

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #163

I would like to provide: *	In-Person Virtual Public Comments
Select the meeting date:* *	October 15, 2020
My public comments are related to: *	Virtual+ Plus Learning
Topic *	School day length for PK-2
Full Name *	Jill Hoffman
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student
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Virtual Public Comments
October 15, 2020
Jill Hoffman

Thank you to Chair Anderson and Members of the School Board

I am here as a second-grade parent to provide feedback on the proposal released earlier this week about the PK-2 adjustment in schedule. But first, I want to share that our household's experience with ACPS this year has been excellent. The adjustment to COVID-19, the herculean task to complete the school year and then return to a period of uncertainty cannot have been easy. Everyone has an opinion about what could be done better, but I for one recognize that this entire situation is unprecedented. We're all flying blind and doing our best to meet the demands of families, our jobs, and our own sanity and trying to find a path forward. And, because I recognize this process inevitably will be imperfect, I have not been one to complain. And, because ACPS has been so attentive to the needs of families like mine, I have been assured that the need to recalibrate the day for our PreK through 2nd-grade students is coming and a high priority of the school district. Which brings me to my primary reason for being here [today](#). The issue for families of young students like my son is not JUST the amount of actual time connected to a Zoom screen. The issue is the length of the school day in a virtual and synchronous/asynchronous environment. The day is simply too long. And, what is even more frustrating is I have spoken to multiple parents of children in middle and high school, and their days are actually LESS rigorous than for elementary students. So, when I read one of the top headlines presented this week about the parent survey, says that "[s]ixty-five percent of families, 47% of staff and 58% of students who responded said we had the amount of teacher-led instruction "just right."., my question is that a combination of responses from all of the grade levels?

And, when you also look at the data that shows that there is strong concern about the amount of screen time, that is a window is the problems I hear loud and clear from other parents. Every single parent I have spoken to, with the exception of one, believes the school day is too long for these elementary kids. Why is the day longer and harder for our elementary students? The schedule adjustments this week do not shorten the day. Why can't we have shorter days five days a week and give the teachers the afternoons for their planning time? Because right now, the reality is that our kids are losing focus as the long days wear on – and breaks become harder to return from and return to synchronized instruction.

Is the reason for the long day to meet state requirements? Because this is a year of throwing out the rule book and doing what makes the most sense to keep our students engaged. The current plan does not do this and further adjustment to the length of the day for our elementary students is a critical need that needs to be addressed immediately.

Jill Hoffman