

Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#448

I would like to provide: *

In-Person Comments in the School Board Meeting Room

Select the meeting date:* *

June 16, 2022 6:30 p.m.

My public comments are related to: *

Safety/Security

Topic *

Safety and Security

Full Name *

Allyson McKowen

What is your relationship to ACPS? *

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Public Comments

June 16, 2022

School Board Meeting

My name is Allyson McKowen. People here in Alexandria know my husband as Coach Rico. When we moved to Alexandria from DC, several people told us that if a problem needed to be addressed in this city, I should be the one to do it, based on their experiences with racism here in Alexandria. We did not want to believe this could be true.

I am sad to say they were right and I was wrong. The actions and inactions of several of you demonstrate to anyone and everyone paying attention that you are either actively perpetuating the oppressive policies of your predecessors or – in your silence – you are complicit. Your unwillingness to speak up, to take a risk and fight for actual change when the children and families you are supposed to represent and serve are suffering, is inexcusable.

Worse than that, your efforts to silence people like my husband, who are vocal about the horrible things happening to our son and others inside your schools, are despicable. You will lie and you will plot and you will have little meetings on the side to figure out what you're going to do about people who won't sit back and politely accept the terrifying reality that children and staff in our schools face every day. When are you going to stop protecting yourselves and your interests and start helping the children? When will you do your job?

Our children have been attending Alexandria City Public Schools since 2012. Zachary just finished 9th grade in the STEM Academy at Minnie Howard and Gabby just finished 7th grade at Hammond, which is so fortunate to have Dr. Finney leading the family that she builds for her students and staff.

There are wonderful, dedicated educators in this school system. Ms. KB sparked a new love for history in our daughter that took her all the way to the state competition for National History Day. Mr. Hutson helped her grow as a writer, supporting her creative efforts in writing short stories. Mr. Matthews worked tirelessly to develop biology labs that engaged our son and his classmates. Ms. Angelich made Algebra II fun. Ms. Huang was attentive and intuitive and supported our son at every turn in his study of Chinese.

Despite the knowledge that there are teachers out there doing their best for every child regardless of their race, as a parent who sends her children to public schools in this city, I have my heart in my throat every single day. Will I have to leave my own students in a panic again because my child has been assaulted? Three times this year, I dropped everything and rushed to Minnie Howard after my son was attacked. The last time, on Monday, June 6, it was when my son's counselor called and told us that something had happened in the bathroom. "It's bad," she said. Let that sink in. "It's bad." Imagine the terror I felt as I called my assistant principal, arranged for coverage, ran to my car, and drove across town. "It's bad."

Students in ACPS have been bullied, harassed, assaulted, raped, shot, stabbed, and killed this year on school grounds and / or during school hours, when parents and families are supposed to be able to trust that they are safe. So please, don't tout all the work you've done changing the names of a couple of school buildings or developing your supposed Equity for All plan. You can sit up there and put a lot of pretty words on paper if you want, but meanwhile, children and families are scared. You are making the work of your dedicated educators a million times harder; your teachers and students should not have to overcome the challenges that you allow to exist because you won't do anything except attempt to silence people – by any means necessary, even if that means concocting malicious lies about them – who are exposing the innumerable problems that exist.