



Garden Hills FAQs 7/28/2020



Q: 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?

A: Virtual learning for the 2020/2021 year will be different from last spring's virtual learning. Please keep in mind last year when face-to-face instruction was suddenly halted, teachers had one day to plan for virtual learning during an unprecedented and unpredictable time. For the 20-21 school year, teachers will have three weeks to prepare for virtual instruction for students. Also, we implemented a newly revised APS Standards of Service. This resource provides guidelines and expectations for virtual learning to improve consistency of instructional delivery. For fall our administration indicated how much time each child in each grade will be engaged in whole group, small group, and face to face, synchronous and asynchronous instruction. In essence, we are hoping to streamline expectations and develop more consistency between grade levels for distance learning. Also, the district purchased a computerized program to help individualize this process. More information will be forthcoming about this new structure with example schedules soon.

Q: What platform will be used? Can it be the same for homeroom teachers/specials/etc.?

A: Yes, we are looking to use one single platform utilized by all staff and students. Besides Google Classroom and ZOOM, there will be a content management system as well (Freckle) that syncs with Renaissance Learning (STAR). We are simplifying procedures so that specials will enter the homeroom Zoom links on our daily schedule as well as most support staff.

Q: Can teachers be required to teach from their classrooms at school?

A: Currently, teachers CANNOT be required to teach from their classrooms. There is a possibility that teachers may volunteer to teach from their classroom occasionally. Please note that several teachers are still considered high risk and will remain virtually teaching from home.

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

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

Q: Would you consider having optional Zooms in the morning and delaying the “more educational Zooms” until after 9am for those of us arranging childcare, this would be helpful.

A: In order to teach the number of minutes set forth in the Standards of Service for virtual learning, we will need the full academic day. We are creating a schedule that will allow for breaks and some flexibility as well as recording class sessions to be viewed at a later time.

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

A: Yes. We are entertaining possibly differentiating schedules to make sure all services can be provided. Although the elementary school day is typically 8:00AM-2:30PM we will not expect students to be “in-class” the entire day. Please watch for example schedules to be available soon.

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

A: All virtual teaching lessons will be recorded and made available for viewing at a later date. While we encourage students to be engaged in the daily lessons, we understand individual family needs and will be flexible to accommodate.

Q: Will there be consistency with instruction within grade levels?

A: Yes, there will be consistency of instructional expectations of all teachers and set schedules by administration. In the spring we all experienced vast differences in tele-schooling preparedness. Now we all have some common experiences and administration can set common expectations of all staff. We also have more time to give staff training thanks to adjusting the start date to August 24th. We understand the importance of consistency among staff. We are working hard to make sure all staff are planning, teaching, and delivering instruction in sync throughout the grade level and school.

Q: How are teachers and students going to be held accountable for attendance and completing class work?

A: Staff will follow the same attendance guidelines as set forth by Atlanta Public Schools. They are to clock in by 7:30 am and are scheduled until 3pm (7.5 hours/day). Students will be held accountable for attendance through daily attendance taken each day. When we receive more guidance from APS around grading and attendance expectations, it will be shared.

Q: Will students be allowed to complete schoolwork and zoom meetings on a flexible schedule to accommodate parents that are at work, working from home, or who have siblings?

A: Yes, some flexibility will exist. Teachers will need to be flexible with parents' work schedules. Live whole and small groups will be scheduled on a regular schedule, but they will be recorded and posted also. Expectations and grading will be communicated soon. We understand that this is a balancing act, and we ask for the same understanding for our teachers who are balancing their own children at home as well. Flexibility in grading and classwork will be given.

Q: Will there be non-screen activities for kids to do?

A: While the bulk of virtual learning will be synchronous and asynchronous teaching via the computer, there will be times that teachers may provide assignments away from the screen.

Q: Will Fridays still be designated as a FLEX learning day?

A: According to the APS Standards of Service, all schools and students will participate in a 5-day school week. Friday's will no longer be designated as FLEX learning days.

Q: How will children in special services get the support they need? SST, IEP, 504?

A: Our school will continue to adhere to principles set forth in the IDEA by meeting the individualized needs of students. Teachers will implement students' IEPs to the greatest extent appropriate in the virtual environment. Prior to the start of the school year, each student with an IEP will be provided a digital learning plan. The digital learning plan will outline how the services in the student's current IEP will be executed in a virtual format. This letter will detail what that will look like and if any concerns arise the IEP team can meet to discuss further.

Q: How will the DLI curriculum be addressed? What would their virtual schedule look like? If parents decide to take their child to another school this year, will their spot still be held for the next school year?

A: Students in the DLI classrooms will receive live whole group and live small group instruction in both English and Spanish daily on a consistent schedule. Students will also have independent practice daily in both languages. In an effort to support all DLI parents across the district, please visit the new APS DLI Parent Support website for information and FAQs regard the APS DLI program. All APS DLI principals, in collaboration with Dr. Margaret McKenzie, Director of the Office of ESOL & World Languages are collaborating to provide our DLI parents with one centralized location for information related to DLI. <http://tinyAPS.com/?DLIparentsupport>.

Q: Is anything being done to help kindergarten students to transition? How will they learn basic phonics and writing skills? How about 5th grade students that are transitioning to middle school?

