

Good afternoon Dr. Hutchings and Members of the School Board.

My name is Cindy Hart and I am Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee, or SEAC.

As you know, students with disabilities have been very heavily impacted by this pandemic. I am here to share the views of SEAC regarding return to school for students with disabilities.

**First**, SEAC feels that it is a high priority to allow parents who felt virtual was the best option for their special needs child in December--based on what they knew at the time--to now choose in-person instruction. The December decision was not presented as binding for the remainder of the school year, and special ed parents need to be given the option to return their child to in-person instruction if they now feel this is best.

**Secondly**--SEAC feels that it is very important to allow students in citywide classrooms to return to school 4 days per week. These students have the most needs and require the greatest level of consistency.

**Third**--Many students with IEPs need more consistency than does the typical student, making it harder to switch back and forth between home and school instruction. SEAC feels that high needs students not in city-wide classrooms—i.e. those who receive all of their reading and math instruction in the special ed setting--should be given high priority for returning to school 4 days per week.

Now that the CDC has relaxed guidance for spacing, hopefully the above will be much easier logistically than it would have been a few weeks ago.

As I'm sure you know, Fairfax County is planning to adopt the new 3' guidance for elementary students, allowing a return to class 4 days per week later this month--for all students, and Arlington has had their high-needs special ed students in the building 4 days per week since December.

**Finally**--Looking ahead to summer, we feel strongly that 4 days of in-person instruction for our special needs students is needed, for those families that choose this option.

Regarding end of summer instruction...Very few families of students with disabilities see value in the two weeks of virtual instruction that are planned for August. Our special ed teachers and in fact all of our staff need a break before the school year begins later in August, when hopefully our students will be back in school for 5 days per week.

I would like to close by commending the hard work and dedication of our special needs teachers and other staff during this challenging year!