

August 17, 2020

Dr. Brabrand and Members of the School Board:

Last semester, FCPS was slow to adapt in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the seemingly abrupt change in plans in July to drop the hybrid option caught families by surprise. Certainly COVID-19 has made it very challenging to have quality schooling for our kids, and in a Town Hall in July Dr. Brabrand welcomed help from the community. In this spirit, we wish to share with you the following suggestions that we hope will help FCPS during 2020-21.

Overall, **FCPS should improve its communications**. We applaud Dr. Brabrand's commitment to host virtual Town Hall meetings weekly as the start of the school approaches, and periodically after that. Yet we are concerned that these Town Halls may not be sufficiently publicized, and therefore the crucial information they are conveying is not accessible to all. It is crucial during this dynamic school year that information be freely flowing both upward (from parents to teachers, from teachers to principals, and from principals to central administration) and downward (the reverse). With this in mind we offer the following suggestions:

- Change the “News You Choose” default so that families are **automatically opted in** to relevant communications from FCPS; you could create a new Coronavirus-related category which sends everyone these very important updates unless they opt out. This channel should then be used to disseminate all information about how schools are adapting differently this year.
- Take some of the communications **burden off of principals** by either having central office staff record videos to be disseminated, and/or provide a clear script, template, or other guidance on how schools are changing their operations this year. This will help the community have confidence that FCPS speaks with one voice.
- Ensure that there are **clear channels to communicate** upward—from parents, students, and teachers—so that best practices are shared and problems are solved quickly. These channels need to be clarified for the new school year (and perhaps new channels created) so that they are obvious and accessible to all.
- **Overcommunicate** via multiple formats to release information. For example, during Dr. Brabrand's August 12 Town Hall, some of his guests used informative slides to help communicate the advice they were providing to parents. These slides should be disseminated widely regardless of whether parents were able to watch the Town Hall.

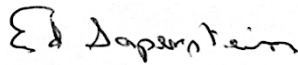
Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations

- Consider soliciting views from students, parents, and teachers via **regular surveys** throughout the year. This tool has been occasionally used by FCPS but may be more useful during a tumultuous time, to properly calibrate both successes and challenges during the year.
- **Include parents** in the planning and implementation of changes where possible, so that communities come together and operations can be smoothed. Parents may be able to help with such tasks as laptop distribution, or the changing extracurricular environment. Generally, more hands make lighter work.

Thank you for your continued hard work on behalf of our community.

Sincerely,

The Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations  
[FedEducationChr2020@fairfaxfederation.org](mailto:FedEducationChr2020@fairfaxfederation.org)



Ed Saperstein  
Co-Chair



Nancy Trainer  
Co-Chair