

Anne Arundel County Board of Education Meeting | March 30, 2021

Due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, Board meetings are currently being held virtually and in compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Times for agenda items are intended as guidance only.

The Board may choose to change the order of agenda items to meet the needs of the Board. Unless changed by the Board, items occur in the order listed.

Board Members

Melissa Ellis
President

Dana Schallheim
Vice President

Candace C.W. Antwine

Robert Silkworth

Corine Frank

Joanna Tobin

Michelle L. Corkadel

Drake Smith

Upcoming Meetings

General Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

6:00 pm

Policy Committee

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

3:30 pm

Virtual

Budget Committee

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

3:30 pm

Virtual

Equity Committee

Wednesday, April 12, 2021

6:00 pm

Virtual

-
- 4:00 pm 1. Opening/Recognition
- 1.01 Invocation
 - 1.02 Pledge of Allegiance
 - 1.03 Establish Agenda Order

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- 4:05 pm 2. Public Comments
- Written comments on agenda items can be submitted through a form available at www.aacps.org/boardtestimony. The process for submitting such comments and comments on non-agenda items, which are only accepted in writing, can be found at www.aacps.org/boardtestimony.

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- 4:25 pm 3. Presentation
- 3.01 Impact/Analysis of the new CDC distancing guidance on the Spring 2021 Reopening Plan
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Key: (I) Information (A) Action (R) Review

Information on agenda items can be obtained from the Board of Education Office (410-222-5311) or at www.aacps.org

The following testimony was submitted for the March 30, 2021, meeting of the Board of Education. The "...” designation indicates the cutoff of testimony due to it exceeding the word the limit. The full version of such testimony has been provided to the Board.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR ITEM 3.01 – IMPACT/ANALYSIS OF THE NEW CDC DISTANCING GUIDANCE ON THE SPRING 2021 REOPENING PLAN.

1. My daughter’s love for learning and school is gone. You have killed it. Your politics. Your games. Open schools full time. Do not fall into the “It’s all about logistics” trap. Do not try to reinvent the wheel. Counties across AMERICA are doing it. There are solutions to every road block you will mention is holding us back. Get away from politics and the teacher’s union demands and get our kids back in school, full time. Do lunches in shifts. Re-poll parents for bus preference. It’s ok if more kids have to quarantine due to close contact. Virtual will still be an option for those days. It’s happening all over the world. AAC students and teachers are NOT special exceptions. GET OUR KIDS BACK IN SCHOOL FULL TIME!

Elisha Roth
Edgewater

2. Stop the constant change of course! It’s 4th quarter and admin, staff, and students have been through enough transitions! We all need stability, predictability, and time to adjust to changes that are still recent. Additionally, AACPS has already had A LOT of cases.... too many! Covid infection rates are rising again quickly. Focus on the Fall!

Juli Gross
Odenton

3. Please do all you can to open elementary schools for 4 (or better yet, 5) days of in person learning. My son has truly suffered from virtual learning. Moving to the hybrid model has been better for him, but it is not enough. Please don't stop at the hybrid schedule for the remainder of the school year. In all of the board meetings I've watched, I have seen discussion about the mental health of the children, but often the focus is on the older kids. My six-year-old son has said truly heartbreaking things as a result of virtual school. He had to start counseling. He often says "I am stupid." We never had problems like this before virtual school. 4.5 hours per day in front of a computer is way too much for 1st graders. Please get him back in the classroom full time.

Kristen Bell
Severna Park

4. I urge you to take action immediately get these children back to at least 4 days a week this school year with a full 5 day return for the Fall. Do not make families wait and wonder about the fall, give them a chance to make changes and moves as they see fit. Give the options of remain virtual, remain 2 days a week or return 4 days a week. Especially for elementary school aged children that are failing at an astronomical level. They are at a far less risk than other levels and suffering greatly. Utilize the gyms and cafeterias that are not being used to spread out classes while eating, They eat at different times based on grade level anyway and utilize outside as much as possible as the weather is starting to change. You can make this work if you care enough about these children. Stop making them suffer any further than

they already have. Stop using "logistics" as an excuse to not move forward. You have had a year to figure his stuff out. I am severely disappointed at the slow rate we have moved forward when many other counties, and states have made it work safely. We can do as well. Don't let Maryland fail out children any more than they already have. The teachers are doing great work but they are not miracle workers. It is not enough. We need more, Now!

Renee Parette
Pasadena

5. Assuming that COVID cases remain in the low or moderate range, we'd like to be able to return our children to school. We were forced to make a decision on hybrid vs. virtual during the peak of the pandemic. Now that circumstances have changed, I imagine there are many other parents who would like their children to return to school as long as it can be done safely.

