

Dear PWCS & VA Department of Education,

Please consider my feedback on the new virtual learning system put into place this fall. I believe there is a PWCS Board Meeting tonight and I ask that this feedback be taken into consideration prior to and during that meeting.

1. Reality

I participated in multiple online meetings hosted by PWCS over the summer to demo and discuss CANVAS, the new elearning platform our kids would be utilizing this school year. In all those meetings they walked us through the platform, explained the modules and really sold the site as the one-stop-shop for learning. Watching and learning over the summer, I felt I needed to be positive but I was very concerned about my children (7&8 years old) being expected to work "online" all day, to understand the **new** content being delivered to them in an unnatural way (virtually) and to be expected to navigate their computers and a new elearning platform. Up until this year, my girls participated in one technology course per week. I will remind you, they have been in school up until now for 1.5 & 2.5 years. At their ages and with the amount of instruction they have received so far, they can open & start a computer, use a mouse and barely type.

Week one, my 3rd grader was expected to open Microsoft Powerpoint in an assignment, complete a task, then save and close her work. When did they teach her how to use powerpoint? Also, weren't we just supposed to be learning about CANVAS on week one? Wait, we are on week two, and I have a list of over 7 websites that my daughter is expected to use to complete assignments. SEVEN websites! That is 7 URLS, 7 LOGINS. I repeat; *"At their ages and with the amount of instruction they have received by their school to this point, they can open and start a computer, use a mouse and barely type.* Not only, are my children being asked to do too much, too fast, they are also expected to participate in ENCORE (PE, Music & Technology) and will be graded for that. As if they don't have enough to get done everyday. Also, why do they need to do that? PE is supposed to be about physical health, which includes mental health. Nothing about what is in place right now is contributing to the health and wellness of my children.

Let's add to this equation, my home includes two people with professional jobs that require us to work 40+ hours a week each. That work includes, proposals, campaigns, meetings, calls, etc. How and when do I have time to sit with my 2nd and 3rd grader to complete the 5-10 assignments they are being tasked to complete daily? Watch the recorded ZOOM meetings? Sure, that is up to 2 hours worth of content. Then, go to up to SEVEN websites to complete the assignments, but don't forget your logins. Who is doing the teaching? When is the teaching happening? All the while my 7&8 year olds are lost somewhere online.

Virtual learning for elementary aged students is not working. PWCS is tasked to deliver my children an education. PWCS is failing at that task. You aren't teaching, you are fire hosing us and leaving us to drown.

The options are; open schools OR be realistic about what can be done in the circumstances we are ALL in. All work should be in Canvas. If it isn't we should be able to complete it via a work packet (which alleviates the dependency on technology, see points above). The world got flipped upside down, it's more important than ever to be realistic and adjust your expectations.

2. Open Schools:

I understand that COVID-19 sprung on everyone without any notice. I empathize with the people that are afraid, as it is a very normal emotion to be afraid of something you are not familiar with and cannot control. That said, the state and the county had nearly 6 months to develop a plan and to create contingencies to those plans. Of all industries, the educational system was fortunate to get a break and assess. Unlike many other industries that were not given time, they had to either close indefinitely, or pivot, adapt and overcome quickly to survive.

I watched the 5+ hour board meeting when it was decided to make schools 100% virtual. I was incredibly disappointed in the hysteria of many parents and teachers who spoke at that meeting. Thousands of people (children, administrators, teachers) in the PWCS system get sick, go to work/school every year. Teachers who have taught a long time have some of the best immune systems due to this fact. Suddenly, this coronavirus sweeps the nation and teachers are all afraid for their lives? Some parents can't stomach their child having a fever or being home sick? I blame misinformation online, the media, and human being's innate fear of the unknown.

The educational system has always held its ground as a leader in logic. Where is that logic now? PWCS is not educating, it's making teachers do busy work so they can keep their jobs, over complicating the learning process (see above) and letting emotion & fear overshadow duty and responsibility. Enough already, open the schools October 30th.

3. Our school. I can't say enough nice things about my children's teachers, their school and the Administration there. They are incredible. Go Tigers!

Thank you for your time and for considering my feedback.

Cheers,

April Youngblut

Dear School Board,

I have spent many hours writing to the school board and my elected officials. NOT ONE person has responded to me. I sit at home helpless and feeling forgot by my officials and community. As a taxpayer and parent of 3 LCPS students I feel that I deserve some sort of response. I have many questions and concerns regarding LCPS not returning to in person instruction. I have watched the school board meeting and see no answers there as well. All I see is the board discussing issues like remaining mascots and holidays. How does that help the eighty something thousand kids doing distance learning? While distance learning may work for some, it does not for our family.

Loudoun County has remained in Phase 3 for over 2 months. Schools for lower grades may open under Phase 2. Why is there still no plan or metric for sending kids back to school? Where is this plan? When will we have answers? As a LCPS parent of 3 elementary school children I feel that I deserve a response or a plan for getting out kids back to school. My husband, children and I have completely rearranged our lives and continue waiting to hear how LCPS will proceed. We have juggled staying home, jobs, kids being depressed and frustrated, financial strain and uncertainty. We still have no idea what to expect from the school system. WHEN will LCPS return to in person instruction?

I have a first, third and fifth grader. The first grader cannot manage online schooling. She cannot read, type or tell time. She has IEP to receive speech services. For 10 mins of her speech time today the LCPS computer would not let us hear her teacher, so the time was wasted. She previous loved school and now hates it. The students cannot communicate to each other online. How is that going to help them feel part of a "community"?

My fifth grader is suffering from panic attacks and anxiety. She frequently cries herself to sleep. She has written you a letter as well that I will mail. The letter begs you to let the kids back in school.

My third grader has also suffered from depression due to lack of interaction with peers. His class has so many people in it most of the time he just plays in his room, as the teacher spends time with technical issues not able to be get to teaching. Kids are constantly getting kicked out the meets or unable to access teaching materials. Three kids who previous loved school now dread it. I am not sure how this continue all semester.

The first ten years of being a parent I spend actively limiting my children's screen time. Now, I am forced to have them in front of a computer all day. This much screen time is not good for young kids. There are many studies that reference how detrimental screen time is to young brains. Add to that social isolation, lack of peer to peer interaction and I the repercussions of this are yet to be see. Widespread distance learning is an experiment I don't want my kids to participate in. I looked into private school, but it is very expensive and most are full. We are not able to afford it. I had hoped living in Loudoun my kids would get a quality education. I do not see that happening over distance learning. Will only the families who can afford private school get their children educated? Why are kids all over the county allowed to sit in day care centers and schools, but not return to school? If the buildings are unfit to be in why are students there for day care? If the building are unfit, why are we using cares money to fix the situation?

My kid's classes have multiple teachers and aides just sitting on the calls. If all these people are on the payroll at LCPS, why cannot we figure a plan to use them and the space we have to give in person option to those who want it? I urge you to present a clear plan to LCPS parents for return to school. Elementary

kids should be given the option to do hybrid or in person learning. Return to school should be given the top priority by the school board.

This is the most important and widespread issue affecting every student in LCPS.

Sincerely

Sarah Pankenier

Please forward to Gov. Ralph Northam.

August 10, 2020

Dear Governor Ralph Northam, Virginia Education Secretary Atif Qarni, Virginia State Legislators, Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Scott Brabrand, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology Principal Ann Bonitatibus, FCPS School Board Members Laura Jane Cohen, Tamara Derenak Kaufax, Karen Keys-Gamarra, Abrar Omeish, Megan McLaughlin, Melanie Meren, Elaine Tholen, Ricardy Anderson, Karen Corbett Sanders, Karl Frisch, Stella Pekarsky, Rachna Sizemore Heizer, the Members of the Task Force on Governor's Schools and other policy makers:

We are parents, students and alumni of Fairfax County Public Schools and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, a Governor's School in Alexandria, Va. We are members of the Coalition for TJ, advocating for diversity and excellence at TJ. We are extremely concerned about a secretive and bigoted, anti-Asian, anti-immigrant effort by Gov. Northam, his cabinet and Virginia state education officials to undermine the admissions criteria, curriculum and future of TJ.

We are quite concerned about the existence of a Governor's task force, quietly created in July 2020 by Gov. Northam and Virginia Secretary of Education Atif Qarni, to recommend to the Virginia State Legislature changes to TJ and its admissions process, potentially replacing TJ's race-blind admissions process with race-based options including a lottery, quotas and an admissions adversity scoring bump to students from underrepresented minorities. This task force has been meeting without public information about its meetings. It is inappropriate to use TJ as a Petri dish for experiments in social engineering, and suggestions made by at least one of the members of Mr. Qarni's task force about potentially eliminating Governor's Schools such as TJ are downright reckless. We seek to increase the numbers of Black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students who gain admission to TJ, but we seek solutions that get at the underlying reasons for this phenomena rather than imposing shortsighted race-based solutions.

Policy makers must consider four key points:

First, TJ is not only an excellent school with a long tradition of providing a world class education for academically advanced students in STEM, but it is also a magnet for businesses, families and investment in Fairfax County, Virginia. US News and World Report ranked TJ the No. 1 high school in America, and it is a major reason that northern Virginia schools--and Fairfax County schools in particular--are regarded so highly by publications and by businesses, many of which point to the school system as a reason to locate in northern Virginia.

What better recommendation for a school district than to have the No. 1 high school in America? Given the importance of TJ to the region and state, we should not undermine the school. Do the Commonwealth of Virginia and northern Virginia now value social justice and equity of outcome more than academic excellence and a business- friendly climate?

Second, these changes will have a disproportionate impact on Asians and immigrants, who make up approximately 70 percent of the TJ student body. There can be no claims of this TJ overhaul battling "white privilege." There is simply no equitable or moral basis for this task force admitting certain students based on race and forcing out immigrants and other people of color who have gained admission to TJ based on merit.

There is a name for these policy considerations. It is called RACISM, and racial discrimination and “race leveling,” which these efforts are clearly promoting, are unconstitutional. It is particularly galling to the Asian and immigrant members of this group that policy makers making decisions about the future of TJ are powerful and privileged US citizens, many of them white. In short: we are outrage

Many TJ families left racial prejudice, political repression, religious discrimination or limited economic opportunities in nations from Romania to India and China to find opportunity in the U.S. We are extremely disappointed to see discrimination and a plantation mentality coming from our adopted home country.

Many TJ families have suffered from oppression, racism, colonization, violence and poverty, with intergenerational trauma a reality. It is racist, bigoted and unfair for TJ's mostly Asian immigrant families of color and their students to be harassed and accused of "privilege," when they have simply been pursuing the universal value of education as a way to advance and then give back to society with service.

Third, these changes threaten to undermine the reputation and academic integrity of TJ by severing TJ's admissions from admissions based purely on academic merit. We have heard speeches by members of the Governor's task force that too many TJ students and families employ test preparatory services to gain admission to TJ and that Black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students may not be able to afford such testing. The solution to this problem (to the extent it is a problem) is simple. The Commonwealth or the counties in northern Virginia should provide discounted or free test preparatory services on a needs basis to local residents. Such practice taking tests will have benefits far beyond merely gaining admission to TJ.

Moreover, you are doing a disservice to Black, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students by moving the goalpost of TJ admissions to allow them to gain admission. Admitting students who have not been able to gain admission through legitimate means will not make TJ any less academically rigorous, and we anticipate that many of these students will struggle academically or lead the school to revamp its curriculum to make it less academically advanced. A far better course of action is to improve the pipeline to TJ through the county's Advanced Academics Program, the Young Scholars Program, nurturing students from underrepresented communities, and other initiatives to support these students.

High school academic excellence is attainable by all ethnicities and cultures if properly prepared at the lower grades, where changes are desperately needed. Preparing students earlier in the process by making the Advanced Academic Program accessible to more students and expanding the Young Scholars program, while maintaining academic rigor and high standards, will best prepare children of all communities for the future. That should be our collective goal.

Finally, we question the legitimacy and lack of transparency of this task force. Secret task forces meeting in private under the guise of being "informal" smacks of back room political dealing and is grossly undemocratic. There should be transparency and much greater opportunity for public comment in this entire process that so importantly affects so many families in northern Virginia.

We urge you to take this letter to heart and let it serve as a warning. We will not go quietly. Your efforts to shame us will not work. We will continue to expose your efforts for what they are: bigoted, anti-Asian and anti-immigrant. We speak out unapologetically for diversity and excellence at TJ. Please contact us so we can assist you in finding solutions. We are reachable at coalition4TJ@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Signatories:

Govil Anoop

Ted Breinig, TJHSST Class of 2023 father and TJ PTSA volunteer

Suparna Dutta, TJHSST Class of 2023 mother and TJ PTSA volunteer

Jason Gan, TJSSHT Class of 2022 father
Lee Hsu, TJHSST Class of 2023 father and TJ PTSA volunteer
Helen Bowman Miller, Class of 2022 mother and TJ PTSA volunteer
Ting Liu, TJHSST Class of 2023 mother and TJ PTSA volunteer
Shibli Nomani, TJHSST Class of 2021
Asra Q. Nomani, TJHSST Class of 2021 mother and TJ PTSA volunteer
YL, TJHSST parent
Kate Liu, TJHSST Class of 2021 mother and TJAB volunteer
Lily Wang, TJHSST parent
Wendy, Wang, TJHSST parent
Yuyan Zhou, TJHSST Class of 2016 and 2020 mother
Zinnia Zhang, TJHSST parent

Dear Secretary Qarni and Task Force Participants,

I recently joined the Coalition for TJ, a diverse group of parents from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), all dedicated to maintaining the rigor of the curriculum and the merit-based admissions process. My husband and I have lived in the Washington, DC region nearly 30 years and moved to McLean 20 years ago as a young married couple anticipating starting a family. We were drawn to this area primarily by the excellent reputation of Fairfax County Schools.

We now have three children. My oldest daughter is a Langley High School Class of 2020 graduate, my son is a rising junior at TJ, and my youngest daughter is a rising freshman at Langley. My oldest is special needs (ASD) and my younger two AAP, so I've had broad experience with the school system. I am unhappy that this Task Force was little publicized and working behind closed doors – with no transparency – on issues that directly affect our current and future TJ families. Several on the panel have been openly critical of TJ and have even talked about dismantling it. Your actions are reckless and are endangering the educations of our students.

I support diversity at TJ. In fact, we already have a highly diverse student body, although admittedly low among disadvantaged Blacks and Hispanics. White families like ours are in the minority there. High school academic excellence is attainable by all ethnicities and cultures if students are properly prepared in the lower grades, where changes are desperately needed.

I and other parents strongly feel that the TJ admissions process should continue to be blind admissions and merit based. For bright, motivated students, TJ is an extraordinary school and offers a rigorous and challenging curriculum. However, it is fast-paced, demanding, and students work extremely hard. It might make the school look better on paper to have increased numbers of disadvantaged minorities, but it doesn't serve students well to put them in a situation for which they're not prepared.

