

# Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #183

I would like to provide: \*

Written Public Comments

Topic \*

Indoctrination of School Age Children

Full Name \*

Thomas Savino

What is your relationship to ACPS? \*

Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

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Please find below a letter which I recently sent to the Alexandria City Public School Superintendent Dr. Gregory Hutchings. I think it should be self-explanatory.

Dear Dr. Hutchings,

I am writing today because I expect my daughter to receive an education at a public school rather than an indoctrination. That, however, is exactly what I fear is happening. My daughter is nine and my son is soon to be seven and they both attend Lyles-Crouch. I recently heard my daughter being lectured on equality vs equity with a reasonable and simple cartoon example of three kids at a baseball game. One was tall, one medium height and one short in relation to the fence over which they all wished to see the ongoing baseball game. I'm sure you've seen it.

That seems an appropriate way to introduce the concept. I would expect her to be introduced to two competing "goods" in such a way as to leave her with a question and a questioning state of mind. This is education. This is not, however, what I heard. Did you know that equality is unfair? Did you know that equity is only fair? Did you know that white people don't share fairly with black people? Really? No facts. Just bald statements. The cartoon was then shown with the happy kids all sharing crates so they could see the game. Nice. Then the "reality in America today" was revealed to the class. One child stood on most of the crates, another fairly straining to barely see the game and the third literally buried in the ground with no hope. This is the reality of America they were told. I could not believe my ears. This is factually and morally incorrect at best and at the very least open to debate. What it is not is plain fact stated to young impressionable minds eager to learn. BLM was cited subtly as an example of the third visually disadvantaged child. I find this almost incomprehensible. What would you say if some school system (and I wish to stress that it is the system I am discussing here and not any individual educator whose actions are driven by school policy and priorities) taught your child something that you found immoral. What

if you had trusted this system and found that they were openly violating their fiduciary duty?

These are instructional priorities and statements that reflect a political agenda and one obsessed with equity on one dimension. At first, I thought this was an isolated incident, but then a few days later I heard that there is a “special group” that meets a few times a week, training children to become “agents for change” in the manner of the equality vs equity discussion. Are you serious I thought? This is open and systematic indoctrination. It’s also an open breach of the fiduciary duty the school system owes to parents.

So I looked at the ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN which states:

- Going forward, racial equity will be at the center of every decision that the school division will make.
- Racial Equity: The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Specifically, when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.
- Equity will be at the center of every decision that the school division will make.

At that point I knew that this was systemic, planned and political. In terms of substance, you know that equality is. It’s a word with some degree of specificity. It has substance and objective meaning. It has a meaning across society and to people in general in its application. Do you know what equity means? Not the word, itself but its application? I’ll tell you. It means whatever in the world you happen to think it means. You and I as individuals may disagree on the merits of a particular outcome in terms equality, but we would start with a mutual understanding of the requirements of the term. Not so with equity. What’s fair? On what level? It’s anybody’s guess, but I it appears that the Alexandria school system seems to have worked that out: equal outcomes regardless of external factors. That is impressive. It is also impossible and so vague as to involve so many variants that it is literally a call for unlimited scope in its attempted accomplishment. In other words, it’s a blank check with no realistic standards attached to it. It is also so morally laden that it belongs more in a church than a public school. I do not want my child to have the received morals of a system that can’t even operate

within reasonable and generally accepted standards. In other words, how dare this system presume to morally and politically indoctrinate children in general and my child in particular.

I am writing today because I want is two things: I want my child to receive an unbiased, apolitical education with her morals not bent to the will of some system and for the Alexandria school system to acknowledge whether or not it intends this for my child and, in fact, all children. It seems obvious to me that teachers and the school system have a fiduciary duty to the parents of their charges NOT to indoctrinate their children into political values that the parents do not share. And doing this secretly, behind the backs of parents is the worst kind of breach. I only know about this because I happened to be working next to my daughter and heard it myself due to the coronavirus shut-down.

I took several days composing this letter because I did not wish to offend. Then I realized that the very nature of my requests must be offensive to a system that takes such open liberties with its prerogatives. I'm angry and I believe many other parents will be as well when they discover this. Let me say this: I am not recommending we teach a Whig history of the United States or a bowdlerized version of American society nor would I if I could. In other words, I want a challenging curriculum that leaves children with tools for critical thinking on all topics including moral ones. What I do not want are answers to highly problematic issues presented in settled terms and I would not do that to the children of other parents were their children in my charge even though I, like most adults, have strong opinions on such matters. I am disappointed with this aspect of the Alexandria school system and I think it has no place in a public school. I intend to pursue this matter up your chain of command and to my political representatives. I hope I can count on your support as what I am requesting is both my right as a parent and integral to your charter as a public official and an educator.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Savino