



January 5, 2022

Dear APS Families,

We are preparing to reopen our schools for in-person learning on Monday, January 10, 2022.

To do so efficiently, effectively, and safely, we are implementing some new protocols, reinforcing many existing protocols, and bolstering our resources.

Here's what you need to know:

- We are offering optional but strongly encouraged **testing for staff and students** in every APS cluster this Thursday, Jan. 6 and Friday, Jan. 7 from noon to 6 p.m. Download the testing locations here: <https://bit.ly/3HFNY8n>
- We need **parents to consent** to having your students surveillance tested. Access the consent form here: <https://tinyurl.com/HealthyAPS>
- We will be hosting COVID-19 **vaccination events** for eligible APS students (ages 5 and older), APS families, and APS staff on Saturday, January 8 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Sutton 7/8, Long MS, Maynard Jackson HS, and Mays HS. Register today at <http://tinyurl.com/apsvax>
- We will follow our updated **decision-making matrix** for pivoting to virtual learning on an as-needed basis (for individual schools).
- Upon our return to in-person learning:
 - We will continue our mandatory **twice per week staff surveillance testing**.
 - We are **increasing our student testing to twice per week**.
- We will implement a new **test-to-stay protocol** (which is also known as a modified quarantine) at all schools and APS work sites for students and staff beginning Tuesday, January 18, 2022 (with orientation and training for school and district staff beginning Monday, January 10, 2022).

Below we have outlined these measures in detail for you. We will continue to provide updates as we gather additional details and receive your questions. We are providing you with as much notice as possible so you can prepare, as well as report illnesses and anticipated absences.

We must all be ready for several weeks of fluctuations as APS continues to monitor incoming data and pivot to virtual learning on a case-by-case basis, per class and per school, as necessary. However, if we all do our part, in-person learning can be maintained wherever possible, much as we have done throughout this pandemic.



Our strength is that we have been here before. Our longstanding practices and procedures put us in the position of being prepared versus reactive. While the spike in positive cases may result in various impacts to our service delivery and operations, we now have the confidence of knowing what must be done in many different scenarios.

Parents, in order to be successful, we need you to consent to having your students surveillance tested. We also need APS community members to get vaccinated and/or boosted to reduce the number of severe cases in our community. As a reminder, you can consent to testing by accessing the form here: <https://tinyurl.com/HealthyAPS>

If we all do our part, an outcome where we modify our behaviors to keep students learning in person is possible. That is what APS is striving to achieve. Our core business is teaching and learning, and we must balance that with the health and safety of all.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent
Atlanta Public Schools

COVID-19 MITIGATION AND HEALTH UPDATES

Information About Student and Staff Surveillance Testing

We are offering and strongly encouraging **voluntary COVID-19 testing** for staff and students on Thursday and Friday of **this week**. There is a testing location in each APS cluster.

This service provides the APS student and staff community with access to free and readily available testing prior to our Monday in-person reopening, so that you may determine your own need to isolate. It will also provide APS with valuable data that we may use as part of our informed decision-making

Surveillance testing will be conducted from noon to 6 p.m. at the locations listed below. You may test at any location if you are a staff member or student.

- Access the consent form here: <https://tinyurl.com/HealthyAPS>
- Download the testing locations here: <https://bit.ly/3HFNY8n>

Upon our return to in-person learning, we will continue our mandatory **twice per week staff surveillance testing**.



In addition, we are **increasing our student testing to twice per week**. This means all students with parental consent to receive weekly COVID-19 surveillance tests at their school will be tested twice per week moving forward (as opposed to our once per week student testing offered last semester.) This additional testing will provide families with more information about potential exposures and will provide APS with more data for decision-making.

APS will implement a **test-to-stay protocol** in all schools and workplaces for students and staff, beginning Tuesday, January 18, 2022. Test-to-stay, which is also referred to as a modified quarantine, provides an additional layer of mitigation and helps us safely keep students learning in person whenever possible.

We will roll out this new protocol in two phases. Phase one begins the week of January 10, 2022 with orientation and training for school and district staff. Phase two begins on January 18, 2022 with implementation.

What is test-to-stay? When a positive case is identified in the school or workplace, persons who have been in close contact with that individual will be notified and evaluated for symptoms. If the close contact has consented to surveillance testing, they will have the opportunity to remain in school if they continue to test negative throughout the 10 days after their exposure and remain without symptoms. Individuals who test positive or develop symptoms will be sent home to isolate.

This option requires parental consent for student testing but provides the opportunity for students and staff to participate in modified quarantine guidelines. Those who do not consent to testing must quarantine at home for the recommended 10 days.

Test-to-stay protocols will provide additional and more immediate data for decision-making purposes and will give families an alternative to help keep their students in school.

Information About Family Testing

Viral Solutions partners with APS to operate a **community PCR surveillance testing** site at Frederick Douglass High School, located at 225 Hamilton E Holmes Dr NW, Atlanta, GA 30318. This site offers a PCR COVID-19 test at no charge. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

No appointment is required. Staff, students, families of APS students, and community members may receive testing at this site.

How We're Deciding About In-Person Versus Virtual Learning



The Pivot-to-Virtual Decision-making Matrix

APS will base all decisions to pivot to virtual learning (for individual schools) on the following factors:

- The overall school positivity rate of COVID-19 detection is equal to or greater than 5% of the student/staff population
- The county in which the school is located is experiencing high community spread as defined by the Georgia Department of Public Health
- If both conditions exist,
 - APS will assess the information gathered as part of our standard case investigation protocol, and
 - APS will assess the impact on our instructional staffing and operations, and
 - APS will consult with the local department of public health for additional guidance before a final decision is made.

Information Regarding Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

APS may require frequent surveillance testing to screen students for participation in face-to-face athletics or other face-to-face extracurricular (i.e., voluntary, and not part of the core, required educational program) activities. Additional guidance with specifics will be included in the Athletics and Performance guidelines.

Masks, Sanitation, and Air Purification

APS will continue to implement our comprehensive, layered mitigation strategies to keep our students and staff healthy and safe. We will continue to implement and enforce our Universal Mask Wearing Protocol in all our buildings and schools. **Every school and bus is equipped with extra masks** if a student needs a mask. [Click here](#) for our detailed mask protocol.

As an additional layer of protection, beginning in February, **we will install air purifiers** in every classroom to sanitize the air by filtering out pollutants, toxins, and viruses.

Staff and Community Engagement

We are planning additional virtual stakeholder engagement and will send details about upcoming events once they are scheduled.

We welcome your questions and feedback at any time via APS Let's Talk, which you can access by clicking the "Contact Us" tab on the APS homepage at atlantapublicschools.us. We will add to our FAQs based on your questions.