Jeremiah Grossman
Severna Park

6. My daughter is a 5th grade student who has returned to in person learning 2 days a week, while remaining virtual the other 3 days. Her grades, attitude and overall engagement with school has increased in just the 3 short weeks. I am a parent first, but I am also a temporary mid day monitor and I see the students enjoying their time at the school. They are laughing and having fun, even while they are in their "boxes" and remaining masked. They are building relationships with students they hadn't before. They are being inclusive. I have advocated for smaller classrooms for years and I am loving the unique opportunity this brings. I know this isn't normal and I know class sizes will increase again, but it is a nice benefit to this hybrid program.

I am split in my opinion on students being only 3' apart to increase capacity in the classroom. I do think that any student that wishes to return to school, in person, should be given the opportunity. No student should be turned away from in person education and if they are on a waiting list, or a family addresses a concern, accommodations should be made for every child. However, I don't think AACPS should start a whole new process with a new survey and all of that to begin bringing on a new set of challenges. We have 2-1/2 months left of school and I think AACPS should be looking for new opportunities to enhance the experience in the classroom as well as those virtually, with the students and the staff....

Julie Howes
Shady Side

7. I think it is imprudent to spend time and effort to change the social distance from 6 to 3 feet this late in the game. Concentrate your efforts on getting everyone back to school in September.

Catherine Lewis
Annapolis

8. Ideas to make lunch time work: outdoor tents (think wedding/event style) with sides that can roll up and down. Ventilation and more space in one! Rent PODS to store extra furniture if needed so large gyms/areas can be used for kids, lunch, whatever. Plexiglass partitions between people, staggered lunch times.

Bussing: my 7th graders bus has 10 kids on it, high schooler bus has 3 kids total. I know parents in my immediate neighborhood would band together to take kids to school if it meant more days in person helping to free up bus seats.

Please please please get creative, we are not re-inventing the wheel here, look to other school districts and get ideas that have been working since August.

Erica Oneil
Gambrills

9. I am writing in regards to schools in AA county to be at least 4 days a week ASAP. Many counties in Maryland like Caroline, Carroll and Washington counties have been open 4 days a week with no issues and have had great success. 2 days a week is not enough for these kids who have failing grades and/or are struggling. Caroline county has been in school 4 days a week since September for elementary kids and is thriving to the point they're opening 4 days for all schools and they only have one elementary, middle high school so they have many kids on one school and have done an amazing job. So many counties can open schools and do the job correctly but for some reason AA has a hard time with this. It's insane how they're failing our kids.

Rebecca Dressel

10. Please don't change the schedule. Every time it happens it is emotionally draining and exhausting on everyone involved. I am also concerned about teachers being able to social distance in the primary grades. It has been impossible to stay 6 feet away from the younger students that already are in the building. Focus should be put on bringing back the many students that are struggling and still not in the building. Ask any admin or teacher and they will be able to easily identify who is home who shouldn't be. Resources need to be focused on title 1 schools where many families have not informed the school of their decisions for hybrid learning.

Jennifer Fishback
Millersville

11. I am appealing to you as both a parent and as a mental health professional that works with kids in our school system that we do not implement any schedule changing for the majority of the students. My child, for the first time since we went hybrid on Th/F, had a good week. It has taken 4 weeks to adjust and I fear adding more days would add another adjustment. We have had many tears and battles to get where we are and I would hate for her to HATE school as a result of all of this. I'm additionally concerned about the spacing issue on busses and during eating times (breakfast and lunch) for kids as the 3 ft designation was just for fully masked time. With so many letters being sent of a child having had CLS for 72 hours but yet being sent to school still we will now have direct contacts at 3 feet. So while we have not seen spread yet within a school if we decreased distance and we have kids eating openly and unmasked (obviously) and parents are still sending kids in with CLS we are going to have spread. Let's finish strong and add in those that can be added on a waitlist. Add to the max for the 6 ft designation for each cohort and let them stay 2 days a week to maximize the number of students that will be afforded the opportunity to attend in a hybrid manner.

Rebecca Wrotny
Crofton

12. Dear Dr. Arlotto and Board Members,

I implore you to not make any more changes this academic year. One of the main arguments that people have made for schools offering Hybrid for students is the mental health of our children. If we as a district are truly concerned with the mental health of students, we would finish the year with much-needed consistency by remaining with the current Hybrid instruction and focusing on plans for the Fall.

I know you have been receiving many emails from parents demanding four or five days of in-person instruction this year, but while making yet another big change like this may be beneficial to SOME students, it simply is not what is best for the majority of our students. Please note that the majority of AACPS students are still engaged in virtual learning, by their choosing.

Before you consider making any more big changes, please consider the following questions:

-If students are only 3 feet apart in classrooms, will all students within 6 feet of a COVID-positive case need to quarantine?

-Since high schools do not cohort, is it really safe for them to switch to only 3 feet of distancing?