Improvements should be made in these areas:

Preparation is the key. FCPS, the School Board, and State level politicians and policy makers are focusing on the wrong level. TJ can't be looked at in isolation. Students admitted to TJ are a product of the school system and the community, and admissions is the culmination of many years of preparation. Changes need to be made at the lower levels; particularly, students need to be better prepared and nurtured in the formative years - preschool, elementary, and middle school. Preparing students earlier in the process through AAP reform, while maintaining academic rigor and high standards, will best prepare children of all communities for the future. That should be our collective goal.

Communication and Outreach. Just knowing about TJ can be highly motivating – I know it was for my son. And learning about it in elementary school is not too soon! Having recently gone through the TJ application process, there is much our family didn't know. More should be done to reach parents, as they are key partners. In addition, FCPS should provide preparation opportunities to disadvantaged students on a free or low-cost basis. I don't disparage those families that do want to take prep courses, just as students prep for PSATs, SATs, ACTs, and FCPS provides free preparation for those tests. I do think that in order to do well on the TJ entrance tests, some familiarity is a good thing and the county should work on providing preparation opportunities to disadvantaged students.

Mentoring Teachers. Student success is linked to the quality of teaching, and great teaching and encouragement make a huge difference. However, FCPS has lost many experienced teachers since the budget troubles beginning in 2009; teachers have either retired or left for neighboring jurisdictions where they can get better pay. We have many new teachers now, and with so many experienced

teachers gone, how are the new teachers getting the training and mentoring they need to develop their teaching? We saw this dynamic play out over the years at our local elementary school – we found in middle school that my son had deficits in math and he’s worked hard to catch up throughout middle school and at TJ – although it’s happening all over the county. There is a great need for better mentorship of new teachers.

Back to the Task Force: I have heard that comments were made that the focus should be first on revamping the admissions policy to admit more minorities, and that changes to the pipeline are to come later. In fact, the REVERSE is true. You need to focus on improving education at the primary and middle school levels in order to better prepare students for high school – whether admitted to TJ or not. That focus best serves the majority of ALL students across the Commonwealth.

I am particularly incensed that discussions have included dissolving the governor’s schools altogether. The Governor’s Schools were created out of the recognition that gifted students are often an at-risk group of learners. The schools have succeeded spectacularly well in the Commonwealth and are a draw to families and businesses. Are they perfect? No. But the answer is not to dismantle them or change the merit-based admissions process or modify the curriculum. The answer is to better prepare younger and disadvantaged students.

Finally, I am most incensed that this discussion is taking place in the current Pandemic environment. Distance learning has been a disaster across the country, and most particularly in FCPS. My youngest imploded – lost all motivation and became depressed. Even my TJ son, who is highly motivated, was losing steam by the end of the school year. Our children miss the structure and rigor of school, the stimulation of being with their teachers and friends – which is highly motivating – and the community through shared experience and all the extracurricular activities, traditions, and other opportunities that make school a special experience. If distance learning was a disaster for us, I can’t imagine what a nightmare it was for disadvantaged families. Too many children have fallen behind.

As Secretary of Education, you should be focused on helping school systems around the Commonwealth prepare for the upcoming school year and on providing the best education for ALL our students, rather than tearing down outstanding schools. It is very easy to tear down TJ and the other Governor’s Schools, and much harder to build up the rest of the school system. Minority students – and ALL students – are better served by improving educational instruction across all schools.

Sincerely,

Helen Bowman Miller

Virginia Board of Education Members:

When it comes to improving the Standards of Quality we demand for our students in Virginia, the importance of professional school nursing cannot be overlooked any longer — especially when considering the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and its evolving effects on the 2020-2021 school year. More than half of our nation's states have legislation mandating the hiring of registered school nurses. Sadly, Virginia is still not one of them. Over the past five years, legislation to mandate more professional nurses in Virginia's K-12 schools has been introduced and unfortunately defeated in the General Assembly.

While the practice of school nursing is often misunderstood by parents, educators, legislators, and other health professionals, rest assured that professional school nurses are an essential component of both our nation's health care continuum and achieving the goals of student learning and academic achievement.

Yes, schools exist for the purpose of education, but without professional nursing staff on site to monitor and maintain student health, educational efforts can and will falter. The relationship between student health and academic achievement is inherently conjoined. Former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders said it best: "You can't educate people that are not healthy. But you certainly can't keep them healthy if they're not educated."

Professional school nurses are essential in identifying and addressing health issues which impact school performance. There is a plethora of evidence and case study data proving that the work of dedicated, on-site registered school nurses increases attendance and instructional time, promotes safety, decreases emergency and crisis management response times, and provides so many additional health and educational benefits.

Regarding the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, it's more important than ever to remember that professional school nurses also support education through the public health functions of epidemiology and infectious disease control. Besides ensuring compliance with immunization requirements, school nurses serve as sentinels in disease surveillance for their schools. As trained nursing professionals working with the Virginia Department of Health, they can detect patterns in illness during the early stages of an epidemic and develop interventions and recommended strategies for virus containment to prevent further spread.

As a standard of our profession, school nurses are the selfless guardians of health and wellbeing for all students. It's beyond time to recognize that undeniable value and include professional school nursing in your Standards of Quality. We ask that you require at least one full-time equivalent registered school nurse position in each elementary school, middle school, and high school in Virginia.

Dear Senator Peterson, Senator Saslow, Delegate Filler-Corn, Secretary Qarni, and other policy makers,

I am an immigrant from a developing country who came to this country more than 20 years ago in search of better opportunities than I could find in my own. I arrived with just \$250 in my pocket but was welcomed and given a chance to share the American dream. I moved to Fairfax County in 2002 with my husband. Now we have children and I want to ensure that they can pursue their own dreams.

Our son attends Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), which has a very diverse student body and high academic standards. In his grade, minorities are more than 79% of the population. This is a wonderful school, full of friendly, energetic children and families of different backgrounds and interests, and with an advanced and varied curriculum to match its students, bring families and attract businesses. He has been very happy there. According to 2015 Pew research, data from international math and science assessments indicate that U.S. students rank an unimpressive 38th out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science. But TJ has been an exceptional American high school, where these subjects are taught at the college level and students are ready to handle the rigor.

We are shocked to discover that, in these politically-charged times, Gov. Ralph Northam has piled on and tasked his Secretary of Education to diversify Virginia's Governor's schools by using racial politics and dismantling their merit-based admissions policy. Despite any good intention, diminishing merit in the admissions process will favor less-prepared children over well-prepared, mostly minority children. Engineering desired racial or ethnic admissions outcomes, whether by implementing lotteries, middle-school allowances or adversity scoring schemes, will dramatically alter the racial makeup of these schools, and it is our Asian community who will feel the full, brute force of its unfairness. This is de facto racial discrimination and possibly violates federal Civil Rights law. It is plainly immoral, uncompassionate towards the deserving and motivated children who are turned away, and it is a depressingly unserious attitude about educating children of any advantage or disadvantage. Just yesterday DOJ released a report finding Yale illegally discriminating against some races in undergraduate admissions. Virginia's education establishment may find its own policies the target of a federal investigation.

How could any progressive society prioritize race over merit and hard work? My family has always put a high value on education, believing that we are asked to develop, to the best of our abilities, the different talents God has given. We have willingly exchanged vacations, dining out, new clothes and other luxuries for regular trips to the library, reading and conversing with our children, music lessons and athletics. We have sacrificed and worked hard to get here and to prepare our children to be independent, confident and responsible citizens. How could such children be devalued and dismissed as "privileged" by any society worthy of them?

Mr. Qarni's "informal" task force, which is to make decisions that affect current and future TJ families, has operated surreptitiously, without public transparency and inviting other viewpoints. This is an absolute disgrace--an embarrassment to all Virginians and to all Americans--and as a citizen and taxpayer I oppose it. It ought to stop and the public be involved to debate an issue of such importance. Our representatives and their agents are supposed to work for and with us to strengthen public school curricula at all levels and improve educational opportunities for every child. Can they think only to shut us out and to impose on Virginians a form of punitive, retributive justice?

If merit-based admission is to be replaced or significantly altered, TJ and other public schools of its caliber will decline, and this Governor, the Department of Education, the Secretary and his task force, and our school boards will all justly share the discredit. They will pay for it politically. My husband and I,

and thousands of others, will use our votes, money and time to remove any public servant who would do damage to the merit-based admissions process and withhold a challenging alternative curriculum from properly prepared students of any race, creed or ethnicity.

I am a member of Coalition for TJ, a diverse group of parents and students seeking to preserve merit-based admissions and a rigorous curriculum at TJ. Please read our petition, which is supported by 1,750+ people at <https://bit.ly/Coalition4TJPetition>. Policy makers should encourage excellence in education rather than practice divisive politics to gain votes. There are practical solutions to disappointing admissions outcomes, such as getting disadvantaged children interested in STEM in elementary school; attracting better qualified and passionate teachers who can excite curiosity in young children; providing support, events and other encouragement to parents to read to their children and reward them for doing homework every day, doing extra-credit work, and working hard. We support these and other efforts that treat all parents and children as individuals deserving of respect.

Sincerely,

Suparna Dutta

Good Afternoon Superintendent Lane, Board of Education Members, and DOE Senior Staff,

I realize when planning the opening of businesses or schools during the COVID-19 pandemic there are many challenges that come along with it. With good leadership, transparency, and a capable staff it can be done successfully. There may be a few obstacles along the way, but they can be addressed and corrected. In fact, the Hybrid Option that was initially offered at Loudoun County Public Schools and many other Virginia school districts afforded the perfect opportunity to get our schools open. Superintendent Eric Williams of Loudoun County Public Schools has not shown the leadership that it takes to make this happen. Below are some examples that support my statement. On July 8th, Superintendent Williams held a virtual Town Hall Meeting about the 2020-2021 School Year.

Questions had to be pre-submitted to be considered. As you can imagine, many parents and students were hopeful that their questions would be seriously considered and answered during this meeting. If the meeting was organized properly and our questions were taken seriously, Superintendent Williams and his staff would have broken out the responses that pertained separately to elementary, middle, and high school aged students. This would have been in addition to answering generalized questions that pertained to all grade levels. Instead, LCPS Public Information Officer Wayde Byard started off the Town Hall by reading aloud the information that they had already sent out to parents via e-mail and was also posted on the LCPS website. This ate up crucial time to be able to address the pre-submitted questions.

To further waste time, Mr. Byard (he read aloud the questions to Superintendent Williams) thought it was funny to repeat some of the submitted questions as he said they were "popular" (one example, "Can my child bring their own lunch to school?") instead of addressing the variety of questions that they received. The way this Town Hall was lead was a complete disgrace and an insult to the parents and students that hoped their voices would be heard through the questions they submitted. In July, LCPS asked parent's to sign in to ParentVue and select if they wanted their child/children to attend school in-person in the fall which would be the Hybrid Option or not return to the school which would be 100%

Distance Learning Option. Parents were told that anyone that doesn't fill out the survey would be defaulted to Hybrid. It was also stated that once you make your selection it could not be changed. Nonetheless, there were some of us that preferred 100% in-person, but we were happy that at least by selecting Hybrid our children would be in school with their peers and teachers. Stress and anxiety in our household and I'm sure in many other's households was reduced as we now made our choice. Soon after our choices were made, Superintendent Williams decided that we would not be opening with the Hybrid option this fall. He failed to answer questions and give facts of why that could not happen. This was yet another sign of failed leadership on his part. During the August 11th School Board Meeting, Superintendent Williams stated that LCPS will be open for in-person instruction for the Monroe Advanced Technical Academy (MATA), EL, and a select group of IEP/SPED students. I personally have no prejudice towards any of these groups of students. My issue is that ALL of our students have the right and need to be back in the classrooms this fall. It should not be assumed if a student doesn't have an IEP (Some have tried to get an IEP and have been pushed aside without any recourse.), is not an EL, or a MATA student that they will be successful with 100% Distance Learning. This is clearly a sign of discrimination on Superintendent William's part and on the part of the School Board Members that accepted his proposal. The only way to reverse this discrimination is to open all of our schools for Hybrid Option students this fall. The majority of our School Board Members are not holding Dr. Williams to the high standards that he should be displaying as being at the helm of our children's education.

Therefore, I am asking for your help by taking action to address his lack of leadership and transparency, as well as, his discriminatory behavior towards our students by not opening all of the Loudoun County Public Schools this September for those that selected the Hybrid Option. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

Best Regards,

Suzanne Satterfield,
Parent of a son in the Class of 2021

To whom this needs to be passed to during these times.

Since the announcement of school re-opening/virtual program my child has strongly refused either course. He has mentioned that sitting in a gym (we do not have Wi-Fi, and government phone doesn't give enough data for virtual classroom) learning on an iPad or equivalent and only receiving breaks for bathroom and to maybe get a chance to stretch their legs outside doesn't appease him. He would be eating lunch at that same seat. Also whoever the teacher will be will still be teaching from within a screen with maybe a few teachers, assistants, or IEP on stand by for help. He has never done well with learning from the schoology program our Goochland district middle/high school provides during normal school days. Thought the education laws say one thing; federal and state laws say another about how you treat your child in and out of school. Without the resources and small availability of a kajeet device to provide this wireless internet to low income families, and no iPad/Tablet to provide, and refusing to attend a gym setting of class in a similar fashion as if at home. He wants to DROP OUT and pursue a GED during the 2020-2021 school year so by time he turns 14 he can apply for a workers permit.

The Department of Education insight and laws say he is too young to DROP OUT and get a GED. I would receive punishment so to speak for his absent attendance. At the same time federal and state laws prohibit me from reprimanding and using a form of force to make him attend one or the other education program(s) being provided. Also, as he has informed me that though he is 13 years of age he has rights to not only voice his reasons but stand his ground for the current education procedures during "covid19". With the limitations and limited adventures of contact with people and places since April offers me nothing to take away from him as a punishment form to not attend school. Like I mentioned before laws prevent me from forcing him on a bus, in a car, and attending/participating in 1 of 2 options for school. With all this being said and our Goochland education directors unable to come up with an affirmative plan and reach out to parents with websites or how this will actually work, and let's not forget avoiding eye contact with parents, teachers, and others asking questions and speaking during these meetings (answering and looking at the floor or ceiling while speaking responses does not make these plans sound and feel that they are what's best). Let's not forget that not only have I seen what looks like early stages of depression in him and his peers but an increase in suicide, drug overdose, drinking, and worse increase in these teenagers since this "pandemic" shut down schools and everything else, including kids not being around each other due to 6ft distancing or just plain avoiding everyone unless need be. Goochland "returns" to school this upcoming Monday. I would appreciate if someone could respond in a timely fashion on recommended alternatives for him to attain an education without ME getting in trouble with not only the education department for his absent marks, but without him calling the law or worse for having to FORCE him to school or somehow a virtual class that I can get help with Wi-Fi, iPad, Tablet necessary for said program. Accusations of abuse by a child is taken very seriously regardless that it's not actually physical abuse.

