

# Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#835

I would like to provide: \*

Written Public Comments

My public comments are related to: \*

Equity

Topic \*

overcrowding at Patrick Henry

Full Name \*

Asa Orrin-Brown

What is your relationship to ACPS? \*

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

Greetings,

As I'm sure you are already aware, Patrick Henry is well over capacity with an insufficient playground and no green outdoor space. The school was left in this state for half a decade because of decisions made by the school board, to save money and get improved facilities delivered for MacArthur students and parent faster and with less inconvenience. I got to see firsthand what the cost of those decisions were today.

I am the parent of a Patrick Henry first grader, but I am also a volunteer with the bicycling in the schools program (BITS) and so I was at the school today. In order to allow the kids to practice on their bikes we had to kick other kids off of the basketball court. The more experience rider were taken to the bus loop, which is also not the ideal playground space you would expect for a newly built school in Alexandria VA. When we told those kids to leave the court, I felt so bad them. We were forcing them back onto the main playground. I was only separated from the main playground by a 20 foot tall chain link fence, so I had a good view of the condition. I swear it looked like an overcrowded prison yard from a bad made for TV movie. Kids were standing shoulder to shoulder! There was no room to run and play, instead there were groups of kids milling about talking to each other. They were crowded in so tightly that it is probably a fire hazard!

There was also a young girl in my group today who spoke no English. There was no one there to help her to participate. I did my best by gesturing and pointing at what other students were doing, and she tried to figure out how to balance on her

bike, but her experience was certainly not equal to the other students. It took her quite a bit of time to even communicate to me that she had to go to the bathroom. I eventually figured out what she meant and was able to connect her with another teacher on the playground who connected her to an older student who spoke Spanish to help get the playground bathroom unlocked. The whole experience pathetic, a far cry for the equal education that we are supposed to be providing for ELL students.

The conditions the school board expect these west end students to accept are appalling. The inequity of the facilities compared to something like the new MacArthur campus is absurd. You need to do a better job of balancing resources between the campuses. It's a bad look when the predominantly white schools have a drastically different student experience, class size, and quality of facilities than the predominantly nonwhite schools. I suspect it's just a matter of time before you are sued by the NAACP. Please fix these inequities for the sake of our students. You can't put off these decisions until redistricting, action is needed now!

Sincerely,

Asa Orrin-Brown

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