

Sylvan Hills Middle School

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the distance learning model be similar to the spring? Or will it be a different model? How much direct instruction will there be? Will there be remediation at the start of the year?

Virtual learning for the 2020-2021 year will be different from last spring's virtual experience. Please keep in mind that when schools were forced to close unexpectedly, the staff had one day to plan for virtual learning during an unprecedented time. It was crisis education and we successfully continued to build our new instructional framework so that our scholars had access to the most optimal learning experience.

Prior to the start of this school year, our team spent a great deal of time reflecting on input from parents and teachers to determine how we could improve distance learning for our students and families. In addition to professional learning during the summer, our teachers are engaged in three (3) weeks of preparation for implementing best instructional practices. The learning will be structured, consistent school-wide, with both synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (independent) learning taking place daily. Learning engagement by all students will be required and essential to student success. Finally, teachers will be accessible after scheduled instruction daily to provide office hours and additional support for students. The district has also purchased resources to support virtual learning and streamline the materials used between grade levels (i.e. Zoom, NearPod, Amplify, etc.)

For families with kids in multiple grade levels, will the school day be similarly structured?

Yes. Each grade level will follow a consistent schedule with core instruction, Connections, Intervention classes and breaks embedded into the day. This will mirror the daily schedule that Sylvan students follow during face-to-face instruction, while taking into consideration the best practices of virtual learning.

What platform will be used? Can it be the same for all teachers?

Yes, we are looking to use one single platform utilized by all staff and students. In addition to Zoom and Google Classroom, we will be using a content management system, Amplify that we will serve as our new curriculum and assessment system for English/ Language Arts. Atlanta Public Schools has also purchased Nearpod to support student engagement during both synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

What curriculum will be taught this year? Can parents access the curriculum prior to the first day of school?

All APS schools, including Sylvan Hills Middle, teach the Georgia Standards of Excellence. If you would like to review each subject's standards, you may visit <http://www.georgiastandards.org/>. We will also continue to implement evidence-based remediation, enrichment, and intensive interventions through MTSS in order to meet the individual needs of our students.

Will parents have access to instructional resources to help supplement their child's learning?

Yes, resources will be made available by accessing Sylvan's website. In addition, we will have a school supply giveaway (while supplies last) August 18th. Furthermore, each grade level will have a bi-weekly "Parent University" session to support parents with virtual learning. This will be time for teachers to explain and teach parents about the work that is being completed by their students, provide support with the different learning platforms, and address any global issues that may arise during the virtual learning experience.

Are students required to log in and participate?

Absolutely. Teaching and learning will take place Monday through Friday, students will be assessed consistently and earn grades, and attendance will be taken daily during each class period just as we would in a traditional learning model. Students and families will be held accountable for lack of participation and/or attendance.

How will children who qualify for special services get the support they need - SST, 504, Special Education, Gifted, and ESOL?

Sylvan teachers provide differentiated instruction (acceleration, intervention, and remediation) throughout the school day during core instruction and through specialized instruction. Students will receive all services in accordance with one of the approved delivery models. Teachers will continue to adhere to the principles set forth by the IDEA and by meeting the individualized needs of the student as outlined in their IEP or 504 plan to the greatest extent appropriate in the virtual environment. Case managers will be in contact with parents on a weekly basis to assess student progress as well. For specific information pertaining to your child's IEP, please contact our Special Education Lead Teacher, Ms. Natasha Jewell (404-802-6209, or njewell@atlanta.k12.ga.us). For 504 plan information, please contact Dr. Tara Cotton (404-802-6212, or tara.cotton@atlanta.k12.ga.us).

Will teachers be allowed contractually to tutor outside of school hours in person?

Teachers will be available for office hours each afternoon to provide additional support for students while in the virtual environment. Teachers are NOT permitted by APS Board policy that prohibits APS teachers to receive compensation for providing services to their students.

Will the virtual learning be live or recorded? Will my child need to be in front of a computer at specific times?

Yes, students are expected to be fully present and engaged when teachers are providing live instruction. Parents will need to communicate directly with the teacher if there is ever a scenario that prevents a student from engaging during instruction. Virtual teaching lessons will be recorded and made available for viewing to support students with each concept being covered.

Will there be any testing at the beginning of the year to determine where students are academically?

Yes, during the week of August 17th, STAR Reading and STAR Math assessments will be delivered virtually to determine students' current levels of readiness in reading and math. There may be additional assessments depending upon a student's specialized instructional plan. Parents will be made aware of all assessments on Monday, August 17th. Parents will also receive guidance to best support their child while maintaining the integrity of the assessments.

