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

School Committee Testimonial

Matthew Cincotta <mcincotta@arlington.k12.ma.us>   Wed, Dec 9, 2020 at 3:12 PM
To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear School Committee Members,

I am Matthew Cincotta, an English teacher at Arlington High School who wishes to advocate for my students. The vast majority of my students wish to keep our remote schedule the way it is. They say it works, so why would we change it? If things need to change, they say that the best option would be the departmental shift model because it would be the least disruptive to our current schedule.

I agree with my students. I've found so many ways to have successful classes in our remote model, sometimes even better than in-person--jounral entries posted in the chat for everyone to read and celebrate, multiple discussions happening at the same time through breakout rooms, and easy-to-access engaging multimedia resources to enjoy our journey through Shakespeare, along with projects and presentations and so much more! Both students and I have gotten used to the way things are and have found ways to build community and have meaningful learning experiences as they learn how to be critical and creative readers, writers, thinkers, and communicators.

The PREDICTABILITY of the remote model is essential to its success. I would need to rewrite my whole curriculum if we were to change the schedule to something other than departmental shift. I hope you can trust the surveys, which parents, students, and teachers have poured hours into filling out to express testimonies. But if you don't trust those, then I hope you can listen to our voices now and see that most students, teachers, and parents want the same thing: either our current remote model or a departmental shift. We need the FLEXIBILITY to be able to move between these two as COVID-19 cases continue to rise and make life increasingly unpredictable.

All that we ask is that you listen and try to understand all the things that are going well in the current model (and that could continue to go well in the department shift one). It's not perfect, but it's a whole lot better than the other options would be. Please trust our experiences. Remote learning is HARD, but certain types of hybrid learning will be much harder. If things were different, we'd all rather be in person; but, for the time being, let's not destroy what's working. Please help all of us maintain our sanity, wellness, and health. Where predictability and flexibility are not possible in our world right now, let us at least make it possible in our schools.

My warm regards,
Matthew Cincotta (he / him / his)
English Deparment

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Matthew Cincotta, M.S.Ed.
He / Him / His
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Black lives matter; Queer lives matter; Trans lives matter; and Women's rights are human rights. Let's free ourselves to free others.

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