Firmly walking your child and shoving them onto a bus or vehicle, firmly walking that child into school, and firmly having the child do virtual schooling at home even if they pay attention or not can be considered abuse and/or neglect. Let's think and remember that if a slight red indentation or mark on his arm from being firmly marched to school or a chair or a car is most definitely considered abuse. So, how can we make my child attend 1 of 2 offered school classroom learning options? How can we find an alternative education option for low income families like mine going through the same situation? I don't have money to pull him from Goochland and put him in Louisa because that school district actually prepared and offered solutions and are having classes in regular classrooms with placements of "covid19" policies and procedures in place for their students. I can't afford any home schooling. I need answers, solutions, and help during these difficult times. Since my phone calls have gone unreturned,

not being pointed in the right direction. I do hope someone takes this email seriously and has put some great thought into the reality of situations like mine that is happening and has a plan of approach.

Otherwise, I would strongly consider asking for a refund from the Universities of higher education for these degrees given and the suppose experience that has been achieved. Knowing when this "covid19" hit and became a pandemic nationally. Virginia especially has had at the very least amount of time since the middle to end of March until now to thoroughly plan for every situation possible that could arise from this. That's a lot of education members per School County, district, and region. I can't imagine a person on our Virginia Board of Education's members receiving a doctrine degree, education degree and so on from turning in an exam paper with multiple mistakes and carelessness and thinking it's ok and still receive a degree knowing you have had let's say 5 to 6 months to plan ahead. Even 1 to 2 months as a shorter preparation for that exam paper with multiple resources from your college that they offer or provide. That makes our VA Education members similar to that college reference with resources who have had 5-6 months (broken down whether you worked from home or not during the shutdown let's say 5 days a week, roughly a 9 a.m. - 4/5 p.m. work hours maybe an hour or 2 break because of no childcare, lunch, and what not leaves a total of roughly a work day of 5-6 hours a day with emails, conference calls, video conference calls, thinking outside the box, brainstorming, rough drafts of situations/solutions let's do the math of those numbers) to come up with a plan. I really hope that someone has thought of an issue that could arise like my current situation and can offer a plan of action to only help me as a parent but my child as a student. I really hope that someone if worse case someone takes the initiative and says hey we didn't think about this particular possibility let's brain storm together and let's look at other options and possible situations to try as elimination factors of approach and mark them off if it doesn't work. Let's find this student an alternate way of learning especially how this student approaches school, and how this student comprehends how they are being taught and their strong views and feelings toward this matter. Let's come together for parents and students like my son and me and let's find an alternative solution to help. I'll be looking forward to a reply and how we can unite and accomplish this in a timely manner. Please feel free to email a reply. With my oldest daughter being in town for a week gives me access to her unlimited internet for a short time unfortunately. Thank you for the time, understanding, and taking this issue seriously.

A very concerned, running out of time, and ran out of options parent

As a parent of a Richmond, Virginia Southampton Elementary School Kindergartener I have some major concerns about the online schooling that is currently taking place.

First, most children were given Chromebooks, yet she was given a Samsung Galaxy tablet. This alone is causing issues due to the fact that all instructions for connecting, classwork, testing, etc. have been written for the Chromebook. My 5 year old daughter is not proficient in using computers in the first place, which I believe should have been expected. That alone coupled with the fact all instructions are written for hardware she does not have is making her schoolwork assignments very difficult, even for me. For example, her very first homework assignment required an app download that we could not complete. She did her assignment but we were not able to turn it in.

My daughter also has some issues she is currently seeing an occupational therapist for that will make school difficult without all of the issues I'm speaking of.

Lastly, there has not been one single day yet that she has not needed me to stop my work at the very least every 5 minutes and help her do whatever is being asked of her online. I don't know about most parents but I do not have time to stop what I am doing every couple minutes all school day to help her. I believe the teachers should be teaching my child instead of spending the entire day going from one place online to another.

They were given dry erase boards and markers to do whatever writing or math is asked of them and the teacher can see and speak to each student. Since the start of school she has been asked to go to many different websites and links, enter in codes and passwords none of which she can complete on her own. I can see how this would work for older students who have computer knowledge already, but for my kindergartener this is just not working at all. Just today they were given 4 or 5 assignments to complete while the teachers are doing individual testing. Of all the assignments only 1 of them can my daughter actually complete, even with my help.

Something truly needs to be done to fix these issues because I feel that my daughter is quickly falling behind, maybe to the point of having to repeat Kindergarten.

Sincerely,

Lesley Faris

Dear members of the Virginia Board of Education,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

For your reference, I'm a mother of 3 and my children have all attended school in Loudoun County Public Schools since my first child started at Emerick Elementary in 2002. Over the years I have ensured that my children were prepared and participated in school, were respectful of teachers, administrators and other students, and that they worked to learn throughout their education. Two of my children have graduated from Loudoun Valley High School and in June 2021 my last child is set to graduate. I have to be honest, I'm ready for this to be over. After all these years of supporting Loudoun County Public Schools, I cannot begin to express my disappointment in how things have been handled by our superintendent and school board over the past 3 months. The bashing of families who want to return to school and the silencing of teachers who also want to return to in-school instruction has gone on long enough. Without quality leadership, a once thriving educational community is sure to fail. The worst effects will be felt by those families and children who are already suffering and that thought breaks my heart.

Since the beginning of the pandemic I have kept myself informed of the Governor's mandates on Covid as a constituent, business owner, and parent. Earlier this summer I watched as he put the school reopening decisions in the hands of our local school systems. While I was concerned that so much was left in the hands of our local politicians instead of the state school board, I did everything I could to make sure that my child would have the best opportunity in her last year of schooling. At first I thought things were going well, with the Loudoun County School Board and Superintendent surveying families on whether they would be sending their children back to school or opting for distance learning. The split was relatively even for families and teachers if you took the county average. After they surveyed us, they held webinars that explained the options that we would have. I attended the webinar and learned everything I could about the two options. While disappointed that our students would not have a 5 day option, I met with my senior, and gave her the facts so we could make a well-informed decision that was the best fit for her from what was available. We did not take our decision of hybrid schooling lightly and it was not made out of desperation to have someone else watch our child or take over our responsibilities as parents. In fact, our daughter made this decision because she missed interacting with her teachers and fellow students. If given the option, she has clearly stated that she would gladly go back to school 5 days a week, wear a mask without complaint, and follow all the requirements just to be able to attend school and learn outside of her home.

Early on as a parent of a highly gifted first child, I opted to not home-school my children because I believed that their mental and social well-being, their ability to work well with others, as well as having a sense of confidence and certainty of self, come from being around a diverse group of people and from learning to interact on a day to day basis with those individuals. I also knew that as adults they would work in positions that required them to get along with others who didn't necessarily have similar view points. I have seen from my own experiences as a mother and as a physical therapist that children must learn from an early age how to handle themselves with others and be able to make things work because not everyone will be their friend.

My belief was that I would be doing my children a disservice by home-schooling them and that they would miss out on such vital human interaction. All three of my children have very different personalities and by far my current HS senior is my most social child. She relies on being in a diverse, challenging environment, and having to interact with students who are outside of her social circle, to help her to balance her overall emotional and social well-being.

As a parent, I've done what I can to ensure her success this year including taking her out of state in order to take her much needed SATs since our county continuously failed our students by cancelling their scheduled SATs.

Imagine my surprise when after given the information and a choice of hybrid, our superintendent and school board made the unilateral decision to take that away from our children without any firm metrics supporting their decision. And how, as we begin our school year, there continues to be no known plan for reopening and no metrics that give us an idea of 'when' it would be safe or possible.

When asked what the plan is, when there will be a plan, what the metrics are for returning to in-school, there is silence. Interestingly, they keep telling us it's not safe. For whom? And how do we know it's not safe? There is no plan at this point, while other parts of the country are back in school full-time. There are no metrics for what is deemed safe and how we will know it is ok to return; while other districts in the state and the US have clear and concise metrics for what determines the next step, how it will happen and when.

As a business owner, this is unacceptable to me. Everything I do is based on metrics, and on doing what's right for my patients. Our physical therapy practice has remained open from the start, with it being expected that medical providers are essential and our services are much needed. From the start, we were required to have a plan within days and to enact a plan to remain open to serve our patients AND keep them safe. We had days, not months. And we treat some of the most vulnerable adults who still need our care, not normal healthy children. Not only did we create a plan that kept everyone safe but our dedicated team chose to continue working even when we offered them the out if they were concerned for their own safety. They saw their position as needed, wanted, and essential and they were there to serve whoever needed their help.

Who decided that schools and teachers are not essential? Who decided that it was in the best interests of all to keep these kids at home? To keep all teachers home when some clearly have stated to their students this week how badly they want to be in school with them. Why are we all not given a choice?

What factors went into that decision other than fear of the unknown?

Who is responsible for monitoring public school systems and providing them guidance and ensuring that the quality of education meets the demands of those most in need?

Who has the final say? Because it's not working the way it is now. Not for many who are truly suffering.

Prior to Covid we all entered the unknown every time we left our homes, and now, no one in primary or secondary education is taking the reins and putting clear and concise plans or metrics in place to get these kids back in school. It feels as though we're expected to just let things float along without any clear plan. And that just doesn't add up to me.

My daughter is not the only child who is suffering and I fear the long term side effects of being home, without varying levels of interaction with others outside of their social circles, without being required to get up and be in contact with the world outside of their homes, will have severely detrimental and long lasting effects on these children. The stress of trying to learn online is overwhelming to many and it seems like we're all being told that it's irresponsible to question this? When did it become unacceptable to ask questions? When did it become wrong to worry about children and the effects this will have on them?

The mental and physical well-being of our children depends on schools being open, of having a safe-haven available to them on a consistent basis. We have spent the last 3 months in upheaval as a country over systemic racism and yet those most in need are the very ones who are being hurt the most with schools being closed. I keep reading about human trafficking and how rampant that is in our country. And yet, for many this starts at such a young age and those poor children rely on teachers and other school staff to recognize that something is wrong. In fact many children become victims of human trafficking online but we're asking them to be online 100X more now than ever before. With some not having supervision at home. Does that seem like we're truly considering the well-being of all children?

Right now, those who need it most have no one in their corner. Not the parents and definitely not the children. We pay taxes for this very purpose, yet somehow as a country and as a state, we have gone very far off purpose. This isn't about babysitting for parents who need to work. This is about providing for those who we are all charged with protecting. "It takes a community" was something I heard before Covid. Now I hear about selfishness and people shaming others for wanting schools to be open. That's an unfair and very selfish comment and it concerns me that we have gone so far off course. We need leadership from our state. And so I turn to you.

Loudoun County Public Schools currently has no leadership. Our Board makes unilateral decisions without listening to the WHOLE of their constituents – of course they have support from those who may never leave their homes again without a vaccine; but what about those children who need to leave their homes to have a safe haven at school during the daylight hours? For food so they aren't left hungry. Let's be real, if they go home hungry do you think their families have the means to get them to the schools to pick up lunches? Do we think these children will feel comfortable telling a teacher that someone is hurting them while they're still at home with that person? Do you think that someone in control and overpowering isn't going to watch and listen to every move that child or teen makes?

Our superintendent is more focused on making unnecessary policy instead of looking at how his lack of a plan toward reopening is hurting our most vulnerable.

I can no longer stay silent on some of what I am seeing in my county and it's time that I get better answers. Since our school board and superintendent have opted out of creating a clear and published plan, I'm reaching out to you for answers.

As a parent and a taxpayer (both private and professional), I am concerned that my tax dollars are not being spent as they are intended. I have spent countless hours on the Virginia Department of Education's website trying to find statutes and updated information on the 2020-2021 instructional and school attendance requirements. I have not found a clear and concise explanation of what I am looking for so I have these questions for you:

1. What is classified as in-person learning?

Being in school?

Online? If so, to what extent?

Doing it on their own while logged into the computer without a teacher's presence? This is happening.

2. What are the EXACT requirements for teaching/instructional time?

How much synchronous learning is expected?

How much asynchronous learning is too much?

I see in a normal year there is a 180-day teaching requirement and a 990 hours teaching requirement, is that still in effect?

What counts toward these days/hours?

Is it different for elementary, middle and high school students? And if so, what are the standards of learning for 2020-2021? Are there set standards and who will be holding these districts accountable?

How are these days and hours calculated?

For example, do we consider 15 minutes of online instruction by a teacher and then another 45 minutes of group time in separate Google Hangouts as instructional time? Can teachers be expected to try and manage 5 groups in separate meetings? What could be happening when a teacher is monitoring another group?

How are schools proving that children are learning for X period of time per class? Is it just because they are logged on to Schoology during that time?

Is that the purpose of Schoology? To track hours? And if so, and a teacher stops teaching, in theory shouldn't our children log off because they are no longer participating in instructional time?

How about Study hall/resource period? Does that count toward instructional time if they're at home and they don't need the help or they just check in and log out?

Our kids are supposed to receive 1 hour of instruction, synchronous time with teachers per class and then have 22 min of 'learning lab'. How does this meet the hour requirements the state has handed down?

Are you going to waive these yearly instructional requirements of days/hours? And if so, how are we ensuring that children are learning what they need?

Do we count Mondays where students are at home working on their own and logging in to 'take attendance' part of these hours? That seems unethical - see my statement below.

3. What does attendance in the month of September count toward?

Does this affect funding for public schools? Virginia funding of a school? Federal funding of a school?

Is this tied to the money a Public School System receives toward hiring teachers? Toward teachers benefits?

Are administrator's bonuses on higher attendance in the month of September?

4. At what point does the state step in?

What requirements do you have of these districts right now?

Who's monitoring and managing them right now?

What metrics are you requiring?

Who's making sure that students are getting what they deserve and what is needed for them to learn what's expected in a class or a grade level?

Who's making sure that no child is left behind this year? Because after all of this, if many students are failing, you will have a greater incidence of anxiety and depression on your hands, of which most might have been avoided.

Who's making sure that school systems aren't committing fraud or being unethical with their current plans?

At this time, consider this email as my formal complaint. I am extremely concerned that Loudoun County Public Schools may be committing unethical and/or fraudulent behavior by pushing students to login on Mondays for attendance purposes. To have them login when there's no instructional reason to do so is at the very least unethical, if not fraudulent, if any monetary gain is connected to a child's attendance or hours present.

If you consider that prior to this pandemic, our students went to school 5 days per week – our high school students were in class from 9:15am – 3:55pm daily.

Attendance was taken in school – schools got credit for students being present while the student was in school because in theory while they were there it was understood that they were receiving direct instructional time with an educator.

Now, our children are only scheduled to have direct instructional time from Tuesday through Friday - with 4 hours of instructional time (4 blocks at 1 hour each) and 88 additional minutes per day of "learning lab" (22 min at the end of every block). They 'can' reach out to a teacher on Mondays or work in small groups 'if needed'.

But unless they actively meet with an instructor, there is no instructional time on Mondays. So, is this considered acceptable? Is this not unethical and/or fraudulent to have students login and mark themselves as 'in attendance' when in fact no teaching or active instruction is occurring on that day? Schools get paid for doing work, right? This to me is not work. It's counting someone as present when they are not.

Please note, I have also directed my concerns to the Department of Justice and the US Department of Education to be investigated. You are being made aware of my concerns so you can address any misdoing before it becomes anything more.

To be clear, I'm not writing this for my daughter as my husband and I will make sure that she has everything she needs to have an amazing senior year and to succeed in life. I have no doubt that she will succeed based on her hard work and determination. But if she is struggling without the mixed social interaction and support she finds at school can you imagine how bad it is for many who don't have similar support at home?

