

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 29, 2021

Subject: In-person Instruction Resumes for Some Students, COVID-19 Surveillance Testing, and Other Return+Learn Updates

Return to In-Person Learning

Team, several hundred of our PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence) students resumed in-person instruction on Monday, January 25, as part of Phase II of our Return+Learn plan. This marks the first time since March 2020 that some of our students have returned to their classrooms.

I had the opportunity to visit several of our schools on Monday and am grateful for the welcoming environment you provided to our students and me. My biggest takeaway was seeing the excitement and curiosity in the eyes of our youngest scholars. They came to school prepared and ready to learn. Experiencing that energy, as I visited classrooms across the district, (socially distanced, of course) hit home for me. It truly was inspiring.

Our principals, teachers, school-based staff, and so many of you have worked tirelessly to ensure a successful return to in-person learning for our students, and I want to thank you so much.

Students in Grades 3-5 who selected in-person learning will return on Monday, February 8, and students in Grades 6-12 who selected in-person learning will be back in classrooms on Tuesday, February 16. I know you will work just as hard for their safe and welcoming return.

COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Update

We are moving forward with our plan to make COVID-19 Surveillance Testing available to students and staff (including contractors who work at any APS site). “Surveillance” testing refers to regular, frequent testing for individuals who are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. [As announced at M. Agnes Jones Elementary this week](#), APS is the first school district in Georgia to make this testing available. We will begin a soft launch in the coming days at Barack and Michelle Obama Academy, Burgess-Peterson, Cleveland Avenue, Humphries, Hutchinson, M.A. Jones, Morris Brandon, and Sarah Smith.

We are in the early stages of this effort, so I ask for your patience as our Health Services team works with principals at these schools on the next steps. School leadership will send communications as logistics and protocols are finalized for their sites.

This work is part of our [Comprehensive COVID-19 Testing Strategy](#) and our commitment to doing everything we can to keep our students and staff safe. We are exploring all options as it relates to the administration of surveillance testing for staff and will provide staff training, information sessions, and other engagement opportunities as testing becomes available. Learn more by [reviewing the FAQs on our website](#).

Metro-Area Superintendents Urge Governor to Accelerate COVID-19 Vaccine Availability

I was pleased to join several other metro-area superintendents earlier this week in sending a letter to Governor Kemp urging him to accelerate the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine for teachers and education staff by moving them into the 1A category. We have been meeting with the Governor's office and the Georgia Department of Public Health over the last few weeks advocating for vaccine access for educators. In our letter, we stressed the urgency of accelerating the availability of the vaccine. I will keep you updated as the Governor considers our request.

Helpful Tips to Boost Your Immune System

I want to thank the thousands of you who completed our anonymous COVID-19 vaccine survey. That information is an important part of our effort to accelerate the availability of the vaccine for all staff.

With or without the vaccine, there are ways we can all improve our health and boost our immune systems against COVID-19. Here are a few resources suggested by our Human Resources and Health Services teams:

- [COVID-19: Prevent Getting Sick \(CDC\)](#)
- [5 Ways to Arm Your Immune System Against COVID-19 \(webmd.com\)](#)
- [Can Supplements Fight Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)? 15 Immune Boosters \(healthline.com\)](#)
- [How to boost your immune system - Harvard Health](#)
- [15 Ways to Boost Your Immune System During COVID-19 \(msn.com\)](#)

Partners/Volunteers in School Buildings

As some of our students are returning to in-person instruction our current policies and practices for the use of our facilities during this pandemic remain in place. This means that partners will not have access to school facilities during instructional hours. Additionally, in an ongoing effort to monitor capacity, volunteers must receive approval from both the building principal and the Office of Schools before providing services during the school day. After school use will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis through the facilities approval process.

Timing of Name Change for Grady High and Brown Middle

In December, the Atlanta Board of Education approved name changes for two of our schools. Brown Middle School will become Herman J. Russell West End Academy and Grady High School will be renamed Midtown High School. Please note that these name changes will become effective on the first day of school in the 2021-2022 school year, so for now they will remain Brown Middle and Grady High.

Thank You and Be Well!

I am proud that the best team in public education showed such grace, determination, and diligence for the first part of the school year. I know you will bring that same energy and enthusiasm with you into the second semester as we continue to put our students and schools first. Thank you for being a part of Atlanta Public Schools and please be well!

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring