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**Peirce IEP Student LAST MINUTE Classroom Assignment Change - information received over email on Sunday 09/20 at 8:05 a.m.**

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Dear Arlington School District Leaders,

We hope this letter finds you and your families healthy!

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge your tireless work during COVID-19 unprecedented times. This pandemic has done nothing but presenting us with challenge after challenge and we appreciate your hard work to face each one of them!

With that being said, we hope that you would be able to show your professionalism and understanding in resolving yet another challenge our family and many others have been presented with over the course of this past weekend. We are sure you have received multiple letters so far, but we decided we want to add one more to them.

We are a Peirce Elementary School Special Education family. Our daughter is currently enrolled in 3rd grade and this year as a family we chose to select Remote Academy learning for both our children.

Last week our children had the opportunity to meet and greet their classroom teachers, and also get to know many of their remote classmates. This has been a challenging time for children as they are not going to be at school the way they are used to but they embraced the remote school idea because we all know kids are resilient.

We thought we are ready to go and dive into the new school year, but I guess that for our IEP student was short lived as we received an email on Sunday morning 09/20 at 8:05 a.m. that due to our daughter's IEP services she is now going to be placed in a new classroom with a new teacher and classmates she has never met or heard of!

Now as you can expect this was a shock for her and for us as parents! It was extremely frustrating to get this kind of information over email with no additional back up. What was most frustrating was the inability to connect with anyone from administration. We could not be more appreciative of the Hardy School classroom teacher who went above and beyond on a Sunday afternoon to help us get connected to someone who could answer our questions! We would like to thank Ms. Karustis as well for taking the time to get back to us and offer information so we can make an educated decision.

Building relationship especially over Zoom with complete strangers for IEP students is not something indicating that school leaders have been putting emotional wellbeing of a child as the highest priority on the list! That left aside it also doesn't speak highly of the consideration and help offered to support remote teachers in their work to create socially and emotionally connected classrooms.

If the highest priority on the list of leaders has been staffing and available workforce, then the question that comes to mind is – Why would APS be offering hybrid and remote by choice programs at the same time when not being able to equip

these two different programs with the special workforce they need?

We have participated in a number of Zoom meetings and especially the meeting for SPED families which was conducted by Mrs. Elmer at the end of August, 2020. I wonder why during this meeting we didn't get introduced to all the actual challenges of getting IEP services in place for the remote students this year. It would have been so much more worth it to set clear expectations rather than promising that every child would receive everything on their IEP. At what cost is our question? The cost of throwing them in the remote wilderness and hoping for their resilience to help them adjust at some point of time? Creating an environment where children feel most comfortable is the true ground for allowing learning to happen! This is valid not only for special ed students but for any child in fact and especially now during COVID-19, and especially during remote academy learning.

Despite all the last-minute changes and us approving the placement of our daughter into the new assigned classroom, we still have no information about her IEP services. We do not know who her special education teachers are or what her schedule is going to be? The school year has already started and we are eager to know when services will start.

We would like to think that this letter and others received addressing the same issue from other APS families would be reviewed from your leadership team with utmost attention.

Thank you for your time in advance.

Wishing you all a successful school year!

Sincerely,

Krasimira and Dimitar Petkov

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