Yes, there has been a pandemic, but there's a much larger one coming at the expense of our children's education and well-being, and the current effects this nightmare is having on good teachers who want to return but can't speak up for fear of retribution.

I would appreciate your response to the questions above and your consideration of my thoughts and concerns.

Loudoun County Public Schools needs a leader and good supporting leadership; unfortunately our superintendent and school board are not willing to work with those who want to return to school. They are acting like individuals with their own agendas who have no plan, nothing to enact, and basically a 'take it as you go' style instead of working as a team and creating a plan. While that may have been acceptable in March, it no longer fits with what is needed by many. Added to the struggles that many are facing, there are no answers forthcoming. Instead, our superintendent and school board blame the parents for kids struggling, our superintendent then throws his teachers under the bus and blames them for kids being disruptive, and added to injury, our school board members are fighting with and insulting constituents who justifiably want answers. Their lack of professionalism alone should have them removed from their positions, but any questionable ethical behavior or worse, fraud, should be taken to a much higher level and if nothing else, we need you to investigate the matter fully as our state representatives.

I am happy to sit down and discuss what I have written and to help be a part of a reopening plan for LCPS and any other school in the state. A big part of my day is spent helping business owners by creating strategic plans that help them turn things around in their companies. I have extensive training at looking at a problem and creating a plan for a workable solution. I have a policy that you never lodge a complaint without the willingness and ability to contribute.

If you have further questions, you can email me at this address.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Dee Bills, Concerned Parent and Citizen

Dr. Lane, thank you for your prompt reply. Is the board meeting next week open to the public? I want to make sure they appreciate the rationale for the technical edits, and it would provide Dr. Alexander Newby and Dr. Ayers an opportunity to expand on the historical context. Also I am interested in the conversation as well.

If you could be so kind in your conversation with Board, please share these thoughts with them. As a Black woman educator, I walked through this process with a multitude of emotions ranging from anger at my ignorance to dismay at my arrogance to jubilation at our product. Initially, my anger was centered on myself for not knowing the information shared during our numerous technical edit meetings, but later, my anger was centered on my school-aged teachers and collegiate instructors for not educating me. At every meeting, I reflected that if our students knew what I learned in these committee meetings, our African American (AA) students and others would not see AA in such a limited capacity to be only an athlete or performer/orator. Our AA students would see themselves as entrepreneurs, innovators, and scientists and be more interested in embodying their history. These technical edits allow our students to see themselves not only in the vain of subjugation but as a survivor and thriver in the most challenging of circumstances. The historical information introduces them to the power within their resilience as well as challenges them to advocate for the world where they will be included as equals.

Please share with the board that most of our history and social science teachers do not know the full history of AA in this country, and sharing this information openly in schools will also empower our instructional staff. With teaching this history, we cause them to see our AA students more robustly; subsequently, driving them to expect more from our AA students - truly embodying an authentic growth mindset framework. I am thinking about the authentic one I shared Black Sunday school teacher who used to tell me that I was built on the broad back of greatness, and she expected nothing less than AMAZING from me. Everyday she held me accountable. She would mention these fantastic Black women's names, and when I heard Dr. Newby and Dr. Ayers speak of them during our committee meetings, I was both angry with my ignorance and proud of the glory of my history. In these moments, I had to also reflect on my arrogance. As a principal of Private Day schools, where I repeatedly graduated students that no one believed would graduate, I would often use the words and exemplify my Sunday School teacher's attitude - firm belief and high expectations. I now realize how little context I had for my assertions. Thankfully they did not challenge me. Our technical edits do not do fully do justice to our history, but they at least scratch the surface.

I am not ignorant to that there will be naysayers. Adding context to our history is uncomfortable, not because it is not true but because it is. There may be some on the board who have an issue with the substantive nature of the edits, but please assure them that no modification or addition was made without historical accuracy. Their concerns may be more a reflection on their positioning than historical fact, and history isn't supposed to be comfortable it is supposed to create reflective opportunities. Maybe if others had been willing to be more honest about America's history, we might not continue to have the ongoing racial conflicts within this country. We can only do better when we know more. Change may cause open racist rancor, but if we respond

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

with facts and not feelings, which is why I think you should have Dr. Newbridge and Dr. Ayers available to respond to any Board concerns because it is much more difficult to dispute facts.

Lastly, let the board know that this is not just about revising and updating history; it is more about showing AA and other students a full accounting of our history. In doing so, AA students have a historical context to draw personal pride, and non-AA students develop more respect for the contributions AA made to this great country. In both manners, all parties win. Our AA parents and students are tired of not being adequately represented in our current history, and I do not want to have them wait another year. The sooner we can approve them the sooner my school team can begin to build supporting lessons.

Sorry, this email was not brief, but this is not only an issue of passion but of duty. It is my duty to ensure students' and parents' voices are heard, and I seek daily to do my job with the same diligence that I saw from my Sunday school teacher - I have firm belief and high expectations that the Board will do the right thing for our students. I truly believe that the commission's efforts were not in naught, and they will see some immediate action because it can no longer be about the loudest voices in the room but it must in this moment be about what is right.

Monica R. Manns

Teaching African American History in Virginia

By James C. Sherlock

I fully support integrating African American history into the broad sweep of history taught in the nation's primary and secondary schools.

On September 17, there will be a Virginia Board of Education meeting with an agenda item titled "Report from the Governor's African American History Education Commission, August 2020" (the Report).

I will offer here an inspiring, optimistic approach.

But first, the fiercely negative approach to the teaching of African American history offered by the Governor's Commission.

MINISTERS OF DESPAIR

I just finished reading the Report that will be considered on September 17. It represents perhaps the most profoundly pessimistic recounting possible both of America itself and of the way to incorporate African American history into the curricula into Virginia schools.

The Report is critical race theory brought to life. It represents the most thoroughly negative view of America's history and pessimism about its future as a nation that I have ever encountered in a government document anywhere.

Many universities have had success at radicalization. This recommends an earlier start. Kindergarten.

If I were a Cuban American who escaped Castro, a Jewish American who escaped Hitler or Stalin, or an African immigrant who recently arrived from Sudan, or a recent arrival from Venezuela, I would simply be mystified.

If I were an active teacher, I would refuse.

Teachers work every day to impart knowledge that leaves their students looking forward to not only to their next day of school but to the lives they have in front of them.

The report uses the term white 75 times. Once is for someone's last name. Every other time it is used as a pejorative, often in reference to white teachers who the Report suggests need initial and ongoing re-orientation to continue in their jobs.

"Ms. Johnson identified the importance of in-depth professional development, especially considering that most teachers are white women. Mr. Hairston agreed and added that students also should be encouraged to read and use primary sources."

"Ms. Jennings stressed equity as a major component of helping white teachers gain the capacity to properly teach African American history and engage with all their students. Mr. Girvan added that white teachers may find the content of African American history uncomfortable and so may go past it quickly or explain it poorly."

And that was from the "Educator Panel", not public comment.

The inescapable takeaway is that white teachers are not to be trusted without re-programming. Even so, students cannot rely on white teachers to tell them the truth. Students must consult "primary sources", identified in the Report's Appendix F as the works of America's critical race theory gurus.

Enough.

AN OPTIMISTIC ALTERNATIVE

I offer a profoundly different alternative, a way to teach that will bring optimism to students and teachers while still bringing forth the facts of slavery and Jim Crow.

My recommendation is to offer such teaching in context of the lives of African Americans who overcame those adversities to succeed. Tell optimistic stories of success while ensuring that students learn the daunting, and in the case of slavery, inhumane conditions they overcame.

This approach will impart lessons of the past, positive and negative, while leaving black children proud of their heritage and white children proud that America produced such men and women and determined to do better in their own lives.

EXAMPLES

I offer examples, hardly exhaustive, to illustrate the recommended methodology.

The life and times of Martin Luther King.

The life of Thurgood Marshall, July 2, 1908 – January 24, 1993. He was without question the greatest African American lawyer and jurist in American history.

The life of the former slave Clara Brown (c. 1800–1885) who spent time working the fields in Virginia. She married another enslaved person when she was eighteen and together they had four children. In 1835, Brown's family was broken apart when they were all sold to different slave owners. At the age of 56, she was granted her freedom. She went west on a wagon train and ultimately became a community leader, philanthropist and aided settlement of former slaves during the time of Colorado's Gold Rush. She was known as the 'Angel of the Rockies' and made her mark as Colorado's first black settler and a prosperous entrepreneur.

The history of Black owned companies like McKissack & McKissack, a 114-year old architectural and engineering that was founded in 1905 in Nashville, TN by Moses McKissack. It was the first African-American-owned architectural firm in the United States and is the oldest African American-owned architecture and engineering firm in the country. It seemingly built half of Nashville and is now headquartered in New York City. As of 2013, the family-owned successor companies were reported to have more than 150 professional staff members and over \$15 billion in projects. Cheryl McKissack Daniel is the current President & CEO.

The lives of Black economists including the prominent scholars Walter Williams of George Mason University and Thomas Sowell of UCLA and the Hoover Institution.

Williams, born March 31, 1936, grew up in a single-parent household in a poor section of Philadelphia. He was raised by his mother, who was a high school dropout. The family spent time on welfare, and eventually moved into the Richard Allen public housing project.

Sowell, born June 30, 1930 and whose father died before he was born, was the son of a maid. *His Up From the Projects – An Autobiography* is an inspiration to anyone fortunate enough to read it.

The lives of these two men will teach American children more of the struggles of growing up poor and black in post-WW II projects than anything in the Report.

The life of the Black business leader Robert L. Johnson, co-founder of BET, the first African American billionaire. He was born in 1946 in Hickory, Mississippi, the ninth out of ten children to Edna and Archie Johnson. His mother was a schoolteacher and his father was a farmer. He earned a master's degree from Princeton. BET was the first black-controlled company listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1991.

The lives of STEM heroines like Ursula Burns of Xerox and the great Katherine Johnson.

In 2014, Forbes rated Ms. Burns, then CEO of XEROX, the 22nd most powerful woman in the world. She was a leader of the STEM program of the White House from 2009 to 2016, and head of the President's Export Council from 2015 until 2016. Burns was raised by a single mother in the Baruch Houses, a New York City housing project. Both of her parents were Panamanian immigrants. She attended Cathedral High School, a Catholic all-girls school on East 56th Street in New York. She has a Master of Science in mechanical engineering from Columbia.

The great NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson was born in 1918 in White Sulphur Springs, WV. Because Greenbrier County did not offer African American schooling past the 8th grade, her parents sent her to high school in Institute, WV. After graduating from high school at 14, Johnson enrolled at West Virginia State, a historically black college. As a student, she took every math course offered by the college. Multiple professors mentored her, including the chemist and mathematician. She graduated summa cum laude in 1937, with degrees in mathematics and French, at age 18. She and her family lived in Newport News, Virginia, from 1953. Her calculations of orbital mechanics as a NASA employee were critical to the success of the first and subsequent U.S. crewed spaceflights. See the acclaimed movie *Hidden Figures* for both her struggles and her successes.

The life of Richmond's black businesswoman and teacher Maggie Walker (July 1864 – Dec. 1934). Walker was the first African-American woman to charter a bank and serve as its president in the United States. Her mother was a former slave and her father was a butler.

The life and times of James Derham (1762—1802), born into slavery in Philadelphia, was the first African American to practice medicine in America. He was owned by three doctors in the Philadelphia area. In one of the households he learned to read and write. In 1788 he was sold to a prominent surgeon in New Orleans, and the surgeon encouraged Derham to learn medicine. He

showed great aptitude and learned surgery. He gained his freedom and was permitted to practice among the freemen and slaves of New Orleans. He was a successful physician and, necessary in New Orleans, fluent in French, English, and Spanish. He would have been a godsend to African-Americans who would not have been allowed to visit a white doctor. Though James Derham's skills were well-known and his practice flourished, New Orleans passed regulations in 1801 that prevented him from practicing medicine since he had no formal medical degree.

The life and times of James McCune Smith (1813 – 1865). He was an American physician, apothecary, abolitionist, and author in New York City. He was the first African American to hold a medical degree and graduated at the top in his class at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. After his return to the United States, he became the first African American to run a pharmacy in that nation. He has been most well-known for his leadership as an abolitionist: a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, with Frederick Douglass he helped start the National Council of Colored People in 1853, the first permanent national organization for blacks. Douglass called Smith “the single most important influence on his life.”

Frederick Douglass (1818 – 1895) was an escaped slave. Harvard Professor of English and Civil War historian John Stauffer tells this story, reflecting on the friendship between the Douglass and President Lincoln.

When Frederick Douglass came to Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural reception in 1865, policemen blocked his way — until the President came to welcome him.

“Here comes my friend Douglass,” Lincoln said, taking Douglass by the hand. “There is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours.”

Douglas published “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself.” in Boston in 1845. His last autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* was first published in 1881 and revised in 1892, three years before his death. The book covers events both during and after the Civil War. He was also a believer in dialogue and in making alliances across racial and ideological divides, as well as in the liberal values of the U.S. Constitution. Douglass was a firm believer in the equality of all peoples, be they white, black, female, Native American, or Chinese immigrants.

Surely there are those among us can find enough history in the lives of those great Black Americans to serve as the canvas upon which African American history is painted for Virginia's primary and secondary students.

If they cannot, we need better historians.

Based on the Report that parroted much of current theory of education in the humanities and social sciences, we also need better education schools.

A HIGHER AUTHORITY

I will finish with excerpts from a speech in which Frederick Douglass challenged the opinions of most observers, including most African Americans, by advocating the acceptance of Chinese immigration.

I quote from that speech because Douglass could have been speaking of the people that wrote the Report.

“It is thought by many, and said by some, that this Republic has already seen its best days; that the historian may now write the story of its decline and fall.

Two classes of men are just now especially afflicted with such forebodings. The first are those who are croakers by nature—the men who have a taste for funerals, and especially National funerals. They never see the bright side of anything and probably never will. . .

But the American people . . . have a right to be impatient and indignant at those among ourselves who turn the most hopeful portents into omens of disaster, and make themselves the ministers of despair when they should be those of hope, and help cheer on the country in the new and grand career of justice upon which it has now so nobly and bravely entered. Of errors and defects we certainly have not less than our full share, enough to keep the reformer awake, the statesman busy, and the country in a pretty lively state of agitation for some time to come. Perfection is an object to be aimed at by all, but it is not an attribute of any form of Government. Neutrality is the law for all.

Something different, something better, or something worse may come, but so far as respects our present system and form of Government, and the altitude we occupy, we need not shrink from comparison with any nation of our times...”

Frederick Douglass,

Boston, 1869

Best Regards,

James C. Sherlock

Three authors cited in the Report -- Robin DiAngelo, Ibram Kendi, and Glenn Singleton -- give harmful advice which, if followed, will lead to civil-rights violations; foster offensive racial stereotypes; and spread racism in our schools.

So as a lawyer and a citizen, I object to the inclusion of them and their writings. They are currently listed in Appendix F of the report, as "Scholars and Partners for Collaboration," and their works are cited as "Resources to Support Implementation."

1. Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

The African-American professor John McWhorter notes in *The Atlantic* that DiAngelo's book is "a racist tract" that is "dehumanizing" and "condescending" to black people, even as it depicts racism as being present "in all whites." As he explains in detail, "DiAngelo's book is replete with claims that are either plain wrong or bizarrely disconnected from reality." (See John McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condescension of 'White Fragility'*, *The Atlantic*, July 15, 2020).

2. Ibram Kendi, author of *How to Be an Anti-Racist*

Kendi's book advocates racial discrimination that is currently forbidden by law. Kendi states, "The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination."

Such discrimination violates the Constitution, which regards discrimination and other racial classifications as a "last resort," not as the "only remedy" for racist discrimination. That "last resort" language is from a 2009 Supreme Court decision. (See *Bartlett v. Strickland*, 556 U.S. 1, 21 (2009)).

To the Supreme Court, the remedy for "present discrimination" is to compensate the victim or punish the discriminator, not to discriminate in the future against whites. Past discrimination is not supposed to be "remedied" by discrimination against whites, except in unusual circumstances (i.e., if the discrimination was recently committed by the government, and was widespread).

The Supreme Court explained in a 1989 decision that discrimination by the government is NOT a proper remedy for past discrimination, where the past discrimination was "societal," rather than by the government itself. (See *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469 (1989)).

Thus, it ruled, the City of Richmond could not give minority businesses a preference in city contracts, even if societal discrimination in the former capital of the confederacy had contributed to city contractors being disproportionately white.

Even when the government is remedying the present effects of its own past discrimination, discrimination that happened more than twenty years ago is usually too far back in the past to justify giving minorities special treatment today, or discriminating against whites, according to the courts. (See, e.g., *Brunet v. City of Columbus*, 1 F.3d 390 (6th Cir. 1993) (court rules that gender discrimination that occurred 17 years earlier does not support affirmative action);

Hammon v. Barry, 813 F.2d 412 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (court rules that racial discrimination that occurred 14 years earlier does not support affirmative action)).

Also, widespread discrimination, not just a few individual instances of discrimination, has to be shown to justify using race, according to judges. (See, e.g., Middleton v. City of Flint, 92 F.3d 396, 405 (6th Cir. 1996)).

Most courts say that the government can use race-based affirmative action only to remedy intentional discrimination, not racially "disparate impact." (See, e.g., Builders Association v. County of Cook, 256 F.3d 642, 644 (7th Cir. 2001); People Who Care v. Rockford Board of Education, 111 F.3d 528, 534 (7th Cir. 1997); Michigan Road Builders v. Milliken, 834 F.2d 583, 593 (6th Cir. 1987), aff'd, 489 U.S. 1061 (1989)).

So for all these reasons, discrimination is generally NOT a permissible "remedy" for discrimination, contrary to what Kendi claims.

Kendi also relies on inaccurate assumptions. He states that "When I see racial disparities, I see racism." (See Ben Wilterdink, "Racial Disparities and the High Cost of Low Debates," The Independent Institute, May 8, 2018).

It is inaccurate to equate disparities with racism. Racial disparities are often NOT due to racism at all. Asians typically make more money than whites. That's not due to racism. Hispanics live three years longer than whites, on average. That's not due to racism, either. Racial disparities exist everywhere, for reasons other than racism, as the black economist Thomas Sowell explains in his book *Discrimination and Disparities*.

Judges have rejected Kendi's idea that disparities prove discrimination. An appeals court ruled in 2001 that a racial "disparity" in school-discipline rates does not "constitute discrimination," even if most suspended students are black, if the school disciplines students in a colorblind manner. (See *Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 269 F.3d 305, 332 (4th Cir. 2001)).

Similarly, the Supreme Court ruled that racial disparities in who received city contracts did not prove recent discrimination by a city, even though the city was half black, and only a tiny percentage of city contracts went to black-owned businesses. (See *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.* (1989)).

3. Glenn Singleton, author of *Courageous Conversation About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*

Singleton peddles offensive racial stereotypes, claiming that "white talk" is "verbal, impersonal, intellectual" and "task-oriented," while minority talk is "emotional." (See *Race And Education, Discriminations*, May 13, 2006) (quoting the Rocky Mountain News).

That stereotypes minorities by falsely depicting them irrational, illogical, and lazy.

Singleton embarrassed the Seattle Schools in a landmark Supreme Court case, contributing to their losing the case in a 5-to-4 decision. Under Singleton's tutelage, the Seattle Schools posted a bizarre definition of racism on their web site, that depicted planning ahead and individualism as

racist or white traits. (See Harrell, School Web Site Removed: Examples of Racism Sparked Controversy, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, June 2, 2006; National Association of Scholars, *Little Delawares All Over: Diversity Indoctrination, K-12 Branch*, Dec. 7, 2007).

It is very offensive and inaccurate to suggest that planning ahead is a white characteristic that minorities lack.

As the National Association of Scholars notes, "The Seattle Schools taught that 'individualism' is a form of 'cultural racism'; that planning ahead is a white characteristic; that it is racist to expect minorities to exhibit that characteristic; and that only whites, who benefit from 'white privilege' and 'institutional racism,' can be racist. 'These bizarre teachings were ridiculed in opinions by Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Clarence Thomas in their opinions in June 2007 in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. Justice Thomas argued that these and other aspects of the Seattle Schools' obsession with 'white privilege' made it inappropriate to blindly defer to school districts when they use race in student assignment. Yet the Seattle Schools' diversity consultant, Glenn Singleton, far from rethinking his obsessions with 'white privilege' and 'institutionalized racism,' continues to spread his weird racial philosophy." (See National Association of Scholars, *Little Delawares All Over: Diversity Indoctrination, K-12 Branch*, Dec. 7, 2007)).

Supreme Court Justices cited this bizarre definition of racism in striking down the schools' race-conscious student assignment policy. As the Chief Justice noted in his opinion for the court, "Seattle's website formerly described "emphasizing individualism as opposed to a more collective ideology" as a form of "cultural racism," and currently states that the district has no intention "to hold onto unsuccessful concepts such as [a] ... colorblind mentality." (See *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701, 730 n.14 (2007)).

Similarly, Justice Thomas's concurring opinion cited this same material about the school district's pernicious racial theories as a reason that "local school boards should" not "be entrusted with the power to make decisions on the basis of race." As he noted, the "Seattle school district's Website formerly" defined as "cultural racism" useful traits such as "having a future time orientation" – that is, planning ahead -- and "emphasizing individualism as opposed to a more collective ideology." (See *Parents Involved*, 551 U.S. at 781 n.30).

Singleton also embarrassed California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. In 2007, he was hired by O'Connell to give diversity training. O'Connell then was publicly ridiculed after he repeated an offensive stereotype voiced by Glenn Singleton: that blacks, as a people, are loud, and need to have their loudness accommodated in the schools. In fact, many minority students express dismay about how loud and disorderly their classes are, finding that to be a major impediment to learning. They want "simple, elusive quiet" so they can study, as education writer Joanne Jacobs and the *San Francisco Chronicle* have reported. The head of San Francisco's NAACP demanded an apology from O'Connell for spreading this unfounded racial stereotype. (See National Association of Scholars, *Little Delawares All Over: Diversity Indoctrination, K-12 Branch*, Dec. 7, 2007).

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Please make my comments available to the Board of Education prior to its meeting that will discuss the report. Please also make my comments part of the record and part of any public comments posted on the internet. Please also let me know if these comments need to be submitted in a separate attachment (such as a PDF file or Microsoft Word document) to be publicly posted.

Thank you for reviewing my comments,

Hans Bader,

(A lawyer who used to bring civil-rights lawsuits for a living)

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

I have reviewed the report that you are due to consider on September 17. While I wholeheartedly support the goal, I fear that the report reflects a political correctness that has been influenced by the passions of the day. While incorporating African American history is essential in the teaching of history, it is important that it be done objectively and with context to avoid the implication that our founders and those who followed were racists at heart. That obviously is not correct. In the editing section of the report, there is an example "Cultural, economic, and constitutional differences between the North and the South, all of them based in slavery, eventually resulted in the Civil War." To say that all of the cultural and constitutional differences were based in slavery is too generalized and misleading and therefore is inaccurate and biased.

The reports statement that "our understanding of what it takes to adequately teach African American history, demonstrates a need for more robust professional development to equip the Commonwealth's largely White educator workforce to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy that facilitates deeper learning opportunities" clearly implies that white teachers are biased and can't teach African American history with indoctrination. I suspect that many teachers will be insulted by that statement and I fear that it suggests a bias and mindset among those who wrote the report.

Care should be exercised in the make up of the steering committee to ensure that it is balanced and committed to objectivity. I recommend that it include Jon Meacham who has just written a book about the life of John Lewis and who is the chair of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. Monticello's president Leslie Bowman would also make an excellent addition. The work of the Steering Committee and related efforts should be driven by John Adams dictum "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

Bill O'Keefe

Midlothian Virginia

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

No radical theories are to be taught in public schools. Teach only true history that is NOT politically slanted even if some find it offensive. We must not allow politics in schools!

D. Goodman

Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

This is a sad commentary on the state of education in Virginia. It seems that this commission was created with an agenda. I oppose the inclusion of radical race theory in our education system. It does not reflect our history. It is surely not based in scientific fact.

<https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/will-virginia-teach-critical-race-theory-to-kindergartners/#more-62948>

Don Bowler

don@bowler-va.com

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

I hereby submit this comment on the "Report from the Governor's African American History Education Commission" submitted in August 2020.

The report cites a crackpot diversity consultant, Glenn Singleton, as one of its "Scholars and Partners for Collaboration," and cites his book in "Resources to Support Implementation."

Mr. Singleton promotes racist stereotypes that harm both blacks and whites, in different ways. For example, he has claimed that "white talk" is "verbal, impersonal, intellectual" and "task-oriented," while "color commentary" (minority speech) is "emotional." (See Arnold Ahlert, "Mayhem Rules in St. Paul Schools," Patriot Post, June 8, 2015).

That makes minorities seem anti-intellectual, emotional, and unable to follow through on tasks. And it makes whites seem cold, heartless, and unfeeling.

That is not a message that should be instilled in teachers and students in our schools. People should not be taught that superficial characteristics such as skin color dictate people's personalities or character.

Mr. Singleton also depicted planning ahead -- "having a future time orientation" -- as "cultural racism." (See "Little Delawares All Over: Diversity Indoctrination, K-12 Branch," National Association of Scholars, December 7, 2007).

This is a harmful message to give to our children. Children should be encouraged to plan ahead and get their studies and projects done in advance, not view planning or studying as "acting white."

I also am concerned about including Dr. Ibram Kendi and his book "How to Be an Anti-Racist." My understanding is that Dr. Kendi valorizes Angela Davis in that book. Davis is notorious for saying that Communist Russia was right to lock up dissidents protesting political and religious repression. Davis first became famous when her guns were used in an armed takeover of a courtroom in Marin County, California, in which four people were killed (although she was acquitted of participation in the takeover).

Greetings,

I am a recently retired 27 year veteran Loudoun County high school history teacher. I routinely have presided over the Briar Woods HS black history month assembly. I have led countless field trips to black history and black cultural sites. Each year I have exceeded the mandate on teaching black history to 11th graders by enlightening students to the past of black achievement that is unspoken and forgotten now. I am married to a "POC" and I have a biracial daughter. By the way the Whitehead's do not think or operate in the manner of race identity or politics, we consider ourselves Americans and Virginians and damned proud of it.

I 100% reject the Report on Black History that was published in August of 2020. In particular I call out key sources to the guiding light of the report:

Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (understanding the impact of white socialization in our culture) • Equity Literacy Institute (provides free self-paced mini courses for a primer on equity and equity literacy) • Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* • Zaretta Hammond, *Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain* • Ibram Kendi, *How to be an Anti-Racist* (provides strategies to deconstruct racism) • Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* • Bettina Love, *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* • Django Paris, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* • Glenn Singleton, *Courageous Conversation About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (race identity) • University of Virginia School of Education, A Center for Race and Public Education in the South • Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Education

The sources you have used are Un-American, Racist, drenched in critical race theory, and promote the antidote of anti-racism which is inherently racist. I reject that my hard earned tax dollars are being used to build up a permanently divided society by means of pedagogy.

My new stated purpose in retirement is to expose the Marxism and lies in modern educational leadership. Educational political and bureaucratic figures such as yourself are on notice. You will be called out, exposed, and you will provide a contrite apology to every Virginian for this unforgivable assault on America and the great state of Virginia. I am,

Yours in service

James Wyatt Whitehead V

The Final Report of the Commission on African American History elicited public reactions that I would like to share with the Board of Education, through this comment.

One is a commentary at CNS News by Hans Bader. The other is a commentary at Bacon's Rebellion by James Sherlock. I think at least some of the criticisms they make have merit, so I am reproducing them below.

1. <https://cnsnews.com/commentary/hans-bader/will-virginia-teach-critical-race-theory-kindergartners>

Commentary

Will Virginia Teach Critical Race Theory to Kindergartners?

By Hans Bader | September 14, 2020 | 10:12am EDT

This week, the Virginia Board of Education will meet to discuss a report that may promote destructive racial ideologies -- the August 2020 "Final Report of the Virginia Commission on African American History Education in the Commonwealth."

Bacon's Rebellion writer James Sherlock laments "the fiercely negative approach to the teaching of African American history offered by the Governor's Commission." He says it's "report is critical race theory brought to life. It represents the most thoroughly negative view of America's history and pessimism about its future as a nation that I have ever encountered in a government document anywhere. Many universities have had success at radicalization. This recommends an earlier start. Kindergarten."

After reading his assessment, I read the report and was dismayed by it as well. Three authors cited in the report -- Robin DiAngelo, Ibram Kendi, and Glenn Singleton -- give harmful advice which, if followed, will lead to civil-rights violations and spread racism in our schools.

So in comments I emailed to the Board of Education at BOE@doe.virginia.gov, I objected to their inclusion. They are currently listed in Appendix F of the report, as "Scholars and Partners for Collaboration," and their works are cited as "Resources to Support Implementation."

1. Robin DiAngelo, author of "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism"

The African American professor John McWhorter notes in The Atlantic that DiAngelo's book is "a racist tract" that is "dehumanizing" and "condescending" to black people, even as it depicts "all whites" as racist. As he explains in detail, "DiAngelo's book is replete with claims that are either plain wrong or bizarrely disconnected from reality."

2. Glenn Singleton, author of "Courageous Conversation About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools"

Singleton, a diversity trainer, peddles offensive racial stereotypes, claiming that "white talk" is "verbal, impersonal, intellectual" and "task-oriented," while minority talk is "emotional." That stereotypes minorities as being simpleminded and irrational.

Singleton embarrassed the Seattle Schools in a landmark discrimination case, which the district lost in a 5-to-4 decision by the Supreme Court. Under the guidance of Singleton's diversity-training firm, the Seattle Schools adopted a bizarre definition of racism that depicted planning ahead and individualism as racist or white traits.

