



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Correspondence to School Committee

Pamela Baldwin <theotherpamela@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 21, 2020 at 6:02 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Tassone <Ktassone@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear Ms. Ftizgerald, Ms. Tassone, and Ms. Morgan,

As we look forward to the meeting tomorrow night I have been reviewing the agendas from several previous School Committee meetings in hopes of locating the two letters I have submitted to the SC regarding the high school.

I am unable to find my letters included/listed in the materials from any of the August or September meetings. I wrote previously about my August letter, and then I submitted a second letter in early September. Can you please confirm both (1) that my letters were received and reviewed, and also (2) what the process is for achieving the goal of having parent submissions included in the regular School Committee agenda materials?

I am aware of multiple other parents who also submitted letters and emails about AHS following the September 10 meeting and the vote in support of fully remote high school instruction, yet I do not see them included in the list of correspondence for the subsequent meetings on 9/24 and 10/8.

Many thanks for your help!

Pamela

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Pamela Baldwin

August 11, 2020

Dear Dr. Bodie, Dr. Janger, and members of the School Committee,

I write as the parent of two students in the AHS class of '21. First, I want to thank you for your hard work this summer. I know that everyone charged with the responsibility and authority to make decisions about how to conduct school in the coming academic year for all of Arlington's students, K through 12, is working extremely hard to adapt and learn and come up with the best possible solutions under incredibly adverse circumstances and in spite of a lack of clear, useful leadership at national and state levels.

I have two requests regarding the proposed 'hybrid' plan approved at the School Committee meeting last night.

1. **We need to do better for high school students and make the building safe for partial use for in-person classes by no later than October 1.** The ventilation issues at the high school and complications due to the construction project are not a surprise to anyone. If we are committed to a hybrid learning model, addressing these facility issues should have been on a fast track as a top priority since last April. The plan that we saw last night is a hybrid district plan in name only. It is actually a K-8 hybrid plan and a 9-12 remote learning plan – a hybrid plan in the wrong way in that it treats students in different age cohorts with different, unequal, solutions rather than a district-wide approach. Fully 25% of our students are not being offered a genuine hybrid model. This plan is also presenting unequal options for district teachers and staff; it's possible many high school staff prefer to start remotely, but my fundamental concern is that this is not a fair approach, largely due to preventable physical plant management issues that should not be driving these decisions.

The discussion last night revealed that the HVAC analysis and adaptation is not even contracted yet. I urge the School Committee to hold the August 28 deadline for a firm commitment by the administration to at least a partial opening of the AHS campus for use by students and teachers this fall, commensurate with the hybrid model of in-person and remote classes offered to the other grade levels (if the overall health metrics allow the district's hybrid plan to proceed in Arlington).

Remote learning cannot replace the experience of being with peers and a teacher, in person. In Arlington, high school is where our students become engaged members of the wider world through participation in co-curricular activities that are integral to their formation as students and citizens. As a parent, it is deeply concerning to see the high school educational experience dismissed with one terse line in today's announcement: **"Arlington High School will open with a Remote Learning Model, as ventilation issues will delay the opening of the facility."**

This plan that has been conditionally approved is not nearly thorough nor specific enough with regard to the high school and its more differentiated curricular and co-curricular offerings.

Please do better for our older students and stop reinforcing misperceptions that high schoolers "can handle" remote learning better than students in younger grades. Yes, most Gen Ed high school students can work more independently than younger students, but **what is happening for students and families is still a crisis at any age – the grief, disruption, inconvenience, and panic just looks different for teens and their families.** Students who have already lost so much are facing real world challenges to prepare for post-high school plans. Getting the building ready for partial, safe return should be a much more timely and central priority than has been articulated. The high school curriculum has many electives and courses offered at different levels, and consideration should also be given to allowing building access for specialized activities in small groups that require hands-on facilities, such as labs, art rooms, etc. Parents and students who do not want to participate have the Remote By Choice option.

Families of the current AHS cohorts have accepted that there will be disruption due to the construction. That said, we will not accept a decision **not** to make necessary improvements to make the current structure usable for the hybrid model, merely because of the future demolition. That would be an unacceptable level of trade-off and prioritizing future students over current students.

2. **Since we know that even with the hybrid model there is every likelihood that much of the learning this year will be via remote instruction, I also urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to mobilize every possible resource to replace the online video classroom from Spring 2020 (Google Meet) with a better online meeting system for high school classes.** It might be Zoom, it might be something else, but synchronous learning via Google Meet is not adequate or acceptable for creating a positive, inclusive, and exciting learning environment. Google Classroom is OK as a learning management system to accompany regular in-person school but Meet is utterly inadequate for successful online teaching and learning. It is likely that for the coming year, unfortunately, AHS will not be spared from the exigencies facing all of secondary and higher education: to deliver real online classes, and to do better, much better, than was possible during the emergency phase of remote instruction of last spring.

I asked my daughters to list, in their own words, why they felt so discouraged about the class meetings that occurred on the Google Meet platform during the "Audit" segment in the last quarter of 2019-20:

1. Doesn't run smoothly on low-power computers like Chromebooks
 - a. Difficulty staying connected to the call, which makes attendance an obstacle
 - b. Difficulty muting and unmuting yourself, which reduces participation
 - c. Difficulty accessing the pop-up menu, which restricts access to chat and other functions
2. No grid view on the mobile app, which makes attending meets from a tablet or smartphone unengaging and inconvenient
3. If your teacher misses your request to join, there is no way for them to know that you're in the "waiting room" or to let you on the call after your initial request, which means some students effectively get locked out of class.

4. Overall function is inconsistent. This is stressful for students because it creates so much uncertainty and causes frustration with our technology.
5. Low-power computers like Chromebooks and unstable wifi connections prevent many students from turning on their webcams because their device or their wifi doesn't have enough bandwidth.
 - . Makes classes feel empty and impersonal to all participants
 - a. Students who cannot use video cannot nonverbally signal that they wish to participate.
6. No way to private chat with the instructor
 - . Students are unable to ask for help without the whole class hearing or reading their question or concern.
 - a. Teachers are unable to ask a student to "stay after class" or to discipline students in a private manner.
 - b. Any question, no matter how minute or specific, interrupts the whole class.
7. No breakout room function
 - . Teachers are unable to let students collaborate in small groups or pairs during class.

We recognize that there are issues with every virtual meeting platform, and I know that classes via Zoom or Blackboard also have drawbacks and glitches. But unless there are substantive improvements to the Google Meet platform, it's not going to be adequate for the 80-minute twice-weekly synchronous blocks that are featured in the proposed AHS plan for a hybrid or fully remote schedule.

One of my daughters ended up skipping most of the class meetings last spring (they were technically optional if you did the assignments for the Audit credit) because she found them so frustrating and demoralizing. And she is a good student who under normal circumstances is very comfortable asking questions and initiating class discussion. What was it like for students who were less comfortable? Better virtual classroom technology exists, and our students and teachers deserve it.

In conclusion, I want to thank you again for your many hours, days, and weeks of diligent work during these troubling times, and for taking the time to read this letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Pamela Baldwin

Pamela Baldwin

592 Summer Street

Arlington, MA 02474

theotherpamela@gmail.com

Pamela_baldwin@harvard.edu



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Cohort A family

Janine Duffy <janinemduffy@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 1:49 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear Ms. Fitzgerald:

I am writing to express dismay and outright anger at making Thanksgiving week and Christmas week all remote.

I have 3 sons who attend Stratton and Ottoson. Two of the three are Cohort A students. They will be receiving 20 in school days between the start of schools to Christmas and my Cohort B son will have 24 days.

This is completely unfair and not equitable to anyone. I have emailed Superintendent Bodie and haven't heard anything.

Thank you-

Janine

Sent from my iPhone



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Re: Updated School Calendar and Inequity of In-Person Days for AA Cohort

Elissa Krakauer Jacobs <elissakrakauer@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 1:42 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Dear School Committee,

We are writing in reference to the updated calendar (emailed to families earlier today).

We are not understanding how there is equity in the updated calendar. We understand that BB students wouldn't have in-person school during the Thanksgiving weeks and Winter Break weeks. However, AA students have already lost in-person days to Indigenous Peoples Day and Yom Kippur, and will lose another to election day. That's 3 lost in-person days in comparison to the BB cohort.

Taking away 4 in-person days for AA students further exacerbates an unequal schedule and does not seem fair at all. This is either really bad math or there is another reason that the district is not disclosing.

Please encourage the district to reconsider allowing AA students to have at least 3 of those days in-person so that there is in fact equity between cohorts in in-person days.

Best,
Elissa and Ryan Jacobs

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Elissa Krakauer Jacobs  
(617) 835-9361  
elissakrakauer@gmail.com



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

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## Fwd: School Calendar Update

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Julie DeSander <julie.hermann@gmail.com>  
To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 1:39 PM

Dear School Committee Members,

I understand that you and the school district are navigating a challenging academic year and trying to do the best possible. However, I would like to express frustration with this decision. We were told by you that both Cohort A and Cohort B would have the same number of in person days due to the balance of holidays on Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday. Cohort A is missing 3 in person school days this semester due to the September 28, October 12, and November 3 holidays. The only weeks we had to balance the number of in person days were the 2 weeks that you are now making remote because there wouldn't be an in-person opportunity for Cohort B. I wish that you and the school district had considered this in your decision, as it now makes your rationale for not giving Cohort A in-person opportunities on Wednesdays on holiday weeks completely invalid. It also continues to put additional strain on working parents to find and pay for childcare on the increased number of remote days. Are there any plans to address the gap in in-person days for Cohort A?

Best,  
Julie DeSander

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Superintendent Bodie** <aps\_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us>  
Date: Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 12:21 PM  
Subject: School Calendar Update  
To: <julie.hermann@gmail.com>

Dear APS Families,

The School Committee has approved the updated calendar for the 2020-2021 school year. I wanted to bring your attention to the weeks of Thanksgiving and Winter Break.

Monday, November 23, and Tuesday, November 24 will be remote for all students, except for preschool students. In addition, Monday, December 21 and Tuesday, December 22 will be remote for all students, except for preschool students. This change avoids the problem of the BB cohort having no in-person education those weeks. Instead, both the AA and BB cohorts will learn together in synchronous instruction in those weeks. Both Monday and Tuesday will follow a regular school day schedule. Wednesday remains remote in both weeks.

For Menotomy Preschool students, Monday and Tuesday of those weeks will be regular in-person days, while the Wednesdays of those weeks will have 11:30 AM dismissals with no lunch served.

A few other dates to highlight in the fall are:

Tuesday, November 3 - Election Day and Professional Day for staff. There will be no school for any remote academy, hybrid, or preschool students that day.

Wednesday, November 11 - Veterans Day. No school for students and staff.

Wednesday, November 25 - Day before Thanksgiving. This day is remote K-12, and students are dismissed at 11:30 AM at the Elementary level and 11:45 AM at the Middle and High School levels. The Preschool will be dismissed at 11:30 AM. There are no meetings for staff that day following student dismissal.



Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27 - Thanksgiving holiday.

Wednesday, December 23 - Day before Winter Break. This day is remote for all students, and we will follow the regular Wednesday schedule. While this is the regular Wednesday early release for students, staff will be participating in their regular Wednesday meetings in the afternoon.

Wednesday, December 23 - Preschool students will be dismissed at 11:30

Winter Break begins on December 24 and continues through January 1. School resumes on Monday, January 4, 2021.

**Please note that the Massachusetts Travel Order requires a 14-day quarantine or a negative COVID-19 test for all people returning to Massachusetts from a state considered high risk. In addition, all Town of Arlington employees are required to remain out of work upon their return to Massachusetts from a high-risk state, whether or not they obtain a negative COVID-19 test result, in order to provide greater safety in the workplace. To keep our schools open and safe, the District is also requiring students to remain out of school for 14 days when returning from a high-risk state. Please keep this in mind as you make your travel plans.**

Sincerely,  
Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.

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SchoolMessenger is a notification service used by the nation's leading school systems to connect with parents, students and staff through voice, SMS text, email, and social media.



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

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## Re: Updated School Calendar and Inequity of In-Person Days for AA Cohort

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Elissa Krakauer Jacobs <elissakrakauer@gmail.com>  
To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 1:42 PM

Dear School Committee,

We are writing in reference to the updated calendar (emailed to families earlier today).

We are not understanding how there is equity in the updated calendar. We understand that BB students wouldn't have in-person school during the Thanksgiving weeks and Winter Break weeks. However, AA students have already lost in-person days to Indigenous Peoples Day and Yom Kippur, and will lose another to election day. That's 3 lost in-person days in comparison to the BB cohort.

Taking away 4 in-person days for AA students further exacerbates an unequal schedule and does not seem fair at all. This is either really bad math or there is another reason that the district is not disclosing.

Please encourage the district to reconsider allowing AA students to have at least 3 of those days in-person so that there is in fact equity between cohorts in in-person days.