-How will lunches be coordinated to allow for 6 feet if classroom instruction is switched to 3 feet?

-Why is 3 feet of distance only considered "safe" within classrooms, but nowhere else? How safe is that really?

Thank you,
Michelle Choulis
Broadneck Feeder

13. I am the mother of Zachary F. Wilson who attends 3rd grade at Fort Smallwood Elementary school in Pasadena. Fort Smallwood Elementary is such a wonderful community school with amazing teachers and administration. I am in need of help.

I am writing because Zachary is really struggling in the virtual learning environment. He has a 504 plan in place and a formal diagnosis of anxiety. He has returned to in-person school 2 days per week. The other 2 days are virtual and he is really struggling. His teacher, Mrs. Colleen Sullivan, has been phenomenal in communicating with me and trying different strategies. The days he is in-person, he does so well staying engaged, doing his assigned work and his emotional well-being is great. I also have Zachary in behavioral therapy with Kennedy Krieger. We have enlisted the help of his providers there as well on strategies to help on the 2 days of virtually learning. During my meeting with Kennedy Krieger this week, it was strongly recommended to advocate to have Zachary return 4 days per week in person.

I understand the current pandemic and the challenges it presents. I work for Johns Hopkins and I am a cancer patient. I have stage 3 aggressive form of breast cancer and in the middle of the pandemic went through chemo, surgery and radiation, with continuing chemo treatments every 3 weeks. If anyone is cautious and understands the severity of Covid, I do! However, my child's education is VERY important to me and these early years lay the foundation for future success....

Beth Wilson
Pasadena

14. Good evening. I am writing in regard to the recent CDC guidelines that have changed once again, what seems to be in a favorable way in getting more kids back in the classroom with the 6ft rule changing to accepting 3 feet in certain scenarios. I understand that the schools are working to adapt to the existing scenario and making that safe and effective. Next phase I assume is bringing more students back in the existing scenario. My request today is working hard to implement that 3 feet is acceptable and more students can come back this school year. The fact is ALOT of families are choosing to stay home. So why not 1) let the students that have returned go 4 days minimum since the classes are so small anyway. And 2) work on the new 3 ft guidelines and let more students return. Parents are screaming no more change. I am screaming MORE CHANGE until my kids are back 5 days full days where they should be. It is beyond frustrating knowing my kids are in their classes with less than 5 kids. Combine that and let the M/T and Thu/Fri group combine and go all week. Then work to make the 3 ft rule and bring more students back. It can be done if you work on this EVERY SINGLE DAY!! This should be the only thing the BOE should be working on. Please adopt the new 3 ft rule, come up with a safe and effective plan and make this your only priority....

Jill Sohan
Edgewater

15. We cannot use logistics as an excuse not to service more students for more days in our buildings using the CDC revised guidelines. AACPS must work out the logistics to help our students who are failing at twice the pre-pandemic rate. When all teachers have been given the chance to get the vaccine and 3-foot is guided by the CDC, we must make the in-person choice available to more students for more days. As for lunch, eat in shifts and use every available space. It takes kids at most 20 minutes to eat, and these few minutes should not stop AACPS from utilizing the. Busing? We are all aware that buses have plenty of room right now, sometimes busing only one to ten students. We have test kits in every school to further contact tracing. And finally, if all teachers are vaccinated and their children are school age, the childcare accommodation should be lifted. We must stop making excuses about logistics. Other states placed in-person education as a priority at the beginning of the year. Maryland and AACPS did not. The failure numbers need to be viewed not as a failure of parents to adequately help their children navigate the virtual environment. They also cannot be viewed as a failure of teachers because there's only so much you can do through a screen. The absence of an in-person option is to blame, and AACPS must bring more students back for more days and adopt the 3-foot guidance.

Elizabeth Fine
Gambrills

16. Mr. Arlotto

Thank you and teachers for all the hard work this past year. My 1st graders have thoroughly enjoyed the 2 days a week! So much so that on days when their are virtual learning they cry because they want to go to school. The energy and passion for the classroom is something we have missed this past year. Not only are they gaining the personal touch of the teacher, they are regaining a chance at socially interacting with peers their own age.

I support using the CDC recommended distancing of three feet instead of six feet. Please stop using

logistics (lunch and busing) as excuses. We cannot let a simple 15-20 minutes of eating be a roadblock to returning more students for more days especially since many other states have returned to school with limited interruption.

A. Buses solution- open the windows for ventilation. The children already wear masks while on the bus, so they can continue to do so.