Will there be a chance for my child to meet his/her teacher prior to the first day of school?

While we would love the opportunity to welcome back and meet our new scholars in person, COVID-19 and the current spread will prevent us from doing so. Instead, we encourage all of our families to join us for our virtual Open House/Back to School night on August 19th from 5-7pm. Please check our website and social media sites for additional information.

When will parents find out their child (ren)'s class assignment for 2020-2021?

Parents can access their child's current class assignment now within the Parent Portal. If you do not currently have access, please visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/48412. If you have difficulty accessing parent portal or if you need your child's student ID number, please contact the school at 404-802-6200 or 404-802-6203.

Will rising 6th graders be issued technology to help them with virtual instruction?

All 6th grade students, who were previously enrolled in Atlanta Public Schools, should have technology issued from the 19-20 school year. However, students who were not issued technology will be issued district technology beginning the week of August 10th. Parents must complete the APS Technology survey even if you already have a device AND for every APS student in your household. The deadline is this FRIDAY, August 21st. (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe0QqB-cGixMjAS6LSy138uceZh-fnKPYk_N7wSq-QztvVhw/viewform)

Is anything being done to help 6th grade students to transition?

Sixth grade student schedules will reflect the Standards of Service set forth by APS and carried out by all of our cluster schools. Students will spend a great deal of time during the first weeks of school engaging in an array of virtual transitional activities to ensure that they will become a successful middle school scholar.

Will Fridays still be designated as a FLEX learning day?

According to the Standards of Service set forth by APS, all schools and students will participate in a 5 day school week. This means that Friday's will no longer be designated as FLEX learning days. We will continue to find ways outside of the traditional learning environment for students to be engaged in school away from the computer.

Will there be any meal distribution to children during virtual learning. If so, how?

As part of the Summer Seamless Option (SSO) APS will resume free community meal service on Monday, August 10th for two weeks only, the district will distribute 10 meals – five breakfasts and five lunches to any child in the community.

Starting August 24 – the first day of school – APS will only provide meals to APS students. Meal distribution will occur Monday of each week through the entire period of virtual learning. Meals will be distributed from 12 central school sites via bus routes or parent pick-up. Families MUST pre-order meals each week through the MySchoolBucks (<https://www.myschoolbucks.com/ver2/getmain?requestAction=home>) online pre-order system.

Sylvan Middle is a Title I school and receives support through the Community Enrichment Program (CEP), which provides all students in that school with free breakfast and lunch. As a result parents will NOT be required to complete an application or pay for student meals. **NOTE: Parents will still be required to enter the MySchoolBucks system to order meals for their students.**

Who do we contact if we need a laptop/Technology assistance?

All students will have the opportunity to receive a digital device in the coming weeks leading up to the first day of school. Parents must complete the APS Technology survey even if you already have a device AND for every APS student in your household. The deadline is this **FRIDAY, August 21st**. (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe0QqB-c_GixMjAS6LSy138uceZh-fnKPYk_N7wSq-QztvVhw/viewform)

Who do we contact if our devices are broken or need repairs?

Please call APS Client Support at 404-802-1000. They will help with all district provided technology, as well as student Google and MyBackPack account information.

Will we still follow the APS calendar and have the same breaks?

Yes. We will follow the APS calendar. The calendar has been shortened by 10 days, other than that, it will remain the same.

When will we know what will happen after the 9 weeks? Is there any chance that this 9 week period will be shortened?

Data surrounding the current community spread of COVID-19 is monitored and evaluated closely by both our government and district officials. Fulton County is currently in a substantial spread of the virus (Greater than 100 cases per 100,000 residents) and we must get to a moderate spread (6-99 cases per 100,000 people) in order to entertain face to face learning. This can be accomplished by wearing masks, social distancing, and refraining from attending large gatherings of 10 or more people. Families are encouraged to remain connected to ongoing community chats and updated provided by the superintendent, Dr. Lisa Herring, as well as by visiting the school and district

websites. In addition, all Sylvan Families are strongly encouraged to remain connected by following us on Twitter (@APSSylvanHills), or Instagram (@apsylvanhillsms).

How can I get a backpack and supplies for my student?

Atlanta Public Schools is working in partnership with the Empty Stocking Fund. Please register at the following link: <https://www.emptystockingfund.org/aps-backpack-request-2020/>