Best,  
Elissa and Ryan Jacobs

~~~~~  
Elissa Krakauer Jacobs
(617) 835-9361
elissakrakauer@gmail.com



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Revised Cohort A Hybrid Schedule

Lynn Chachkes <lynn.chachkes@hotmail.com>

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 11:05 AM

To: APS Superintendent <aps_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>
Cc: "kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us" <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Thad Dingman <tdingman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "adam.chachkes@fmr.com" <adam.chachkes@fmr.com>, Brian Meringer <bmeringer@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear Superintendent Bodie:

While there has been no official communication, we learned about changes to the APS school calendar approved on October 8 through another Dallin parent yesterday. There are two issues that we are writing to express our concern with: 1) the limited communication about the calendar change and 2) the inequity that the calendar change has on elementary and middle school hybrid cohorts. Changing two weeks of schooling/schedules in the next two months seems to be an important schedule shift to share. We are well-informed parents and the fact that the APS calendar on the website is still from June 25 and the updated cannot be easily found anywhere is unacceptable.

These issues pale, however, to losing this in-person time for Cohort A elementary and middle school students. We have two children in the hybrid program who are experiencing remote/virtual learning quite differently, one at Dallin and one at OMS. Our middle school student is doing okay as he is older. The other is experiencing significant difficulty with remote/virtual learning that is requiring support from both school and outside resources. An example is that I had to take the day off work today to be with him for his learning. I am an educator in the Newton Public Schools and could not go in today due to my elementary child's needs with remote learning and the upset that is happening when he is "in school" one day a week with little synchronous instruction the rest of the week. Minimal learning is happening on Wednesday-Friday and in-person days are a lifeline for both him and the rest of the family.

Considering this, it's hard to understand how APS administration can justify introducing such an imbalanced schedule between Cohorts A and B between now and the end of January. From an equal number of in-person days (32) and holidays (4), we are now looking at 28 in-person days, 4 remote days and 4 holidays for Cohort A, while Cohort B will continue to have 32 in-person days and 4 holidays plus the addition of 4 remote days. Other school districts are compensating for this discrepancy and it is unacceptable that Arlington is allowing this to happen creating a significant equity issue. There seems to be an intention to make up 2 of those days for Cohort A at the end of June, but that is extremely disheartening after losing the equivalent of 2 expected weeks in the first four months of school. And since very little happens at the end of June, if anything, those last two days of school at the end of the year should be split between A&B if we are still in the hybrid model.

Obviously all of this could be moot in a matter of weeks if the district is required to go fully remote, but for now, every single day in the classroom matters for kids who are struggling with remote/virtual. An added issue is that there's no clearly identified path for families to indicate trouble on home days - the best way to catch those in difficulty remain those check-ins on in-school days.

We are obviously experiencing a public health crisis and there is a staffing shortage at APS. This, however, seems like an inequity that could be easily balanced by twice swapping a Thursday or Friday with Cohort B between now and winter break. As families have not been officially informed of any change to the schedule yet, that kind of shift could be built into any adjustments.

We look forward to hearing back from you and the School Committee on this issue.

Sincerely,
Lynn & Adam Chachkes
251 Wachusett Avenue



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Revised APS Calendar: A&B Cohorts

Tracy Van Dorpe <tvandorpe@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 9:49 AM

To: Kathleen Bodie <aps_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Cc: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us, Thad Dingman <tdingman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Jane Morgan <janepmorgan@gmail.com>

Dear Superintendent Bodie -

While there has been no official communication, I learned about changes to the APS school calendar approved on October 8 through Facebook Arlington Parents and then when my fourth grader at Dallin came home distressed earlier this week hearing about the impact on Cohort A from his teacher. There are two issues that I'm writing to express my concern with: 1) the limited communication about the calendar change and 2) the inequity that the calendar change has on elementary school hybrid cohorts.

I appreciate your recent emails to families about playground use on October 9 and positive test results on October 13, but changing two weeks of schooling/schedules in the next two months seems to be an important schedule shift to share. I am a well-informed parent and the fact that the APS calendar on the website is still from June 25 and the updated cannot be easily found anywhere is absolutely ridiculous.

These issues pale, however, to actually losing this in-person time for Cohort A elementary students. We have two fourth graders in Dallin's hybrid program who are experiencing remote/virtual learning quite differently. One is doing fine. Not great, but good enough for now under the circumstances. The other is experiencing significant difficulty with remote/virtual learning that is requiring support from both school and outside resources. For all practical purposes, minimal learning is happening on Wednesday-Friday and in-person days are a lifeline for both him and the rest of the family.

Considering this, it's really hard to understand how APS administration can justify introducing such an imbalanced schedule between Cohorts A and B between now and the end of January. From an equal number of in-person days (32) and holidays (4), we are now looking at 28 in-person days, 4 remote days and 4 holidays for Cohort A, while Cohort B will continue to have 32 in-person days and 4 holidays plus the addition of 4 remote days. I cannot imagine how teachers are expected to instruct full classes on Wednesday remote days when the two cohorts experience such a discrepancy. There seems to be an intention to make up 2 of those days for Cohort A at the end of June, but that is cold comfort after losing the equivalent of 2 expected weeks in the first four months of school. And since very little happens at the end of June, if anything, those last two days of school at the end of the year should be split between A&B if we are still in the hybrid model.

Obviously all of this could be moot in a matter of weeks if the district is required to go fully remote, but for now, every single day in the classroom matters for kids who are struggling with remote/virtual. An added issue is that there's no clearly identified path for families to indicate trouble on home days - the best way to catch those in difficulty remain those check-ins on in-school days. As a member of Dallin School Council, I've encouraged Principal Dingman to deploy quick survey tools to assess student moods/resiliency/happiness so we can figure out ways to identify and support these kids before they fall too far behind, but this kind of monitoring should be happening on a district-wide level.

We are obviously experiencing a public health crisis and there is a staffing shortage at APS. This, however, seems like an inequity that could be easily balanced by twice swapping a Thursday or Friday with Cohort B between now and winter break. As families have not been officially informed of any change to the schedule yet, that kind of shift could be built into any adjustments.

I look forward to hearing back from you and the School Committee on this issue.

Sincerely,
Tracy Van Dorpe
151 Appleton Street



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

School playground restrictions

Hannah B <hannahb@gmail.com>

Sat, Oct 10, 2020 at 11:41 AM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us, aps_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us

Dear Dr. Bodie and members of the school committee,

I am writing to respectfully disagree with the decision to limit elementary school playground hours to in-school children only. I understand there is a need to protect safe space for public school children to play. I wish that you had considered remote academy children's needs as equally important to those in the hybrid model and in the after school programs. I have three major concerns.

1. Equitable access: North Union park and playground is a public space for the entire town. This densely settled corner of town does not have another easy access playground and park. This decision leaves far too many children who live in small apartments with nowhere to play for most of the week. In the winter, 8am-4pm is just about all of the day light hours. Children need to play outside EVERY day.

