

Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#409

I would like to provide: *

In-Person Comments in the School Board Meeting Room

Select the meeting date:* *

March 24, 2022 6:30 p.m.

My public comments are related to: *

General Public Comments

Topic *

School Safety

Full Name *

Devon Wells

What is your relationship to ACPS? *

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

Students, parents, staff and faculty, community members and all stakeholders are owed information about serious, violent offenses that take place in this City's schools. Parents are best positioned to make the risk assessments for their children and to address any trauma associated with going to schools where a rape occurs. ACPS is, and continues to be, derelict, and chooses image and politics over the safety of our children – this includes the Superintendent and each of the members of this school board. Hiding behind juvenile privacy laws to cloak yourselves in silence is cowardice of epic proportions. With that, I beseech any of you, especially the Superintendent, to find the moral fortitude to provide information about the October 6th rape that is very, very long overdue. The specific questions I want answers to are: (to be provided during my comment).

COMMENTS OF WELLS, Devon – 24 March 2022

Students, parents, staff and faculty, community members and all stakeholders are owed information about serious, violent offenses that take place in this City's schools. Parents are best positioned to make the risk assessments for their children and to address any trauma associated with going to schools where a rape occurs. ACPS is, and continues to be, derelict, and chooses image and politics over the safety of our children - this includes the Superintendent and each of the members of this school board. Hiding behind juvenile privacy laws to cloak yourselves in silence is cowardice of epic proportions. With that, I beseech any of you, especially the Superintendent, to find the moral fortitude to provide information about the October 6th rape that is very, very long overdue. The specific questions I want answers to are:

1. Was there a Title IX investigation? Who is the district's certified Title IX investigator?
2. What time of day did this occur, the arrest record indicates over lunch and learn -
 - a. If it happened during lunch and learn what changes took place to mitigate the lack of supervision over that period? What is the school doing to ensure safety in bathrooms – not allowing children to use the bathroom is a cruel answer.
3. Who called the police?
4. How many assailants?
5. Who made the legal determination that this information is not disclosable as indicated by the City's horrifying, victim-blaming statement – since there does not appear to be in-house legal counsel, who made this decision? Did you consult an attorney, or are you relying on parents taking your word for it?
6. What is the current status of cameras at the Minne Howard campus? If there are cameras, who monitors them and are they constantly monitored?
7. What crisis and trauma resources are available to victims and students? Knowing crimes of this magnitude occur at school can increase anxiety among a group of kids that have been through so much in the last two years, burying information increases fear of the unknown. It also prevents any deterrence.
8. What is the current safety plan at the schools?
9. Is there known gang activity in the schools?
10. When will you involve parents and not treat us as an enemy?

I am going to conclude my remarks on a personal note. The day before the National Review story was published, St. Patrick's Day, I made a post on my personal Facebook page stating "Our school district has so many things that frustrate me... It is so political and our superintendent is an absolute joke/performance artist. But, it is, also, such a special place and our kids are thriving. I think about it often as schools really are the political ground zero right now, and when I speak-up I have to always wonder if it is me as a grown-up carrying on an unnecessary campaign, when what is happening each day for our 5 kids is pretty wonderful. . . ." Yes, you heard that right, we have 5 kids in ACPS schools. My sentiments still remain true, but they have been tarnished by the unquestionably intentional silence and obfuscation by you, the Superintendent, you the

Board, and the City's mayor. ACPS is not a political machine – it is a school district. Your stated mission of “Equity for All,” because of your current failure to have open, honest, and meaningful conversations about this assault and safety in schools, will never be achieved. Unsafe schools render equity unachievable – and it will not ever plausibly occur when the schools remain mired by crime, drug use, violence, and vandalism. Not talking about such things does not render them nonexistent, it just makes them unsolvable – as a parent said in today's Alexandria Times – sunshine is the best disinfectant.

My last reminder is you, the Board, are the Superintendent's boss – he is your employee and has no authority to tell you how to conduct yourselves, you answer to your constituents and no one else.