees are categorized in Phase 1B, and we're working with our partners at the Fulton County Board of Health to speed up that process.

We are doing everything we can to provide a safe environment for in-person teaching and learning in our schools. I want you to know that your concerns and feedback are important to me. I am listening and will continue to evolve our plan with your input.

As your Superintendent, I can tell you that I'm committed to our mission, and I know you are too. Thank you for all that you do and please be well.

Yours in Service,

Lisa Herring