2. Access for remote children. We parents chose remote school for safety concerns. However, our children are very much missing school and, especially, playing on the school playgrounds. We have no recess access to playgrounds during the day because there is not enough time during our short breaks to walk to one. We are already feeling very left out of the school community that has seemed to give consistent priority to developing and implementing the in-person system. Might it be possible to reserve some hours on our home school playgrounds just for remote kids so our children could also safely access the climbing, swinging and balancing they NEED after so many months at home.

3. Asking us to use other playgrounds is not trivial. First, they are not all safely accessible to all children, some of whom walk there alone. Second, I have been trying to find a playground that feels safe for us remote families, with our added sense of concern. Our children get out of school later than the in-school children, so by the time we arrive at any town playground it is already quite busy. It feels like we are always coming in second and having to deny our children playground time.

Perhaps all of the schools can look at ways to most creatively use all of the school properties to designate outdoor spaces dedicated only for safe use by in-school children at certain times. Please do not use town playgrounds, and please do make time and space for remote children. We are by far the largest elementary cohort and the only one with no dedicated playground time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Hannah Blitzblau, mother to two Thompson remote students



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Questions for school Committee meeting Thursday 10/8/2020

Lisa Hersey <lhersey1999@gmail.com>
To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Tue, Oct 6, 2020 at 5:15 PM

I believe in a previous meeting that it was discussed by Dr Bodie that students who attend in person on Mondays in the AA cohort would get a make up day for all the Monday holidays that don't fall on a vacation week so they would still get 2 in person days a week, why is this not happening? We are now having our 2nd Monday holiday and my daughter is missing school again, with in person be so little it is so extremely important to have those 2 days a week with her teacher in person.

Sent from my iPhone



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

AHS re-opening communications, in-person learning, and the senior class

Pamela Baldwin <theotherpamela@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 14, 2020 at 7:00 AM

To: Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Matthew Janger <mjanger@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Tassone <Ktassone@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Cc: rmacneal@arlington.k12.ma.us, Jeff Thielman <jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us, pschlictman@arlington.k12.ma.us, whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us, lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us, kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us, Diane Gardner <dsgardner@verizon.net>, Amy Hoff <amyhoff@gmail.com>, andrea canty <andreacanty02474@gmail.com>, Melina Vanderpile <vanderpile@comcast.net>

Dear Drs. Janger and Bodie (with copy to Dr. MacNeal and the members of the School Committee),

I wrote to you about the problem with the plan for AHS a month ago. Did you read my letter? I am resending it, attached, along with renewed concerns, and joined by several other concerned parents who have also written, and asked that their names be added, below.

We fully recognize how challenging the current situation is, and we know that administrators and teachers at AHS are back at work and working incredibly hard to be ready to welcome students, remotely, on September 21.

Nevertheless, my concerns from August 11 remain, and we are deeply disappointed to learn that in the intervening time, leadership has moved the plan for the high school further in the wrong direction. And this comes after putting the AHS community through a charade of seeking family input. You convened a hand-selected parent advisory group that only met once. Most egregiously, you offered a 'survey' for students to sign up for a hybrid schedule model that you evidently had no intention of delivering. At a forum on August 20 you assured families that student schedules would be available 'shortly after September 4.' Until a message to students (nothing to parents) arrived this past Friday, 9/11, we heard nothing from the leadership of the AHS community, as the days ticked away and students wondered which classes they would have in the fall semester while trying to complete their summer work.

But this past Thursday night, September 10, you revealed to the School Committee that even with improved HVAC (which you have failed, with literally months of lead time, to procure), you believe that the building cannot accommodate alternating cohorts of in-person classes, and you sought and received approval to conduct the entire fall semester online. It was clear in the presentation Thursday that the HVAC concerns were not the primary obstacle but that the high school admin team either could not or would not create a workable hybrid schedule. With the summer months behind us now, it is evident that you have not used that time to explore or implement other creative solutions, such as dividing the school into smaller cohorts, thinking about grade by grade approaches, and/or rotating cohorts by week as other schools are doing.

When I wrote to you a month ago I was dismayed that you had agreed on a temporary carve-out from the district plan -- this was an entirely unequal solution but the claim was that it would be short-term and only due to HVAC issues. You didn't respond to my letter. Now, based on what I heard during the meeting Thursday, you appear to be claiming that you cannot deliver the hybrid schedule regardless, because of the complexity of the schedule and a "perfect storm" of the pandemic and the construction project. None of these externalities have changed since last spring. We can only conclude that you selected the AA/BB hybrid model while knowing it would not work in the spaces we have. And yes, now you are "out of time" to keep working on the hybrid schedule, because it was never going to work with the hybrid plan you picked.

We have no choice but to accept your assessment of the facility and the scheduling matrix. The SC was forced to approve the fully remote semester. But I do not accept that the AHS leadership chooses to keep trying to 'spin' the narrative rather than communicate with compassion and transparency, or ask for real input to consider multiple scenarios. You measured the classrooms back in June and July -- if they don't work for a 50% alternating hybrid schedule why didn't you disclose it then and spend the months and weeks of the summer creating the all-remote program that you are now enthusiastically espousing, with schedules distributed on time?? If some HVAC adjustments could make the hybrid model work, why didn't you vigorously pursue this and make it work?? Which narrative is it?? There are other older school buildings in Arlington that also face ventilation and scheduling and staffing challenges and yet the leaders of those schools are somehow making it work, because the hybrid model was approved and announced as the plan for the district.

You have had the same amount of time to work towards a positive start to the high school academic year as every other high school in Massachusetts. The status of the building has not changed since March 12, the last day that classes were offered on the AHS campus. Yet Arlington High School students are facing a disorganized, disruptive and half-baked school-year start, in the midst of a pandemic that is already deeply destabilizing and emotionally taxing. **For the community of students and families you have created a dynamic of distrust that was totally avoidable.**

Offering a second community forum this week may be helpful, but these plan changes, pop-up meetings and uncoordinated emails, which may have been inevitable as the public health emergency unfolded in April and May, betray the **overall lack of a coherent, consistent approach to the task at hand which is getting all our high schoolers back in school.**

Please note that the Friday 9/11 email to the "AHS community" was not sent to parents -- just one example of a chaotic communication approach. **A coordinated, transparent, and consistent communication approach is really the bare minimum that our students deserve.** Our school can and should do so much better than this, especially given its incredibly talented teachers who are already demonstrating their commitment to creative, student-centered solutions, to the extent they are able in their various areas.

Creating a positive learning community does not mean sending insistently cheery messages that fail to adequately address or even to acknowledge the severity of the academic, social, and emotional challenges facing our students.

