

FCPS Remote Virtual Program Student and Family Testimonies

[May 15, 2024 BOE Meeting](#)

Due to RVP being added to the budget cuts at the last minute, many families were unaware that RVP was even up for elimination. Only two parents were able to sign up in person for public comment while the rest of the students and families were not allowed entry due to the board conference room being at capacity.

*The testimony below is just a portion of each person's comments, please see the video for the complete testimony.

Timestamp	Speaker	Quote
2h:07m	Parent 1	<i>"This program is the last thing keeping my child in FCPS."</i>
		<i>"RVP changed that it allowed her to attend classes from home and has been nothing short of a godsend in combating her mental health issues. It is the one thing keeping her in FCPS and it almost certainly the final step before withdrawing her and going with homeschooling due to her needs."</i>
		<i>"There is a very real risk that this particular cut could be wildly counterproductive and end up costing FCPS more than what it costs to run the program."</i>

2h:13m	Parent 2	<p><i>“Today I am here to urge you to reconsider the proposed elimination of RVP for grades 3-8. A decision that would tragically setback for countless children who rely on the program for their education and wellbeing. RVP is not a luxury program, it is a lifeline for students like my daughter. For her and many others in person classroom settings are not feasible. Due to medical conditions my daughter faces a range of health challenges.”</i></p>
		<p><i>“The decision to eliminate RVP is not just a budgetary choice it is a moral one. We must prioritize the needs of our most vulnerable students and ensure that every child in our district has access to an equitable education.”</i></p>

[May 20, 2024 SECAC Meeting](#)

In addition to the quotes below there were many students, families, and staff members present supporting RVP who did not make public comment.

*The testimony below is just a portion of each person's comments, please see the video for the complete testimony.

Timestamp	Speaker	Quote
6m	Student 1	<p><i>“Some kids simply do not do well in an overcrowded environment or also a problem I had at my school the constant noise and lack of personal space is too much for me.”</i></p>
		<p><i>“While I am going into the high school next year the program will not be cut but I worry about other kids who will not be and will not have an easy transition to another school. Please save RVP.”</i></p>

8m	Student 2	<i>“Walking through busy hallways could be challenging for anyone but for someone like me who is on the spectrum it makes me very uncomfortable. It would be easy to get distracted and it is very overwhelming. Being in the classroom in person with all the students would be distracting and it would be hard to pay attention to the teacher which would impact my learning.”</i>
10m	Student 3	<i>“I do not feel safe in school. I can focus better at home and my grades reflect that. Traditional learning is not for everyone and I am proof that virtual learning works. A few years ago some kids posted on social media that they wanted to shoot some people of color but they used a different word. This is at my home school and if you don't fund virtual you're asking me to go to school every single day scared.”</i>
12m	Student 4	<i>“I'm a student at RVP and wanted to tell you that it has majorly impacted my life in a positive way. I am also special needs and I didn't do well in person.”</i>
14m	Student 5	<i>“Being in it for almost a year I can say it's been life changing for me. I was able to focus on school work and enjoy school.”</i>
		<i>“I know you need to do the right thing, but is the right thing removing peoples jobs and preventing kids from learning.”</i>

15m	Student 6	<i>"I struggled to focus in the classroom. Learning was a challenge one I felt I would never conquer. As a student with a 504 plan the brick and mortar classroom did not suit my needs. I felt sub par to my peers and put little effort into my education throughout middle school. I was a B, C and even D student however this changed when the pandemic happened. For some online school was a struggle but for me I blossomed."</i>
20m	Student 7	<i>"The staff and teachers have a passion for teaching and they are amazing with the students. They try to accommodate everyone and I just love it, it is amazing."</i>
22m	Student 8	<i>"RVP is a safe school program that anyone can do from home and you don't have to go into school and get bullied and hurt. If you are a person like me who has many allergies it can be hard eating out but RVP allows me to eat at home so I do not have to face fears of eating in a large school cafeteria."</i>
		<i>"I remember my first year of elementary school. The school was already at max capacity and with all the building around me I can't imagine how full it is now. Also if the school is full the classes must be full and that would mean the teacher would not be able to help everyone like the teacher can now in RVP."</i>

24m	Student 9	<i>"In kindergarten and first grade I was very heavily bullied so heavily in fact that something as casual as going to the bathroom would get me bullied everyday. So when my mom couldn't get the school to help me we decided that I would be educated somewhere else. So if that is how it was in kindergarten imagine how it would be in middle school."</i>
27m	Student 10	<i>"I have depression and anxiety due to my terrible experiences going to school. Being in online school is like the best thing to do for me and my fellow students. I don't like school due to the trauma at the school."</i>
		<i>"Just please online it helps people relieve stress and doesn't endanger children. Most things leading up to shootings or trauma are anxiety and stress, being bullied, abused and neglected, those being the most causes of school shootings. Children lose their lives daily due to depression, anxiety, bullying shootings and more. If you want children to learn and go to school, keep the program. I know that if it gets cancelled I will refuse to go to school."</i>
31m	Student 11	<i>"When she was going to school in person she went through a lot of problems so many that when she had a lot of anxiety and depression. She was experiencing bullying at school and that made her feel insecure and have very low self-esteem and also she had suicidal thoughts and she no longer wanted to go to school because she thought that everyday the same thing would happen."</i>

		<i>"Now that she has been online everything has improved. Her thoughts, her grades, her behavior. She's more sociable now, she speaks more in English with other people."</i>
		<i>"She increased her IReady score by 136 points."</i>
1h:47m	Parent 1	<i>"Regular classroom teachers are not special ed trained. Most do not follow in our experience the iep 504 some flat out ignore it because they are already overburdened in the growing class sizes. Neurotypical kids are not taught how to accept autistic kids so the bullying persists."</i>
		<i>"Both of them are not in person school because FCPS could not provide for or protect them properly and we will never put them back in person."</i>

1h:54m	Parent 2	<i>"This program has given hope to a lot of us parents who have children with special needs and that the in person learning just doesn't work for. For many reasons whether it be for health reasons, logistics, whether it be because they can't handle the crowds. Before when my oldest was in person learning he would come home from school everyday and most days in tears unable to tell us what was happening that was causing him such duress."</i>
		<i>"Once again we have been given no notice. Once again all of our options have been closed to us."</i>

1h:59m	Parent 3	<i>“These are the kids that that helped so this is a part of the portfolio of options that FCPS should have at their fingertips to be able to serve every child every day. This is one of the few options that are there for kids that needed it you know.”</i>
2h:02m	Parent 4	<i>“And so my observation is that this is driven by trying to save money and so everybody’s kind of drawing lines in the sand and you know that there’s \$2.7 million associated with this program but I have a feeling that when this program is going to be cut then ultimately it’s going to cost the county a lot more money. You’re going to have to find placement for a lot of students that have rights under IEP. It’s going to get negative publicity.”</i>

2h:06m	Parent 5	<i>“Not that he was a bully but very disruptive in the classroom so my fear is and our fear is a lot of times because of the virtual program we didn’t get those calls we were getting when he was in person so we didn’t get the call saying we are removing him from the classroom.”</i>
		<i>“But here you just told these students that the thing that...they was using to lift themselves up and show pride and show the future and show that there is light at the end of the tunnel that we’re taking it away from you.”</i>
2h:11m	Parent 6	<i>“I want to continue coming back to this RVP program itself it it’s being like you know as you’re emptying your home you see what you could throw away for your Fall cleaning, it feels like RVP program is. Like when you are looking at the budget it is your crown jewel you have to realize that I wonder why you know that the county is not you know showing off how they came up with this program.”</i>

2h:17m	Parent 7	<i>“These students have been acclimated to a completely different learning platform and they deserve the continuation of education in this manner that they have been taught.”</i>
2h:19m	Parent 8	<i>“This is not just a program, it’s a school with its own community. It’s creative and it’s flexible it’s personalized to challenge kids in their strengths and support them in their weaknesses. Just because it is not a traditional brick and mortar school shouldn’t make it easier to shut it down.”</i>
2h:27m	Parent 9	<i>“The value of giving students optionality. I heard somebody make that point before and that’s huge with optionality with respect to education delivery methods.”</i>
		<i>“They’re able to focus on what matters most, consuming the curriculum free from fear, distraction and judgement and I am convinced that at this point I’m not going to risk their school years being compromised. They will not be going back to an in person environment. I see that it’s not the right school program for them.”</i>

2h:34m	Parent 10	<i>“These exact accommodations are written in her 504 plan so how can these same accommodations be made for her in an in person setting, they can’t be and eliminating this school denies her these rights.”</i>
		<i>“RVP is a breath of fresh air and a way of educating children which has otherwise remained unchanged for decades but very few people even know of its existence. Think of how keeping and increasing student enrollment in this school can help relieve overcrowding in classrooms and redistricting of neighborhoods.”</i>

[May 21, 2024 County Council Meeting](#)

In addition to the quotes below there were many students and families present supporting RVP who did not make public comment.

*The testimony below is just a portion of each person's comments, please see the video for the complete testimony.

Timestamp	Speaker	Quote
14m	Student 1	<i>“RVP is a safe school program that anyone can do from home.”</i>
16m	Student 2	<i>“I used to have a very hard time with reading before I joined RVP. Now that I joined RVP I got to do tutoring and after a couple of school years of tutoring in the RVP I know how to read fluently.”</i>

17m	Student 3	<i>“As a student with a 504 plan the brick and mortar school did not suit my needs.”</i>
		<i>“The RVP taught me independence, responsibility and self importance. The staff in the RVP are some of the best I have ever experienced.”</i>
20m	Student 4	<i>“Some kids can’t learn in the in person classroom for so many reasons.”</i>
2h:25m	Student 5	<i>“Because some people that are in virtual can’t go in person. This is because of health, physical limitations, social anxiety, PTSD, bullying or they have autism and find in person extremely difficult.”</i>
2h:29m	Student 6	<i>“When I went in person I never stood out. I had friends and I got good grades sure but I blended in with the crowd. In RVP I skipped 6th grade Math. I am an A honor roll student. I participate in contests and competitions. I never would have written a whole speech and then read it in front of so many people but look at me now.”</i>

2h:31m	Parent 1	<i>“FCPS unjustly eliminated the remote virtual program which serves many special needs students. There was little to no warning to staff, parents and students. Those students and parents who scrambled to the school board meeting were turned away due to the room being at capacity. And the board voted on elimination without discussing any of the submitted public comments or discussing or hearing from those the decision would impact the most.”</i>
2h:37m	Parent 2	<i>“Nothing else. I have not received one word about a possible elimination. I have not received one word about a public hearing. I have not received one word that in fact at this moment it’s been eliminated.”</i>
2h:38m	Parent 3	<i>“My daughter can not attend school in person. My daughter requires around the clock medical care, is nonverbal and depends on a g tube for feeding. For families like mine the remote virtual school is not just convenience it is a lifeline.”</i>
2h:41m	Parent 4	<i>“It’s crazy to me that this county is struggling with funding school buildings and they just cut a place where kids can go without having to go into a physical space. They did it without any real analysis of the cost savings for cutting that program. It was just simply a tidy line item at the expense of a marginalized group of students.</i>

2h:46m	Parent 5	<i>"I think a lot of us would like to have a very serious discussion about how this decision was arrived at. I just don't understand the economics of it. I don't understand the Math behind it. This is a program that satisfies core fundamental aspects of the curriculum. For many people this is the only way they can consume it."</i>
2h:48m	Parent 6	<i>"The in person schools are overcrowded and distracting which makes them a difficult place to learn. Our children have a right to an education in a manner that works for them that is why there are charter schools and Montessori schools."</i>
2h:51m	Parent 7	<i>"The RVP is not a nice to have, it is a school. With a principal and a counselor and teachers and students and after school clubs. It's critical. It's critical to help our most vulnerable students in the county. It's not just for medically fragile, not just for autism, not just for IEP, people who can learn better with all the distractions around them."</i>
		<i>"Putting them back in will cost more money and cause lawsuits. It has very little overhead. The cost is salaries and these teachers are being reabsorbed. We did not receive proper notice and the due diligence was not done on the behalf of the board of ed."</i>

2h:54m	Parent 8	<i>“At present the Board of Education is demanding that Frederick county fund upfront Maryland’s portion of the budget requirements. Frederick county has already forward funded the state's share of the school construction budget. This manufactured chaos is FCPS’ own doing for the more long-term planning for the budget has been neglected for the short term, short sighted, unnecessary cuts to school programs such as the remote virtual program.”</i>
2h:59m	Parent 9	<i>“Here’s a program that when you look at it costs less per student to achieve stellar results.”</i>
3h:01m	Parent 10	<i>“I think it was council member Carter who said earlier something about working together. I think that’s a wonderful idea to work together once in a while and just see who’s where and what’s what and how things can maybe be done better. We can all learn we should all be learning especially when it concerns our families.”</i>

[June 12, 2024 BOE meeting](#)

In addition to the quotes below there were many students, families, and staff members present supporting RVP who did not make public comment.

