

Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#856

I would like to provide: *

Written Public Comments

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General Public Comments

Topic *

Jefferson–Houston Admin Being Put on Leave

Full Name *

Sujata Mitra

What is your relationship to ACPS? *

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

I am writing as a JH parent of 6 years, of a 5th grader and 2nd grader regarding the incident on March 19th. I absolutely understand and support the need to review and investigate the incident that happened. I hope the family and child are doing well. I am also 100% in agreement that it is critical to ensure that appropriate staffing and processes are in place to ensure this does not happen again.

However, I am disappointed and sad that our beloved admin team is on leave due to the incident. I have been at JH since 2019. This is the first time something like this has happened. When we first started at JH, the school had no sense of community, no pride, it had kids from all over the district (and Maryland) coming in and out in a transactional way, and there was no family engagement. Dr. McCain joined in 2020 in our virtual year, and completely turned the school around over the last four years. Of course, there have been highs and lows, as with any professional journey. But over the last four years, I have personally observed his and Ms. Young's dedication to our children and improving academic excellence and scores.

I am also extremely disappointed at ACPS' public handling of the incident. ACPS manages the Pre-K program, trains and coaches the teachers, while school administrators have oversight on instruction and teacher evaluation. A teacher could have been evaluated fine, but made a mistake on the playground. There is NO WAY a K-8 admin team can be on the playground at all times during the day.

Additionally, ACPS only took action 3 weeks after the incident, when the story became public, and AlxNow published their

memo moments after parents received it. It would seem to professionals within our community, that this was a calculated response from ACPS to deflect blame, which negatively impacts the professional reputations of our admin team.

Did you know that Dr. McCain takes kids on his personal time to get hair cuts because they can't afford it themselves? Ms. Young calls parents personally to answer questions or concerns, many times at 8 or 9 PM, from school where she still is, because she has been working late into the night. Last year, when my older son was having a hard time navigating a new teacher, Ms. Young talked to me for hours, worked with both myself and the teacher to find a solution, and I will always be grateful for her patience and emotional support and reassurance. Not to mention the countless after hours family engagement events they organize and host, such as popsicles on the playground, science night, math and puzzles, and more!

Dr. McCain has deepened parent engagement in ways his predecessors were never able to do. When I am at the school, he knows specific details about my kids, especially my younger one who tends to be shyer than my older one, but with Dr. McCain, my younger one is all hi-fives and conversations about Marvel comics, a testament to his ability to connect with kids as an educator. During the annual pancake breakfast, the raffle for "Lunch with Dr. McCain and Ms. Young" was one of the most popular selections! There were so many kids who were disappointed that they didn't win, that Dr McCain made time to have lunch with them!

We have come so far at JH because of Dr. McCain's and Ms. Young's leadership. We now have a thriving and vibrant neighborhood school, with active and engaged parents across a very diverse set of families. It's a wonderful culture. Now that we have a strong neighborhood community, Ms Young and Dr. McCain have spent the year focusing on raising SOL scores, something I know is a priority for you both as well. I have so appreciated the extra tutoring programs, pushes on the teachers on academic rigor and prep, and the acknowledgement that a positive learning environment is paramount.

While I understand Ms Johnson is a well regarded, long-time ACPS administrator, I will be devastated if we lose the

tremendous leaders we have in Dr. McCain and Ms. Young. JH deserves them, and they deserve the opportunity to come back stronger with the support they need to make any adjustments in the school's processes as necessary.

There are times to stand by your team and times to not, and I truly hope you view this as a time to stand by them, and that we are reminded of the amazing impact they've had on our students and families. I hope we can come out of this, especially with SOL's a month away, with Dr. McCain and Ms Young still in place as our leaders, and JH will be even better and stronger than it is.

Thank you for your time,

Sujata