With regard to technology challenges, it should go without saying that the fundamental requirement for making the all-remote semester anything *remotely* close to a positive learning environment is reliable internet and devices, and yet it is not clear that you have resolved the problems with Google Meet, and Chromebook/Zoom compatibility issues, that I noted in my letter last month and that were pointed out in Thursday's meeting as well.

Finally, I am compelled to point out that the September 26 and October 3 SAT administrations have been bungled, and AHS has failed the senior class by refusing to find a way to offer the test at our school. The AHS community has never been told why you decided you could not safely offer the test if all available spaces in the building were utilized, with windows open, for this one-time event on 9/26 (and/or 10/3). The information about the cancellation was buried in the School Counseling Newsletter sent to all grades in late August. It is likely that there are some families that don't even realize the test may not be happening at AHS, because official cancellation notices from the College Board have not gone out (we know of at least several students who still have a registration showing as active, even though AHS is on the test center closures list). **The communication to the Class of 21 that went out this past Friday 9/11 did not even mention the SAT.**

Some students just received cancellations for the Medford HS October 3 test administration, but it's not clear whether they have cancelled the test entirely, or limited spots to their own students. Somewhere in all the red tape, the status of the AHS test is still murky. We believe our school certainly could have administered the SAT in various rooms at AHS. Many spaces in the school are available, APS could find money to stipend teachers and others to staff an SAT that takes place in multiple rooms if necessary, and if we knew that we needed a large space like the gym or cafeteria for the SAT, the administration should have pushed the Facilities Department to prioritize those spaces for HVAC upgrades.

It is as if our school leadership has decided it has no responsibility to articulate the issues, show compassion, or acknowledge the gravity of the challenges and uncertainty that surround the 2020-21 college admissions cycle. Instead families received a message on Friday that implies everything is normal except the college fairs are 'virtual.' It's not an adequate message in the current moment. Students do not want to be told that 'most colleges will be test-optional this year so don't worry about it.' They are justifiably very worried!

Seniors need guidance and support for wrestling with how to approach a drastically changed college admissions landscape that presents uneven distribution of opportunities and requirements. We know that individual School Counselors have been in touch directly with their seniors and that they are compassionate and constructive professionals who themselves are facing unprecedented challenges, but communication about these important concerns from leadership has been sorely lacking.

We urge you again in the strongest possible terms to do whatever is necessary to provide in-person learning for AHS seniors, before the end of the semester if possible, and certainly for Semester 2. **A building with plenty of rooms with working HVAC should have on-site programming, including classes, for seniors much earlier than late January.** This is the last year of school for these students, many have courses they have to take to graduate, some are short of service hours, most need support with college applications, and they should be able to connect with their friends. The School Committee approved a deadline in November for delivery of the Semester 2 plan, but we respectfully insist that you assure the community well before then that the available spaces in the building will be regularly used for on-site programs and instruction for seniors and other cohorts, including but not limited to, high needs students. For the reasons we have articulated in previous correspondence, an all-remote academic year is not acceptable, not warranted, and would be nothing short of a travesty for the class of 21.

In closing, let me reiterate what I said in my previous letter. We know that the pandemic has wrought unprecedented challenges for schools and communities. We appreciate the hours, days, and weeks of work that APS personnel are putting in on behalf of Arlington students during these troubling times, and we thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,


Pamela Baldwin, Summer Street
Andrea Canty, Westmoreland Ave
Diane Gardner, Linden Street
Amy Hoff, West Court Terrace
Melina Vanderpile, Cliff Street

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Pamela Baldwin

 **AHS fall 2020 plan letter.pdf**
559K

 **Gmail - Fwd_ Aug_Sept update from School Counseling Department.pdf**
143K

 **Gmail - Fwd_ High School Re-Opening.pdf**
164K



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

School Committee Meeting Question

Janet Sparks <janetstuzzi@gmail.com>
To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 6:08 PM

Is it possible to provide asynchronous learning for remote days to ensure that education is accessible for all students?

Synchronous poses a problem not only for ASD and ADHD learners, but also for young learners and students with unreliable access to the internet/devices.

Wednesday was hours of synchronous learning which was overwhelming for my child. She can't learn like this. Wednesdays will be a waste every week and if her cohort goes remote, this will only get worse.



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Not urgent, but important for 2021-22

Sharon Lipton <sharonlipton@gmail.com>
To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Fri, Sep 11, 2020 at 9:10 PM

Hi Karen,

I don't know what your timelines are, so I wanted to send this email now before I miss an important deadline.

The Jewish high holidays are no longer school holidays, and the first day of Rosh Hashanah next year is Tuesday, September 6th, the day after Labor Day.

Please, please consider starting the first day of school the previous week or any other day. Don't make every Jewish family in town decide between our faith and our kids's education.

(I would also hope APS not make the first day on Wednesday the 7th, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, but I recognize that's a larger ask.)

Please let me know if there is another group I should make aware of the conflict.

I know there are WAY bigger things going on right now. I'm happy to set a calendar reminder to follow up at a better time. Good luck and thank you for all of your hard work during this crazy time. We all appreciate it!

Thanks,
Sharon Lipton
Parent of a 2nd grader and 2021 kindergartner



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

commending you on School Committee vote on August 31

Alex Lancaster <alex@biosysanalytics.com>

Sun, Sep 6, 2020 at 4:28 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us, kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us, lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us, whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us, lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us, jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us, pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us, jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us

Dear Arlington School Committee,

I am writing as a parent of a Hardy Elementary School boy who is entering 4th grade this year. I am writing to express my strong support of the School Committee's vote on August 31, to continue with the hybrid in-person plan. I was glad that the motion to further delay the opening of school was defeated.

Back in late February and early March, as an evolutionary and mathematical biologist, and I had been watching the incoming epidemiological data with extreme alarm. I wrote to Superintendent Bodie as early as March 8 urgently requesting the immediate closure of all Arlington Public Schools when the first COVID-19 case was detected at Stratton. I believe the immediate public health crisis override all the other concerns. A week or so later APS made the correct decision to close schools. That was the right decision then, and if we were in a similar situation now, it would be the right decision again.

We are, however, in a very different position now. Levels of COVID-19 in Arlington and most of the surrounding towns is low, a state-wide 2-week average positivity rate of 0.9%, we have a fairly high per-capita testing across state, and a contact tracing program is in place. Massachusetts as a whole, and Arlington in particular, is practicing a high compliance with mask mandates and social-distancing protocols, despite being in phase 3 of reopening (although I would have preferred that casinos had stayed shut). APS seems like they have secured routine testing for teachers. **Now is the time to try this experiment.** Not wait another 2 or 3 or 4 weeks.

Obviously re-opening is not completely without risk, and if the data suggested again that re-opening started to lead to increased community transmission (or that the background community transmission rate in the rest of the town or state increased), I would again suggest another immediate shutdown. But we owe it our kids to at least try the hybrid program. I think it's widely appreciated that the remote program was a disaster over the Spring. Our son did not have a synchronous meeting for **9 weeks** after school shutdown. I do hope and expect that the school district will have learnt its lesson and that the remote offering will be better. However, there is nothing like in-person class.