B. Lunch solution-

1. Half the class in the classroom, while the other half is in the cafeteria.

2. Open the gymnasium as a another "cafeteria". Put tables in there so that the kids can be more spread out.

The number of elementary school students failing math went from 445 across county schools for the second marking term in 2019-2020 to 1,131 in 2020-2021, a 154% increase. For English, 509 students were failing in 2019-2020 and this year 1,506 students are failing, nearly three times as many. The change for middle and high school students was not as severe, but still showed at least a 29% increase in the number of students with failing grades across subjects....

Mark Trohanowsky
Pasadena

17. I'm writing to thank those that have made it possible for my 6 year old son and the hundreds of other students in this county to attend school twice a week. He had severe learning obstacles with distance learning when schools shut down over a year ago. He said almost daily how much he "hates" school. Though it's only been a few weeks of in person hybrid learning he is excited to go to school those days, and comes home with the biggest smile on his face along with positive stories from the day. This is leaps and bounds for his mental health.

I fully support the new CDC recommended distancing of 3 feet spacing. With each school being so unique, I'm confident that the leadership of each school will find ways to make it possible to space children out by 6 feet during lunch. We should not have to reinvent the wheel. We can see what other large counties' solutions are around the country that have kids fully in school 5 days a week. If it is too much to figure out, would it be so difficult to have current hybrid elementary kids at the least move to 5 days a week, with the other half of Wednesdays serving as a cleanup afternoon?

I know about the counties failing rates and they are embarrassing and unacceptable.

Please be a part of the solution and trust the health experts put there. Our kids futures depend on not just us parents, but you as well.

Kathryn Woodruff
Annapolis

18. Hello and thank you for taking the time to read my message. I am writing to ask to not change the status of schools again this year. There are several reasons why we should not change the status again.

The first reason is that students need consistency and have already had to adapt to several changes and

new routines as the school system has changed time and again. It would be better to focus our attention on starting next school year and developing any contingencies that may be needed when we start next school year.

The second reason is that both teachers and parents need to be able to plan their schedules and with so much uncertainty remaining in this school year, that is almost impossible because who knows what the next change will be with, so few months left of school.

The third reason is the CDC recommends three feet except when eating and I do not see how more students in the buildings will allow that to occur. Also, more students will be required to quarantine for positive cases since more students will be considered in proximity to any students who test positive.

As of today, 3/28/21, Anne Arundel County is in high transmission which (according to the CDC recommendations) means middle and high schools would still need the six-foot rule since the hybrid plan does not follow the definition of cohort as established by the CDC.

Please consider not making any further changes to this school year.

Seth Wolak
Annapolis

19. The new CDC guidelines should have little to no effect on our hybrid plan. 3 feet only applies when students are masked. Elementary students spend two meals a day in the classroom and during that time are unmasked. Many schools' cafeterias are filled with furniture and supplies that did not fit in classrooms when desks were spread apart. Suggestions like eating in the hallway (potentially the dirtiest location in the building and outside (where most schools do not have seating, shade or space) are sad attempts at problem solving, by BOE members that have not taught. These guidelines still focus on adults keeping 6 ft away. This is already a challenge with 10-12 students in a room, we cannot increase those numbers. Let our students settle into a routine and end our year on a good note!

Kassie Haney
Pasadena

20. This Board claims to "follow the science" which means now it is time to fully re-open our schools. Enough with hybrid, enough with giving in to fear. This Board is not trailblazing. Schools in Maryland and across the nation have already figured it out. Yet the press release for this meeting offers a glimpse into the "can't" attitude of AACPS. Reasons are already listed as to why schools can't open further. ENOUGH ALREADY!

Since you all can't seem to find solutions I'll offer some. Have kids eat in their classrooms in two shifts. Every other student eats at one time while the student on either side remains masked and doing their engage time then switch. Boom, problem solved, 6 feet of distance between kids while unmasked and eating. Moving on to buses... buses are a luxury. Many would drive their kids to school if it meant their kids could attend. But honestly how can an airplane be full with random masked passengers sitting side by side but a school bus with a very known ridership be subjected to these arbitrary guidelines? It makes no sense and there is certainly no science supporting it. You have an alphabet soup of committees and secret committees advising those committees but what you won't seem to allow is for parents to make

their own choice for their students.

There is still time to salvage some of this school year. Kids want and need to be in school and now there really isn't a reason to remain in hybrid format....

Cheryl Wolf
Severna Park

21. Given the new guidelines from the CDC, our hope is that you will allow elementary students to return 4 days a week as soon as possible. Many buses are running near empty and many schools only have cohorts attending on one set of days. Please... in person learning the past few weeks has been such a welcome change and it is like a light has turned back on in our daughter's life. Please, we implore you to expand in person instruction to 4 days a week.

