

I would like to provide: *	In-Person Virtual Public Comments
Select the meeting date:* *	January 7, 2021
My public comments are related to: *	Virtual+ Plus Learning
Topic *	Virtual Plus learning
Full Name *	Janice Kupiec
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Community Member
Enter your comments here OR upload below:	My comments will focus on our experience with Virtual Plus learning for our ES student.

January 7, 2021

Alexandria City School Board

1340 Braddock Place

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Good afternoon Chair Anderson and members of the Board,

My name is Janice Kupiec and I have lived in Alexandria for almost 19 years. My husband and I opted to stay in Old Town once our daughter was born, despite friends telling us we needed to move to a better school district. We did move, but just a short distance south so that our neighborhood school would be Lyles Crouch. I still remember that first day of Kindergarten. I watched my little girl go off to a full day of school with a backpack slightly too big for her small body and a huge smile. We were fortunate to be part of this community over the years and have caring, talented, and dedicated teachers and staff. I never worried about her and knew every morning, I left her in the hands of incredible humans doing amazing work.

I have had the opportunity to get to know the school and community better as a member of the PTA. Spring was a learning experience, and everyone did an amazing job keeping spirits up when they were tanking. This Fall I was relieved watching her online as her teacher bent over backwards, forwards and every way possible to ensure every child was having his or her needs met academically and emotionally. The school counselor was there to support the children and even the principal would make appearances on zoom to bring some smiles.

Despite all this, it was not enough. We made the incredibly hard decision to withdraw her from ACPS before the holidays and enroll her at a private school that is meeting in person. I have watched the impact that isolation from friends, not being at school and sheer frustration from all the glitches that have occurred with Virtual Plus take their toll. Every time she was kicked out of zoom, tears flowed. It has been truly crushing as a parent to say the least. Her love of learning has been impacted and she went from being very engaged to doing what was necessary to make it through the day.

I am aware that there has been nonstop effort to find ways to have children return to school. I am also aware that school districts around the country have managed to bring students back to school successfully. It's not been perfect, but it's been done. My heart was incredibly heavy when we informed our principal and teachers of our decision because it is a community we love. But as a parent I need to make the decision that is best for my child. We are hopeful that this move will be beneficial, and I can watch the joy on her face and her love of learning return. My faith in ACPS and the ability to return students back to their schools has been lost and it breaks my heart. I have been a strong advocate for public schools and am a product of public schools. At this point it would be helpful to all families for ACPS to be honest about what is not possible this year and focus on the next academic year. Parents may not like it but we all can appreciate transparency and honesty. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with all of you today.

Janice Kupiec