

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #115

My public comments are related to: *	Continuity of Learning 4.0
Topic *	Return to School Plans
Name *	Lisl Brunner
What is your relationship to ACPS? *	Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

The attached letter is included below:

July 22, 2020

Dear Members of the School Board,

I write in regard to the Enhanced Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0 in strong support of a model that brings students back to the classroom for as many days of the week as possible, maintaining precautions that are necessary to protect the health of students, teachers, and school staff. Parents who prefer a 100% virtual learning experience should have this option, and a quality virtual education program should be available to them. However, I urge you to explore all possible options to ensure that parents who need to send their children back to the classroom can do so.

Many children – and younger children in particular – learn more effectively in a classroom environment than in a virtual program. My children, who were in kindergarten and third grade during the last academic year, have not yet developed the discipline and focus needed to thrive in a learning environment that consists entirely of screens. While they are engaged in classroom learning, they quickly lost interest in the virtual environment. Each day of virtual learning became a struggle for us. I do not wish for learning to be a battle – I want my children to continue to develop their intellectual curiosity and to make academic progress during the next school year.

For working parents, a 100% virtual learning environment is an untenable situation that strains the household and the family's financial stability. We discovered that we cannot simply leave our children to their virtual instruction; we must be beside them to answer their questions and ensure that they stay engaged and on task. We are fortunate to have some flexibility to do so, but many parents are unable to work from home or to provide the support needed to make a virtual learning experience meaningful. The current options for child care are extremely limited, and it is doubtful that any have the capacity to support children's virtual learning effectively. For essential workers, single parents, and families who are struggling to make ends meet under normal circumstances, having little choice but to stay home with children can lead to problems such as food insecurity, which further impact children's capacity to focus on schoolwork in the short and long terms.

I have confidence that our school communities can work together to find ways to bring children back to school safely. Our city is full of outdoor and indoor spaces that can be adapted for this purpose; parents like myself can volunteer time to help in these classrooms on a rotating basis. Pursuing these options is

not inconsistent with ensuring that parents who want an entirely virtual learning environment can have one.

Many parents and students in Alexandria need an in-classroom learning experience in order to thrive, and I encourage you to explore all available options that meet their needs.

Sincerely,
Lisl Brunner
Alexandria, VA 22301

The following parents of elementary school children have also expressed their support for this letter:

Jennie Geisner, Alexandria, VA 22301
Julie Kelleher, Alexandria, VA 22301
Lee Raynes, Alexandria, VA 22301
Jennifer Ferrara, Alexandria, VA 22305