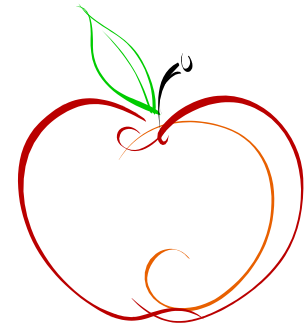


3400 N. California St., Rm. 44
El Monte, CA 91731
January 9, 2009



Ms. Maribel Garcia
Columbia School
3400 N. California St.
El Monte, CA 91731

Dear Ms. Garcia,

Columbia's students are being denied opportunities for learning because of an outdated schedule that does not meet students' needs. Many students, for example, are not being given an opportunity to reach their full potential in math while others are stuck in math intervention classes that take away their electives — and electives are crucial to a well-rounded education.

But it doesn't have to be this way: there is a solution.

If we shorten each period by three minutes, eliminate the six-minute homeroom, and make a modest adjustment in the time allocated for lunch, we can add one additional period to the schedule without increasing the length of the school day. With this schedule, *every* student would get two periods of math and an elective — and the benefits of such a schedule are truly incredible.

First, by having two math periods, those students who are at or above grade level could receive enrichment leading to even greater achievement. Given such an opportunity, it is likely that many of Columbia's students will be learning geometry in the eighth grade — a clear advantage for them and a remarkable achievement for any middle school. Indeed, learning geometry in middle school will allow students to learn even more, much higher math in high school or free up time that would have otherwise been unavailable to pursue other academic interests.

Should some of those who are solidly at or above grade-level decide they do not want to spend more time in a math class, they could be offered another elective. Clearly, this would motivate students who may be on the fence when deciding how much effort to put into being good, academically-sound students.

Second, those students who currently have to give up an elective in order to take a math intervention class could actually take an elective. This is important because studies have shown that subjects like music, art, computers, journalism, and speech and debate actually increase student achievement in all other areas!

Third, this new schedule and the opportunities it brings would help distinguish Columbia and instill into our students our tradition of hard work and excellence — character traits that will serve our students well as they move into the world beyond schooling.

Equally important, I believe such a transformation would also affect teachers. Imagine the pride teachers would feel when talking to their colleagues from other schools about our high-achieving student body. What teacher could deny the urge to become an active part of such a campus? Teachers who are part of a staff that helps students achieve beyond what is expected are happier, more productive, and more fulfilled teachers.

I realize that there will be obstacles in implementing such a schedule. For example, some might object to losing three minutes for each period because of the reduction of teaching minutes within a period, or the loss of three minutes during a “prep” period. Most people, however, who consider carefully what I have proposed will see the merits of such a schedule and conclude that these other issues are easily resolved with a little imagination and effort.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience so that we may set up a meeting and begin discussing how we can implement this exciting, challenging initiative.

Sincerely,

Mr. Mason