A: Kindergarten schedules will reflect the Standards of Service set forth by APS and carried out by all of our cluster schools. Students can and will be able to learn phonics virtually with daily lessons from our phonics program, Foundations. We have also ordered take home Foundations resources (thanks to our Acorns to Oaks Foundation) to use during lessons. Of course, support from parents will always be encouraged. Kindergarten teachers will be holding virtual play dates prior to day one as well.

Q: Will Kindergarten follow the virtual instruction of other grades?

A: Each grade level will have their own schedule with its own specials time and Support time.

Q: Will Kindergarteners be issued technology to help them with virtual instruction?

A: All kindergarten students will be issued district technology, if needed. More information to come on the distribution of technology to students.

Q: Are there childcare sharing platforms or options for collaboration for parents who have to work?

A: There currently aren't any childcare sharing platforms. However, families may begin to partner up with like students (grade level or class) in an in-person format in order to learn as a group. Referred to as "pods", families can solicit non-APS employees to provide in-person or virtual support during school hours. We cannot guarantee student placement to accommodate any pods at this time.

Q: Can parents request students be in the same homeroom class due to learning pods that have already been set up?

A: We will not be able to recreate rosters to accommodate learning pods. We are encouraging families to wait until teacher assignments are released on August 5th. However, if pods have been created across grade levels, it is fine to continue with the pod grouping. We are going to work hard to ensure that instruction and pacing is in sync across the grade level. We have already made changes for twins in the same grade to be in the same homeroom to make schedules cohesive for families.

Q: Is there a way for the school to be involved with the creation of learning pods so some children won't be excluded?

A: We understand that inequities thrive during virtual learning. For this reason, the school will not entertain changing classes to support learning pods, or to gear instruction for those that are learning together. It is important to note that a large number of families will be learning independently at home, which is perfectly fine. Many families may not have the means to afford additional tutors or help.

Q: Will virtual tutoring be offered? Will teachers be allowed contractually to tutor outside of school hours in person?

A: There is an APS Board policy that prohibits APS teachers to receive direct pay for tutoring APS students. All grade levels will have an intervention/enrichment time where students will be assigned for assistance & assessments.

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

A: I am unsure as to when another decision will be made in regard to opening. The superintendent has stated that we are in substantial spread of the virus with Fulton County (Greater than 100 cases per 100,000 residents) and we must get to 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. When school districts go back to in-person instruction, we will have had a chance to learn what has worked and what has not.

Q: Can Garden Hills' Go Team exercise independent judgment and offer in-person classes?

A: While the Go Team does have some autonomy and flexibility of school operations decision making, they do not have the power to override the superintendent and BOE on the decisions for virtual learning and possible in-person learning.

Q: Is there a possibility of in-person options?

A: There are currently no options for in-person learning at this time. Decisions regarding this will ultimately come from the district.

Q: Will students receive the school kits that were purchased for this school year?

A: Yes, we are working with the PTA closely to ensure that when you come to the school for any distributions, we will also distribute those to you all at one time.

Q: Will there be any physical materials that will be handed out?

A: Yes! Parents and families will be able to pick up last year's classroom materials, TO GO learning supplies, textbooks, Folders, and technology supplies during August. We had previously indicated August 6 & 7 for retrieval of items and new item pick up. As our start date has been delayed we will be sending scheduled times for pick up the week of August 17-21 based on last names. We want to only ask families to come up to the school once, if possible. More information to come.

Q: Will parents have access to teaching materials, teacher notes, and textbooks to help supplement their child's learning?

A: Yes. There will be pick up times for students and parents to retrieve curriculum materials for each grade level the week of August 17-August 21. Furthermore, we are planning for regular parent educational sessions called "Parent University" where we will explain more about curriculum, instruction, and technology. During these sessions teachers & staff will explain and teach parents about the work being completed by their students. More information to come.

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

A: As part of the Summer Seamless Option (SSO) APS will resume free community meal service on Monday for two weeks, August 10 and August 17, 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 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. We do not have details on this plan to share YET.

Families MUST pre-order meals each week through the MySchoolBucks online pre-order system. All families paying for meals will need to submit payment through the MySchoolBucks online payment system. Schools will not be collecting money for school meals.

For the 2020-2021 school year, the North Atlanta Cluster will no longer participate in the Community Enrichment Program (CEP), which provides all students in that school with free breakfast and lunch. These schools will participate in the Federal Eligibility Application (FEA) program, which offers free and reduced meals to qualifying students. All students at FEA schools MUST apply to qualify for free or reduced meals. Free meals will continue for all students at these schools for 30 days. After the first 30 days of school, students will pay full price for meals until their application is approved.

Q: Will there be Milestones testing this year?

A: The state superintendent, Richard Woods, has applied for a waiver to opt out of Georgia Milestones this year. However, we are waiting on further guidance from the state and district in regards to a state assessment plan.

Q: How can parents sign up for access to Parent Portal Infinite Campus?

A: Parents can get access to Infinite campus by reaching out to <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/48412>

Q: Will families have access to school facilities and playgrounds?

A: At this moment, families will not have access to school facilities and playgrounds per APS guidelines.