

# Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #257

I would like to provide: \*

Written Public Comments

My public comments are related to: \*

Reopening of Schools

Topic \*

Ventilation

Full Name \*

Megan Reing

What is your relationship to ACPS? \*

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

I truly appreciate the time and prompt communication from Dr. Hart and her facilities team with regard to school reopening concerns. However, the ACPS strategy for ventilation in our schools continues to be insufficient for addressing the spread of COVID-19. This is particularly true with the new 3ft student-student distancing recommendation and the B.1.1.7 variant which is spreading quickly in Virginia- and is more lethal and more transmissible in children. ACPS facilities has done a good job improving/fixing our HVAC systems and placing MERV13 filters in the schools. However, this merely brings our students good air quality for normal circumstances and does not take the extra precautions needed for a pandemic. Though the HVAC system does bring in outside air (35% according to the ACPS website), this cannot be enough to meet these guidelines as outlined by the CDC:

Bring in as much outdoor air as possible.

If safe to do so, open windows and doors. Even just cracking open a window or door helps increase outdoor airflow, which helps reduce the potential concentration of virus particles in the air.

Use child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Safely secure fans in a window to blow potentially contaminated air out and pull new air in through other open windows and doors. Consider having activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.

If ACPS is unable to do these first listed recommendations, all classrooms and spaces with students should be given a portable HEPA filter unit to filter the inside air, as other surrounding districts with aging facilities have done. By already placing these in clinics, ACPS is conceding that MERV filters are insufficient to deal with COVID. With the influx of money that schools are receiving, I encourage ACPS to make this a priority. Elementary school children will not be vaccinated by the fall. Ventilation is essential to earning

the trust of families. Given the aging condition of many ACPS buildings, ACPS should be performing air quality assessments on each site and then tailoring ventilation strategies to each building. Some surrounding districts in NoVa are using carbon dioxide monitors as a way to measure air quality and the number of air exchanges in certain spaces. I have been told that ACPS cannot compare itself to other districts because our facilities are different; however, this reasoning falls short when we see measures being taken by other districts with aging facilities, such as DCPS or Chicago Public Schools. And the age of facilities plays no role in thinking creatively about outdoor eating.

I am urgently asking ACPS to please think carefully and critically about lunch and breakfast in closed spaces. Having students eat unmasked in closed classrooms truly goes against all the science. I truly appreciate the time, attention, and hard work of all parties involved to keep our students safe.