Specific timestamps for further public comment from additional students and families can be found here : 4h:49m; 4h:51m; 4h:54m; 4h:55m; 4h:56m; 4h:57m; 4h:59m; 5h:02m; 5h:06m; 5h:07m; 5h:08m; 5h:09m; 5h:11m; 5h:16m; 5h:21m; 5h:22m; 5h:25m

The testimony below is just a portion of each person's comments, please see the video for the complete testimony.

Timestamp	Speaker	Quote
1h:45m	Student 1	<i>"Going to the bathroom got me bullied. Playing on the playground got me bullied. The school did nothing."</i>
		<i>"My pediatrician told me I should not go back to in person. RVP is the perfect compromise to allow me to do school with kids my age."</i>
1h:48	Student 2	<i>"I struggled to focus in the brick and mortar classroom. I was harassed and stalked while my school did nothing but excuse his behavior."</i>
		<i>"I went from barely passing my classes to a straight A student."</i>
1h:52m	Student 3	<i>"I was too scared to approach my teachers and ask for help. Since I have joined RVP I have gotten more confident and was able to ask for help."</i>
1h:53m	Student 4	<i>"I have been in the virtual program for 3 years and I feel like it is where I belong."</i>
		<i>"Being on the spectrum I am very concerned about being bullied by people who don't understand or like me because I am different. The virtual program has given me a safe place to learn."</i>

2h:33m	Student 5	<i>“At my old school I was relentlessly bullied by so many people it was impossible to stop the incidences. I had detrimental self harm thoughts about myself and I realized I couldn’t stay at my school any longer. When I’m there(RVP) no one bullies me or makes fun of me so I can feel safe while I am learning. So we can thrive in a safe environment . RVP is a much better environment for people who can’t cope in the school setting.”</i>
1h:58m	Parent 1	<i>“RVP is not only a comfortable school for these kids, it is their community. These marginalized children feel safe and supported with their RVP family. RVP has been so successful that these children are thriving socially, with their report cards, test scores and even having IEP and 504s downgraded. Without RVP these children will suffer again, they will return to the in person setting that already tormented them and left them out.”</i>
2h:01m	Parent 2	<i>“Being in online school reduces a lot of her anxiety and stress because she’s able to be at home. She is able to get her parents if her emotions spiral. She feels safe. It allows her to learn, create and be themselves.”</i>
2h:02m	Parent 3	<i>“Being autistic means it’s difficult to read facial expressions, body language and social cues. Being autistic means crowds, loud noises, bright lights and unpredictability can make you so stressed and overwhelmed to the point of a meltdown. My son was relentlessly bullied because of his autistic traits.”</i>

		<i>“With the quiet inclusive environment and the help of a counselor he is able to start the healing process from the trauma.”</i>
2h:10m	Parent 4	<i>“Before this program how many people were underserved. They were going through a day to day school experiences in a manner that wasn’t working and just listen to how many people are thriving through it(RVP).”</i>
2h:13m	Parent 5	<i>“They were drowning in distraction and dismay. They couldn’t stay focused and their anxiety ran rampant. The virtual platform promotes equity. RVP is the least restrictive environment and they are thriving.”</i>
2h:16m	Parent 6	<i>“All of my children struggled with the overcrowded, distracting and punitive environment of in person school.”</i>
		<i>“In virtual learning he was more relaxed and he stated he felt safe. He was more focused on learning. (Pediatrician stated) We are fearful if he returns to in person school it will have deleterious consequences on his physical and mental health.”</i>
2h:20m	Parent 7	<i>“Our most vulnerable children have excelled in this environment. Neurodiverse children are much more likely to be bullied. 60% of autistic children are bullied in the in person setting and are 28 more times likely to have suicidal thoughts.”</i>

2h:39m	Parent 8	<i>“She requires around the clock medical care. This puts her life at risk if a dedicated and skilled nurse is not available to manage her care. She communicates through an ipad. You need to start considering the true cost of bringing these kids to in person schools.”</i>
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