As the National Association of Scholars notes, "the Seattle Schools taught that 'individualism' is a form of 'cultural racism;' that planning ahead is a white characteristic; that it is racist to expect minorities to exhibit that characteristic; and that only whites, who benefit from 'white privilege' and 'institutional racism,' can be racist. These bizarre teachings were ridiculed in opinions by Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Clarence Thomas in their opinions in June 2007 in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. Justice Thomas argued that these and other aspects of the Seattle Schools' obsession with "white privilege" made it inappropriate to blindly defer to school districts when they use race in student assignment. Yet the Seattle Schools' diversity consultant, Glenn Singleton, far from rethinking his obsessions with "white privilege" and "institutionalized racism," continues to spread his weird racial philosophy.

Supreme Court justices cited this bizarre definition of racism in striking down Seattle's race-conscious student assignment policy. The chief justice did so in his footnote 14 of his ruling. Similarly, Justice Thomas's concurring opinion cited this definition as a reason that "local school boards should" not "be entrusted with the power to make decisions on the basis of race." As he noted in footnote 30, the Seattle Schools defined as "cultural racism" the useful trait of "having a future time orientation" – that is, planning ahead.

Singleton also embarrassed California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. In 2007, he was hired by O'Connell to give diversity training. O'Connell then was publicly ridiculed after he repeated an offensive stereotype voiced by Glenn Singleton: that blacks, as a people, are loud, and need to have their loudness accommodated in the schools. In fact, many minority students express dismay about how loud and disorderly their classes are, finding that to be a major impediment to learning. The head of San Francisco's NAACP demanded an apology from O'Connell for spreading this unfounded racial stereotype.

3. Ibram Kendi, author of "How to Be an Antiracist"

Kendi's book advocates racial discrimination that is currently forbidden by law. Kendi states, "The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination."

Such discrimination violates the Constitution, which regards discrimination and other racial classifications as a "last resort," not as the "only remedy" for racist discrimination. (See *Bartlett v. Strickland* (2009)).

To the Supreme Court, the remedy for "present discrimination" is to compensate the victim or punish the discriminator, not to discriminate in the future against whites. Past discrimination is not supposed to be "remedied" by discrimination against whites, except in unusual circumstances

(i.e., if there is evidence that widespread discrimination was recently intentionally committed by the government).

The Supreme Court explained in a 1989 decision that racial preferences in favor of minorities are not a proper remedy by the government for past discrimination, where the past discrimination was "societal," rather than by the government itself. (See *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.* (1989)).

Racial preferences are also not a proper remedy for "individual" instances of racism, that don't amount to a "systemic pattern of discrimination." (See *Coral Construction Co. v. King County* (1991))

Unintentional discrimination is also not supposed to be remedied through racial preferences. (See, e.g., *People Who Care v. Rockford Board of Education* (1997); *Michigan Road Builders v. Milliken* (1987), *aff'd* (1989)).

Discrimination that happened more than twenty years ago usually doesn't justify a racial preference, either. (See, e.g., *Brunet v. Columbus* (1993); *Hammon v. Barry* (1987)).

So for all these reasons, discrimination is generally not a permissible "remedy" for discrimination, contrary to what Kendi claims.

Kendi also relies on inaccurate assumptions. He states that "when I see racial disparities, I see racism." But it is wrong to equate disparities with racism. Racial disparities are often not due to racism at all. For example, Asians typically make more money than whites. Hispanics live three years longer than whites, on average. Racial disparities exist everywhere, often for reasons unrelated to racism, as the black economist Thomas Sowell explains in his book "Discrimination and Disparities."

Judges have rejected Kendi's idea that disparities automatically prove discrimination. An appeals court ruled in 2001 that a racial "disparity" in school-discipline rates does not "constitute discrimination," if school policies are colorblind.

Hans Bader practices law in Washington, D.C. After studying economics and history at the University of Virginia and law at Harvard, he practiced civil-rights, international-trade, and constitutional law. He also once worked in the Education Department.

2. <https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/teaching-african-american-history-in-virginia/>

Teaching African American History in Virginia

Posted on September 12, 2020 by sherlockj | 49 Comments

By James C. Sherlock

I fully support integrating African American history into the broad sweep of history taught in the nation's primary and secondary schools.

On September 17, there will be a Virginia Board of Education meeting with an agenda item titled "Report from the Governor's African American History Education Commission, August 2020" (the Report).

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

I will offer here a positive, optimistic approach.

But first, the fiercely negative approach to the teaching of African American history offered by the Governor's Commission.

ministers of despair

I just finished reading the Report that will be considered on September 17. I urge you to read it. See postscript for how to comment for the record to the VBOE by 5 PM on Wednesday, September 16.

It represents perhaps the most profoundly pessimistic recounting possible both of America itself and of the way to incorporate African American history into the curricula into Virginia schools.

The Report is critical race theory brought to life. It represents the most thoroughly negative view of America's history and pessimism about its future as a nation that I have ever encountered in a government document anywhere.

Many universities have had success at radicalization. This recommends an earlier start. Kindergarten.

If I were a Cuban American who escaped Castro, a Jewish American who escaped Hitler or Stalin, or an African immigrant who recently arrived from Sudan, or a recent arrival from Venezuela, I would simply be mystified.

If I were an active teacher, I would refuse.

Teachers work every day to impart knowledge that leaves students looking forward to not only to their next day of school but to the lives they have in front of them.

The report uses the term white 75 times. Once is for someone's last name. Every other time it is used as a pejorative, often in reference to white teachers who the Report suggests need initial and ongoing re-orientation to continue in their jobs.

"Ms. Johnson identified the importance of in-depth professional development, especially considering that most teachers are white women. Mr. Hairston agreed and added that students also should be encouraged to read and use primary sources."

"Ms. Jennings stressed equity as a major component of helping white teachers gain the capacity to properly teach African American history and engage with all their students. Mr. Girvan added that white teachers may find the content of African American history uncomfortable and so may go past it quickly or explain it poorly."

And that was from the "Educator Panel," not public comment.

The inescapable takeaway is that white teachers are not to be trusted without re-programming. Even so, students cannot rely on white teachers to tell them the truth. Students must consult "primary sources," identified in the Report's Appendix F as the works of America's critical race theory gurus.

Enough.

An Optimistic Alternative

I offer a profoundly different alternative, a way to teach that will bring optimism to students and teachers while still bringing forth the facts of slavery and Jim Crow.

My recommendation is to offer such teaching in context of the lives of African Americans who overcame those adversities to succeed. Tell optimistic stories of success while ensuring that students learn the daunting, and in the case of slavery, inhumane conditions they overcame.

This approach will impart lessons of the past, positive and negative, while leaving black children proud of their heritage and white children proud that America produced such men and women and determined to do better in their own lives.

Examples

Start with the life and times of Martin Luther King.

The life of Thurgood Marshall July 2, 1908 – January 24, 1993. He was without question the greatest African American lawyer and jurist in American history.

The life of the former slave Clara Brown (c. 1800–1885) who spent time working the fields in Virginia. She married another enslaved person when she was eighteen and together they had four children. In 1835, Brown's family was broken apart when they were all sold to different slave owners. At the age of 56, she was granted her freedom. She went west on a wagon train and ultimately became a community leader, philanthropist and aided settlement of former slaves during the time of Colorado's Gold Rush. She was known as the 'Angel of the Rockies' and made her mark as Colorado's first black settler and a prosperous entrepreneur.

The history of Black owned companies like McKissack & McKissack, a 114-year old architectural and engineering that was founded in 1905 in Nashville, Tenn., by Moses McKissack. It was the first African-American-owned architectural firm in the United States and is the oldest African American-owned architecture and engineering firm in the country. It seemingly built half of Nashville and is now headquartered in New York City. As of 2013, the family-owned successor companies were reported to have more than 150 professional staff members and over \$15 billion in projects. Cheryl McKissack Daniel is the current President & CEO.

The lives of Black economists including the prominent scholars Walter Williams of George Mason University and Thomas Sowell of UCLA and the Hoover Institution.

Williams, born March 31, 1936, grew up in a single-parent household in a poor section of Philadelphia. He was raised by his mother, who was a high school dropout. The family spent time on welfare, and eventually moved into the Richard Allen public housing project.

Sowell, born June 30, 1930 and whose father died before he was born, was the son of a maid. His *Up From the Projects – An Autobiography* is an inspiration to anyone fortunate enough to read it.

The lives of these two men will teach American children more of the struggles of growing up poor and black in post-WW II projects that anything in the Report.

The life of the Black business leader Robert L. Johnson, co-founder of BET, the first African American billionaire. He was born in 1946 in Hickory, Mississippi, the ninth out of ten children to Edna and Archie Johnson. His mother was a schoolteacher and his father was a farmer. He earned a master's degree from Princeton. BET was the first black-controlled company listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1991.

The lives of STEM heroines like Ursula Burns of Xerox and the great Katherine Johnson.

In 2014, Forbes rated Ms. Burns, then CEO of XEROX, the 22nd most powerful woman in the world. She was a leader of the STEM program of the White House from 2009 to 2016, and head of the President's Export Council from 2015 until 2016. Burns was raised by a single mother in the Baruch Houses, a New York city housing project. Both of her parents were Panamanian immigrants. She attended Cathedral High School, a Catholic all-girls school on East 56th Street in New York. She has a Master of Science in mechanical engineering from Columbia.

The great NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson was born in 1918 in White Sulphur Springs, W.V. Because Greenbrier County did not offer African-American schooling past the 8th grade, her parents sent her to high school in Institute, W.V. After graduating from high school at 14, Johnson enrolled at West Virginia State, a historically black college. As a student, she took every math course offered by the college. Multiple professors mentored her, including the chemist and mathematician She graduated summa cum laude in 1937, with degrees in mathematics and French, at age 18. She and her family lived in Newport News from 1953. Her calculations of orbital mechanics as a NASA employee were critical to the success of the first and subsequent U.S. crewed spaceflights. See the acclaimed movie Hidden Figures for both her struggles and her successes.

The life of Richmond's black businesswoman and teacher Maggie Walker (July 1864-Dec. 1934). Walker was the first African-American woman to charter a bank and serve as its president in the United States. Her mother was a former slave and her father was a butler.

The life and times of James Derham (1762—1802), born into slavery in Philadelphia, was the first African American to practice medicine in America. He was owned by three doctors in the Philadelphia area. In one of the households he learned to read and write. In 1788 he was sold to a prominent surgeon in New Orleans, and the surgeon encouraged Derham to learn medicine. He showed great aptitude and learned surgery. He gained his freedom and was permitted to practice among the freemen and slaves of New Orleans. He was a successful physician and, necessary in New Orleans, fluent in French, English, and Spanish. He would have been a godsend to African-Americans who would not have been allowed to visit a white doctor. Though James Derham's skills were well-known and his practice flourished, New Orleans passed regulations in 1801 that prevented him from practicing medicine since he had no formal medical degree.

The life and times of James McCune Smith (1813-1865). Smith was an American physician, apothecary, abolitionist, and author in New York City. He was the first African American to hold

a medical degree and graduated at the top in his class at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. After his return to the United States, he became the first African American to run a pharmacy in this nation. He has been most well-known for his leadership as an abolitionist: a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, with Frederick Douglass he helped start the National Council of Colored People in 1853, the first permanent national organization for blacks. Douglass called Smith “the single most important influence on his life.”

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was an escaped slave. Harvard Professor of English and Civil War historian John Stauffer tells this story, reflecting on the friendship between the Douglass and President Lincoln.

When Frederick Douglass came to Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural reception in 1865, policemen blocked his way — until the President came to welcome him.

“Here comes my friend Douglass,” Lincoln said, taking Douglass by the hand. “There is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours.”

Douglas published “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself.” in Boston in 1845. His last autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, was first published in 1881 and revised in 1892, three years before his death. The book covers events both during and after the Civil War. He was also a believer in dialogue and in making alliances across racial and ideological divides, as well as in the liberal values of the U.S. Constitution. Douglass was a firm believer in the equality of all peoples, be they white, black, female, Native American, or Chinese immigrants.

Surely there are those among us can find enough history in the lives of those great Black Americans to serve as the canvas upon which African American history is painted for Virginia's primary and secondary students.

If they cannot, we need better historians.

Based on the Report that parroted much of current theory of education in the humanities and social sciences, we also need better education schools.

A Higher Authority

I will finish with excerpts from a speech in which Frederick Douglass challenged the opinions of most observers, including most African Americans, by advocating the acceptance of Chinese immigration.

I quote from that speech because Douglass could have been speaking of the people that wrote the Report.

“It is thought by many, and said by some, that this Republic has already seen its best days; that the historian may now write the story of its decline and fall.

Two classes of men are just now especially afflicted with such forebodings. The first are those who are croakers by nature—the men who have a taste for funerals, and especially National funerals. They never see the bright side of anything and probably never will. . .

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

But the American people ... have a right to be impatient and indignant at those among ourselves who turn the most hopeful portents into omens of disaster, and make themselves the ministers of despair when they should be those of hope, and help cheer on the country in the new and grand career of justice upon which it has now so nobly and bravely entered. Of errors and defects we certainly have not less than our full share, enough to keep the reformer awake, the statesman busy, and the country in a pretty lively state of agitation for some time to come. Perfection is an object to be aimed at by all, but it is not an attribute of any form of Government. Neutrality is the law for all.

Something different, something better, or something worse may come, but so far as respects our present system and form of Government, and the altitude we occupy, we need not shrink from comparison with any nation of our times..."

Frederick Douglass, Boston, 1869

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Good afternoon,

As the leaders of Social Studies education in Arlington Public Schools (Arlington, VA), we wanted to write in support of the standards and professional learning recommendations from the Governors Committee on African American History in Virginia. We strongly advocate for continued work and change to ensure that the social studies standards reflect a full and accurate depiction of the history of our state and nation from the perspective of all groups and peoples in the United States.

Thank you,

Kerri Hirsch (Social Studies Supervisor, K-12)



ROBERT RUSSA

MOTON MUSEUM A Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a museum professional, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, unanimously adopted statement regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of agenda items C and D, the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.*

In your own words, we support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." The Robert Russa Moton Museum is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, our partner institution Longwood University, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship. The work of the Commission on African American History Education in Virginia elevates our mission here at the Robert Russa Moton Museum to ensure that students understand Prince Edward County's role in advancing civil rights in education for the nation, and our desire to see that history along with the often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and the country shared more broadly. We strongly ask for your unanimous adoption.

Best,

Executive Director
Robert Russa Moton Museum

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a high school teacher, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of [agenda items](#) C and D, the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#).*

In your own words, we support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” Our school is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Warm regards,

Holly Wilkewitz Means MAEd

Stonewall Jackson High School

US&VA Government, Political Science

Social Studies Dept. Chair|DE Instructor, LFCC|Member, VCSSL

540.477.2732 -- Ext. 11208

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a teacher educator and associate professor of graduate education at the University of Richmond, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two [agenda items](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

In your own words, we support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" As a teacher educator, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

Bob Spires, PhD

Graduate Education

University of Richmond

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

I am the parent of two former Henrico County Public School students who was actively engaged in ensuring that the education they received was complete and accurate. There were many instances in which I felt that the curriculum fell short and was compelled to step in and supplement (and even correct) what they were being taught in school. The COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH proposed recommendations go a long way towards remedying that situation. It is good first step but could still go further.

