



bh communitywatch &lt;bhcommunitywatch1@gmail.com&gt;

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**Fwd: 8th Grade Italian Concern**

1 message

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**Laura Kapuscinski** <lkap@icloud.com>  
To: bh communitywatch <bhcommunitywatch1@gmail.com>

Mon, Oct 17, 2022 at 12:11 PM

Please post...

Begin forwarded message:

[REDACTED]

**Date:** October 17, 2022 at 11:54:15 AM EDT  
**To:** Laura Kapuscinski  
**Cc:** Melissa Varley <mvarley@bhpsnj.org>, David Greer <dgreer@bhpsnj.org>, "Kobliska, Paul" <pkobliska@bhpsnj.org>  
**Subject:** Re: 8th Grade Italian Concern

M. Kapuscinski,  
Thank you for your email.

There is an inaccurate premise to your email in that you state that teaching co-seated regular and honors classes is impossible and unreasonable. If you look at the curriculum for Italian 1 that is posted online [HERE](#) you will notice that the honors and regular curriculum are the same curriculum with each unit identifying one or two additional activities (usually an outside reading) that the honors students must complete. In small programs, like Italian and French, it is common practice to co-seat regular and honors classes at all levels. Indeed, at this moment there are multiple co-seated classes from level 1 - level 4 in both languages. Teaching co-seated classes is neither impossible nor unreasonable, it is normal and expected, and has been so since before my arrival in the district twenty three years ago.

This co-seating practice is not limited to Berkeley Heights, and within Berkeley Heights it is not limited to the World Language Department. It exists because there is a natural tension in all schools between running small programs to provide students with multiple opportunities and choices, and more efficient allocation of staff and resources.

One of the by-products of maintaining small programs like French and Italian at the same time is that it leads to these kinds of scheduling choices. Fewer language

choices means more students in the choices that are offered. This was one of the considerations that went into the recommendation to end the French program last year. While the decision to maintain two small programs in French and Italian does provide more choices to our students, it also makes co-seating necessary to maintain both programs. In contrast Spanish, a larger program that is well subscribed, does not co-seat.

Globally, the allocation of teaching staff and the creation of teaching sections is dictated by student choice, staffing, staff certifications, contractual obligations, teaching spaces, and historical trends. These are not the only drivers, but they tend to be the biggest ones. Every year during the scheduling process we are faced with difficult choices to make all the pieces fit. These decisions involve multiple administrators across buildings and departments and take months to work through. There are many factors that are weighed when these decisions are made.

Broadly speaking the choice to create a co-seated section of 28 students in Italian 1 at CMS was driven by the following: class sections of greater than 25 students is common; co-seating is both a normal and expected instructional practice; and, this configuration allowed for the best coverage given the totality of our certificated staff and other courses running across two buildings.

From your email, it does appear that we should look to provide the instructor with additional support. Rest assured that we will be addressing these concerns as soon as possible so as to support her and her students.

Best



Director BHPS

On Fri, Oct 14, 2022 at 7:47 AM Laura Kapuscinski <[redacted]> wrote:  
Good morning.

I wanted to share my email to Dr. Greer and Mr. Kobliska below.

It is more than concerning that with an annual budget of 60million we have crammed 28 eight-grade students into a (very tiny) classroom with one teacher for Italian. Moreover, this class has combined both Italian Honors and 8th grade Italian. How exactly are the needs of all 28 students being met?

I have been in communication with the Italian teacher (who has truly tried to make this work - but, it's not feasible) and she has requested, multiple times, to separate the classes. So now, I am looking to you all for help - your job is to ensure our schools are being well run - this is an example of how we can do better - for our children!

I have done some research, and it is my understanding that that 8th grade French and Spanish do not have combined sections of their respective languages and have more manageable class sizes. What is the average class size for 8th grade curricular classes? How much is too much? Where is the equity?

I implore you to help find a solution - it's negatively impacting our students and placing an unnecessary amount of pressure and unattainable expectations on our staff.

Thank you for your time!  
-Laura Kapuscinski

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Laura Kapuscinski [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** 8th Grade Italian Concern  
**Date:** October 13, 2022 at 6:30:28 PM EDT  
**To:** [pkobliska@bhpsnj.org](mailto:pkobliska@bhpsnj.org), [dgreer@bhpsnj.org](mailto:dgreer@bhpsnj.org)  
**Cc:** [tdimartino@bhpsnj.org](mailto:tdimartino@bhpsnj.org)

Good afternoon Dr. Greer and Mr. Kobliska!

It was nice to see you both yesterday at the BHTPO meeting and I hope you are feeling acclimated in the district.

I wanted to bring to your attention the 8th grade Italian Honors and Regular language class which has been combined into one section. The class has a total of 28 students which is unnecessarily high. Additionally, there is only one teacher (who we adore) who is expected to teach honors and regular Italian simultaneously - which is impossible.

I was hoping this was the result of some scheduling issues and would be worked out but we are well into October and this seems to be how the children are expected to learn and this 'expectation' is not reasonable. I would like to request that the classes be as they were intended, two separate sections of Italian.

This is arguably not an ideal situation for our students or teacher and I know WE can do better for our students and staff.

I have reached out to Mrs. DiMartino as well and hope that together we can figure out a solution, and quickly. Please understand this email has nothing to do with the teacher or the teaching but the unfortunate situation she and the 28 students in 8th grade Italian have had to endure for the last 6 weeks.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to a solution that will support all of our students and ensure they are all receiving the education they deserve!

-Laura Kapuscinski

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[REDACTED]  
Berkeley Heights Public Schools

