Governor Kemp, Superintendent Woods launch K-12 Restart working groups

NOTE: This release was updated June 4, 2020 with additional members of the Restart Working Groups.

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**Please follow phone calls with a text message if possible.*

May 21, 2020 – Governor Brian Kemp and State School Superintendent Richard Woods are announcing the creation of six K-12 Restart Working Groups to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Georgia's K-12 schools and plan for a safe 2020-21 school year.

Since the beginning of the outbreak and throughout the COVID-19 school closures, state leaders have worked to help school districts prepare and students adapt. The working groups formed today will assist in planning the next steps forward and providing guidelines and supports for schools for the next school year.

"As we work to defeat this virus, we want to ensure Georgia's students are safe, secure, and learning," **Governor Kemp said.** "Georgians can be assured the safety of students, families, and school staff is our first priority. The K-12 Restart groups will ensure we have experts at the table as we take measured steps forward."

The working groups, which include teachers, school district staff, and public health officials along with representatives of education organizations, nonprofits, and state agencies, will focus on six key topics: school meals; distance learning and professional learning; connectivity and devices; mental health and wellness; supplemental learning; and facilities, equipment, and health guidelines.

“As we've faced the challenge of COVID-19, I have encouraged our local educational leaders to focus on compassion over compliance," Superintendent Woods said. “Our top priority continues to be ensuring that children get through this time healthy, safe, and nurtured and that they have opportunities to learn and grow. These working groups will join us in this student-focused approach and will provide invaluable expertise and perspective as we ensure schools are prepared for the fall and have options to ensure learning continues, following the advice and guidance of public health officials on the national and state levels."

K-12 RESTART WORKING GROUPS – MEMBERS

School Meals

- Dr. Linette Dodson, GaDOE School Nutrition Director (Chair)
- Paige Holland, GaDOE School Nutrition Program Manager
- Alyssia Wright, Executive Director – Food & Nutrition Operations, Fulton County Schools
- Courtney Hart, Director of School Nutrition, Hart County Schools
- Kim Kiker, Director of School Nutrition, Calhoun City Schools
- Keshia Williams, Director of School Nutrition, Coweta County Schools
- Tessany Lockhart, Georgia School Nutrition Association
- Kathy Kuzava, Georgia Food Industry Association
- Misty Friedman, Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Kyle Waide, Atlanta Community Food Bank

Distance Learning/Professional Learning

- Dr. Caitlin Dooley, GaDOE Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning (Chair)
- Dr. Keith Osburn, GaDOE Associate Superintendent for Georgia Virtual Learning
- Dr. Zelphine Smith-Dixon, GaDOE Director of Special Education Services and Supports
- Mike Duncan, Superintendent, Pike County Schools
- Dr. Karen Barker, Professional Learning Facilitator, Coweta County Schools
- Melanie Harwell, Instructional Technology Coordinator, Calhoun City Schools
- Dr. April Aldridge, Assistant Superintendent for K-5 Curriculum, Decatur County Schools
- Nic Carroll, Director of Digital Learning, Columbia County Schools
- Tracey Pendley, 2020 & 2021 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Atlanta Public Schools
- Allison Townsend, 2019 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Fulton County Schools

- Casey Bethel, 2017 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Douglas County Schools
- Karen Hallacy, President of Georgia PTA
- Laura Evans, Director of Education, Georgia Public Broadcasting
- Buddy Costley, Executive Director, Georgia Association of Educational Leaders
- Deborah White, Executive Director, Georgia Association of Curriculum & Instructional Supervisors
- Chris Chastain, Principal, Brooks County High School
- Victoria Harris, Superintendent, Quitman County Schools
- Dr. Jeff Jackson, Georgia Independent School Association