I know that many are saying that with masks and SD in place, it will be a suboptimal experience for students. It certainly won't be ideal, but having seen the positive effects of well-supervised socially-distanced playdates on our son's mental health over the late Spring and the Summer, I know it can work, at least for many kids. We have other friends who have put their kids in mask-wearing, socially distanced summer camps and it worked out well for them.

Having kids in in-person school will also improve the mental health of parents - when both me and my wife were trying to juggle our full-time work and manage our 3rd grader coming in and out of Google Classroom, it was almost impossible. School Committee member Dr. Allison-Ampe, hit on this issue in the last Committee meeting (at 2:06 on the video) when she said she had concerns about:

*either the remote, or the, the hybrid, the remote section of the hybrid. And I understand that we're trying to give them screen breaks....**but I'm thinking as a parent, especially if I'm trying to work a job at the same time coordinating when the kids supposed to be, on, off back on, off again.** I mean, I'd have a hard time scheduling it for myself I'd have to set up alarms or something. And I'm concerned about how well it's going to go.*

This is the problem - if the kids aren't in under direct supervision of teachers - then even though the teacher might be present on screen in the synchronous portions of remote learning, you are effectively delegating a good portion of teaching to us, the parents. That's a **job** that you're asking us to do on top of our regular jobs, and one that we have little to no input on how it is scheduled. With the hybrid model - at least parents will get a break from that co-ordination job for 2 days.

I hear that there are further petitions to delay and/or cancel the hybrid plan and I would **strongly urge you to reject these motions**. We expect that will be rocky for everyone. Yes, the schedules are a bit of a mess, maybe some are workable, and some are not. There will be bumps and realignments, but we don't do anyone any good if we don't try. **And the only way we're going to know if a hybrid option is going to work at all is to try it for a while.** There are may who are not comfortable sending their kids to school at all. Fine. We have the "remote academy" option for them.

I worry that you might be hearing more voices skewed towards keeping the schools closed. Please know that there are many, many of us parents who desperately want you to try this hybrid option that you may not be hearing from.

If the public health data starts going south, I'll be amongst the first to call for a shutdown, but now is the right time to try this.

Best,
Dr. Alexander Lancaster
Brooks Ave, Arlington MA 02474



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

High School Re-Opening

Andrea Canty <andreacanty02474@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 3, 2020 at 5:53 PM

To: Matthew Janger <mjanger@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>, aps_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us

To the members of the School Committee, Dr. Janger, and Dr. Bodie,

Thank you all so much for your continued work on the school reopening. I can't imagine how difficult this process has been for all involved. I am grateful for all the time you have dedicated to this issue.

I am writing to follow up on my last email regarding my hope that students return to AHS in the hybrid model once the building's ventilation issues are addressed. After the last School Committee meeting, I was left with the impression that too many kids signed up for the hybrid option, making it challenging to bring back all those students who chose the hybrid option in a way that allows for safe social distancing. If this is indeed the case, and the building is not able to accommodate all grades, I strongly advocate for bringing back the seniors, as this is the end of their high school experience, and, if space allows, the juniors. Additionally, many of these students have AP exams, which I believe would be better served by an in-person experience.

I would also advocate for bringing these students back as soon as the building can accommodate them, rather than waiting for another plan or another survey. It is disappointing to think that this may further delay a return to in-person instruction. I understand this has been a loss for all Arlington families, teachers, and administrators, but it will be felt most profoundly and with irrevocable finality by the AHS seniors.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Andrea Canty, mom of 2 12th graders

Amy Hoff, mom of 12th grader

Pamela Baldwin, mom of 2 12th graders



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Supporting Hybrid

Iain King <iain.King@sopheon.com>

Thu, Sep 3, 2020 at 1:54 PM

To: "jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us" <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us" <kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us" <lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us" <whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us" <lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us" <pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us" <jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us>
Cc: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear School Committee,

I have watched most School Committee meetings this year and I wanted to write to express my support for the decision you made to on 8/31 to continue the plan towards School restarting on September 21st in a Hybrid mode. Our child is a rising 4th grader in the Bishop School. She is a typical kid who engages with school and has received positive feedback from teachers. However, our experience as a family since the start of the Pandemic has us very concerned that if we return to fully remote schooling we will have significant behavioral and emotional issues.

During the initial closure period she engaged with remote resources (IXL math and language, Keyboards, etc) was good. The transition to the "Grid" caused significant challenges as we as parents had to provide the role of teacher. The remote engagement of the teacher was not effective in terms of allowing her to progress the assignments, and as parents our support typically ended in arguments. To be very clear, our child who exhibited no social and emotional issues before the pandemic, was now suffering emotionally from the isolation.

Our experience with Karate is instructive. Pre-pandemic she has attended classes 3x a week for 3+ years. She loves it. They transitioned to remote webinars which were not successful as they were (a) remote, and (b) performed by instructors she was not familiar with. They then provided small classes where the instructor could see them and she could see her friends which were more successful, and then finally she was able to attend small group in person classes which have been hugely successful.

Similarly, remote Art camp not successful, but in person sewing camp was very successful (including wearing masks all day).

It appears this town has a minority of very vocal opponents of returning to in person schooling. It does not appear they represent the majority of parents who are electing (at the Elementary level) to prefer a hybrid approach. I strongly believe that without in person engagement from Teachers our children will continue to have severe emotional and behavioral issues, not to mention significantly impacted educational outcomes.


Parents I know are extremely worried by the continued uncertainty of what the school committee will decide in the coming 2 weeks. As of now we have the conditions to start school in hybrid mode to enable teachers to engage with their new classes and form the relationships necessary for effective learning. Personally I have been encouraged by the hard work performed across the district to enable any form of in person learning.

Finally, my niece and nephew returned to full time middle and high schooling in Scotland 3 weeks ago with no issues yet. My colleagues in Netherlands and Germany are reporting that their kids are significantly happier for returning to school in person.

Regards, Iain


Iain King

Global Enterprise Services Leader

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Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Please reconsider

Holly Rossi <holly@hollyrossi.com>

Tue, Sep 1, 2020 at 1:39 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us, aps_superintendent@arlington.k12.ma.us

Cc: Rob Rossi <rrossi@gmail.com>

Dear Members of the School Committee and Dr. Bodie,

I'm writing to urge you to please reconsider your position on the school reopening plan. To hear Bill Hayner's motion voted down last night in favor of a hybrid model that is neither workable in the short term nor sustainable in the long term was profoundly disappointing to us. We know that the parent view is different from the many internal conversations that you are all navigating. But we also know that Julianna Keyes was crystal clear: "You are not listening" to teachers.

