

Dear Kathy, Len, Jane, Paul, Kirsi, Bill, Jen, and Jeff

This article in the Washington Post got me thinking: <https://apple.news/AMG1nVYwFReG7wcnsPxKGSg>

How do we ensure academic achievement for all students during this Covid 19 epidemic? Even in the best of times, persistent social, economic and racial disparities embedded in our society make closing the achievement gap a major challenge. Now, with schools closed, this very complex issue has become even more complicated. How do we do our best to educate all students?

I have questions and concerns about APS's policy related to remote learning. Even for many of our strongest students, on line learning can't provide the structures they need to engage on a regular basis. This is even more so for our struggling students who require even greater consistency of instruction and personal attention. I believe that the lack of challenging new material along with the no grading policy, is affecting the motivation that all students need to access what is available to them on- line. I worry that our most vulnerable students may fall further behind and that other students will "tread -water" at best.

I admit: There is no perfect solution to the educational predicaments caused by the pandemic. There was no way we could have prepare for this. Not all of our teachers are ready to maximize the use of the available technologies. Not all students have access to computers. We can't duplicate what happens in the classroom. However, I think we can do better than we are now.

You may have already thought about, and may be working on all of the things below, I just want to share what has come to my mind.

If not already doing so, provide teachers with the intensive professional development needed to engage students on-line. We do not know how long the virus will linger or if it will recur. Teacher need these skills now and will in the future.

I believe that all students benefit from enrichment activities. Seeing already learned concepts in new ways has educational value. But we must provide more -especially if the health crisis lingers longer than expected. Continue to offer enrichment activities for all students and augment this with new and challenging curriculum.

Grade student work on a pass/fail basis. Many students are motivated by letter grades. Since teachers are not able to provide the same level of support that they could in a classroom setting, a pass/fail system may provide the accountability students need to do the assignments.

Look at the data to see where more help is needed. Which students are not engaging on-line? Why? Do they need more teacher help? Parent support? Computer access? Hard copies of assignments? More challenging work? At least some of these issues may be solvable on an individual basis. I am certain that the vast majority of the staff are working long and hard for students. However, I wonder if some specialists, counselors, or aids, may be available to provide additional help to these students.

Thanks for reading. Stay healthy.

Barbara C. Goodman  
Still an educational junkie