Connectivity and Devices

- Jannine Miller, Office of the Governor (Chair)
- Chris Shealy, GaDOE Director of Technology Services
- Michele Taylor, Superintendent, Calhoun City Schools
- Tim Cochran, Superintendent, Decatur County Schools
- Dr. Jason Branch, Superintendent, Oconee County Schools
- Jim Farmer, Chief Technology Officer, Fayette County Schools
- Diane Jacobi, Georgia PTA
- Joy Hawkins, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Student Achievements
- Cornelius Ball, Member, Turner County Board of Education
- Floyd Fort, Superintendent, Pelham City Schools
- Wendy Cornelisen, Georgia Public Library Service
- Representative of the Georgia Telecommunications Association
- Representative of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Mental Health and Wellness

- Ashley Harris, GaDOE Director of Whole Child Supports & Strategic Partnerships (Chair)
- Cheryl Benefield, GaDOE Program Manager for Safe & Supportive Schools
- Beverly Stewart, Director of Student Support Services, Bibb County Schools
- Dallas LeDuff, Director of Student Services, Oconee County Schools
- Dr. Kenya Gilmore, Director of Project Aware, Muscogee County Schools
- Chelsea Montgomery, Executive Director of Counseling, Psychological & Social Work Services, Fulton County Schools
- Dr. Deborah Williams, Assistant Superintendent, Columbia County Schools
- Evan Horton, Incoming Superintendent, Coweta County Schools
- Dawn Stastny, President Elect of Georgia PTA
- Erica Fener Sitkoff, Executive Director, Voices for Georgia's Children
- Dante McKay, Director of the Office of Children, Young Adults, & Families, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Teresa Hearn, Regional Wraparound Coordinator, Pioneer RESA

- Leslie Myles, Communities in Schools of Georgia
- Terriyln Rivers-Cannon, 2019 National School Counselor of the Year, Atlanta Public Schools
- Laura Ross, 2020 National School Counselor of the Year, Gwinnett County Schools
- Gwenetta Sullivan-Echols, System School Social Worker & Wraparound Services Educator, Chattahoochee County Schools
- Lynne Meadows, Coordinator of Student Health Services, Fulton County Schools

Supplemental Learning

- Shaun Owen, GaDOE Deputy Superintendent of Federal Programs (Chair)
- Deidre Smith, GaDOE Program Manager for 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Lori Rodgers, Assistant Superintendent of District Effectiveness and Federal Programs, Bibb County Schools
- Amy Barger, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, Fulton County Schools
- Katrina Cook, Director of Special Education, Hart County Schools
- Michele Sherman, Assistant Superintendent, Columbia County Schools
- Ernie Lee, 2016 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
- Lauren Holcomb, Executive Director, State Charter Schools Commission
- Katie Landes, Director, Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
- Emily Carter, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
- Dr. Randell Trammell, President & CEO, YMCA of Georgia
- Dr. Kenneth Zeff, Executive Director, Learn4Life
- Wes Taylor, Superintendent, Lowndes County Schools

Facilities, Transportation, and Equipment

- Dr. Garry McGiboney, GaDOE Deputy Superintendent for School Safety & Climate (Chair)
- Pat Schofill, GaDOE Director of Facilities Services and Pupil Transportation
- Paul Hildreth, Emergency Operations, Fulton County Schools
- Dr. Jody Barrow, Superintendent, Fayette County Schools
- Sam Kitchens, Executive Director of Capital Programs, Bibb County Schools
- James Odom, Director of Plant Services, Muscogee County Schools
- Chris Latimer, Comptroller, Coweta County Schools
- David Seagraves, Director of Operations, Hart County Schools
- Cliff Sanders, Director of Facilities Maintenance and Operations, Columbia County Schools
- Sara Kroening, Chief Nursing Officer, Georgia Department of Public Health
- Bert Brantley, Georgia Department of Economic Development

- Harlan Proveaux, Deputy Director, Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS)
- Rob Brown, Superintendent, Lumpkin County Schools
- Cliff Shearouse, President - Georgia Pupil Transportation Association, Executive Director - Transportation, Henry County Schools

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