

12/17/2020



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE OF ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

P.O. Box 320, Arlington, MA 02476

December 2020

To Our Good Friends and Sponsors:

We hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. In spite of the difficulties of our times, we will hold the 2021 Dr. King Observance, the 33rd program in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., here in Arlington. The Observance will take place virtually on Monday, January 18, 2021, the holiday named for Dr. King. Thanks to our partnership with ACMI, Arlington Community Media Inc., we will stream the program. Further details will be available shortly regarding where to find the observance as well as the online program pamphlet. Our guest speaker is acclaimed playwright and Arlington native Kirsten Greenidge. The 2021 program will highlight history as reflected in the arts.

We invite you to sponsor this very special Dr. King Observance.

Sponsor: We look forward to your donation of \$50 or more to support this community celebration of Dr. King, in honor of his life and work. Your sponsorship sends a powerful message to the greater community, helps support this evening, and keeps Dr. King's inspiration and message alive today and for future generations. Today Dr. King's goals have significant relevance. The enclosed envelope will hold your check as well as how you wish to be listed in the program book.

Nominee: Please help us honor an Arlington resident whose activities deserve recognition for their work in promoting Dr. King's goals of equality and justice within Arlington. Send us the name and a statement about why you think this person should be recognized. Include your nomination in the enclosed envelope. It must be received before December 20th. Since this is an important part of Arlington's Observance, we hope you will nominate someone you know by submitting their name and activities.

Your sponsorship does more than bring the Observance to the community. Combined with a new and soon to be launched online free will collection, your donations further the goals of justice and equality, especially within the Arlington Public Schools. Revenue for the 2020 Observance was \$4,916.58. Expenses for printing, music, speaker, custodian, postage, etc., were \$1,934.00. MLK Committee donations were: \$1,000 to the Arlington African American Scholarship Fund; \$1,000 to the New Repertory Theatre to bring the play *Thurgood* to Arlington High School; \$108 to the Center for Jewish Life following arson attacks; \$300 to the Mass Library Association in memory of Judy Paradis; \$275 each to the Mass Covid-19 Relief Fund, the Greater Boston Food Bank – Covid-19 Relief Fund, and Mass Bail Fund; \$100 each to Arlington Eats and Arlington Health and Human Services Charitable Corporation for Arlington Covid-19 Relief.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

The Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Observance Committee - Ian Jackson, chair: Regina Caines, Kate Cubeta, Alberto Guzman, Sherry Hahn, Jillian Harvey, Crystal Haynes, Roberta Lasky Temple Shir Tikvah, Ann Mathes First Parish UU Church, Pearl Morrison, Neil Osborne NAACP, Rev. Mikel Satcher



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

Message to School Committee from David Conneely (AHS Science Teacher)

1 message

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

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 12:33 PM

Hi Karen,

Here is a note I want to send to the school committee.

Thanks,
David

Dear School Committee Members,

My name is David Conneely and I am a science teacher at Arlington High School. This year I am teaching 10th grade biology and AP Biology (to 11th and 12th graders). I am writing to encourage you to support either the remote with reverse field trip plan (currently being implemented) or the departmental shift plan.

One of the reasons I want you to support one of these two plans is because students are learning a lot and they are having positive experiences. I'll be the first to admit I was unsure how the remote learning was going to go. I was nervous. However, students are learning a lot of biology in my classes. My classes are organized and engaging. In my 10th grade biology classes I do one-on-one breakouts with students almost every day. I screencast my lectures outside of class so I can make class engaging and focus on connecting with the students during class. We've done reverse field trips where students have implemented experiments and improved microscope skills. Students have also conducted group projects/experiments from home, such as a public health COVID-19 project where students collected data on mask use and public perceptions on measures to prevent getting COVID. In my AP class, students have lively group breakout sessions where they do inquiry activities. They also do labs from home using kits I created for them. My AP Biology students are having fun while also learning an enormous amount of biology. They are performing well on challenging unit tests, thereby indicating my class is preparing them for the AP Biology Exam in May.

A second reason to support these two plans (either the current remote or departmental shift) is because it maximizes synchronous instruction. I currently spend the entire class connecting with my students either one-on-one or with groups. It is very engaging and the students are always on track with completing assignments. This is particularly important for my 10th grade students who I think need me to be checking on them daily to assess their learning and their completion of work. However, even my AP students need it. Synchronous instruction not only allows for engaging academic learning. It allows us to connect and do a check-in about what they'll be doing on the weekend, etc. It provides strong social-emotional development. I often hear my AP students chatting about life while working in groups and getting assignments done. This helps them feel connected to one another. If we move away from the remote or departmental shift, this will increase asynchronous instruction. The result will be less time to connect and engage with students. I think this will actually decrease learning.