There are two main points we have heard used to justify continued commitment to the current hybrid model:

- Students need to be in the classroom to have social and emotional support
- Virus levels are low in Arlington, so we need to get as much in-person school time as we can before that situation changes

Both of these are examples of abstract thinking, and the clock has run out on any attempts to bring them into concrete, operationally feasible reality. Ms. Keyes described a situation in which some teachers do not yet know what they will be teaching. Mr. Feeney has said that ventilation and filtration capacity will not last into cold weather without further work and changes to the systems. The number of unanswered questions about testing and quarantine protocols for hybrid cohorts are too many to count. How does any of that amount to a socially safe learning environment for students or staff?

On the second point, Somerville, Wayland, Cambridge, Watertown, Malden, and Medford make almost a perfect circle around Arlington in having decided to open fully remote with a phased-in hybrid plan. In most of these towns, virus levels are low. Yet school leaders in these towns understand that starting school in a fully remote model for any students who can safely do so, with a thoughtful plan to phase in a hybrid learning model, is how we *keep* the viral curve flat. Squeezing in a few weeks or even months of in-person learning before the pandemic catches up with us hardly feels like a responsible decision. And really, how socially and emotionally supportive will it be for children to have to pivot home when temperatures drop below the level the air filtration system can properly tend to?

School Committee members declined to support Bill Hayner's motion last night, in part, because there were no dates offered for the phase-in. Yet all but one of you voted for the original hybrid model motion without specifics. How do you account for this apparent double standard?

There are no "good answers" in a pandemic, but the School Committee has been frustratingly willing to go to extreme lengths to protect abstract ideas about what "should" happen in September. Please consider changing course, as a matter of moral responsibility.

Please also consider the systemic import of these decisions. So much of what we observed in last night's meeting matches the items on the list of "Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture" described by the group Showing Up for Racial Justice. One in particular that stands out is the "sense of urgency" in which leaders claim there's insufficient time to consider inclusion and racial justice at important decisive moments. I urge you to read the linked article and to think carefully about what APS is asking teachers, families, and students to tolerate during a pandemic that disproportionately sickens and kills people of color. It's not too late to reconsider the immediate opening plan, and to focus all available resources in the direction of clear, safe, and scalable plans that offer all APS students the education everyone wants them to have.

There's time. You can make time by reconsidering a fully remote start on September 21.

Thank you,
Holly Rossi
Rob Rossi (TMM Precinct 2)
Hardy School parents



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

thank you

Catherine Slesnick <clslesnick@gmail.com>

Tue, Sep 1, 2020 at 9:39 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us, kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us, lextan@arlington.k12.ma.us, whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us, lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us, jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us, pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us, thielman@arlington.k12.ma.us

Dear APS School Committee,

I am a parent of rising 1st and 4th graders as Hardy Elementary and I am writing to commend you for your vote to uphold the decision to allow our elementary students to begin the year in a hybrid program.

A little background on me and my family – I am not typically very involved in school activities. My husband and I both work full time as data scientists. We are blessed to have two children who do well enough in school that we don't worry too much about their academic standing at ages 6 & 9. However, while we are not very involved with school and academics, we are very plugged into and involved in our children's mental and physical well-being. And our children, our whole family, has been struggling since last March.

My son, who is only barely 9, became very clinically depressed last spring and through this summer. He went from being an active, healthy happy kid to a sedentary, depressed, angry kid who has high cholesterol at age 9, all in the span of 4-5 months. My 6-year-old daughter completely regressed back to her day-care behaviors in that same time period. Our entire family dynamic as we knew it has been torn apart. But we did our part and kept to ourselves and wore masks believing that our family's hard work, and our town's hard work, would pay off. And it did. Arlington is one of the safest towns in one of the safest states in the country right now. Our kids should reap the benefits of this hard work.

I listened to the school committee meeting last night. There was talk about how social-distancing and mask-wearing was not going to be good for kindergartners and first graders. And it might not be good for all of them. But I believe this thinking is wrong for most of them. And I 100% know that it is wrong for my first grader. I sent my kids to Arlington Center for the Arts in person camp last week. It was the first time they were with other kids since March. They became different children. They came home every day so happy and full of life. My 6-year old not once complained about having to wear a mask or social distance. All she could talk about was how much fun she was having with her new friends. I was slightly concerned for my son. He is older, but he has some disabilities. He has very bad vision and no depth perception and has almost no hearing in one ear. He has a hard time wearing masks between his glasses and his hearing aid. He has a hard time understanding other people who wear masks because he can't see their mouth move when they talk. But none of that mattered once he got into a space with his peers. He also never once complained about the masks. He came home smiling more than I had seen him in months. Most kids need to be around other kids. They are resilient to changing circumstances as long as they feel loved and included. And our teachers can give them that even with masks and social distancing. The children in our town can give each other that even with masks and social distancing. We owe it to them to at least let them try.

Thank you,
Dr. Cathy Slesnick



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

question for school committee

Lisa Marshall <lisa.faye.marshall@gmail.com>
To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 5:54 PM

Hello,

My question for the school committee is as follows:

Many districts have been making accommodations for the children of teachers to come to school everyday, in accordance with DESE recommendations. Will Arlington be providing any accommodations for the children of teachers?

Thank you,

Lisa Marshall



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Questions for the APS School Committee on 08/31/2020

Katia Sht. <katiasht@hotmail.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 5:21 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Hello,

Would you please pass the following questions to the School Committee meeting happening tonight?

Thank you,

Katia.

Hello,

My question is to the School Committee(SC) and directly to Mr. Janger.

I am a parent of a rising AHS junior. My child is a strong, good student, and is neither special ed nor academically challenged. He does not struggle with using a computer, but I have never seen him as disengaged, uninterested, and constantly angry as last Spring.

The SC voted on Aug. 11 that a hybrid education model should be implemented in all APS schools, however, since HVAC system at AHS makes it unsafe for students to be there, AHS would start in all remote until it is safe for students to be in the building.

Based on this opening plan, my family chose "hybrid" education plan for the upcoming academic year, assuming that at some point when the ventilation issues are fixed, my child will be doing hybrid and actually be going to school at least twice a week.

However, a few days later Mr. Janger released AHS reopening plan which has NO plan for children like my child to start full hybrid, even if the HVAC is fixed. Moreover, on Aug. 26 SC meeting, when asked about this directly, Mr. Janger confirmed it and explained it with space issues saying he would have to cut electives if full hybrid for all AHS students were to be implemented. It also appeared like Mr. Janger was personally leaning on not doing full hybrid and not even considering this. He suggested that instead of attending school two days a week, engaging children in education could be accomplished with occasional "field trips" to school.

