

No Child Left Behind

Ebony's Story

One day life was normal. I had a 5th grader that didn't like school but enjoyed interacting with his classmates and teachers after arriving every morning. He got homework help and played with friends at the Boys & Girls Club after school. Depending on the season, he played football alongside teammates that became brothers and coaches that became mentors.

Then COVID hit and life as we knew it, changed. Even with the advantage of having a financially stable household and parent with the flexibility to work from home and support him with virtual learning, my son has struggled academically, mentally and emotionally. His grades slipped. He was irritable, defiant and angry all the time. We were stuck in the house together and couldn't get along further isolating both of us. I'm there to make sure he's logged in and help him navigate the online platforms. I can communicate with his teachers throughout the day to address issues with his engagement and participation. Still, it's a struggle for him to stay engaged in learning and stay up with his coursework.

My family has some advantages and we still struggle. Many families are a lot less fortunate. Some caregivers can't stay home to monitor their kids' engagement in virtual learning. Others lack technical skills to help their kids navigate the online platform, face language barriers preventing them being able to communicate with teachers for added support. There are kids that depend on school to be their safe haven.

My question is, how do we support the families and children that had greater disadvantages before the pandemic and even more now. What about the children whose parents can't stay home to support their virtual learning or don't have the technical or language skills to navigate the online platforms and communicate with teachers? How do we support families with multiple children who all have different learning schedules, needs and challenges?

While the return to school is well underway via the hybrid model, sending kids back to school is not a one size fits all answer. It's a complicated, difficult decision for families to make, particularly for black and brown communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the effects of COVID.

Here, I would like to ask MCPS not to forget about the students that aren't going back and to focus on ensuring they have the support they need to be successful until they return to school.

To do assist with that, The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence released a report in October 2020 outlining 7 recommendations to support black and brown families with virtual learning around 3 key areas which were 1) adult support, 2) communication, and 3) resources.

Establish a structure where disengaged students have one person that can consistently check on them, assess their needs and connect their families with resources to support their families and the students re-engagement in virtual learning.