A third reason to support these two plans (either the current remote or departmental shift), is they will be less disruptive. As I'm sure you are aware, our students thrive on routines. They are in the habit of doing school remotely. To switch the routine and do something new and different would require new routines, which (in my opinion), would take time for adjustment. This would decrease learning.

I hope some of this provides information and context you can use in making your decision. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns and thank you for taking the time to read my message.

Sincerely,

David Conneely

--
David Conneely
Science Teacher



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

Statement for the school committee

1 message

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

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 1:16 PM

Hello Karen!

I hope you are well. I wanted to send along a letter for the school committee in advance of this evening's meeting. I won't be able to attend to read my letter during the public comments, but I was hoping that you might pass my thoughts along to the rest of the committee for consideration.

Thank you for all of the work that you have been doing for the school!
Best,
Megan Miller

Dear Arlington School Committee,

My name is Megan Miller, and I teach 9th and 12th grade English at the high school. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I am writing this to you between my classes today, and I hope that my perspective and experience is helpful as you consider the best course of action for AHS in the second semester.

I am one of the many teachers whose health concerns place them in the high risk category, so I was relieved for the first semester to be able to continue to do the work that I love in a remote setting where I felt I would be safe. Nevertheless, I worried over the summer about whether I would be able to convert all of my curricula to this new digital world. Happily, I have found that remote teaching is going much better than expected, because of all the technology tools made available by the district, as well as the support and hard work of my colleagues. I have been able to find ways to use many of the same best practices in my teaching online as I do in a normal year, such as providing models for students and working with them one-on-one in breakout rooms as they practice, allowing students to collaborate and talk to one another in small group breakout rooms, and providing opportunities for collaborative projects that ask students to engage with texts and each other in new ways.

Unfortunately and counterintuitively, my biggest challenge this semester was finding a way for our in-person reverse field trips to be educationally valuable. I felt at a loss when faced with the many safety restrictions that are so necessary to keep me and my students safe - I could not have them work in groups, share materials, or even turn and talk quietly with a partner to practice their answers before bravely sharing with the rest of the class. Almost all of the best tools in my "teacher toolbox" were off the table. There could be no group posters demonstrating their thinking visually, no small groups huddled together over a passage that they are annotating and picking apart, no leaning over a student's essay with them to help them improve their thesis statement - I had my students in rows six feet apart, with masks on that made it a bit hard to hear each other. The in-person experiences felt, ultimately, to detract from the rich learning that we were engaging in on a regular basis on Zoom.

I know that the in-person time is valuable for students' emotional well-being, (though of course the in-person time simply doesn't look anything like "normal" school). I recognize how vital it is that we insulate our students from the harmful effects of isolation and loneliness. But I also know from my experience that there will be an enormous educational cost to the time spent in small groups in the classroom. That face-to-

face time, though technically together, will in many ways feel more distant than the digital face time we have been experiencing.

It is for these reasons that I hope the Department Shift Model is chosen for our second semester. I believe that of the options available, it allows for the best balance of educational and social needs. With cases of COVID rising precipitously, and knowing what I do about the possibilities of both remote and socially-distant teaching, I believe that the Department Shift Model allows teachers to continue to build on the work we have done this semester while also giving students more regularly scheduled in-person experiences. After talking about the options with my classes, I can also attest to how many of my students crave consistency and routine, and expressed the hope that their schedule would remain as close to the current model as possible. I hope that my perspective here is helpful, and that you will choose the Department Shift Model for semester 2.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter!

Happy Holidays,

Megan Miller

Megan Miller (she/her)
English Teacher
Arlington High School

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In regards to proposed hybrid models for AHS second semester

1 message

Joy Danison <jdanison@me.com>

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 2:34 PM

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

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

Dear School Committee members,

We would like to add our voices in support of the Departmental Shift model that has been recommended by Drs. Janger and Bodie for the second semester program at AHS, beginning in February. While the current all-remote model is not ideal, and certainly not what we would choose for our 9th grade daughter were there not a pandemic in play, it has provided a consistent schedule of teacher-student contact and direct instructional time that has proved extremely beneficial during these uncertain and challenging times.

