

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

Bethany Orange Woodbridge
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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Amity Community:

I would like to begin this letter thanking you for the over 1500 responses to the parent/student survey that was sent last week and to the almost 300 responses we have received to the staff survey. As I mentioned in both cover letters, we acknowledge that making decisions now - with little information and a changing landscape - is difficult, but the feedback is of tremendous value as we continue to develop our reopening plans.

Our Reopening Schools Committee has been operating since June 30th. This committee of 54 members includes teachers, students, administrators, nurses, custodians and as needed, bus drivers, food service, and administrative assistants. The group is divided into 10 subcommittees including:

- Physical Wellness
- Mental Health and Social Emotional Wellness
- Transportation
- Food Service
- Facilities
- Instructional Operations
- Digital Instruction & Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- School Culture & Climate

The 10 subcommittees make recommendations to a Planning & Governance oversight committee, where all the interconnections between the subcommittees are pulled together. Per CIAC Guidelines, there is an additional subcommittee for athletics. Since June 30th, the subcommittees and entire group have met weekly, often from 3-9 hours per week, to plan and prepare for reopening schools. Many of these committees have partnered with the Orange Health Department and the Quinnipiac Valley Health District, as well as our school medical advisor, for feedback and assistance in decision making. Coordination and collaboration between all 4 BOWA school districts has also been a critical element of the planning process.

If you are watching or reading the news, you have heard that school districts are required to submit a plan to the State Department of Education (CSDE) by this Friday, July 24, 2020. While the Amity Reopening Committee has made significant progress in planning, there are still several areas in which we are waiting for further guidance from the CSDE before making decisions on the reopening plan.

The Amity community can expect that our schools will comply and address every required item in the state's reopening guidelines, **Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together**. Additionally the Amity plan will provide details about:

- Expectations for students and staff for increased physical safety and wellness, including masks and enhanced cleaning;

- Expectations for teaching and learning if schools must transition between in-person, hybrid, and remote learning models;
- Expectations for transportation and food service;
- The daily schedules for the full in-person, hybrid, and remote learning models;
- Details for maximizing social distancing;
- Protocols for staff and students who present with COVID19-like symptoms.

The Reopening Committee will release the final draft of the plan to the community in early August. This later date is intentional to allow time for the state to clarify outstanding questions, and closer to the deadline when the Governor is expected to make a final decision on the return to schools. Once the plan is released, a second, more detailed survey will be sent to parents to identify more comprehensive aspects of your student(s) return to school.

At this time, we can present the following for your planning purposes:

- With the recent exception provided by the CSDE, students will attend school for 178 days. **The first day for students will be Monday, August 31, 2020.**
- **The hybrid model** - which conceptualizes 50% of students in-person and 50% of students in a remote setting was **developed in collaboration with BOWA** to minimize the impact on families and create consistency for different-aged students from the same family to be onsite and offsite at the same time.
- A single Learning Management System (**Google Classroom**) has been selected by the district. Expectations will be set for how staff and students use the system to provide ease and clarity if we move between the in-person, hybrid, and remote learning models.
- Planning of space and additional systems, such as use of swipe ID cards, will be implemented to **maximize social distancing and minimize contact.**
- Adjustments to staffing will be made to decrease class sizes; support student and staff health; and meet mandated cleaning requirements.
- **All students and staff will be required to wear masks throughout the school day**, including on the school bus. The only time students will be permitted to remove masks will be when they are eating or during supervised, outdoor mask breaks. The school district will provide every student and staff member with 2 washable cloth masks at the start of the school year.
- We will maintain a Reopening Committee for the 2020-2021 school year to make adjustments and improvement to the plan as needed.

The Governor and the CSDE have been explicit since late June, that every school district should anticipate and plan for a full return to in-person instruction beginning this fall. Amity Regional Schools and the Reopening Committee continue to work with that expectation in mind. We sincerely thank you for the trust you place in us to keep your students safe and the opportunity to provide them with exceptional, comprehensive educational opportunities.

We look forward to sharing the full plan with you in early August.

Sincerely,



Jenn Byars