



Dear Families:

Recently, Atlanta Public Schools announced that APS will implement a Universal Mask Wearing protocol in all schools and buildings as we begin the new school year on August 5.

In reviewing our data, here are a few key considerations:

- Approximately 18 percent of our eligible students are fully vaccinated (*source: Fulton County Board of Health*) and approximately 58% of district employees have indicated that they are fully vaccinated or plan to be (*source: Atlanta Public Schools survey data*).
- Children under 12 years do not have the option of being vaccinated and remain vulnerable to contracting and spreading the disease.
- The Delta Variant is now the dominant variant of COVID-19 in the United States and may spread 225% faster than the original virus.
- Consistent and correct use of mask wearing has been shown to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all students and school staff, wear masks, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and the CDC recommends that all unvaccinated people wear a mask.

Given our low vaccinations rates and increasing community spread, the CDC acknowledges that universal masking would be appropriate. In light of this information and in our efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, APS will continue to offer COVID-19 surveillance testing weekly.

In addition, APS will offer COVID-19 vaccines to students and staff during two upcoming opportunities:

- In partnership with Walgreens, APS will offer vaccines to families and staff at the Back to School Bash on July 31.
- Starting August 9, APS will offer on-site COVID-19 vaccinations to eligible students in our middle schools and high schools and staff through our partnership with Fulton County Board of Health. Parents will be notified and provided consent forms. More information on our vaccination plans will be provided in a future communication.

APS remains committed to ensuring healthy and safe learning environments for the 2021-2022 school year. Stay abreast of all the health protocol updates on our Back to School website at www.atlantapublicschools.us/backtoschool.