Nicole Morella
Arnold

22. My two middle schoolers officially went back to school March 11 and 25. I immediately noticed the positive changes in their academic, mental and physical well-being. Both communicated their disappointment to return to virtual. I did not recognize the signs of depression in my own children. However, for those two days, their loneliness, lack of motivation, lethargy, and apathy that have been building for the past year disappeared. Two days is better than none, but it is too little, too late. They both need to be in school around teachers, administrators, and peers a full five days. The CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics and WHO are in agreement 3' social distancing is the standard. Lack of planning on part of AACPS is the only thing keeping our kids out of school. Schools can work around the lunch issue by using all spaces, eating outside, purchasing tents, staggering schedules... just like other schools across the nation have been doing for the whole school year. As of March 17 only California has a smaller percentage of kids returning to school than Maryland. Private schools and other school districts in Maryland including Harford County and Carroll County are in school four+ days a week. The second term grading rates presented by MDSE show that you are failing our children by not making in-person education a priority. Teachers have been vaccinated. Parents who are fighting the return can keep their children at home. Enough excuses.

Abby Glenn
Davidsonville

23. I have two children in elementary School who are currently in the two days a week hybrid. They both have suffered a lot this past year with the virtual learning. Their education, their socialization, and their mental health have all been negatively impacted.

Please stand up for these children and do what science says is best for them and get them back in school full time. Every day counts!

Andrea Kromer
Annapolis

24. I wanted to express how much my kids are thriving with the two days they are allowed back into schools. I cannot overstate the impact that in-person learning has on kids in this community and now the CDC has reduced the required distance to 3 feet. Our focus must now turn to maximizing the

number of kids in schools and the number of days each child can attend in-person learning. If I drive east, the state of Delaware has 60% of their students back to in-person learning. If I head west, VA has 51% of their students back in-person. If I go a little farther west, West VA has 98% of their students back. In case you are curious, we are third to LAST at 17.5%, which is embarrassing. It makes you ask, are our students that much more contagious than VA, WV or DE? Are the immune systems of our fully vaccinated teacher more at risk? Of course not, the only difference is the desire to do what is right and stop giving in to a teacher's union that is fighting the return to school every step of the way. Our kids are being penalized because they do not live an hour west or east in a state that has decided to prioritize kids and science over fear. It is time for the BOE to utilize CDC guidance, put the welfare of our kids first, and get them back to full time in-person learning!

Matt Fine
Crofton

25. Board of Ed:

I am writing to express my support for increasing to 4 days per week of in-person learning before the end of this school year, given the new CDC social distancing guidance of three feet. My son has benefitted from simply going to the building for two days. Our kids need to have the choice to return to a more normal learning environment. I support using the CDC recommended distancing and ask you to stop using logistics (lunch and busing) as excuses. So many other school districts in the US have figured out how to have kids in school safely full-time while recent reports show Maryland kids failing math and English at unprecedented rates. We need to play catch up now when our students are lagging behind the rest of the country. I fully support adding students and additional hybrid days to the schedule. Our children deserve it!

Susan Nester
Crofton

26. My daughter is a sophomore at Crofton High School. She just returned to school last week with her Th/Fri cohort. After just two days of attending in person, her mood was brighter and happier than I have seen in a very long time. It's like a huge weight has been lifted from her shoulders. Seeing her friends, meeting her teachers, and simply being around other humans for her school day has made all the difference. My daughter has always been a very motivated and dedicated student. This past year, her positivity about school has drastically declined, which has made virtual learning and being isolated in her room day in and day out for instruction very challenging. She absolutely LOVED being in school last week and wants to be there all five days. As a parent who supports a full-time return, I am still aware and accept the schools will not be free of risk. However, I wholeheartedly believe the risk of continuing to keep our children out of the classroom is far greater. You know the facts and are very well aware of the impact this has had. That said, I fully support AACPS adapting the new three feet guidance from the CDC and shifting to AT LEAST four days/week ASAP. The roadblocks (vaccines, logistics, transportation, etc.) will never fully cease, so we can no longer use them as an excuse. It's time to think outside the box and bring our children back to school.

Heather Sanders
Crofton

27. Please follow the most recent CDC guidance and allow students to sit three feet apart. Between the percentage of students who wish to remain virtual and utilizing each building's unique space, students can return in-person for 4-5 days per week. Please use public school models that have been functioning across the country for guidance. My teenagers, similar to many others, need peer interaction in a learning environment beyond two days per week. We are at the point where it is safe. COVID prevention and treatment have grown drastically; now it is time to focus on our children.

Lindsey Dryer
Severna Park

28. Thank you for voting for Hybrid. I can't tell you how much my children are benefitting from being in a classroom and learning in person. They are so happy!

Now that MD has adopted the new 3' distancing guidance from the CDC, the default should be for ALL GRADE LEVELS to return to 4, hopefully 5, days per week, providing the much needed consistency and routines for our students once again. Please stop using logistics (lunch and busing) as a reason to not open fully. Other counties in MD are doing it and other states have been open all year.

