Public Comments for School Board Meetings   #842

I would like to provide: *	In-Person Comments in the School Board Meeting Room
Select the meeting date: *	Thursday, April 25, 2024, 6:30 p.m.
My public comments are related to: *	Safety/Security
Topic *	Verbal Assault and Bullying at ACHS in hallways.
Full Name *	MICHAEL ANDREW KLEEMANN
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student
Enter your comments here OR upload below:	Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening, my name is Mike Kleemann, I'm the parent of a recent graduate, class of '23, and a future graduate, class of '25. I've come tonight to make some statements and ask some questions to the school board regarding the incident where Dr. Matt Henry was harassed and bullied in the hallways of Alexandria City High School. My wife and I felt that if we remain silent, or indifferent, or DO NOT TAKE AND ENCOURAGE ACTION, that we become complicit in the outcome. I sent a letter to the School Board on March 14, and I received no response, so this week I've submitted it again on Monday, April 22. The letter I submitted centers on verbal assault and bullying based on race, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation of any students and school personnel. Dr. Henry said in his letter to the School Board, that "I never thought that I would have to defend myself at my place of employment, defend myself from the very people I have been called to educate, protect and serve," that "I, and other staff and students, should not be made to feel unsafe, through verbal or physical assault or threat thereof, at a place of employment and education."

In the Student News Paper THEOGONY, an article by students wrote, "When I'm walking in the halls and people yell the f-slur at me, there will be a teacher, or security guard or admin within earshot, and they won't say a thing. And I think that's a step that needs to be taken; when you hear it, say something. Don't be a bystander."

The article concluded that "when teachers don't take steps to actively punish homophobic students and when administration sweep cases of harassment under the rug, it creates a violent underbelly for a generally loving, accepting, and progressive school system."

If "bad things" happen in the hallways both in between classes, and during classes when students are supposed to be in classes, what should be done?

Mark Eaton, a writer/contributor for the Alexandria Times recommended in his Op-Ed letter using a form of an alternative high school program for the city....allowing problem students an alternative approach to education with specialized resources/support they may need, this would remove and maintain a safer and more accepting school environment for everyone else. There seems to be some merit to this idea, specifically using the "Chance for Change Academy."

BUT, what happens when/if these students attend the Academy or other corrective change programs and don't change?

Mark Eaton stated that "a principal or assistant principal would say, "We spend 80 to 90% of our time chasing the same [insert a number from 25 to 75, depending on the school year] students." "

It seems to me that the school should NOT chase 25-75 students attempting to police them, that's less than 1% of the school population. My recommendation is that if these students are repeat offenders is that they are put on the path of expulsion from ACPS.

My finishing questions to the School Board are:

1. What does the School Board expect from the schools going forward regarding incidents like this?

2. What is needed to get the hallways under control, free from both verbal and physical threats of violence, in addition to violence itself?

My final statement is that I'm willing to volunteer at or support the Chance for Change Academy in any capacity that is suitable, and acceptable.

Upload a copy of your public comments or other supporting documents:

4.22.2024_letter_to_the_school_board_re_dr._matt_henry_incident.docx
155.8KB · DOCX