We believe the Departmental Shift model would build upon what has been working this semester for our daughter and for many of her friends. It maintains the level of direct instructional time of the current model, while increasing the opportunities our daughter would have for some in-person instruction and social interaction with her peers. It allows our daughter to maintain her current schedule for second semester, which is also important to us. As a participant in the math bypass program, she currently benefits from the opportunity to take advanced honors-level courses in math alongside many juniors and seniors. She has worked hard for that opportunity over the past three years, and she could lose it if the schedule has to be revamped; if course offerings are limited; or if 9th and 10th graders are separated from 11th and 12th graders, as proposed by some of the other hybrid models.

We also believe that the Departmental Shift model places the least additional burden on our high school teachers, and gives them the freedom and the bandwidth to expand upon what they are currently doing and what is working well. Time and energy are finite, and our teachers have already had to revamp many of the ways that they teach, along with their entire coursework, to fit into the current remote, semesterized schedule. Rather than asking them to revamp it all again for the second semester, we would prefer they spend the time and energy connecting with our daughter and with other students and improving upon what is working in this first semester. The Departmental Shift model seems most conducive to this aim.

To be clear, the current model is not perfect. Our daughter feels underwhelmed and unchallenged academically and of course longs for more social interaction with her peers, as we all do. But we don't believe that the other two hybrid models that have been proposed — the four-cohort model and the grade-shift two-cohort model — would solve those issues. On the contrary, by reducing the amount of direct instructional time, we fear that the academic piece would suffer even more. We strongly believe that more hours of independent work/study time/asynchronous instruction would be detrimental to our daughter's education. By increasing demands on our teachers, we believe they would have less time to spend reaching out to our daughter and other students and diversifying the curriculum for students of varying levels. The trade-offs of the other two proposed models are just not worth it, in our opinion.

As for the social interaction piece, when we talk with our daughter, we find that what she truly wants is more social interaction without the constraints of the pandemic. She doesn't want more time in a school building maintaining six feet of distance. She wants to be able to connect with her peers without masks and without distancing. At this stage of the game — nine months in — it's perhaps what we all want, deep down. But our daughter realizes, as we do, that it is just not possible at this point. So far this semester, she has participated in two reverse field trips and freshman orientation, as well as some socially distanced conditioning practices for the girls' swim team in late summer. Those have been positive experiences for her. She has expressed to us her strong preference for the Departmental Shift model, as it allows her to have some increased social interaction without sacrificing instructional time and academics. And in the meantime, as we all wait for a vaccine, she will continue to reach out and connect with her friends in safe ways, by taking walks through town with masks on or gathering in backyards with patio heaters for games of cards and movies.

Thank you for considering our thoughts on this matter. We recognize the very difficult decisions before you, and we are extremely grateful to you for your service on behalf of our family along with many other families, our schools and our entire town.

Sincerely,

Joy and Doug Danison

Parents to Naomi (9th grade, AHS); Saideh (7th grade, Ottoson); and Matthew (4th grade, Stratton)



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

Arlington School District is in Violation of DESE's Guidance

2 messages

Mette Aamodt <metteaamodt@gmail.com>

Sun, Dec 13, 2020 at 5:35 PM

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

Cc: Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us, pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us, kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us, Liz Exton <lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Leonard Kardon <lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Jeff Thielman <jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Donato <kdonato@arlington.k12.ma.us>, RMacNeal@arlington.k12.ma.us, Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Dear Superintendent Bodie,

I would like to file a complaint that Arlington is not in compliance with DESE's guidance on school education models and the State's DPH health metrics and I would like to request a meeting with the Superintendent to discuss this issue.

On November 6, 2020, DESE stated the following:

"DESE is making updates to its initial guidance on interpreting these metrics in school settings based on a growing body of evidence that students should remain in school. With numerous examples of schools reopening from around the world, across the country, and recent first-hand experience here in Massachusetts, it is increasingly clear that schools are not sources of significant COVID transmission, so long as proper health and safety protocols are followed.i ii iii iv "

They then say the following:

- **Districts are expected to prioritize in-person learning across all color-coded categories, unless there is suspected in-school transmission, in accordance with DESE's *Guidance on Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios*.**
- **Districts and schools in communities designated gray, green, or yellow are expected to have students learning fully in-person, if feasible.** A hybrid model should be used only if there is no other way to meet health and safety requirements. Parents and caregivers will continue to have the option to choose a district's remote learning program for their children.
- **Schools in red communities should implement hybrid models, while maximizing in-person learning time for high-needs students.**

Arlington has a yellow rating and is therefore expected to have students learning fully in-person, if feasible.