Remote learning is a poor substitute for in-class teaching and the recent study released by MSDE proved this by stating staggering numbers regarding the percentage of learning loss compared to last year. In AA County, 3,390 high school students had a failing grade in the second quarter for English and 3,473 students in Math, equating to 14% of our high school students failing Math and English. Given that teachers have been told to be more "compassionate" in their grading, this data should then be even more alarming. This is only the beginning. We will continue to see the negative effects of learning loss for years to come.

MD has failed its children long enough. Teachers have been vaccinated. AACPS' inability to get our kids back to full, in person learning is just unmatched. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! Please vote to put our students back into the classrooms full time, now.

Kim Pratta
Edgewater

29. I want to thank AACPS for moving to a hybrid model and allowing my 6th grader back into the classroom for 2 days a week. There has been a noticeable impact to both his mental health and his academic performance in just the first two weeks. I can only imagine how 4 or 5 days would positively affect him. Given the CDC's new guidance, it seems that there are few less logistical barriers to getting more kids back in the classroom full time. I urge you to not reinvent the wheel here: many, many other public schools have been back in school full time since the start of this school year. Look to how they have successfully done this. Ask teachers, principals and parents for creative solutions to logistical issues with unmasked lunch. It can be done. Our children have proven over the last year that they can be flexible and adaptable, so let them show their adaptability with this. We owe this to our children.

Jessica Mentasti
Crofton

30. My kindergartener came home from school last week and could not stop talking about how he got to play soccer at recess time with his friends (just the kids in his class). He was beaming ear to ear as he chatted about what felt like every detail of recess. This right here made me tear up with pure joy because this is the joy he has been missing for the past year! This is the happiness he should be feeling every single week day, Monday - Friday, as he attends school. There should not even be a hybrid option going on because kids belong with other kids in school. As he sits at home Wednesday - Friday doing school on the computer, he struggles behaviorally because he is longing to be back in the classroom. He is thriving in the classroom, please add days to in person instruction so that he can continue to flourish. Seeing my son as happy as he is on his in person days is what I should be seeing Monday - Friday every day of the week. I implore you to push this and get our kids back in the building full time.

Amy Willey
Pasadena

31. I am writing to express my concern about the new CDC guidelines regarding reducing classroom distancing to three feet. According to Up-to-Date, spread of the coronavirus continues to happen within 6 feet, as opposed to 3 feet. This is why the staff are still supposed to be 6 feet away from their students according to the CDC guidelines. As I understand it, there is some evidence, according to the CDC, that children do not spread the coronavirus as readily as adults, perhaps because they simply do not contract the virus as readily as adults. In the interest of returning students to the classroom, this recommendation was made.

My children are high schoolers and one is technically an adult. They are hybrid learners at Arundel High School, one in 9th and one in 12th grade. I was alarmed when I learned that staff and students are only to quarantine if they are determined to be close contacts of an infected individual. This requires that individual to not only be honest regarding who they may have been close to, but to remember. This was the concern of my 9th grader, as she expressed it would be difficult for her to recall her close contacts, which should technically go back two weeks from the positive test. The number of close contacts will of course increase if students are placed 3 feet apart in the classroom. At a time when numbers are rising in Anne Arundel County, this change should be off the table.

Lee Ann Walker
Odenton

32. I just wanted to say thank you for all that you have done to manage through this challenging year. The decisions you've made have impacted and affected the lives of thousands of children. I know my children have been significantly impacted academically this year.

Unfortunately, I have been completely blindsided by the regression of my second grader. She was identified immediately by the school in person learning and tested by the reading specialist because of the significant delay that was noticeable. Unfortunately, she tested at end of Kindergarten reading level and has started Wilson intervention immediately. Two years behind!!! My sweet, adorable, seven-year-old daughter can not pay attention to virtual learning. I ask her to pay attention, and tears stream down her cheeks as she cries, "I'm trying mommy, but it's just too hard!"

I am hoping and praying that with the new CDC guidance and letter from the state you can immediately allow these young children back in the classroom full time. The youngest of children have been negatively impacted by virtual learning. It is truly not sustainable for some families. Teachers have been

vaccinated and the youngest of children have the lowest risk profile for disease. What are we worried about? What are we waiting for? I have offered several suggestions for meal time logistics and bus routes to local BOE members. Please do whatever it takes to get them back. The little ones are suffering and can't fall any farther behind.

Jennifer Grey
Davidsonville

33. I am a mother of 5. (2 kids graduated from South River)

My junior at South River: went back last week begrudgingly because he has come to enjoy doing school from his bedroom. However after I forced him back- he came home saying how much better he understood math and digital electronics by being in person and was excited. Fortunately he had all 8 of his teachers in person unlike his peers whom he said have to sit in cafeteria and be babysat by other staff while teachers are at home teaching virtual:

My 8th grader whom by the way was an A/B student last year has been struggling with online. He will be going back in person after a Easter and we are thankful. I am even more thankful we have the means to pull him out of public school for next year and send him to Spalding because I have lost confidence in this county school system. By the way- what about the kids whose family doesn't have means to do this— the gap you all worry about so much is only going to become widened. Totally unfair!

