

Dr. Duran and Members of the Arlington School Board:

I am writing on behalf of the Arlington Parents for Education to expand on my remarks from Thursday's School Board meeting regarding learning loss recovery. I know we all recognize that last year was a challenging year for APS' students and that the impact of the pandemic on K-12 student learning was significant. As a [Report from McKinsey & Co.](#) notes, students around the country are on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading as of the end of this last school year.

In Arlington, we saw a 21-point drop in math SOL passing rates (which is a 24% decline) from the prior year's test scores. To put that in context, for the period in which [VDOE](#) publishes such data, that drop is five times greater than any gain or loss in math SOL scores that APS has ever experienced, or from which it has ever recovered. While reading SOL scores appeared to decline by less, those results were subject to last year's State Board of Education reduction in the minimum passing score – in other words, the rigor of the test – which was reduced across grade levels by up to 15%. As a result of that change, the 13% reduction in PALs reading scores may be more indicative of the true scope of reading losses. That data is reflected on the attached charts that I shared at the Board meeting.

As Ms. Turner noted in her remarks, this is not intended to discourage anyone; nor is it intended to place unnecessary pressure on our teachers or students this year. We recognize that our talented teachers worked incredibly hard to make virtual learning as successful as it could be. But, a recognition of the magnitude of the challenge that APS faces is necessary in order to properly inform APS' response.

We appreciate that APS has adopted an [Accelerated Learning Plan](#), which is recognized in the literature as being a preferred approach to remediate instruction (as opposed to remedial instruction), and which is being adopted by many school districts whose plans we have reviewed. That said, we also recognize that even under that model, students do not suddenly learn faster or better. Rather, that model is intended to focus on teaching "power standards" and the most critical knowledge by grade level, potentially at the expense of other standards or knowledge that students would ordinarily be taught in a given year.

The literature on learning loss recovery, some of which is [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), strongly suggests that effective learning loss recovery requires **additional instructional time**, including high-intensity tutoring (e.g., more than 3-days per week or for 50 hours over 36 weeks), extended instructional days (including before and after school instruction), extended school years, and double dose instruction. A recent AASA [survey](#) of superintendents shows that 44% are using their ARP funding to offer high-intensity tutoring and 42% are offering added instructional time. Virginia has also [announced](#) grant programs totaling \$62.7 million to help fund increased in-person instruction, extended instruction, year-round or extended-year calendars. Our neighboring districts in [Fairfax](#) and [Prince William County](#) are

both offering tutoring and extended instructional time. Those districts also have lengthy and detailed plans about how they will approach learning loss recovery, as do many other [districts](#). And they have devoted a greater percentage of their ARP funds to learning loss recovery, as reflected on the attached chart.

We would strongly encourage APS to look for ways to provide additional instructional time, particularly for our students who have struggled the most. We also encourage APS to commit, as Fairfax has done, to getting all students to make sufficient progress to be on grade level in English Language Arts and Math by the end of the year. The literature and the actions of peer school districts suggest that achieving such a goal will require more than simply the accelerated instruction and formative assessments that APS has currently announced.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our children.

Best,

Reg Goeke
On behalf of Arlington Parents for Education