Based on their Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance of June 25, 2020, it is absolutely feasible using a minimum 3' spacing for students.

Here is what they say about physical distancing:

"Physical distancing is another important practice that helps mitigate transmission of the virus. While the U.S. federal CDC has recommended maintaining a physical distance of six feet between individuals, the World Health Organization's guidance states approximately three feet. There is no precise threshold for safety; indeed, studies suggest that physical distancing of three feet or more leads to reduced transmission, with additional distance providing additional protection. For instance, in a study of household transmission in China, keeping at least three feet of distance was associated with one-fourth the number of transmissions. It is important to note that six feet distancing is emphasized in public health advisories especially when no mask/face covering is worn.

We encourage districts and schools to aim for six feet of distance between individuals where feasible. **At the same time, a minimum physical distance of three feet has been established when combined with the other measures outlined in this list of safety requirements.** Because of the reduced susceptibility in children and lower apparent rates of transmission, establishing a minimum physical distance of three feet is informed by evidence and balances the lower risk of COVID-19 transmission and the overarching benefits of in-person school."

Please let me know when you are available to meet as soon as possible.



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

Superintendent

1 message

Brendan O'Day <brendan.oday@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 6:23 PM

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

Hi Karen,

I am writing just to add a voice of support of the School Committee's choice of Dr. Elizabeth Homan.

I would like to thank the School Committee for its work. I have heard truly wonderful things about Dr. Homan, but that is neither here nor there.

I am grateful that you all put the time and energy into evaluating the candidates for this position --- and I trust you as a board to make decisions you believe are in the best interests of the students, teachers and town, based on information you gather and your best judgement.

Thank you for your work,

Brendan O'Day



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

Keep the current model

1 message

philip blumenau <pdblumenau111@outlook.com>

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 7:00 PM

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

We just want to express our support to keep the current model at AHS.

Thanks to everyone for all their hard work.

Phil Blumenau & Joanne Piepol, parents of a Junior

Sent from Mail for Windows 10



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

(no subject)

Paula Jordan <paulajordan@yahoo.com>

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 7:43 PM

To: kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

Dear Ms Fitzgerald.

I am writing to express my concern regarding the very serious problem with the Arlington School Committee's review process that has led it to favor Dr. Elizabeth Homan over Dr. Victoria Greer to be the next Superintendent of Arlington Public Schools.

I have read the petition and also, the concerns raised by other committees in town and agree it bears re-consideration.

Please do the right thing and listen to the various stakeholders and their concerns. Our town deserves this and the democratic process is very important.

Cordially,

Paula Jordan
Arlington, MA

Resident of Arlington for over 30 years, and member of DTG

Sent from my iPad

*Stop your Rush
to Judgement!*

Wherever Greer Goes
her Steller Career
leaves a trail of success

**Greer
The Better Match of
APS Priorities to
Proven Expertise**

Please Put Aside
Personal
Preferences
And Be
Professional

*Why do you
Prefer "Potential"
Over Excellent Record?*

**HOMAN
NOT YET READY
TO HEAD
ARLINGTON
SCHOOLS**

**Greer is the
most
Super-qualified!**

**We Super intend
to change
your vote!**

**SUPER-DUPER
VICTORIA GREER
FOR SUPER!**

**No
No
Homan**



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

just saw the others

2 messages

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

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 6:16 PM

Please share with other members

I move that we suspend any decision regarding programing at the high school for one week and have the superintendent direct the principal of the High School to create a survey with the following question on it

Would you send your child to a 2 cohort AA/BB program if it was offered in the spring?

Yes ____ No ____

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

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 6:25 PM

To: Jane Morgan <jmorgan@arlington.k12.ma.us>, William Hayner <whayner@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Paul Schlichtman <pschlichtman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "Thielman, Jeff" <jthielman@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Liz Exton <lexton@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Kirsii Allison-Ampe <kallisonampe@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Len Kardon <lkardon@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>, "Fitzgerald, Karen" <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Karen Tassone <ktassone@arlington.k12.ma.us>

[Quoted text hidden]

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Karen Fitzgerald

Administrative Assistant

Arlington School Committee

Superintendent of Schools

869 Massachusetts Avenue, 6th Floor

Arlington, MA 02476

781-316-3540

kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us

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