

AAPAC is saddened by the district's decision to not offer before or after care in the 2021-22 school year. We are sympathetic to the arguments advanced by other concerned parents, such as the disproportionate burden this will place on working mothers, whose careers have already been affected by a year of at-home schooling, as well as the disproportionate burden placed on lower income families with less flexibility in their work days.

As the parent advisory group for special education, our concern is focused on students with IEPs and/or 504s, and as such, we want to make sure the Board of Education understands the important role that school-based child care plays in the lives of these students.

It is true that there are other childcare providers in Ann Arbor, and that if parents or guardians have the means to do so, they can pay another organization to provide childcare in the hours before and after school. Parents without financial means to pay the additional cost of private child care might be able to work out arrangements with neighbors or family or friends.

Students with disabilities, particularly those that include behavioral, communicative, and/or cognitive difficulties, are often, by virtue of those very disabilities, foreclosed from opportunities to participate in off-site childcare programs. When compared to the excellent staff at school-based childcare, childcare providers outside of the public school system are neither as skilled nor as prepared to manage the behavioral or communicative differences of many students with disabilities. It is our experience that the very best childcare for students with disabilities is that provided by Rec & Ed, onsite in school buildings, often with many of the same staff members that provide support for students with disabilities during the school day. The continuity of location, staff, and behavioral expectations and routines makes school-based childcare the only adequate solution for many students with disabilities.

We ask the Board of Education to recognize the unique place of the Ann Arbor school district within the lives of students with disabilities. Because of the strength of public education's mandate to provide education for everyone, even those with disabilities, AAPS is quite literally often the only place in our community that is both ready and prepared to educate and care for students with disabilities. This extends to the school day, to before and aftercare, to team sports and extracurricular opportunities. Not offering any childcare for the entire coming school year leaves these families in a precarious place, without the ability to take advantage of other, community-based options that may be available to other students.

In recognizing AAPS' unique place in the lives of students with disabilities, we ask that the Board of Education reopen the question of school based before and aftercare. AAPAC is always happy to consult with the Board on ways to provide for students with disabilities in ways that are cognizant of COVID-19 risks.

The 2020-21 AAPAC Board

Melissa Epstein, Co-Chair, AAPAC, 2020-21; Haisley Elementary parent

Kate Wright, Co-Chair, AAPAC, 2020-21; Bryant Elementary parent