

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #205

I would like to provide: *	Written Public Comments
Topic *	I am writing to ask you to add in your budget a separate counselor for our honor, AP and TAG students that focuses on the student's mental wellbeing.
Full Name *	Zion Bezu
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student
Enter your comments here OR upload below:	<p>Dear Board members and Dr. Hutchings,</p> <p>I am writing to ask you to add in your budget a separate counselor for our honor, AP and TAG students that focuses on the student's mental wellbeing.</p> <p>I recognize and understand the work you do for our students. I know that our students' safety is a significant priority for you. I have been part of ACPS for close to a decade. To be honest, it was hard when I first tried to register my kids to attend John Adams because the experience was very unpleasant and isolating, the representatives were unhelpful and the service I was getting was absurd. Now, though, I am happy to say that the ACPS staff and members were welcoming and considerate.</p> <p>The change has been noticed and appreciated because I know that building that relationship with the parents can only benefit the students more. Nine years ago, there was no GIA, and no Young Scholars programs available. The TAG group was limited to certain students and the selection process was unfortunately unbiased. When I brought my son, it was apparent that he was above grade level and when I asked for a GIA so my son could get the learning that he deserved, I was told that there was no such program for him. I kept pushing and all I got was excuse after excuse not based on him but based on me, his mother. Anything from the fact that I am not from here or because English is my second language or more remarkably, I did not "know the system". But I was stubborn.</p> <p>So, a group of volunteers including me went to work and learned the system. For hours we would pour into information about GIA and ACPS policy. We would take leadership classes such as PLTI (Parent Leadership Training Institute) We would also join multiple workshops one of which was organized and led by Donna. In that particular workshop, I remember showing up with a large binder full of my son's</p>

work. I will admit that when I walked in, I got looked at as though I was not allowed or invited. But I did not allow that to deter me, I walked into Donna's room, sat in the very front, raised my hand, and asked my questions. Without delay, she answered every single question. When I walked out of that room that day, I knew that everything was going to be okay. It was because of donna.

The progress in TAG in ACPS is remarkable. I watched it grow from zero to a hundred in a matter of years. The academic field in ACPS has a bright future and is only going to soar.

Unfortunately, there is another issue that has been ignored but impacts the students in a big way. I am expressing my concern for the emotional and psychological support specifically for our honor and TAG students. It seems as though we have all deluded ourselves into believing that just because our students are making the grades and passing the test that they are alright.

They are not alright, 2020 has taken a toll on every single student and most of them are not getting the support they need because they know that even if they go to seek any counseling, however great they might be, they know that unless it is to further their academic future whether it is to change their current classes or to choose their classes for next year the counselors would much rather pay more attention to the students who have a separate set of grades or behavior past. I am not trying to belittle the other students' needs but If this was an issue that I could fix myself I would but I am reaching out to you because I want my children and their friends to be able to trust others and know that it is okay to feel overwhelmed and be able to know how to handle that. I realize that the counselors have been providing presentations on a number of different topics including mental health during ruler time but I do not see any positive effects, in fact, I hardly believe that it works at all. I advise that there is a separate counselor for our honor, AP, and TAG students that focuses on the student's mental wellbeing and does not have anything to do with their academics at all. While there might be arguments that as long as it does not affect the student's grades it does not matter but it does. The student's grades and performance can only get better when they are not miserable. I feel that this can help a lot of students and have a positive impact on not only themselves but the people that they surround themselves with. Learning about their emotions and being able to face them instead of burying them under their workloads will lead to a better chance at success. I am asking this because just because they make good grades does not mean that your jobs are done, these students spend countless hours at school, virtual or not, and expect that you

keep them safe and take care of them. Take care of our kids and help them in a way that we the parents don't know how, please.

Thank you for your consideration
