

WELLS Devon 2 June 2022

The ESSER funds should be spent on safety.

When it comes to children and their physical safety at school, I never fathomed I would have the opportunity to say, “I told you so,” but here we are, and, guess what, “I told you so.” On March 24 I stood here and commented, “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.” I even asked about known gang activity in schools. At the end I said, “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 . . .”

I am going to amend my last statement, by proclaiming that the Board and Superintendent have actually achieved equity – equity as all students are being failed and equitably served by this failure.

So, now I will take my remaining two minutes to, once again, talk at you, knowing I will likely never get a response, and, sadly, knowing no one will likely be held accountable for the wonton refusal to actually educate Alexandria’s children.

I am standing here on the sixth day of canceled in-person learning not knowing what threats closed schools and when those threats may end. I am in no way positioned and informed to make appropriate risk assessments for my children and family, as I am just supposed to trust the Wizards of Oz who ineptly run this school district. Should my daughter attend the All Night Graduation Party? How about graduation?

What systems are in place to start addressing physical safety at school? Do teachers receive training on gang activities in school? How about the students? Why have you not admitted the SRO program is not operating as normal? Why have you not empowered parents with information?

For Dr. Hutchings and Ms. Alderton, I understand you get the peace of mind knowing your children do not attend this district’s schools, but we are not all as fortunate. I do not say this to garner “got you points,” but to let you know, I just don’t see you as part of the team on this. You see, you did not panic text your child last Tuesday wondering if he was physically ok. You do not have to tell yourself daily that you are not a bad parent for sending your child to public school. You do not monitor real estate values and other housing markets just to see if you can get out. But, these are very real things that are happening in many homes across this City because this Board refuses to LEAD.

Speak up! Speak loud! And take action! Insist on a robust partnership with law enforcement. Call out the City Council members standing in the way – by name, and loudly, and often. Let parents know of the threats and dangers in school and generously invite us to be partners to make this better. Speak to the media, even when the Superintendent tells you not to.

Lastly, fire the Superintendent – he is incapable and too self-involved to lead ACPS out of these trying times. He has failed every Alexandrian, and he should be allowed the time to focus on his private LLC and write his book – you should make that an easy path for him.

Our children are depending on your courage. I look forward to working with you for a better, safe ACPS.