

# Alexandria City High School community reacts to virtual learning changes made after deadly stabbing

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## Alexandria City HS continues virtual learning after deadly stabbing

FOX 5's Sierra Fox reports on the reactions from parents and students at Alexandria City High School after the school decided to move to virtual learning in response to a deadly stabbing.

**ALEXANDRIA, Va.** - Parents in Alexandria, Virginia are expressing concerns about the response to a deadly stabbing involving a high school student at a shopping center.

The incident happened on May 24 at the Bradlee Shopping Center in the 3600 block of King Street. Authorities said 18-year-old Alexandria City High School (ACHS) student Luis Alejandro Mejia Hernandez was stabbed and killed during the fight, which involved more than 30 people. A 16-year-old was taken into custody related to the stabbing on Wednesday.

In response to the stabbing, ACHS returned students at all four of its campuses to virtual learning. According to the letter, the changes are in place through Friday. The school has not indicated if they will keep virtual learning in place until the end of the academic year, which would be next Friday, June 10.

The new plan only allows seniors who need to complete graduation requirements, students who need to take standardized testing, and students in the city-wide specialized instructional programs to get inside the school building.

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In a letter sent to families, the principal of the school cited the stabbing and the elementary mass shooting in Texas as the reason for the change. He added that the time spent doing virtual learning will allow students and staff time and space to grieve the loss.

FOX 5 spoke with parents and students in the area to get their reactions to the decision. Many said they do not believe virtual learning is the solution to this violence, and some said they believe it could make matters worse.

"It's not helping with the grades. Honestly, I feel like it's stressing everyone out – mostly me. It's affecting a lot of seniors too," ACHS student Amy Rivas tells FOX 5. "I do want to be in school because I hate being at home and school is the only distraction I have, but now we can't even do that. Virtual is not great for me and many people either and now to go back to it like at the end of the school year – I thought we were going to end happy."

FOX 5 also spoke with a psychologist who said that, after two years of isolation, reverting to virtual learning can be difficult for students and parents.

"Virtual learning is a good back up. However, in-person is much preferred because kids need the socialization, they need to be with each other, they need to learn how to have interpersonal reactions. With virtual learning, the more time that's on the screen – the less the vocabulary develops," said **Dr. Anita Gadhia-Smith**.

**Dr. Gadhia-Smith** also said that keeping students in school in-person would have allowed the kids "to process what has happened live with each other in a community."

FOX 5 reached out the school for a statement on the decision to revert to virtual learning, but our request was denied.

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In addition to the school attendance changes, the school also said it is working with the city, the police department, and the Bradlee Shopping Center to figure out what other safety measures should be implemented.