And lastly- my 3rd grader I pulled out for this year to homeschool.

Solution? Do what the other schools are doing and get these kids back 5 days! Figure it out! Where I work, (AAMC)if we didn't feel safe to do our jobs we were had to resign and find something else to do. Your actions show that these kids are NOT the priority. Sadly we will all pay for this down the road in one way or another.

Jodi Doney
Riva

34. I am the parent of a hybrid first grader at Central Elementary. Please consider keeping just 2 days of school for students this year. It has been a year full of schedule changes and uncertainty. My son loves being in school, but I'm not sure we can take another change this year. I do not feel comfortable sending him if the distance is reduced to 3 feet. How will students eat unmasked? How will bus transportation work? It is my understanding that the recommendations in those areas have not changed. How will close contacts be defined? Will there be a greater chance of schedules being affected by students/groups having to be quarantined when there is a close contact? Please let our students finish the year under the current plan. They need some consistency in this year that has been so stressful and full of change for them. Thank you for your time!

Amy Speed
Edgewater

35. I can't begin to express the change in my child in the last month with him going back to in person school. Every week, he so looks forward to going to school on Thursday and Friday. At the end of the day

when I pick him up on Friday afternoon, he says, "I can't wait until next Thursday"! Typically, most kids wouldn't talk much about their day, but because they have been out for a year, he talks nonstop. About his teacher, friends, playing on the blacktop- when you ask him if he wants to be home or at school, he says "at school" every time. He doesn't even complain about what they don't have access to. We NEED you all to do what is BEST for these children. Not politics, not unions. You were voted in to be an advocate for them. THEY WANT TO BE IN SCHOOL. Others may want the choice to stay out but for those who want in, we need to get them in full time this spring. It also will help prepare for next year, when they should all be in full time. PLEASE REMEMBER, Schools all over the country have been in full time since the fall. You can't explain that away. PLEASE advocate for these kids!! Thank you for getting them back at least 2 days, let's keep pushing!

Jennifer Morrison
Pasadena

36. It is time to increase the days of in person learning for those who chose hybrid to 4 days per week with a set plan in place to return all children to in person 5 day traditional learning this fall. My son and daughter have returned this past week and just those 2 days have caused such a change in their demeanor and attitudes toward learning and general well being! My son was smiling when I asked him how his day was. He is 12 and still thinks school is "boring" but was not angry, frustrated or crying which is what he has spiraled downwards to during virtual learning the past year. It breaks my heart because this was a straight A student who once loved his classes, teachers and school (and this is at a middle school that other children could not wait to be done with). He also mentioned how happy he was to see some of his teachers in passing from last year. THIS is what you do not get in virtual learning. The personal interaction while learning is a CRUCIAL piece to the puzzle.

Neither of my children have full cohorts or buses. In one class my son is the only student. My high school daughter says there is an average of 5-6 on each of hers. With the new updated CDC recommendations there is no reason our kids can't go 4 days per week. I believe if anything this past year has shown how adaptable and tolerable to CHANGE our kids out....

Michele Rowley
Pasadena

37. It is the purpose and responsibility of the BOE to provide an in person education. Any variation from that should be the exception, not the rule. Our current stats of failing students reflect WHY. I signed my high school and middle school sons up for hybrid because they need that in person education. Since returning their biggest feedback is that 2 days is not enough. They need more time in front of their teachers, more consistency, more time with their peers. They tell me that 2 days feels like they are an after thought. That their needs must not be important. Until you offer more days to those who chose hybrid, you are failing to provide them the quality education the Maryland Constitution guarantees. People had a choice to choose in person or not. Choices have consequences. Do not now harm those who chose to go back in person because they need it - to benefit those who chose the alternative delivery method - virtual. The in person education is the what they BOE has a legal responsibility to provide. Nothing more. Nothing less. It's time to provide it- 4 days a week, for all ages. Make it as safe as possible, with students and families accepting the innate risk that is involved in our current

environment. You can not negate all risk. That is not your job. Your job is to provide in person education - 4 days a week now, and 5 days a week in the fall.

Shannon Leadbetter
Crofton

38. Open schools fully now. The CDC recommends it, parents want it, students need it, and it is the primary job that the school board ought to be concerned about. Just do it!