This dramatically changes the situation for those many of us who do not have special ed or struggling students, and who chose "hybrid" in the hopes our children would attend school. If AHS can directly violate the SC resolution and in fact has no plans for full hybrid, many of us would instead choose remote learning or jumping to private schools, or ACHS, or transfer out of the district, because in the current "phased remote (hybrid)", as Mr. Janger calls it, the students get only 2 days a week interaction with the teacher remotely for the foreseeable future, and no interaction with peers at all.

Specific questions/points:

1. Will AHS be implementing full hybrid (even if at the expense of electives), as voted on by school committee, at some point in 2020/2021 academic year?
2. It appears that, since AHS knows now that they have to cut electives to accommodate full hybrid, this decision could be made now, and not at the end of November. Will they choose to cut electives and do full hybrid, or will they choose not to?
3. If AHS has no plans to do hybrid for ALL students who signed up for hybrid, we would like to be directly told this - and have the option to change education plans we voted for.
4. Is AHS allowed to ignore the decision by SC?

Thank you very much,

Katia Shtyrkova.



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

School Committee mtg Aug 31

Laura O'Brien <lauraobrien@alumni.virginia.edu>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 2:16 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

I'd would like to understand from the committee

1. what considerations the committee has given to the teacher's input and opinions.
2. Now that parents have committed, can we hear how many students per school chose remote and how many remote and hybrid classes will be available? Do we know if students can stay at their current assigned school? Or will remote classes need to be combined with other schools? We need to be preparing our children so they can adjust, especially if they get assigned to a different school. If the children get placed in a different school, what onboarding will be available to them (and parents) to not only get to know the new classroom teacher, but also the specialists?
3. When will we hear how many students are in a remote class, with which teacher, what the schedules look like, so that we as parents can plan accordingly and get support in place?
4. What the details look like for ELL students sample schedules. Again, parents need to be planning and putting support systems in place for these schedules. When can we hear the details?
5. Can you clarify the commitment to the teaching experience we choose, hybrid vs. remote. Is a commitment for a year? A term, like just Fall? And what is the process for switching should the option we chose simply not work for our child. I've heard conflicting information about whether we committed to a full year or not.

Kind regards,

--Laura



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Question for tonight's School Committee meeting

Lambert, Brett <Brett.Lambert@stantec.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 2:46 PM

To: "kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us" <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Cc: Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Michelle Lambert <michellelambert19@gmail.com>

Hi Karen,

We are submitting the question below for tonight's meeting, which can be read or summarized by the chair.

I listened to the recording of the facilities subcommittee meeting last week, and from what I heard it appeared that the facilities work update was in large part focused on ensuring all of the equipment was operating as originally intended (discussion about replacing motors, belts, servicing equipment). Understanding of course that is a critical first step, I was concerned there was no update on increasing ventilation capacity or higher level filtration being installed. Early discussions and reports were very much focused on increasing ventilation rates and installing MERV-13 filtration (with the caveat of 'where possible').

I am very aware of how difficult of a task the Facilities Department and School Department is facing with trying to get all of these answers in a short period of time. Because of my background, I am also very aware of how much ventilation and filtration can affect occupant health even in 'normal' circumstances.

I would like to ensure that increasing ventilation and filtration above and beyond the code-level ASHRAE standards that the equipment was previously operating at is still happening districtwide, and furthermore understand where (if anywhere) this is not possible.

Brett Lambert, AIA CPHC

Senior Associate

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Stantec Architecture Inc.
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Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Public Comment for 8/31 School Committee Meeting

Tony Siddall <tonysiddall@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 1:42 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

I am concerned that, at this late date, our teacher's union is not supportive of the reopening plan. It makes me wonder how the union was involved in the creation of the development of the proposal. I would respectfully ask that the Superintendent (or the union president) provide details on when and how the union participated in the creation of these plans.

Tony Siddall
Brackett Parent



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Public comment for August 31st Meeting

Manz, Eve <eimanz@bu.edu>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 3:01 PM

To: "kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us" <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Hi,

I would like the following statement included in the materials sent to the school committee for this evening's meeting.

As an elementary school parent who has chosen the hybrid option for my children, I urge the school committee to listen seriously to the concerns that the Arlington Education Association has about the hybrid plans and rollout. Please address the concerns directly and leverage the expertise of educators to develop plans that feel safe and supportive - emotionally and physically - for our community. We must work together as an entire community to develop plans that bring our children back to school in person and recognize both the shared goals we have and the complexity of this work.

If there is time, I am happy to speak personally, but understand if there is not enough time.

Best,
Eve Manz

Eve Manz
she/her/hers
Assistant Professor
Science Education, Elementary Education

Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development
Two Silber Way | Boston, MA 02215



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Question for school committee meeting

Stephanie Larason <slarason@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 2:42 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Here is a question for tonight's meeting, thank you!

The current plan options for Arlington High School significantly limit class choice options for remote students. Given the space challenges of launching hybrid at AHS - which could also end up limiting class choices - would it not be more equitable to offer all classes remotely to ensure all students can choose the ones they need, then launch creative but optional in-person learning opportunities to whatever extent the facility is able to support them?

Best,
Stephanie Larason



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Question for school committee tonight

hilarity clay <hilarita@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 at 4:26 PM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

What are the details for the testing plan that is available for staff and potentially students?

Thank you,

Hilary Clay



Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Upcoming school committee vote

Brian O'Hagan <bwohagan@gmail.com>

Sun, Aug 30, 2020 at 7:22 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Mrs. Fitzgerald,

As I understand it the Arlington School Superintendent has sent the required school readiness report to the School Committee and you are preparing to finalize plans for the start of the school year.

Since the meeting on 10 August where the recommendation was originally submitted to the board I have learned a lot. The following presentations from the OMS and AHS principals were especially useful.

At this point, I feel the AHS phased-in reopening plan is safer and superior to the hybrid option for OMS. The idea of brief "field trips" to the high school for specific project/lab work is a great idea that should be utilized for both middle school and high school grades. I strongly urge you to shift to a safer plan and follow the phased plan outlines for the high school for the entire town.

Additionally I don't feel the superintendent sufficiently considered the opinions of the teacher's union. I also have problems believing that the superintendent has the best interests of our community, teachers, & children at the forefront of her decisions as this is her last year serving in this role. She quite simply does not have to deal with the fallout, the community does.

Brian

PS: please read the above into the record on Monday's (31 August 2020) record. Should this need additional unplanned summation like the 10 August meeting, please use, "The AHS phased reopening plan is safer and superior to the hybrid option for OMS, please shift to this plan for all Arlington schools"