

DATE: January 5, 2021
TO: FCPS Superintendent Brabrand and School Board Members:
FROM: Pamela Kondé
RE: FCPS Return to School 2021

Happy New Year! I have been thinking of you as you go into yet another very busy and challenging month of meetings and decision-making.

I have reviewed the detailed presentation uploaded on Board Docs. It is clear that senior staff have done a lot of diligent work, likely over winter break. As you move forward on Return to School decision-making and oversight, I would suggest that you focus your discussions around the following issues and adopt these recommendations:

I. EFFECTIVE MITIGATION STRATEGIES:

To assure effective mitigation strategies, FCPS should conduct a project management and accountability approach:

- Regarding reporting of Covid-19 school transmission, FCPS should provide real data, *per school* and type of staff position (administrator, classroom teacher, support staff working with students, office staff, custodial, other, etc.) regarding any school transmission and any other contact tracing information. FCPS should report within ONE WEEK of school transmission. This should include reported information of exactly where the breakdown occurred and how that has been addressed. This data should be clearly separated from community spread that impacts a school staff member but does NOT spread through the school.
- All staff should have PPE as needed.
- Staff should have an anonymous way to voice concerns.
- FCPS should ensure that staff, students, and community members are actively and methodically engaged in this process, and that “Stop the Spread” rules are enforced consistently. Mitigation is only as effective as the people involved.

II. STAFFING:

Staffing safely is a top priority:

- ADA Accommodations: FCPS should finalize the last of the ADA Accommodation forms submitted this month. 200 forms can be reviewed by HR and school administrators ASAP.
- Additional Staff Needs: FCPS must evaluate and report on what else it needs to do to recruit and hire enough classroom monitors. Expedite the process? Pay more? Include them as essential workers for vaccination status? Offer benefits? If so, what resources does it need from County, State, or FCPS reserves? Work more closely with community volunteers?
- Support Staff: FCPS must provide that report noted previously of how it planned to redistribute the support staff that have been getting paid, but aren't really needed if school buildings are not open. What are the staff numbers, costs, and status? Have all support staff members been reallocated and trained

for their alternate roles? If not, why not, and how can that be more effective regarding the challenges noted above?

- Stakeholder Engagement: It is critical that administrators and teachers are a meaningful component of decision-making as FCPS moves forward. FCPS must address when else they need to *be safe* and to *feel safe*?

III. FACILITIES:

- Dr. Brabrand mentioned that a “handful” of schools still have some space challenges. FCPS should provide a complete report, *by school*, of each school’s ability to keep students and staff socially distant. In the August or Sept 2020 presentation, FCPS included an analysis of air filtration and had created a report per school. It was my understanding that FCPS conducted measurements of every classroom at that time too. FCPS should produce a public report that includes a listing of which schools have Covid-related space challenges, and how it plans to resolve those issues. As this only impacts a *handful* of schools, this list should already be available and should be presented this week (perhaps even today).

IV. TIMELINE:

- FCPS leadership needs to continue planning as if schools will be opened, or they won’t be ready when Covid-19 numbers do drop.
- FCPS leadership and County leadership also need to lead a grassroots lobbying effort to urge Governor Northam to do whatever is necessary to bring Covid-19 case numbers down.
- FCPS leadership should have a vigorous and detailed conversation about the “Updated Approach,” which may allow individual FCPS schools to open. If other schools are unable to open, or open but must close, FCPS leadership should consider ways to equitably support the closed schools and their students. I have some constructive ideas here, including ways to include the community.

V. PROACTIVE COVID TESTING

- FCPS should require regular Covid-19 testing of all its staff that are in school buildings. It should be weekly or bi-weekly. This will help identify and find clusters before spread happens. It will also facilitate close coordination with FCHD.

VI. VACCINE

- Lobbying by FCPS leadership include ensuring that school staff as included in Phase 1b as essential workers. That should start late Jan-Feb, so by Feb 28, all school staff could be vaccinated.