I see no reason why these edits should not be adopted as written with future plans for an even more broadly inclusive curriculum. I look forward to hearing that these recommendations were adopted with 100% support of the committee.

Carla Strothers

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a former public school U.S. history teacher and current teacher educator, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, unanimously adopted statement regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of agenda items C and D, the proposed First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.

I support and request that you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." As a teacher educator and history education researcher, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship. As a citizen and father of school-age children, I am thankful for the steps that are being taken to strengthen our educational system.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Yoder, Ph.D.--

Assistant Professor of Teacher Education

Director of Graduate Teacher Education

Program Coordinator of Secondary Education

Eastern Mennonite University

1200 Park Road

Harrisonburg, VA 22802

(540) 432-4147

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As Executive Vice President and Chief Curator at James Madison's Montpelier, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two [agenda items](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia*.

In your own words, we support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" James Madison's Montpelier is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

Elizabeth Chew
Executive Vice President and Chief Curator
echew@montpelier.org
540-308-2085

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a retired educator and current school board member, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, statement which was unanimously adopted regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of agenda item C and D, the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

I support and now ask that you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” Our local educators and school board are ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

--

Karen Whetzel, Shenandoah County Public Schools

**9424 Shenandoah Drive
New Market, VA 22844
540-740-8589**

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a teacher educator, I was encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of [agenda items C and D](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

I support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” As a teacher educator, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teacher candidates, school communities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship. I just taught a related lesson today, and college students were amazed at what they did not know about their own state and regional history.

Best,

Beth M. Lehman

Beth Lehman

Assistant Professor
Teacher Education
Bridgewater College
Phone: 540-828-5352 | bridgewater.edu

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and members of the Virginia Board of Education:

As a history professor at a Virginia school (Eastern Mennonite University) I was encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of [agenda items C and D](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

Since I began teaching in Harrisonburg, Virginia in 2001, I have worked hard to research and develop a strong curriculum within our university classes to emphasize the local African American history. It is a complex history--one that often raises passions and concerns, and one that certainly reverberates down through the generations. I was thus thrilled when I learned of your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" I am committed to continuing to work toward that goal as well, and I'm currently part of a local group of educators and African American community leaders who are brainstorming new ways to promote this important history to students of all levels, as well as to the community at large. Please do continue to support these efforts through the passage of the above noted agenda items. It's an important thing to do, and, indeed, the right thing to do.

All the best, - Mark Metzler Sawin

--

Mark Metzler Sawin, PhD

Professor of History & Director of University Honors



Eastern Mennonite University 540.432.4468

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

I am writing in support of two elements of the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia: the *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History* and *Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations*. It is essential that, as you have said, "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." As Director and now co-Director of the University of Virginia's Center for the Liberal Arts I have sought to see that my colleagues and I contribute towards that end, and I hope very much that the Board will make these strong commitments to support such work.

Sincerely,

Victor Luftig, Professor and Co-Director, Center for the Liberal Arts

Interim Director of Writing and Rhetoric, University of Virginia

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Emily, Based on further reading of Item E on Thursday's agenda, I submit the following additional input to the BOE.

I urge you to review a March 2020 presentation by Patty S. Pitts, Assistant Superintendent Teacher Education and Licensure Virginia Department of Education March 9, 2020. She discusses both reasons for teachers leaving Virginia public schools and the shortfalls in recruitment of their replacements. Perhaps she can update it for you before you vote on Thursday on Item E on your agenda.

It is yours to judge from Ms. Pitts' March presentation the prospects for teacher hiring and retention in light of the proposed policies to be voted on September 17.

Her data did not include the retirements and resignations since COVID, and it certainly did not include the recent onslaught of critical race theory initiatives that are washing over public schools in this state.

Consider these data in the context of the new expectations of teachers as reflected in recent initiatives by the School Boards of

- Virginia Beach - policies similar to the ones before the Board of Education,
- Albemarle County - grading policies that eliminate homework, class participation and test grades from consideration in overall grading,
- Loudon County and others.

The Professional Development Recommendations of the *Commission on African American History Education in Virginia* are:

- Revise Virginia's Teacher Evaluation Regulations and Virginia's Uniform Performance standards for School Leaders to include cultural proficiency efficacy.
- Require every Virginia educator to certify that they have enrolled in Cultural Competency Professional Development by 2022.
- Allocate funding and personnel resources to develop and implement comprehensive professional development in the areas of cultural competency and African American History content for Virginia educators.
- Mandate certification (Continuing Education Units) in African American History for all holders of education licenses issued by the Virginia Department of Education (this includes initial licensure and renewals).
- Amend requirements for licensure endorsements in History/Social Science to require evidence of course study in African American History.
- Require a credit in African American History as a new requirement for graduation in Virginia. The new elective course in African American History developed by VDOE and WHRO could be used to fulfill this requirement.

Those recommendations are made in a backdrop in which teachers are already in some districts attending mandatory training in which they are berated for their "white privilege".

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

The students hurt most by these policies will be the very ones they are targeted to help.

Students and their parents of every race and ethnicity with high educational ambitions and the means to seek alternatives will abandon the public schools in droves. The supply of private schools, learning pods and home schooling will rise to meet the demand. Meanwhile, a great many teachers simply will not put up with policies that demean them and that, as in the Albemarle County grading policy, challenge their integrity.

If you adopt these policies, you will be in effect betting that with these policies the demand for public school education will fall to match the falling supply of qualified teachers.

That will be your legacy.

Best Regards,

James C. Sherlock

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a teacher educator, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of [agenda items C and D](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

In your own words, I support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” I support efforts of teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

Cathy Smeltzer Erb, Ph.D.

Chair/Professor/Jesse T. Byler Endowed Chair
Undergraduate Teacher Education
Eastern Mennonite University
Office: 540.432.4638

Cell: 540.560.3046





COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia

P.O. BOX 810

STAUNTON, VIRGINIA 24402-0810

Telephone: (540) 332-7850

FAX: (540) 332-9989

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a State educational institution committed to the goal of sharing a full and inclusive story of Virginia's past, as well as providing a forum for guests and students to consider issues relating to their experiences today, we are encouraged by your June 18, 2020, unanimously adopted statement and efforts to ensure a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system. We are also pleased by the work of the Governor's Commission of African-American History Education in Virginia. The Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

I am writing to you in support of agenda items C and D, the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.*

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Megan H. Newman".

Megan H. Newman, PhD
Executive Director

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a historian and associate professor at the University of Richmond, I was deeply inspired by your June 18, 2020, unanimously adopted statement regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education. Your statement seeks to guarantee high-quality education for every child by eliminating the types of barriers that have too often been endemic to education in the Commonwealth of Virginia—namely, the historical legacy and present realities of racial and socioeconomic inequities,

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two agenda items, the proposed First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.

As you stated, we support and now request that you follow through on the commitment to ensuring "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." The University of Richmond is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, and universities. We are also committed to working with our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia (and future Virginia students) will enjoy an equitable, robust and place-based education that prepares them to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and active citizenship.

Best, Julian Maxwell Hayter, Ph.D.

Historian and Associate Professor of Leadership Studies

University of Richmond Jepson School of the Leadership Studies

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

REF: Commission on African American History Education

Sept. 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As the President of the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, adopted statement regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system. This is something we feel very strongly about.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of agenda items C and D, the proposed First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.

When a group of 3rd graders study and visit Long's Chapel, an historic African American Chapel built in 1869, it is not "special", it is another history lesson. We want everyone to grow up with a better understanding of this history. Our organization is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship in all walks of life.

Yours,

Robin Lyttle

President

robinlyttle@valleyblackheritage.org

www.valleyblackheritage.org



Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and members of the Board:

I am a long-time educator, first with 15 years teaching social science in grades 7-12, followed by 28 years helping K-12 teachers use geographic information systems (GIS) in instruction. I am heartened by your unanimous statement of June 18, 2020, regarding "systemic racism, racial justice, and education," and commitment "to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system."

I write to you in support of two agenda items: (a) the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History*, and (b) *Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia*.

In four decades (the last three with ever stronger data and processing support) of studying conditions, patterns, and relationships, I've seen that only a holistic perspective, particularly including data and views of those least empowered, yields true understanding.

I embrace your commitment to ensuring that "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." Esri corporately and I personally support these efforts, and will continue working with educators and specialists, across K-12 and higher education, and with partner organizations, to ensure the students of Virginia engage in a rich, full, place-based education, preparing them effectively for a lifetime of active citizenship.

Sincerely,

Charlie Fitzpatrick

Esri K12 Education Manager

2001 15th St N #1403

Arlington, VA 22201 USA

e: cfitzpatrick@esri.com

<http://www.esri.com/schools>

Hi Ms. Noles,

Thank you for the reply and for the email about the board meeting this week. I've been reading the board's recommendations and wanted to make sure I was calm before responding. Much of what I have read in the recommendations is very troubling as it appears to be a rewriting of our history not based in fact, but from a political agenda.

The most egregious offense is the use of "all of them based on slavery". This is absolutely false. It is well known that Virginia had planned on staying neutral during the Civil War. It was only after President Lincoln ordered us to send troops to fight against the South that we voted to secede. This is a matter of fact and shows states rights played a vital role in the decision. It doesn't add up that slavery was the only reason. I fear politics has clouded their judgement.

Anti-Racism definition. This is false and does not come close to defining the America I grew up in and live in. I remember asking my mom in 1988 when Doug Williams became the first Black American Quarterback to win the Super Bowl the following question: What's the big deal, he a quarterback and others have won? She just told me I was too young to understand. I only saw him as a quarterback, not as a black quarterback. This commission is telling me it's not possible for me to see him this way. In my lifetime, the large majority of Americans my age and younger do not have a racist bone in their entire mind or body. I completely condemn this statement. There has been no legal racism in the United States in my lifetime and I'm almost 53. There are racists, but they are few and far between in this country anymore.

Require African American History to be taught. I totally agree, but not the way it is presented in this report. I would eliminate Black History Month altogether and teach just as American History. I would also get rid of the term African American as it is exclusionary and infers that blacks are less than American. My warehouse manager has worked for our family for 30 years. She hates being called African-American. She said I was born here and that I'm an American. I totally agree with this statement. Also, her family is a descendant of slavery. It is actually how they have 40 acres of land her mom lives on today. The slave owner gave the plot of land to her family when he died. It doesn't forgive him for owning a person, but it did help the descendants greatly and will probably make them millionaires when they sell the property after her mom's death, hopefully a long time from now.

PG 21 - Conclusion - Everyone in the World knows we had slavery and that we fought a war that killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. 360,222 Union soldiers died to eradicate slavery from our Country. 1 American dead for every 6 slaves freed. Hundreds of thousands more injured. Millions have fought to make this a better country and make it the greatest country in the World. This really upsets me that this commission only focuses on slavery. The tremendous progress we have made is being undone by people that must only have absolute hate in their heart for this country. If they can't see the tremendous strides we have made over the last 150 years, then I can only feel compassion for them as they have been told a lie.

PG 31 - Fully support the 2nd Parent and Community Stakeholder Panel part (2nd one on the page). Teaching the contributions of Black Americans is essential. This is actually what I thought the commission would focus on and is greatly needed, but sadly it looks like slavery and condemning the country as racist appears to be the #1 agenda item. Frederick Douglas, Sgt. William Harvey Carney, Thomas Sowell, Senator Hiram Revels, and countless more should be held up as great examples of Black Americans. There are 100,000's more that can be used. All of them loved this country and wanted to make it better. Most of this commission report would have you believe the opposite.

PG 31 - Holding judgement on the final item on the page. I am for recruiting minority teachers as long as it doesn't become a quota based on population representation. All should be qualified and no one should be held to a lower or higher standard as all people are capable of achieving the highest degree. As for professional development, as long as not indoctrination into the theory that all Whites are racist and this country is racist, then I am for it. The teaching should shine a light on all the great contributions by Black Americans and the contributions that made them love this country.

Other notes without pages:

I saw the commission want to teach about Africa and the beginnings. This is great, but please don't leave out that the Ottoman Empire enslaved whites in greater numbers than blacks in America. Thomas Sowell provides some insightful commentary about slavery in the chapter titled "Twisted History" in the Thomas Sowell Reader. This is at the end and very important if facts are important.

It seems all the racism is stated towards only blacks in our education. No mention that Italians Immigrants were the target of the largest lynching in American History. The majority of the Christopher Columbus statues were put up as an apology to the Italian immigrants for that lynching. There is always mention of Asian Americans being jailed in concentration camps in WW2, but barely a mention of German Americans and Italian Americans that suffered the same fate.

Juneteenth - Making this the end of slavery in America is a downright lie. Slavery existed in America until ratification of the 13th Amendment. Juneteenth only applies to Texas. It is absurd any educator would use this in a Virginia history book as it has no bearing on Virginia. Using February 1868 for Virginia ratification as the end of slavery in our state or December 1868 when the Amendment was ratified and became part of the Constitution is correct.

Removing Pocahontas under 1.1f. Why remove Pocahontas? Seems very revisionist. Why is there such a need to drive a wedge between America and Native Americans? There are absolute facts that atrocities happened, but also facts where Colonists and Indians helped each other.

2.5a - Martin Luther King absolutely advocated for all people to be treated fairly. I'm fine with the additional language, but this should not be removed.

VS.3e - Removing that they were indentured servants when first arrived is a lie of omission. They absolutely were indentured servants. It took an activist judge to declare the first slave in the Americas. Incidentally, the first slave holder was a black man. Why leave that out as it is an important fact?

VS.7a - This should not be removed as it is correct as written and is essential to know why the two different systems existed at the time.

USII-1h - Absurd to delete this. Why are you afraid to teach the amendments that ended slavery, provided for American Citizenship, etc. and showed the country was making progress towards a more just society? Is it to ignore this fact as it doesn't allow the false narrative that we have improved every year towards a more just society?

Confederate History: This should not be reduced to just slavery. Robert E. Lee has been vilified, but no one mentions the fact that he was against leaving the Union. Only after Virginia voted to secede, did he agree to become General for the Confederacy. His love for Virginia was more important than his personal opinion. For this, his own state now condemns him while conveniently forgetting they were the ones that ordered him into battle. I'm fine with saying he remained silent, but to add "did not encourage" puts a much more negative tone that is not needed.

USII.3c: I would change recommendation to add the part in red: After his death (and against his wishes), Lee became a symbol. It's a known fact he was against statues and thought unifying as a country was more important.

I did not see Stonewall Jackson mentioned, but he should continue to be honored. He built a school in Virginia to teach slaves how to read and write when doing so could have caused him to be killed. From the Chicago Tribune:

Before the Civil War, in the state of Virginia, Stonewall Jackson broke the law every Sunday. For that, many slaves and black freedmen in Lexington, Va., revered him and considered him a hero of the African-American community. At that time, according to Virginia law, it was illegal to teach African-Americans to read and write. However, Jackson believed that everyone deserved to be educated and established the Lexington Presbyterian Church Sunday School in 1855, where together with his wife, he taught African-American children to read and write.