Eileen McFarren
Severna Park

39. I am writing to advocate that all in person learning be expanded to five days a week. Although my children have only had the opportunity to attend one week of in person classes, because they are in the 7th and 10th grade, I have already seen just how much the time spent with their teachers and peers have meant to them. Schools all over the country have found a way to make five days a week possible and it is just beyond my comprehension that AACPS is so far behind. How long will we allow our students to suffer because of our leadership's inability to problem solve. We must make our students the priority again. It's time we start following the science and experts that are telling us just how much our students are suffering with online learning.

Denise Iversen
Gambrills

40. Relaxed CDC distancing guidelines and the vaccination of school staff are both clear indicators that schools can and should return to a normal in person schedule. Children and families are sharing stories of the success and joy kids are experiencing with a return to in person learning. But, AACPS can do BETTER ! Our children and families need to return to a 4-5 day in person schedule. Failure rates in Math and English point to the importance of getting students back to the classroom. The burden of teachers teaching online and virtual simultaneously is impractical. Please develop a reasonable plan to return students to in person learning 4-5 days per week as most school systems across the nation have been able to accomplish. Please do not let the will of TAAAC continue to dictate the future of our students and families. Their agenda is not in line with the community, and is frankly unreasonable, since teachers have been vaccinated. My husband and I are both essential workers who are last on the vaccination priority list, yet we work everyday. The greater good of the community must be the priority when considering this issue, rather than an entirely political agenda being pushed by The teacher's union.

Holly Basta
Pasadena

41. My son attended George Fox until December 2, 2021. His grades were plummeting, he had a 504 plan with 8 accommodations for 2 disabilities and 2 of the accommodations were being met on a routine basis. The county failed my son and did not hold up their commitment to providing a quality education for him. As a result, his passion for math and desire to be in school diminished each day. I watched as my son gradually became a child that lost his spark. He is now homeschooled with parents who work full time. We are doing the best we can, but he is a 13-year-old boy who is learning at home not with his peers in school.

Many families chose to withdraw from AACPS because the education was not suitable for their child when once upon a time it was very desirable. I want my son back in school and he needs to be back but for him, it must be 4 days a week when he can learn and be observed as a learner which happens best when in person.

Reopen schools 4 days a week. Allow teachers to teach in person and truly meet the needs of their students. Allow a choice for families whose children NEED to be school and for those who choose to be virtual, set them up with a virtual only teacher. We will not stop advocating for our kids.

Chris Farrelly
Pasadena

42. My daughter is a 10th grader at Northeast. She started last week and was beyond happy to attend school in person. During each break she texted me an update and was so excited to share her experience. My heart was full each time she sent me a play by play of her day. When she got home, she continued to share how positive her day was and how learning in person is what she has been missing since school started. She asked if she could sign up for the Th/F group because it was that good and wants to go more days.

AACPS needs to fully realize the incredibly positive impact that in person school has on our students and that 2 days IS NOT enough. It was a sufficient way to start but it's not an efficient way to end. The data released regarding student performance proves that AACPS is providing a less than adequate education and our student's success is the product reports pointing to our county's failure to allow them to thrive. Teachers are trying so hard and "doing the best they can" and yet the question remains, Why are you continuing to force them to try so hard to learn a new way when they can be back into the classroom and excel in their ability? Our teachers deserve more respect for their profession.

Jennifer Farrelly
Pasadena

43. Science is ever changing and we must be adaptable. On March 19, 2021 the CDC updated their guideline for 3 feet of social distancing in schools. On March 22, 2021 MSDE gave their second quarter numbers, showing how poorly most of our students are doing in the virtual environment. All of this together shows the strong need to offer as much in person education we can for the remainder of this school year, with nothing less than 5 days in the Fall. "Every problem has a solution. You just have to be creative enough to find it." Travis Kalanick

Our educators are amazing- let them use their intelligence and creativity. We must allow our children the opportunity to THRIVE with FIVE.

Loubna Presley
Odenton

44. I'm a Junior at Arundel High School. I started hybrid last week and can't tell you how much I enjoyed coming back to school Thursday and Friday. It allowed me to be much more productive than sitting at home being distracted. I was able to talk to my teachers face to face and that made such a difference with classes I've been struggling in. I always turn on my camera for virtual but no one else does and it felt great to FINALLY see people - see people I haven't in over a year. Talk to them, work on homework and classwork together. Just the small things that come together create big things in order to re-create a sense of normality in my life.

Please let us go back to our school four days a week. Let us and our principals find a solution for lunch - there are plenty of places in our schools where all of us can eat safely. I'll be 18 years old a couple of weeks after I start my senior year in the fall. Since the pandemic, I've started working in a restaurant and have even been promoted to shift lead. I lead other people at work - I know me and my friends are able to make this work, so that we can get back to school more days this year.

School finally seemed real again last week. Thank you for making that happen. It was the best week.

Nate O'Toole
Odenton
Arundel High School