

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #254

I would like to provide: * In-Person Virtual Public Comments

Select the meeting date:* * April 8, 2021 5:00 p.m.

My public comments are related to: * Virtual+ Plus Learning

Topic * High School Scheduling for 21-22 & Return to School

Full Name * Jessica Hughes

What is your relationship to ACPS? * Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below: As the parent of a current TC Williams (TCW) 11th grader, I contacted TC Principal Peter Balas and Head of Counseling Melissa Deak to express my concern with TCW's class scheduling for next year. As you may be aware, this year TCW used a semester scheduling system. That is, having students compress year-long courses into a semester except for their first period course. Information is circulating that TCW may do this again in 2021-22. To date, I have heard nothing back from the school and I sent this inquiry on March 10, 2021.

The School Board absolutely must not allow the semester scheduling model to proceed next year. While I understand it was done due to the needs of Virtual Plus, it has done a terrible disservice to many students. To begin, it reinforces "summer slide" by having students go many, many months without instruction in a subject. For example, students with 2nd semester math this year had no math instruction between June 2020 and February 2021; or no foreign language instruction for the same period of time. I think that it is in students' best interest to have a steady course of instruction, particularly in core subjects. Importantly, semester scheduling has been very detrimental for students preparing for college. Cramming AP classes, which are already challenging year-long courses, into a semester results in the following harms:

- 1) Pacing of the material makes mastery difficult and prevents teachers from doing any in-depth teaching beyond what they think will be on the AP Exam. I have heard of classes that did not actually finish the curriculum and are meeting informally to finish covering the course material.
- 2) Overwork and burnout among students to keep up with the pace of the class.
- 3) Students who take the AP course first semester then have to study independently and stay fresh on the material for 3 months; students who take the AP course 2nd semester have even less time (2.5 months)

to cover the material.

4) Discourages students from taking APs because they are worried about mastering a year's worth of material in one semester.

The best way to remedy this situation is a return to normalcy in the fall. By the beginning of the school year, all high school students should be vaccinated (kids older than 16 are already eligible and now 12–16 year olds will be shortly). Even if students are still wearing masks, there is no reason not to return to the block system of pre-COVID (Red and Blue Days) or a traditional class meets each day schedule.

Our high school's students have already been tremendously harmed by the pandemic, bad decisions on scheduling should not make things worse.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these issues.