

# Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#895

I would like to provide: \*

In-Person Comments in the School Board Meeting Room

Select the meeting date: \*

Thursday, June 6, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

My public comments are related to: \*

Equity

Topic \*

ACHS Concerns

Full Name \*

Allison Paytas

What is your relationship to ACPS? \*

Staff Member

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

I'm speaking tonight as a concerned educator worried about the future of our high school. Given ACPS' history and reputation of retaliation against staff who speak up, many of us have remained silent for too long, but it's time for you to hear from us. I teach Earth Science and Oceanography at ACHS King St and I'm here to let you know that our staff has lost confidence in a leadership style that leaves out those charged with carrying out the district's mission of providing an equitable, high quality education for all students.

Since August, trust has been slowly eroding to the point where it's nothing more than a grain of sand. It began with the High School Project. Teachers were assured that their input was vital to the process, so they participated in the focus groups, volunteered their time for working groups, developed plans to disseminate information and elicit staff buy-in, only to have their suggestions and solutions repeatedly discarded by administration. When there were more questions than answers about the High School Project, staff were presented with a form to submit questions that would be answered by administration in a spreadsheet accessible to all. To date, the last time any questions were answered by administration is March 11th, 2024. When the decision to reorganize administration and make all 16 current assistant principals and deans reapply for jobs was announced to staff on February 29th, we voiced concerns about losing quality administrators who know our students, our community, and the unique challenges that come with being the largest high school in Virginia. Once again, we were

assured that this was being done with students in mind. We have now seen the results of this reorganization and I struggle to find how the decisions made are in the best interests of our students. Before I continue, I want to add that we were told the hiring process would be completed in April giving staff time to seek other opportunities if needed or wanted; in reality this process completed on May 30th, 2024, despite still having open positions, and administration has not communicated with staff about the results of this process.

I question how it's in the best interest of students to not hire back the people who know our students by name, who consistently show up for our school community, and who work long hours, day after day, to help our students succeed. These are the people who fight every day for the equity and inclusion centered in our school's mission and vision. I could speak about great work each of our APs and deans have done, but in the interest of time, I want to highlight one AP's work without mentioning names. This AP is a voracious advocate for their students who come from all over the world. They have effectively led their academy for the last two years, partnering with community groups to provide vital services to our immigrant students and their families, successfully addressed the fentanyl crisis within their academy, worked to mediate and eliminate conflicts between different ethnic groups, all while building strong relationships with students and staff. In their previous district, This AP was profiled in a national article about their work going above and beyond to keep immigrant students in school and connect them to community resources during the pandemic. Despite all of this experience and being one of the only Spanish fluent administrators, this AP was not hired as an academy principal or dean for the 24-25 school year, despite having open positions. This raises serious concerns about the hiring process. With this AP's knowledge, skills, and abilities, they should be a top candidate for both the AP and dean position, especially working with immigrant and ELL students. It begs the question, if ACPS does not value a person like this AP, what do they value?"

Best,  
Allison Paytas

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