

**Public Hearing on the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0**  
**Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting**  
**July 10, 2020**  
**Comments from Andy Baker-White**

I am a parent of rising fifth and third graders at Charles Barrett and appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0.

While I want my kids to return to school, it is something that needs to be done safely. This means safe for my children, their classmates, teachers, school staff, and our community. We know what it takes for the coronavirus to spread. It moves from person to person and really gets around in high risk settings that are enclosed, with people are in close contact for prolonged periods, and where there is lots of vocalizing. Repeated outbreaks have been tied to these types of settings including bars, churches, childcare centers, and overnight camps. If we want to get back to some semblance of normal, then we must prevent the spread of the virus.

At this time, I support the fully virtual option because it is the better option to help stop the spread of the virus. There are three primary reasons I find the fully virtual option preferable.

First, our community transmission level is not sufficiently low. The WHO advises that before reopenings occur the test positivity rate should be 5% or below for at least 14 days. Alexandria has had few of these days and the current seven-day average is above 7% and trending upwards. These rates are indicative of the community transmission level and that available testing is unable to provide a full picture of the virus' spread.

Second, we need assurance that testing and contact tracing in schools will be adequate. Without these the risk of sending kids back to school cannot be safely managed. We need to know the time it will take for test results to come back and the length of time it will take for contact tracing. If these are too slow or delayed virus can quickly spread through a school and into the community.

Third, the adherence to required social distancing and social gathering guidelines under the hybrid option will be difficult to maintain and their failure will lead to outbreaks. Enforcing physical distancing within a classroom and throughout a school will be challenging and the other mitigation measures such as PPE, increased disinfecting, plexiglass barriers, and adequate ventilation will be costly. Even with these measures, it will not be a matter of if an outbreak occurs in a school setting but rather when.

Because of these concerns I support the fully virtual option. Again, I want my kids to return to school but it must be safe for everyone. I fear that under our current and foreseeable circumstances the physical reopening of schools in any manner will allow the virus to spread even more widely. We have seen this play out with the reopening of bars, churches, and overnight camps. We don't have to allow it to happen in our schools.

Thank you.