

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 *	Community Driven Metrics
Full Name *	Kevin White
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

January 7, 2021
School Board Organizational Meeting
Public Comments by Kevin White

Good afternoon.

I would like to start by thanking the School Board for giving me - an 8 year resident of Alexandria that has a 2nd grader at James K Polk - the opportunity to talk about why I think more needs to be done to reopen PUBLIC schools in the city of Alexandria.

The reasons that schools should be open are numerous.

I could talk about the recent report about how poorly Alexandria city students are doing. How that divergence in grades is unfortunately - but predictably - breaking along racial lines.

I could talk about how other countries and even other areas of this country have prioritized getting children back in classrooms - and found that those classrooms are not conduits for COVID spread.

I could talk about the mental battle that is taking place for children of this community ... how parents like myself and my wife - as well as countless others react to their children like mine that tell us repeatedly they deserve something better than zoom school. They do - and all of - all of us as community are failing them.

What do you say to your child when you ask them on Tuesday if it was good to talk to his friends at school and he responds and I quote - I didn't say anything to them. I usually dont speak during the day - I'm on mute most of the time. What do you say? Because my wife and I were at a loss for words? Is this the best as a community we can do?

I could talk a lot more about all those things - but what I want to talk about in my remaining time is community.

Schools are - and they should be - the focal point in the community. There ARE FEW POPULATIONS AS VULNERABLE AND AS UNABLE TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES IN a community than children - and schools are NOT ONLY the place where we educate and mold the future generation, BUT WHERE SO MANY CHILDREN FIND THEIR ADVOCATES AND THEIR VOICES.

Without community - without neighbors - without neighborhoods ... we are just individuals fighting each other. Together we are stronger than divided.

For months Dr Hutchings has said schools can reopen only under certain circumstances.

Staffing and capacity are mainly school management issues. We could argue OVER WHETHER ACPS should utilize rec space for additional classrooms or how the wonderful teachers of ACPS

deserve hazard pay. But - at its core - those are issues for ACPS management and the school board TO DECIDE.

However, Dr. Hutchings has also outlined that community health metrics are part of the equation.

The problem HOWEVER, IS THAT he hasn't told the community what GOAL NEEDS TO BE ACHIEVED.

He has said that positivity rates and cases per 100K are the indicators - but he hasn't stated where the goal posts are.

The community - me, you, your neighbors - your church group - everyone that calls Alexandria a home can be part of the solution ... but only if they know the winning ENDPOINT.

So, I want to close by calling on the school board - TO ALLOW Alexandria AS A community TO PLAY A LARGER ROLE IN GETTING OUR KIDS BACK INTO SCHOOL, WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO... BY INSISTING THAT Dr. Hutchings put CLEAR stakes in the ground ... help me tell my neighbors who don't have children WHAT WE AS A COMMUNITY NEED TO ACHIEVE IN ORDER TO help each other - tell us exactly what we are working towards so the broader community can work together to help moms and dads, employees and come , friends and family across the city get back to work and back to well-being by getting kids back to in-person learning.

I thank you all for your time - I know every person on this call has been tirelessly focused on getting a workable plan in place while simultaneously trying to keep our families and lives afloat - and I look forward to seeing those goalposts get set in the ground.