

# Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#848

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: \* General Public Comments

Topic \* Jefferson-Houston Leadership

Full Name \* Nora Lovrien Buehler

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

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Nora Lovrien Buehler and I am the parent of a 3rd and 5th grader at Jefferson-Houston. We've been involved with the school since 2017 and lived in Alexandria since 2008.

I'd like to address the handling of the March 19th incident in which a young child in the pre-K program wandered away from the school grounds. I support the need to understand the circumstances and ensure that corrective action is taken. This should not happen again. Ever.

However, I see several unfortunate choices made surrounding this incident, which may lead to negative outcomes for the Jefferson-Houston school long term. I urge the expedient return of Dr. McCain and Ms. Young.

Since 2017, I have seen three school administrations. The first was disciplinarian, the second was overwhelmed, and the third, led by Dr. McCain and Ms. Young has been transformational. When Dr. McCain interviewed for the position, he observed that Jefferson-Houston needed consistent, loyal, long-term leadership. And he assured the parents that he intended to be that leader and he has been. Jefferson-Houston is thriving and I credit him for that.

Likewise, Ms. Young is extremely dedicated, helpful, approachable, and ready to go the extra mile. She and Dr. McCain are a powerhouse combination helping Jefferson-

Houston continue to evolve and grow into the school it has the potential to be.

Starting over with new administrations every few years is a recipe for failure. The best schools in ACPS and any district are those with long-term, steady leadership, which McCain and Young intended to be, and I hope still can be.

Protocols exist and I understand that they were put on leave accordingly. But, the way this was done, the communication to families, and how the story was relayed to the press, hangs these two dedicated leaders out to dry while saying nothing about resource, budgetary, and management shortcomings coming from central offices. Just by omitting the explanation that their leave is a matter of protocol, insinuates a suspicion of guilt and mishandling, which is akin to public and professional castigation.

In the time between the incident and the story in the press, I assume Dr. McCain's and Ms. Young's appropriate reactions to the incident are well documented and available for review. I hope this investigation can conclude quickly and fairly, and that Dr. McCain and Ms. Young can return to the halls of J-H where they belong. In doing so, I urge ACPS administration to assure them that they will do better to publicly support them and do better to provide full and adequate resources to ensure that no other child wanders away from school grounds ever again.

I would have a hard time trusting that my employer supports me after this. I can only hope that their dedication to the children and families of Jefferson-Houston is strong enough to withstand this experience.

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