

**SBOE Public Meeting
Wednesday March 17, 2021**

To: SBOE Representatives
From: Nia Rutherford
Date: March 17, 2021

Good evening State Board of Education Representatives! My name is Nia Rutherford, I live in Ward 7 and I am speaking out here today with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education.

My daughter Nova attends Rocketship Legacy Prep in Ward 8 and I am an early childhood educator. As an educator, I know that all kids deserve quality education, but as a mother I am even more committed to making sure that this is possible, not only for my own daughter, but for kids across the District.

The Pandemic has been really hard on students, parents and educators alike! And one term that has been used a lot is 'learning loss'. When we think of learning loss, most of us are usually thinking about students losing progress in academic subjects like math, social studies and language arts, but what about the social and emotional skills kids are losing out on practicing because of almost a year of virtual learning?

The virtual platform isn't conducive to my daughter's learning. It's almost like the kids are just pictures in a Zoom box, and while she was virtual it felt like there was little to no individual engagement. Each child needs to be acknowledged for who they are and their distinct learning style. Before the pandemic when in-class learning was happening, Nova had an individual job of saying the motto each day in class. She was so proud of this job and would be so happy to talk about her role, but how do we replicate these types of feelings and activities in a virtual setting?

Even in my own classroom, there have been times when we've tried to schedule meet ups with the kids where the whole class will get together, but it's like the first day of school every single time! For kids who are at such an important age in early childhood education, it's sad that they barely know how to interact with their friends and classmates or how to express their needs to teachers and adults like kids their age should. Teaching and practicing peer interactions like conflict resolution has been challenging on the virtual platform, so as we consider a future that will most likely include a mix between virtual and in-person options, we have to keep this in mind.

This is just one example of why the city's investments in SEL is so important, and why you should support PAVE parents when we ask for a \$10.8M investment in Social emotional

learning and trauma informed training in schools. I believe that we also need to think creatively about how to support outdoor learning options, while considering some of the specific challenges that families East of the River face, especially in terms of safety concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony today, and I hope that the State Board of Education will support our requests to systems leaders in the District for greater investment in SEL and trauma informed training, especially for early learners.

Thanks,
Nia Rutherford
Ward 7 Parent Leader