Even after he'd left Lexington to join the Civil War, Jackson never forgot his students; and, sent money to them and the church school, until he was killed in the war. Stonewall Jackson during the Civil War was a leading advocate for thousands of black Confederate soldiers, as corroborated by a member of Abraham Lincoln's Cabinet. Dr. Lewis H. Steiner, the chief inspector of the U.S. Sanitary Commission — today's equivalent of the Environmental Protection Agency — said in 1862, he saw over 3,000 well-armed black Confederate soldiers in Stonewall Jackson's army in Frederick, Md., and that those soldiers were "manifestly an integral portion of the Southern Confederate Army." (Steiner Report, New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1862, pp. 10-11.)

In this era of taking down Confederate memorials, in Roanoke, Va., there's one at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, where since 1892, for 125 years, Stonewall Jackson has been memorialized in a stained-glass window. That's not a big surprise considering he was a famous Confederate general and a Virginian — that is, until you meet its African-American congregation. Third-generation member Joyce Bolden says the window is not about Gen. Jackson, but Jackson the man, who before the war led a Bible study for his slaves — including the parents of an early pastor. “This was a monument to the future of the African American race,” she said. “Stonewall Jackson was as a human being and as a man of Christ, of faith. He defied all the laws of the South by educating his slaves. He taught them to read and write.”

The Department of Education should honor this Stonewall Jackson (the man) while teaching Stonewall Jackson (The General) was fighting for the South. The full article was written in the Chicago Tribune and can be viewed here: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/os-ed-do-not-rename-stonewall-jackson-school-front-burner-20180314-story.html>

I'm starting to get upset again seeing all the places of disagreement I have with the recommendations. There are just so many falsehoods in this document that I would think it was written by Nazi Germany, Communist Russia or the Communist Chinese.

Honestly, It's like the commission didn't even listen to the students who said slavery was the only focus of education for Black Americans and that they wanted more positive history included about their race and country. Read the public comments and 50% of the comments basically read this way.

It's time to uplift Americans by focusing on the people who have worked so hard on making this a colorblind society and improving it for all. We have basically achieved that. All we need is our press and one party to stop living in the 1800's and realize America is the land of opportunity for all people of all colors, races and nationalities. How else do you explain everyone trying to get into the country. No one is trying to get into Cuba. They all want to come here.

I have so many more points I would love to address, but I've already written a lot and need to calm down from reviewing this astonishing proposed rewrite of our history. Thank you for reading my email and I hope you will read the below from the great Thomas Sowell.

Ed Boak

Nokesville, VA

Of all the tragic facts about the history of slavery, the most astonishing to an American today is that, although slavery was a worldwide institution for thousands of years, nowhere in the world was slavery a controversial issue prior to the 18th century. People of every race and color were enslaved – and enslaved others. White people were still being bought and sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire, decades after American blacks were freed.

Everyone hated the idea of being a slave but few had any qualms about enslaving others. Slavery was just not an issue, not even among intellectuals, much less among political

leaders, until the 18th century – and then it was an issue only in Western civilization. Among those who turned against slavery in the 18th century were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and other American leaders. You could research all of the 18th century Africa or Asia or the Middle East without finding any comparable rejection of slavery there. But who is singled out for scathing criticism today? American leaders of the 18th century.

Deciding that slavery was wrong was much easier than deciding what to do with millions of people from another continent, of another race, and without any historical preparation for living as free citizens in a society like that of the United States, where they were 20 percent of the population.

It is clear from the private correspondence of Washington, Jefferson, and many others that their moral rejection of slavery was unambiguous, but the practical question of what to do now had them baffled. That would remain so for more than half a century.

In 1862, a ship carrying slaves from Africa to Cuba, in violation of a ban on the international slave trade, was captured on the high seas by the U.S. Navy. The crew were imprisoned and the captain was hanged in the United States – despite the fact that slavery itself was still legal at the time in Africa, Cuba, and in the United States. What does this tell us? That enslaving people was considered an abomination. But what to do with millions of people who were already enslaved was not equally clear.

That question was finally answered by a war in which one life was lost [620,000 Civil War casualties] for every six people freed [3.9 million]. Maybe that was the only answer. But don't pretend today that it was an easy answer – or that those who grappled with the dilemma in the 18th century were some special villains when most leaders and most people around the world saw nothing wrong with slavery.

Incidentally, the September 2003 issue of *National Geographic* had an article about the millions of people still enslaved around the world right now. But where is the moral indignation about that?

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As an Education Professor, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of [agenda items C and D](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

I implore you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." As a professor who trains pre-service teachers, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

Hope Rias

Assistant Professor

Teacher Education

Bridgewater College

Phone: 540-828-5332 | hrias@bridgewater.edu

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a museum educator, museum professional, and UVA Ed.D. candidate, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two [agenda items](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

I support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" In my role as a museum professional, local arts & history board member, and active community resident, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Thank you for your commitment to constant improvement in Virginia's education system!

Gratefully,

Jacqueline Langholtz

jcl7u@virginia.edu

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As an educator, I was encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#).*

I would add, however, that the important contribution of all people toward America's historical realities which have shaped today and continue to shape our future, and including Indigenous Peoples, Latinex, Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, and similar cultural groups, should be included in Social Studies education for our state. Virginia began on land owned by Indigenous Peoples. The encounters of people native to this land with colonial settlers has not always been taught in fair light. It's time to rectify that situation, as well. Social studies should move beyond remembering battles and wars and look more realistically at how people with variant backgrounds have come together through compromise and peace-building, too. Human beings prove to not always be tolerant, but certainly, we can show that each person and the contributions of many Virginians with divergent cultural backgrounds coming together allow us to recognize we are working toward the same goals: a better life for ourselves and our children, based on values of recognizing the worth and dignity of each human being.

In your own words, I support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*"

As the Director of [Corhaven Graveyard](#), a burial ground of African Americans enslaved on a plantation in Shenandoah County, VA, I am ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

With kind regards,

Sarah Kohrs

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As parents, citizens, and educators in Virginia, we see daily how the lack of knowledge about our past—as a state and nation—has harmed us all. Thus we were encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of *a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system*.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, we are writing to you in support of [agenda items C and D](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

We support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” In our overlapping roles as parents, citizens, and educators, we stand ready to support these efforts and will work to ensure the students of Virginia enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

David Ehrenpreis

Professor of Art History

James Madison University

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As a coordinator of the Virginia Geographic Alliance and a Professor of Geography at Longwood University, I was greatly encouraged by the passage of the Virginia Board of Education's statement in early summer that directly addresses systemic racism, racial justice, and education. Issues addressed in the statement have been a topic of concern in many conversations I've had with Virginia educators at VGA-sponsored events for over 8 years. Further, I appreciated the statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system. In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two agenda items. The first is the proposed First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits. The second are other the standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia.

The Virginia Geographic Alliance of history, geography, and social studies educators supports and requests you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation." An example of our support can be seen in the recent updates in the Atlas of Virginia that contain a number of topics raised in your statement. We are also planning professional development institutes for AP Human Geography that address systemic racism and racial justice that will build recent events in Virginia from this past summer. Our group has considerable energy, expertise, and commitment to promote these curricula changes to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Respectfully,

Edward L Kinman, Ph.D.

Virginia Geographic Alliance Coordinator

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

My name is John Hobson and I am the current President of the Virginia Social Studies Leaders Consortium (VSSLC), an organization of social studies specialists, college educators, museum professionals, and social studies education non-profit professionals.

As the leader of this consortium, I was encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support the proposed *Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

These technical edits are entirely consistent with a statement of values that we are putting forward to guide the next round of standards revisions. Specifically, we believe that our standards must reflect the diversity of the world in which we live and the students we teach. The history of diverse groups should not be peripheral, but embedded within the curricula and explored through first-hand accounts and other source material. All students must have the opportunity to see themselves in the content. This not only generates relevance through personal connections, but it also affirms student agency, humanity, and identity by valuing multiple perspectives.

Our organization is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Sincerely,

John Hobson

VSSLC President

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As the Coordinator for Social Studies for Fairfax County Public Schools, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two [agenda items](#) scheduled for September 17, 2020: the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#).*

I encourage you to follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” Our school division is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy an accurate, rich, and inclusive education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Sincerely,

Colleen Eddy

Coordinator, Social Studies

Fairfax County Public Schools

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear Board of Education,

I write to you today in support of the report from the Governor's African American History Education Commission. I have read their agenda item for your meeting tomorrow, September 17, 2020, the supporting documents and hope that you will agree with their recommendations. It is imperative that we take immediate steps to strengthen history education in our Commonwealth, and one way we can do that is to have our history be more inclusive and comprehensive in telling and celebrating the story of all Virginians. Crucial to these recommendation's success is the professional development that would be required of History and Social Science teachers so that they are better equipped to incorporate the stories of African Americans into their teaching. I have been an educator in Fauquier County Public Schools for twenty-five years, and during this time, we've always been able to offer our students an elective in African American History. I look forward to the resources and continued learning for our teachers and students to further enrich this experience for all. As a lifelong Virginian, I am proud of the work done by this Commission to improve the teaching of history.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Amy Acors

Director of Instruction

Fauquier County Public Schools

540-422-7018

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As Vice President of Visitor Programs & Services at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, I was most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education, and statement of commitment to making good on the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of that statement and commitment, I am writing to you in support of two [agenda items](#), the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

In your own words, we support and now request you follow through on your commitment to ensuring that “*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*” The Thomas Jefferson Foundation is ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,



Gary Sandling

Vice President of Visitor Programs & Services

Monticello

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

As social studies teacher educators at James Madison University (JMU), we were most encouraged by your June 18, 2020, [unanimously adopted statement](#) regarding systemic racism, racial justice, and education as well as the statement of commitment to the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system.

In the spirit of the statement and commitment, we are writing to you in support of [agenda items](#) C and D, the proposed *First Review of the Recommendations for Technical Edits from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia and History and Social Science technical edits and other standards revisions and recommendations as shared by the [Report from the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia](#)*.

To quote your commitment to African American History Education, we support and now request further commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" Our social studies program at JMU is ready to support these efforts and will work with pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, curriculum specialists, and other partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

Drs. Michelle Cude, Aaron Bodle, Emma Thacker, & Ashley Taylor Jaffee

James Madison University

Social Studies Education



The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

TO FEED THE HUMAN SPIRIT BY SHARING AMERICA'S ENDURING STORY

September 16, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation was founded so that the future may learn from the past and is committed to the mission "to feed the human spirit by sharing America's enduring story." For over 40 years, Colonial Williamsburg has interpreted the African American story. For the past 31 years, it has also ensured that teachers attending the Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute of Colonial Williamsburg gain the historical content knowledge and pedagogy skills they need to teach students about the entirety of American history in relevant and engaging ways. We continue to research African Americans, so their stories of enslavement and significant contributions to the founding of our nation can be fully told.

Colonial Williamsburg supports the recommendations in the *Report of the Virginia Commission on African American History Education in the Commonwealth, August 2020*. The recommended technical edits to the *Virginia Curriculum Framework for History and Social Science* and improved teacher professional development guidelines are essential for culturally responsive teaching and a higher quality education for every student.

Colonial Williamsburg is committed to telling a complete and inclusive history of our nation. We continue to support professional development opportunities for teachers, including this summer's online course, *Teaching about Race and Slavery during the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*. Students and teachers can also access a wealth of educational materials on African Americans. It is imperative that teachers have the resources to ensure that students understand the full story of our nation's history, its connection to the present, and how it informs the future.

In your own words, we support and now request follow through on your commitment to ensuring that "*Virginia students learn and understand the complex and often untold history of Black Americans in Virginia, and our nation.*" Colonial Williamsburg is ready to support these efforts and will continue to work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure that Virginia students receive a complete, rich, and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

September 15, 2020

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

My name is Bill Obrochta and I am the executive director of the Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives here in Richmond. I also teach ESL part-time in the adult education Department of Richmond Public Schools. For most of my career, I directed educational programming at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, and I have been an advocate for history education in the Commonwealth for more than 35 years.

I am writing in support of the Governor's Commission on African American History Education in Virginia in its efforts to ensure our students learn a more balanced and accurate account of American history. In the words of Governor Northam, "Black history IS American history."

History is complicated. It is nuanced, complex and challenges the thinking of both children and adults. It requires empathy and understanding from those of us who learn it; it requires sensitivity and compassion from those of us who teach it. It is a difficult subject, which is why, in recent years, history has been de-emphasized in the k-12 curriculum across the nation.

The Governor's commission got it right. The history we teach needs to be more accurate and inclusive and our teachers need to be better prepared to engage students with content knowledge and sensitivity.

In conclusion, I urge the board to adopt commission's recommendations for revising the standards, making technical edits and providing professional development for teachers.

The Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives stands ready to support these efforts and will work with all stakeholders to ensure that Virginia students are better prepared for the future.

Sincerely,

William B. Obrochta, Executive Director

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

Dear President Gecker, Vice President Wilson, and esteemed members of the Board:

My name is Kirk Moyers and I'm the Social Studies Coordinator for Harrisonburg City Schools and I serve on the VDOE Social Studies Steering Committee. I also serve on our division's Equity Advisory Board and represent HCPS on the National Research Practitioner's Board for MSAN, a national equity group made up of diverse school districts from across the United States.

I'm writing today to support the recommendations set forth in the report from the Commission on African American History Education. Working in a district with a lot of cultural and racial diversity, I see how vital it is to not only represent all voices, but to share the history of ALL the people of the past. The recommendations of the commission are a great first step in the goal of diminishing the inequities present in our educational system (racial, cultural, and socioeconomic).

Harrisonburg City Public Schools are ready to support these efforts and will work with teachers, curriculum specialists, universities, and our many partner organizations to ensure the students of Virginia will enjoy a rich, full and place-based education to prepare them for active citizenship.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirk Moyers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Kirk Moyers

Harrisonburg City Schools

Public Comment Related to the Governor's African American History Education Commission

To the Virginia Board of Education

In regards to integrating African American history into the broad sweep of history taught in primary and secondary schools, I was not aware that it was not being taught I certainly remember it when I went to school and when my son went to school. After reading the report it seems to me, we focusing primarily on the negative aspects of history, you can find man's inhumanity to man throughout history in all nations of every race and culture. I would hope that we would highlight the vast achievements we have made in this country by all races and cultures that have made these country the last refuge of freedom and liberty throughout the world. We have made great strides to achieve the ideals set forth in our Declaration of Independence where no matter where you started in life with hard work you can achieve anything you set your mind too. I hope we are not going to be teaching children that they are being held back because of racism, poverty, or family circumstances, that we are not going to teach them to feel inferior or ashamed because of them. We should not be judging or assuming the capabilities of our students based on color, or any other criteria. We should strive to provide equal opportunity, not equal outcomes, setting goals and standards for them achieve so they can succeed. We should be teaching that we are all together in this great melting pot, we are one race, the Human race, we are all Americans no matter where are ancestors came from. Thank you for considering my thoughts on this subject.

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