

Public Hearing on the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0
Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting
July 10, 2020
Comments from Cindy Hart

Hi! My name is Cindy Hart. I'm the Chair of SEAC and the mother of 8, including 2 with special needs.

First, I want to share my gratitude for the enormous amount of time and effort that you've all devoted to provide for the children of ACPS under the most trying of circumstances.

I've been in contact with many families about their experiences with Continuity of Learning Plan 2.0. Though there was confusion about how Zoom time related to IEP services and if missed related services would be made up...Many parents agreed that their child's teachers worked tirelessly and truly did all they could to support their students. But at the same time families say that this instructional model is unsustainable. It did not work for most families.

An aside, in case you don't know: Our students struggle with being able to attend to live zooms. Even when direct 1-1 zoom instruction is provided, some of our students need direct adult support on the home end, and that adult needs to have strong behavior management skills which may require the assistance of a behavior professional.

So, I would like to share a few specific priorities as we move forward:

1-The solution should not be "one size fits all." Many if not most of our SPED students require a level of instruction and accommodations that make distance learning extremely challenging, and many SPED students have suffered. So if we end up using a hybrid model, which seems likely, special needs students must be given priority in returning to the school setting. Many will need to be in school for more time than their typically-developing peers. Those in the city-wide classrooms, for example, may need to be in class double the time of the average student.

2-If we end up in a distance learning model or for those who must choose this for health reasons, we need to ensure that there are consistent resources and zoom times relative to IEP services across schools and across teachers of any given school. Some students will need 1-1 direct instruction plus behavior support for families.

3-As ACPS focuses on providing our Special Education students with a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE), communication of what is being done is important. Parents want to hear details and specifics from Dr. Hutchings on down to school Principals and others. If parents don't hear details, they get worried. Perhaps a separate SPED section in ACPS communications could serve this function.

4-Parents will need details about each model before making an informed decision about sending children back to school or not.

Thank you again for your time and for your work on behalf of our children. I wish you much success!