

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: January 8, 2020

Subject: Return+Learn Updates for a New Year

Happy New Year and welcome back! I trust that everyone took advantage of the much-deserved holiday break and returned this week rested and rejuvenated.

A new year brings so much to how we approach our work. By sheer virtue of turning the page on the calendar, we can create within each of ourselves a mental reset that establishes a revived energy, a new enthusiasm, and even a renewed HOPE in the work to graduate every student ready for college, career, and life.

Yes, hope and more can still happen even amid the sad and shameful events that occurred earlier this week in Washington, D.C., which [I wrote to you about earlier today](#).

Even before those events, we all understood too well that so many things changed in 2020. What has not changed is our mission and our vision. What has not changed is our young scholars' need for education, equity, and social justice. And what has not changed – and I've seen this a thousandfold over my tenure as your superintendent – is the unrivaled dedication of the teachers and staff of Atlanta Public Schools.

In fact, your focus, devotion, and commitment have grown toward greater service for our students and schools. Your example has encouraged me and given me a new spirit, especially during the challenging moments. I cannot thank you enough. Please continue the hard work as we finish the first semester and prepare for the next phase of Return+Learn.

With that in mind, and my commitment to transparency and frequent communication, here are a few updates and reminders.

Return to Work Schedules/Telework Process

As part of our phased-in approach, we have prepared schedules guiding our return to work in person. These dates include teacher preparation days leading up to reopening with the option for in-person learning for students.

- Monday, January 11 – CLL and other District offices staff return to work in person
- Tuesday, January 19 – School-based staff return to work in person
- Monday, January 25 – Students in grades PreK-2 and Special Education (low incidence – PreK -12)
- Monday, February 1 – Students in grades 3-5, 6, 9, and 10 return

- Thursday, February 4 – Students in grades 7, 8, 11, and 12 return

We understand that unexpected circumstances may require telework for some. For anyone who did not submit a telework request by the January 4th deadline, the online form remains open on an ongoing basis for new personal health situations that may arise, like positive COVID testing or newly-diagnosed personal health conditions. For more information about that process or to apply, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/teleworking.

Intent to Return Results

Before the holiday break, we asked our families to share their intent to send their children back into our school buildings by choosing the instructional model they feel most comfortable with for the third nine weeks (site-based virtual learning, face-to-face, or Atlanta Virtual Academy).

We sent the Intent to Return Declaration form to nearly 38,000 students, which represents the total PreK-12 enrollment of all traditional APS schools. Families of students at charter and partner schools did not participate in the intent to return process, so these results don't reflect those additional 10,000+ students.

More than 24,500 families (65%) submitted their forms by the deadline. Of those submitting the forms, more than 13,000 – more than half – expressed their intent for their children to return to school when we resume in-person instruction. More results, including cluster and school results, are available below:

- [Total Completion](#)
- [In-Person](#)
- [Site-Based Virtual](#)
- [Atlanta Virtual Academy](#)

APS Protects: Safety Protocols

As we move into further phases of Return+Learn, I want to assure you that your safety remains a top priority. Visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/APSprotects to see the numerous ways we are working to maintain health and safety protocols. At this moment, all of our schools and office buildings remain closed to the public.

We continue to monitor daily COVID-19 data published by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). We provide data and related reports on our [COVID webpage](#). In the case of exposure or contraction, DPH recommends 14 days for quarantine. However, close contacts to a positive case may only require a seven-day quarantine if the following criteria are met:

- Contact does not have symptoms
- Contact does not reside in a congregate setting
- Contact tests on or after five days of quarantine from last exposure AND receives a negative test result
- Contact completes a full seven days of quarantine from the date of last exposure to a confirmed case
- Contact does not develop symptoms

For complete DPH quarantine guidance [Click Here](#).

As part of our mitigation strategy based on DPH guidance, any employee exposed to a positive case and who meets the criteria for seven days of quarantine must continue to monitor for symptoms for a full 14 days. Should symptoms appear, the employee must isolate immediately, continue mitigation efforts, and consult a healthcare provider.

Employees testing positive for COVID-19 must adhere to full isolation guidelines and can only return to work in person after receiving a negative test result. For complete DPH isolation guidance [Click here](#).

Do not report to work if you feel sick. [Click here](#) for what to watch for when monitoring symptoms and contact your healthcare provider or [Click here](#) for DPH COVID-19 testing sites to schedule a COVID test, if needed.

Childcare and School Enrollment Options for Teachers

I want to remind everyone about our efforts to provide teachers with childcare and school enrollment options. We are making childcare services available at some of our schools over the limited time frame of January 19, 2021, through February 2, 2021 at a greatly discounted cost. These child care programs will be available for students from PreK through 8th grade. Our usual after-school care vendors will provide this service at either your work site or a designated school within the cluster for at a cost of \$150.00 per child per week. You may contact Sedric Smith, Director of After School and Summer Programs, for additional information at 404-802-2742 or sdlsmith@atlanta.k12.ga.us.

For other childcare support, you may also call our dedicated APS employee hotline powered by Quality Care for Children in partnership with PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive. Call 470-426-2610 to explore your childcare options, identify yourself as an APS staff member, and ask for Anna Buchman. You can also visit www.qualityrated.org to search for options online.

If you are experiencing financial hardship in accessing childcare, you may be eligible for the following options:

- If you live in the 30314 or 30318 zip codes (or the Washington/Douglass clusters) and meet income eligibility criteria, you may be eligible for a PAACT scholarship for your 0-3 year-old. Visit [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- If you have a student in grades K-7, you may be eligible for a SOLVE scholarship depending on your location and income. This program has also now been expanded for students with special needs. Please visit www.decal.ga.gov for additional information on eligibility and how to apply.

Employees have the additional option of enrolling their child at their school worksite (if age appropriate) or at another APS school with available space. Please contact Cory Edwards, Director of the Department of Student Assignment and Records at ceedwards@atlanta.k12.ga.us or 404.802.2232 for further details.

Finally, thanks to a generous donation from Mercedes-Benz USA, this week we are awarding \$75,000 in direct childcare grants to staff who expressed a need for financial assistance in order to return to work! This is an outstanding example of APS' commitment to a caring culture.

Thanks to Rachel Sprecher, Sedric, Cory, Skye Duckett, Chief Human Resources Officer, and Sydney Ahearn, Director of Early Learning, for all of the efforts to support our teachers!

Thank you and Happy New Year!

As we move through Return+Learn, I want you to know that I remain forever thankful for your service to our students and our community. Please continue to take care of yourselves, each other, and your loved ones. Happy New Year!

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring