

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 BOARD OF EDUCATION  
December 8, 2020 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
6:00 P.M.  
VIRTUAL MEETING

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

John Belfonti, Robyn Berke, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Shannan Carlson, Paul Davis, Steven DeMaio, George Howard, Sheila McCreven, Patrick Reed, Dr. Jennifer Turner

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Carla Eichler, Andrea Hubbard

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT**

Alison Bowler, Caroline Chen

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

Dr. Jennifer Byars, Shaun DeRosa

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Belfonti called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Recited by those present

**3. COMMENTS FROM BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRPERSON**

Presented by Chairperson Belfonti

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Presented by Chairperson Belfonti

**5. INFORMATION ON AND DISCUSSION OF CURRENT COVID-19 METRICS AND INTRUCIONAL LEARNING MODELS**

Presenters: Dr. Byars; Karen Wolukewicz (Quinnipiack Valley Health Department), Dr. Amir Mohammad (Orange Health Department), Dr. Gregory Germain (Medical Advisor for Amity Regional School District No. 5), and Brian Slugoski (Orange Town Sanitarian)

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**6. ADJOURNMENT**

*MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, SECOND by Shannan Carlson, to adjourn meeting*  
*VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)*  
*MOTION CARRIED*

Meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Pamela Pero*

Pamela Pero

Recording Clerk

Good evening, everyone,

I would like to first thank all of the board members and health professionals who are able to join this meeting tonight with such short notice. We appreciate it. I know several of you requested that we meet in person for those willing to do so. I apologize that we are unable to accommodate this request given the short notice but we will certainly be meeting in person again for our next regularly scheduled meetings in accordance with guidance from our local health departments.

This special meeting was called for by 3 of our board members. Their concern is all of our concerns – how we continue to provide an Amity quality education during these difficult times. These last 9 months have been difficult for all of us. For the parents working from home, who do not have formal training in teaching attempting to help our kids with new technology while still doing their normal jobs. For the parents who are essential employees as well as our teachers and staff, who interact with the public on a daily basis, trying our best to be safe and not bring the virus home to our families. And lastly, for our students, many of whom hold a sense of loss – loss of their sports and clubs, loss of seeing their friends and loss of learning in an environment the way it used to be.

As recently as Wednesday, the director of the CDC reiterated his advocacy for in-person learning, citing evidence that schools aren't a major source of coronavirus transmission. The director stated, "we now have substantial data that shows that schools' face-to-face learning can be conducted in K-12, and particularly in the elementary and middle schools in a safe and responsible way". Governor Lamont and the CT Dept. of Education fully support in-person learning in our schools as long as the local health departments concur. The American Academy of Pediatrics statement on Covid advocates strongly that students be physically present in schools by stating: The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020. Lengthy time away from school and associated interruption of supportive services often results in social isolation, making it difficult for schools to identify and address important learning deficits as well as child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse, substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation.

There are a lot of questions many of us have and this is why we will be hearing from our District Health Advisor and our two health districts in a few minutes. If there has been one constant over the last nine months, it has been that Amity has worked in partnership with our two health districts. School district's consultation

with their local health departments is exactly what the state is recommending districts do and Amity is no exception. The health districts have advised us from what PPE our staff should be using, to setups of spaces in the schools, to training for our nursing staff and when Amity should be in person, hybrid or remote. Regarding remote learning, Amity has always offered a remote option for our students and of course, will continue to do so. For the first couple of months, when the numbers supported full in person instruction as per the leading and secondary indicators outlined by the State, the health departments recommended hybrid instruction. Some saw this as too conservative an approach. This past Friday, the health departments recommended we go hybrid in the high school and in person at the middle school. Some see this as non-conservative enough. One thing is for certain, the health departments are the trained professionals in community health care and we will continue to follow their recommendations as we have all school year.

With that being said, I'd like to move onto public comment.

We have 25 letters in support of continuing the hybrid model. Some of these specifically supported the hybrid model at the high school, some for continuing the hybrid model at both the middle and high school.

We have 51 letters supporting remote learning. Many of these advocated remote learning through the winter holiday break.

We have 43 letters supporting full in-person learning. Some of these supported in-person learning in general, some support in-person learning at the middle school, and advocate for in-person learning at both the middle and high school.

We have 12 letters specifically supporting a hybrid model at the high school and full in-person at the middle school.

We have 16 letters speaking against a particular model of learning. 11 spoke against returning to in-person learning, and 6 spoke against remote learning. There were an additional 8 letters that addressed either multiple issues or different issues, such as a support of teacher or concerns for student mental health .

All together, we received 155 public comments. These have all been shared with the Board of Education members and will be included in the meeting minutes packet and posted on the website.



**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Stephanie Kennedy <kennedystepha@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 5:44 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In person learning

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Hello, I am writing in support of in person learning at the middle school. I am in support of the decision for students to go back on Wednesday.

Stephanie Kennedy

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jennifer Levy <jenniferann8@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 5:50 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In support of in person learning

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Hello,

I'm in support of in person learning for our Amity students. I am a teacher myself and currently in person teaching.

So long as masks are being worn and social distancing is being put into place, our schools are safe. I understand the high school faces different obstacles and should remain hybrid however, middle school can move to full time because of their ability to cohort the students.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Levy

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Amy Tirollo <Amy@tirollo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 5:51 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment

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Hello,

My name is Amy Tirollo. I am a 6th grade teacher happily teaching five days on a shortened schedule in a neighboring district. I am a mother of three daughters attending Amity Regional High School, and we own one of the bus companies that provides transportation in town. I am wholeheartedly in favor of the hybrid model at the high school.

Throughout this pandemic, scientists, doctors, and board of health members have not agreed on much, but what they DO agree with is that school is the SAFEST place for students to be. Let's be real here. Families are not staying home like they did in the spring. If kids aren't in school, they are no doubt out with friends... without masks... without social distancing, getting sick and spreading it to families. Covid is not spreading in school because they are social distancing and wearing masks. I could not be more confident in Mrs. Mahon's efforts along with the rest of the staff working to keep the staff and children safe. School is healthy for students social and emotional well being as well as their future academic success. If remote learning could be done in a way that had no measurable effect in the quality of education offered, I'd be all for it, but that is simply not the case. The students need to be in school with teachers teaching. Amity has a reputation of high academic standards and success. That is one of the reasons I agreed to stay in Orange (my husband's hometown.) That reputation will quickly deteriorate if they take any more time away from education.

Thank you for your attention,  
Amy Tirollo

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Megan Flaherty <megan71203@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:01 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In school learning

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Ms. Pero,

My name is Megan Flaherty and I am the mother of twin daughters who are freshmen at the high school. I am also an educator in a neighboring town. I wanted to write in with my support of your return to hybrid schooling. As a mother and educator, I understand the necessity of remote learning when deemed appropriate for the safety of students and staff. However, I am imploring Amity to follow the recommendation of the governor and his health experts in keeping our schools open. My children learn better in school, not to mention the mental health benefits of in school learning. They suffered isolation and sadness in the spring due to the extended remote learning and I can see the benefits of hybrid learning. With the overall cases of Covid at the school being low, the data showing no cases of student to student transmission, and add in the social, emotional and mental health benefits of in school learning; I ask you to please consider keeping the students in person learning as long as possible.

Thank you,

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Jason Agvent <mjagvent@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:09 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Full in-person learning

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Hi my name is Melissa Agvent my son Dylan attends 8th grade at Amity Middle Orange. I am so disappointed to hear that teachers and parents are fighting in-person learning. My son has struggled with the remote and hybrid learning and was so excited to hear he was going back 5 days a week. My younger son is at Peck Place and has been going 5 full days since August so I am sorry for these teachers and parents who disagree with it but it's time to go back our kid's education and mental health depends on it. There are a lot of people who have been working the entire pandemic and if our district doctor and health department agree it's safe to send them then the teachers need to do their jobs. If parents Are scared they have the option of full remote for their child. I'm asking to please consider the kids and what's best for them. Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Kersti Melchior <kmelchior@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:09 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment

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Dear members of the Amity Board of Education

I wanted to send you a note expressing my support for the current learning plan for the High School to return to hybrid and Orange Middle school to move to a full time reduced day schedule.

I think it is so incredibly important for our children to start to get back to a safe yet more normal way of learning IN SCHOOL. They have been making sacrifices all around to be able to do this and it is only fair they have the chance. The amount of anxiety and depression that we have seen in some kids is heartbreaking and continuing a full remote schedule is just compounding the issue.

The Administrators have done a wonderful job keeping everyone informed of what's happening and I believe wholeheartedly that they have the welfare of the teachers and children in mind when making the return to school decisions.

There is so much data out right now and the vaccine is just around the corner. My hope is that the current schedule is upheld.

Thank you for your time

Kersti Melchior

Parent of:

Sydney Melchior Amity High School 10th grade Zachary Melchior Amity Middle School  
Orange 7th grade

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jill Querker <jill@jlqdesign.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:10 PM  
**To:** Dad♥; Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In person learning

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Hi Pamela, just taking a minute to share our opinion. Our family is in favor of in person learning.

During these times I understand the Hybrid model may be best for most.

Good luck.  
Jill and John Querker

--  
Jill Querker  
JLQ Design  
203-530-6001

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Michelle Fink <dstrat62@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:11 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In person learning at Amity High School

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My name is David Stratford. I am a clinician and would like my voice heard on in regards to in person learning.

I disagree with the teachers and their union opposing this decision. The safety issue was brought up at least three times during the Fox 61 interview. Who's safety? The teachers? Not once was the "safety" of the student body considered. I find that disheartening. As stated I work with patients all day. I know the statistics and more importantly the impact of gathering whether social, business or schools. The Hybrid learning allows for social distancing just as much as going to the grocery store or any other day to day interaction. The negative impact and stress on the student body being home far outweighs the very small percentage of possibly contracting the COVID 19 virus. The Boards of health have affirmed this. Again I believe as a father, neighbor and clinician that in person learning at the Amity High School is safe and important for the student body Regards,

David Stratford  
Dstrat62@gmail.com

Sent from my iPhone



Dawn Coppola

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Dawn Coppola <dawncoppola@ymail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:20 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Jennifer Byars; Anna Mahon  
**Subject:** In person learning

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Hello,

I am writing to you because I understand there are teachers who Would prefer remote learning.

I want to express my concern as a parent And a teacher. I feel it is imperative for the children to be in school even if it is The hybrid model until The beginning of next year, although My daughters preference would be full-time.

The administrators do a wonderful job ensuring health and safety of our children. I am not aware of one case of covid being spread in the school. Our children have suffered for several months, and they need to be social, in school, and resume some normalcy.

I can't imagine what

The effects of children being alone, on a computer all day, in their bedroom.

I would hope teachers would want more for our children.

I understand some teachers cannot be in school because of health issues, that is their choice.

Many professions such as healthcare workers and first responders do not have a choice, they report to work.

Teachers can also be considered essential employees since they are teaching our children.

It is really disheartening

To think the teachers have so much power over our children's future.

Please give our children The opportunity to be in school.

People who run our state and our country and all of the professionals Encourage children to be in school.

Please stand your ground and continue on the path to getting our children in school full-time.

I applaud Dr. Byars and Mrs. Mahon for their endless work in keeping our children safe .

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Sandrine Saunders <sandrinesaunders@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:25 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** hybrid model

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Hi

i am writing you tonight to let you know that i feel it is extremely important that we keep students IN school as much as possible (full time would be even better than hybrid!) while keeping everyone safe. The amount of instruction lost when students are remote is alarming. My daughter is a Freshman and is struggling with lack of instruction and unable to ask questions during class a lot of the time!!! We need them in school before they fall too far behind!

There is absolutely no evidence showing kids are at risk inside the school. they NEED structure, instruction and social interactions in the worst way!

PLEASE KEEP STUDENTS IN SCHOOL!

thank you

Sandrine Saunders

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** drnili@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:26 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** in favor of return to school

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Dear Members of the Board of Education

I am writing to voice my opinion in favor of a return to school model at ARHS. The importance of face to face interaction with teachers and fellow students is immeasurable. Through out the pandemic I have been working face to face with patients while following appropriate safety measures as have my patients. Following proper safety measures has allowed the patients to receive the care they need. Teachers and students can absolutely do the same with success. I understand that concern for everyone's safety is first and foremost, however a response to fear and anxiety does not make for appropriate decision making. I fully respect and support the decisions made and the metrics used by Dr Byars to reach the return to hybrid model at this time. I strongly urge the Board of Education to continue with those plans as they have been stated. The damage created to our students in this altered school year is much greater than can be viewed from their exterior. Please take that in to consideration. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nili Harpaz-Pletter, DPM

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Marcie Rocchio <teachrocc@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:27 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Keep the kids in School

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Good Evening Ms. Pero and the Amity Board of Education, I am an Orange Parent of two boys, one high school and one middle school. I am in full support of the middle school and high school going back full time. My children need the structure of school and connection of seeing their teachers and peers in school.

I feel the schools have done a nice job of creating a safe environment.

I teach high school in Madison at Daniel Hand High School. Students are following all the guidelines while in school and custodial staff have been cleaning constantly. I am sure Amity is doing the same. We were remote for the last couple of weeks and I saw a rapid decline in motivation in my students. They were thrilled to return today, as was I. Although, I was in school teaching even when my students were remote, unlike the Amity teachers.

During the last week while fully remote, my middle school child had tons of unstructured class time. With a schedule that only goes till 12:47, how can these teachers be letting them out early? These are critical years for our children. Please keep them IN school and learning.

Thank you for your time and understanding!

Sincerely,

Marcie Rocchio

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Heather Martire <rasku32@me.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:28 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Students in School

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Hello,

I was given your email address from a friend who suggested I write to you if I believe that students should still have the option for in-person learning.

My name is Heather Martire, and I am a resident of Orange. My son is a sophomore at Amity. He has benefited greatly from the time spent IN school during the hybrid learning period.

I am writing in support of the hybrid model continuing because it affords kids opportunities to socialize, to connect with their teachers, and to be much more active than when they are at home. Masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing have kept them safe and will continue to do so.

I am a teacher and I know first-hand that teaching in this model is a terrible battle that I feel like I'm losing. It's exhausting. It's filled with glitches. It's exponentially easier for me to teach when everyone is remote. However, I don't think it's easier for students to learn and thrive when they are remote.

I am writing in support of a continuation of the hybrid model for Amity High School. I appreciate your time.

Thank you,  
Heather Martire

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Heather Porto <heather.porto@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:38 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity In person learning

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To whom it may concern:

I have an eighth grader who is in the Orange Middle school. I understand the teachers concerns but truly hope the Board will continue to consider the full in person learning. The remote learning is simply not the same and in my opinion is not as beneficial to our students.

I believe the students get more out of being in school in person with their teachers and not just behind a computer screen.

I feel that it is safe to send my son to school and feel the Amity school system has been safe in protecting our teachers at the middle school.

Please consider this request for continued in person learning.

Thank you.

Heather and John Porto

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Joshua Sanner <jsanner82@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:39 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In class learning

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I Joshua Sanner of 328 Ann Rose Drive support in class learning. Our kids need to be in school. It's important for them mentally and physically to be in school. Not to mention there have been no major outbreaks in orange or surrounding school systems. Look at the facts and make the right decision. Keep schools open our kids development depend on it

Joshua Sanner



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Frank Lee <flee@aegiscap.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:43 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Tomorrow meeting.

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Good evening. This needs to be voted down. Crazy union nonsense. My job has people traveling and working daily. I understand the fears but the kids need a life outside of home.  
Frank

Sent from my iPhone

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FINRA<[https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.finra.org%2f%23%2f&c=E,1,\\_piOfBRky8HZuoGrzVTRi9gLXDek0XXLJNNcp2vbtqsDKdUVefSljmMuvzfBv\\_xkHxdLX\\_CxdvV1z5MovQXWPeNRYMh-QWxN5UZeuW1CO0RfrPal&typo=1](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.finra.org%2f%23%2f&c=E,1,_piOfBRky8HZuoGrzVTRi9gLXDek0XXLJNNcp2vbtqsDKdUVefSljmMuvzfBv_xkHxdLX_CxdvV1z5MovQXWPeNRYMh-QWxN5UZeuW1CO0RfrPal&typo=1)> and SIPC.

<<https://www.sipc.org>> Please use this link to view all disclosures-Aegis Capital Risk

Disclosures<[https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.aegiscapcorp.com%2frisk-](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.aegiscapcorp.com%2frisk-disclosure%2f&c=E,1,Ph0gYm768NXrcEbMKxbVacmGloa031QPz_FywSQ3hwtYcuxRtKLy1eSH6As-vdA_4G-7GNO75WdM4z5xBSBO4K-Y8jK-YEgYj4T9aAXqGGnITNOrj91M2Cw,&typo=1)

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## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Pia M Conners <piampesce70@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:49 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** No full remote

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Good evening,

We have 3 children in the Amity Region 5 district, 2 which have ADHD, anxiety, and a 504. My third child does not have a diagnosis, but struggles terribly with remote learning. I feel that for all 3 of my children, and most children in general, the face to face contact and in person learning is so necessary for both their mental health and academic success. The remote learning could never take the place of what a human being (not to mention school-aged children) needs to learn and be successful for academically, emotionally, and mentally. Please do not fail our children by not allowing them to attend school even if only on a hybrid schedule. Anything less is tragic. Remote learning is not learning at all. It is just a way to try and keep the kids engaged, but it doesn't work. I have seen my honor student drop down to having failing grades in a couple of his classes.

The children of Amity Region 5 (and all other schools) need to be in school. There are no statistics showing that the virus is spreading because the kids are in school. Please listen to us, listen to our kids. Keep them in school.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

William and Pia Conners

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Timothy Pletter <tpletter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:57 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Thank you

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Dear Ms. Pero

Thank you for supporting our students. It is critical that they be allowed to have some in person learning. I support the decision to allow the hybrid model. The more in person learning the better.

Tim Pletter

Sent from my iPhone

Tpletter@gmail.com

[https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.AmbrogioPletter.com&c=E,1,eQi-9K5TvwXUle6GdiT7ksZIEILuuAk-yFFhfjOCypIYIjc12zRwi45X1hJH1iWNBh8AP0f39E8VGKJD7Qqaw\\_Qp8M9knrdfU0ILka8SvYNk1-Y,&typo=1](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.AmbrogioPletter.com&c=E,1,eQi-9K5TvwXUle6GdiT7ksZIEILuuAk-yFFhfjOCypIYIjc12zRwi45X1hJH1iWNBh8AP0f39E8VGKJD7Qqaw_Qp8M9knrdfU0ILka8SvYNk1-Y,&typo=1)

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Sdworkin50@hotmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 6:58 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero; John Belfonti  
**Subject:** Hybrid learning model

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Dear Ms. Pero and Mr. Belafonte,

In advance of tomorrow nights Board of Education meeting, I wanted to share my opinion about the current learning model at Amity high school.

I was very surprised to see, via the local news, that they were protests by teachers upon returning to school this morning. My understanding was that December 7 was scheduled to be the return to hybrid learning. The school appears to be following the plan laid out in advance so I'm not sure why it came as a surprise to anyone or caused any level of upset.

Based on my daughters experiences, a sophomore and a senior, any time spent in school, in whatever form it is available, is infinitely more beneficial than remote learning. That is not meant to denigrate anyone's efforts to implement and execute online learning, rather that there is no substitute for in person education. And I do believe that all necessary measures have been taken by the Board of Education, the administration, and other staff to ensure everyone safety-students and faculty- within a classroom setting.

In essence, I just wanted to express my support for the return to the hybrid model that was implemented today. Kudos to all who have worked so hard, and continue to work so diligently, to ensure that the highest possible level of education is taking place within our school system.

With appreciation,

Stacy Dworkin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** laurenhass@hotmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:03 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero; John Belfonti  
**Cc:** David Hass  
**Subject:** Support for AHS hybrid model

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Dear Ms. Pero and Mr. Belfonti,

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our support for Amity High School continuing in the hybrid model, as was planned.

With obvious appreciation for all the teachers, and with care and concern for everyone's health, we feel very comfortable sending our two high school students into the building, with the understanding and confidence that safety guidelines are being followed.

The quality of in-person education is far superior to remote learning, in addition to the mental health benefits to our kids of being in the school building as much as possible during this uncertain time.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lauren and David Hass

**Lauren Hass**, Professional Organizer  
Clutter Kicker, LLC  
Board Director of Professional Development, NAPO-CT  
Direct: 203.535.2784  
ClutterKickerCT@gmail.com



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Shayna Goldblatt <shayna.goldblatt7@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:10 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter in Support of In-Person Learning  
**Attachments:** Amity Board of Ed Letter.docx

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To Whom It May Concern,

Attached is a letter in support of the Amity School District continuing in-person learning.

Thank You,  
Shayna Goldblatt

12/7/2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to my attention that the Teacher's Union is demanding that the Amity School System go fully remote until mid-January. As a proud alumna of the Amity School System, having been through both the Orange Amity Middle School and Amity High School, I am deeply concerned with this proposal. The middle and high school years are where I met my lifelong friends, made lasting memories, and was taught by only the best teachers. These memories, the friends that I made, and the reason I keep coming back to see my old teachers, would never have happened if those years were spent in front of a computer.

As a participant in hybrid learning myself, I can assure you that I learned best this semester when in the classroom. Going to school online not only consists of a multitude of distractions, but also leads academic dishonesty and a disconnect in the course content. The time spent in person with the teacher is so valuable as it gives the students a chance to express themselves in person, get to know their teacher, and learn how to function in a classroom setting. As well as this, school is not only a place to grow and learn and prepare for the next step. It is a place where lifelong friendships are formed, life skills are learned, and bonds between students and teachers are created. Without these fundamentals, we are teaching students how to rely on a computer for all their answers and depriving them of an excellent education.

For a lot of these students, this is either their first year in middle school, their first year in high school, or their first year in the Amity School System. Amity prides itself on being for the students, but when the students need Amity the most they are bailing.

I understand the concern of the staff fearing for their safety, however, as a student at Elon University in North Carolina, where the COVID-19 cases are higher, we completed the entire semester through hybrid learning. Though not ideal compared to full in-person classes, we made the best out of an unpleasant situation. Professors and students did their best to stay in person as long as possible and made a commitment to each other to stay safe and stay in person until it was absolutely necessary to not do so. That day never came. If we as a community, make a commitment to not only ourselves, our families, or are friends, but the entire community to stay safe, wear a mask, and keep our distance, then I believe that this school year can finish off as strong as it started.

In Health,  
Shayna M. Goldblatt

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Erika Higgins <higgins.erika@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:10 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter in support of fulltime in person learning  
**Attachments:** Amity Middle school letter.docx

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Ms. Pero,

Please see the attached letter and present to the Amity Board of Education at tomorrow's meeting.  
I am in full support of children learning in person starting Wednesday

Kind regards,

Erika Higgins



December 7, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to you today as a parent of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Amity Middle School Orange student. I am also the daughter of a 41-year veteran teacher and the daughter in-law of a retired Superintendent of schools. I fully understand the importance of education for all students and the necessity of in school learning. I also understand we are in the midst of a pandemic. I am a healthcare worker who has had Covid-19 and had not been exposed to anyone that I know of. My husband brought it into the home and we have no idea where he got it. Likely the grocery store. We take all precautions by wearing masks, socially distancing and washing our hands and still got it. It does not matter where you are or what you do, you can still get it. The mask wearing helps as well as all other precautions but it is not 100% effective. Nothing is. We all take risks everyday by going out to get groceries, pumping gas, going to the post office or anything else where people are.

The news that I received regarding the teacher's union now pushing back against fulltime in school learning and wants to remain remote until mid-January, is very upsetting. The teachers need to understand that the towns health departments would not put the health and safety of the children or teachers in jeopardy if they felt it was unsafe. The schools have done an excellent job since August and have had minimal cases in all schools. This speaks volumes to how the administration has been protecting its students and staff. The likelihood that any teacher is getting COVID from a student is small. The likelihood they are getting it from outside sources and their life outside of school, very likely.

I am a healthcare worker who has been in this mess since March of 2020. I did not choose to deal with COVID-19 in my career, but I had no choice. Supermarket workers, police, firefighters, postal workers and the list goes on and on, also did not choose to deal with COVID-19 in their line of work. Guess what? Teachers are not exempt. My children deserve to be in school and not in front of a computer screen for hours a day. My son has been getting migraines because he is in front of this computer all day until 12:47. It is getting old for everyone and the teachers need to be in school, and in front of students. It is the safest place for them other than home and they are ready to be back five days a week. They are cleaning, they are in cohorts and it is the safest form of education at this time. The elementary school my middle son goes to has had only one case since August, and it was a teacher. The cohort quarantined and they were right back at school and no one else in the school was affected. They are in school full-time and it is working. There is absolutely no reason these middle schoolers should not be in school full time and it isn't even full time, they are done at 12:47. There is ample time for the school to be cleaned and sanitized.

Please know that I fully appreciate all of the teachers and everything they have had to do to accommodate this current learning environment, but we have all had to change the way we do things in our line of work. It is now time that the children are back in five days and are getting instruction in the presence of their teachers. I fully support the fulltime, in school model and look forward to my son being in school fulltime starting on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

Sincerely,

Erika Higgins

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Carrington Melissa <MCarrington@alinabal.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:11 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment  
**Attachments:** Amity BOE 12-7-20.docx

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Hello Pamela,

Please see the attached letter I'd like to add to the next Board of Ed Meeting.

Also, could you please confirm you received this email?

Sincerely,

Melissa Carrington  
Project Engineer  
Alinabal, Inc.  
(203)-877-3241 x239

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Dear Members of the Amity Board of Education,

I would like to express my gratitude for your outstanding efforts to keep our high school students in a hybrid learning model and for the return to school on December 7th. I fully support this decision and furthermore support the middle schools full enrollment early dismissal schedule.

As an engineer, I have worked through this pandemic from the beginning being considered an essential worker for our National Defense Programs. We have never stopped or gone remote with over 350 employees. However, I have seen firsthand how effective the safety protocols of wearing masks, taking temperatures, washing hands and social distancing works. In a facility where manufacturing personnel interact regularly we have not had one known case of transmission in the workplace. All cases have been traced to outside of the facility. Due to our diligent workflow and safety protocols, we have been fortunate that when cases do arise due to being in contact with a host outside of the workplace, the workers that had contact have remained negative. We even had a case where someone with a medical condition who can't tolerate a mask was in contact with someone who tested positive operating the same machine, with similar touchpoints and remained negative due to the safety measures practiced previously mentioned. Speaking with my two high school daughters, grades 12 and 10 respectfully, I am sure and reassured by their reports that the same diligence and safety measures are being taken daily by students and faculty while in school with no exceptions. Similarly, all cases they have heard of have occurred outside of school. Data proves that in school interactions are safer than remote ones. Our administrative teams led by Dr. Jennifer Byars have done an outstanding job following the data, keeping updated on the latest information on a daily and even hourly basis. Our Principal Anna Mahon has worked tirelessly to regularly give information based on facts to the parents so we are informed and can make decisions best for our personal family needs. She puts safety of her students and faculty first, as demonstrated after the late October spike when she researched and dug deep in contact tracing to get the data to Dr. Byars and the Department of Health regarding outside gatherings which triggered going fully remote in a proactive countermeasure.

As a town tax payer and mother I chose to move to Orange 20 years ago to receive the superior education the Amity Regional 5 District provides. I have been and continue to be in full support of the decisions made by Dr. Byars and her amazing administrative teams. Why you ask? It is quite simple, data. Data speaks and the data proves that all of the proper safety protocols are in place in all of our school environments. It is so critical to keep these kids in school. They need, at a minimum, the limited social interactions that a hybrid model provides to give them the best social, emotional, and academic education possible. We all know it is not equivalent to pre-covid times, but I am thankful for what our Board of Education, Administration and teachers have launched and provided in these turbulent times.

I understand that many teachers are feeling uncomfortable. I simply ask that our Board of Ed and amazing administration work with them to feel comfortable in school teaching. I believe that teachers are "essential" workers so I ask them to please work with our Board of Education to stay in school. These students need you, as patients need Doctors and Nurses, as families need grocers, manufacturers, truckers, police officers and all essential workers who have never stopped in person duties to get through these times. Our youth and teens need to be in school for both their physical and mental health. Many are not thriving, anxious and are depressed. The two or three days they are in school is all they have to continue to push through these tough times and maintain hope. Teachers you

are supported, appreciated and your concerns are heard so please do what you do best, continue to lead and teach in person, our children, our country, our future needs you now more than ever before.

Sincerely,

Melissa Carrington

Orange, CT

Mechanical Engineer and mother of two Amity Regional High School students

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Abby Silbert <[abby@silbert22.com](mailto:abby@silbert22.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:16 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero; John Belfonti  
**Cc:** Jon (husband)  
**Subject:** Support for AHS hybrid model

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Dear Ms. Pero and Mr. Belfonti,

We would like to voice our support for Amity High School continuing in the hybrid model.

We have felt that the high school has done a great job minimizing risk and we feel that our children thrive more by being in the presence of their peers and teachers at least part of the week.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jon and Abby Silbert

Abby Silbert  
Arbonne International  
National Vice President  
203.605.8813  
[abby@silbert22.com](mailto:abby@silbert22.com)  
[www.abbysilbert.arbonne.com](http://www.abbysilbert.arbonne.com)

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Darlene Sanner <dsanner@live.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:17 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In person learning

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I Darlene Sanner, 328 Ann Rose Drive support FULL TIME IN PERSON LEARNING...

Our children deserve their education in school in person, full time. We pay taxes for this. Teachers get paid for this. We have no major issues in schools with children or teachers and covid. They have already stolen enough of their childhoods. If teachers cared, they would want to be in person, and i know many who prefer it. Any teacher who wants to sit home on a screen and think that is sufficient for the social and emotional development of our beloved children must not have young ones of their own. Its too bad they decided to teach without fully committing their hearts. If they are against in person, they should stay home and allow someone willing to jump in and do the job. Our children also need exposure to germs for their immune systems to develop. We are physically and mentally harming our children by isolating them. It will be very sad to see the mental illness this pandemic will create for our children and their futures. I pray that the isolation does not lead to severe depression and increased suicide rates in the future. Tell the teachers who are bitter to stay home, we dont want them teaching our kids. We need positivity, motivation and a loving guide to remind our kids that we are strong, we are ok, and we will persevere. Let our kids be kids. And by the way, parents need to work, we cant quit jobs and leave 12 year old unsupervised 40 hours/week.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Tanya Allain <tanyaallain3@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:21 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In FAVOR of in person learning

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing because I know there will be a meeting about in person learning. I have three kids, one at Amity High School and the other two at Beecher. I am 100% all for in person learning. It is where the kids NEED to be. I am tired of the teachers being so concerned for their health and not being concerned about the kids mental health. If these teachers are fighting to go remote I would really like to know if they all will stay home too. Will they go to the grocery store, holiday shopping, gas station? They can get COVID at any of these places more so then going to the school building and teaching these kids. And if they do any of these things or have anything delivered to them who do they think is providing these things for them, they are called essential workers, something that the teachers are supposed to be. I have heard the governor say over and over again that the kids need to be in school. He has taken away sports and put harder restrictions on things just so the kids can stay in school and now because teachers are complaining then the kids get punished. Haven't they gotten punished enough?  
Tanya and Oscar Allain

Sent from my iPad

**Pamela Pero**

---

**From:** Jacqueline Forchetti <jacquelineforchetti@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:21 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Support for In Person Learning

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I'm writing to express my support for the Amity school district to continue in person learning for our students. The students need to be in school and I feel remote learning is not an effective way to educate our students. The students have struggled tremendously academically, socially and emotionally from being isolated at home behind a computer screen. The students need to be in school as that is what is best for their overall well being and it has been proven to be safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Forchetti

Sent from my iPhone



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Bill Conners <linexct@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:22 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** No full remote

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No one but we the parents understand fully how our children are suffering under these school lockdowns. Their education that we the taxpayers pay for is terribly insufficient. Also their mental and social well being is getting worse and worse by the day. I always thought our great educational system was meant to lift our children's lives but that is not the case here. It's a sad state of affairs when our children's education take a back seat to their educator's fears.

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** tara chizmadia <t.chiz@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:22 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public comment

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I write this letter as a parent of two children at Amity Regional High school and as a teacher in a district near by. It is wonderful that districts are giving families a choice of the model their children are in . I choose for my children to be in school In person . I believe they learn better and it is better for their mental health to be in the building. There are two high schools in my district and they have never left the hybrid model even though the town has been in the Red early on. This is because school is the best and safest place for our children.They are wearing masks and are social distancing . They pride themselves as putting students first. I teach everything day of the week in person and I can say that is where I want to be. If I worked at Target or the grocery store could I say I don't feel safe going to work? How far would that get me? If I had a medical condition that prevented me from teaching I could either get a doctor's note and teach remotely or take a leave. I choose to go to school everyday to teach my students and support them through the challenges they may be going through during this pandemic. This is why I picked Orange to live in because I wanted a district like Amity for my own children. Please do not take this away from our children . Keep them in person and in school . Sincerely, Tara Chizmadia

Sent from my iPhone

**Pamela Pero**

---

**From:** Leah Smith <leahsmithlcs@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:24 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public comment

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To the BOE of Amity Region 5,  
I am writing as the parent of 3 children at Amity High School, one in grade 12, and two in grade 10. I fully support the current hybrid learning model and the plan that the Amity administration has designed for our high school children. Please keep this plan in place and do not return to fully remote learning.

Thank you.

Leah Smith  
491 Racebrook Rd  
Orange, CT 06477

Sent from my iPhone.

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Michael Kosh <okosh\_30@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:53 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In school learning support

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To the members of the Board of Education, as a parent in the community and a staff member at ARHS, I fully support in person learning. I realize that there are parents that may choose full remote learning for their student and are allowed that opportunity, I just hope that those who choose in school learning get that same opportunity and consideration.

Sincerely

Tricia Kosh  
824 Amity Road  
Bethany

Sent from my iPhone

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Denise D'Onofrio <denised9@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:55 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** School

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I am in favor of in-school learning. I feel the hybrid model is acceptable, but isn't working for many.

FT remote is unacceptable.

I would prefer the kids going back FT.

Sincerely,  
Denise D'Onofrio

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Louis Gloria <lgloria@procyonpartners.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:56 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE covid meeting

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Pamela,

Our children need to be in person - period

Your very recent letter to us shared why the middle school was safe to return to based on the last three months of data and why the high school was safe to go back to hybrid after the recent holiday break.

A "better safe than sorry" approach is proving to be significantly more harmful to our children than a virus that they have a 99.997% chance of surviving.

When it comes to the children, it is clear that they do not spread the virus in school settings.

Assuming you are consistent next year and beyond, I would expect that we would be fully remote during the flu season as the seasonal flu tragically does take young lives every year.

I am 100 percent against fully remote as the data does not support it and we should not be giving into the union or a few loud voices that are not considering the consequences that these decisions have on the lives of our children.

Regards,

Lou Gloria

Lou Gloria

Partner

Managing Director

Procyon Partners, LLC

Image

1 Corporate Drive, Suite 225 | Shelton, CT 06484

M: (844) Procyon | D: (475) 232-2703 | F: (475) 232-2742

lgloria@procyonpartners.net [www.procyonpartners.net](http://www.procyonpartners.net)

Click here for COVID-19 related resources through Procyon Perspectives

Mr. Gloria is also a registered representative of Purshe Kaplan Sterling Investments, Inc., (Member FINRA/SIPC and headquartered at 80 State Street, Albany, NY 12207 - "PKS"). In Mr. Gloria's separate capacity as registered representative of PKS, securities may be offered through PKS and not Procyon Partners. Procyon Partners and PKS are not affiliated companies.

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[www.procyonpartners.net](http://www.procyonpartners.net) for important disclosures.

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Karen Russo <karenrusso329@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:02 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In school learning

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To whom it may concern,

My daughter is a 7th grader at AMSO this year. I think it is very important that these children get back to full in person learning. I understand that teachers may be scared about the pandemic, but it has been proven that the spread is not occurring inside the schools. I am an occupational therapist and I work at the Saint Rafael's campus of Yale New Haven Hospital. I do not like to wear full PPE all day long as I treat patients with or without Covid. I didn't "sign up" for this. It is completely exhausting and not what I am used to. But I had to adapt. And given that this is my job, I am expected to do this, to care for these people with an unbiased approach. Don't these teachers have an obligation to our children?

I just hope that the teachers and children will return to full in person learning to halt the social isolation that our children are feeling and to get the quality education that we all have come to love in this district.

Thank you,  
Karen Russo

Sent from my iPhone

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Bradley Saunders <saunders@pezcandyinc.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:19 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Kids back to school

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Hi,  
Please add me to the camp who believes students need to be back in school now!

Dr. Fauci recently recommended this as well and CT's positive rate is a lot lower than other states.

I have been working everyday through this pandemic and so should teachers.

Thanks,  
Brad Saunders

Sent from my iPhone



Thank you

Brian Laubstein  
Bethany  
Father of a senior

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** bvah@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:25 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Commets for BOE meeting 12/8/2020

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To the Amity BOE,

This has been a difficult last 9 months for everyone. Never in my lifetime have there been such a pandemic . In the beginning of the 2020, none really knew alot about this "New Virus". There were conflicting stories from what it was, how it was transmitted between people ,the the consequences of catching this disease. Everyone has said from the beginning of this pandemic"Follow the science" even when the scientists were not sure what the science really was. Remember leaving packages out in the garage because we thought the virus could last on cardboard for a week??

Now with 9 tough months of living and some dying with the virus, one thing still rings true."Follow The Science"

What is the science related to teaching ,children / ,schools openings. ?

From The World Health Organization

Currently almost all studies suggest that the covid virus is not spreading in schools

Children less then 18 are less susceptible to catching the covid virus

Children almost always have less symptoms then adults.

From the American Psychological Association

Zoom has put a stress on mental heath for our kids.

Kids have been taught to learn in groups and get help from their peers, Now with Zoom , learning is in a vacuum

Relationships at school inspire motivation for many kids. Motivation is lost learning by themselves

Spending time with friends is often a student's favorite part of school, and without that sense of belonging, it may be harder for kids to stay focused

Our children have lost enought socially and educationally and athletically over 2020

For all theses reason .Amity needs to open up and allow in class teaching .

## Pamela Pero

---

**From:** Mara Saccente <msaccente@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:27 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Support for In-person High School Classes

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Dear Board Members,

We are writing to express our support for in-person classes at the High School. While we know the administration and teachers have done their best with hybrid learning nothing can replace an in-person learning experience for our children. A lot has been learned since school has reopened about how the disease is spread and contained. Around the world countries are shutting down everything except in-person learning and seeing significant drops in their positivity rates. All the current science shows that the virus is not being spread in schools. We believe it is best for our children's education and emotional development to spend as much time in-person as possible. We would like to thank the administration, teachers and all Amity employees for everything they are doing to provide the best experience for our children.

Thank you,  
Mara and Ken Saccente  
524 Ridgeview Road  
Orange, CT

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Faith Miller <faithm@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:34 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity BOE

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December 7, 2020

Dear Amity BOE Members,

I am writing as a retired Amity teacher and a concerned Bethany citizen. I believe that changing from the hybrid model to full time in-school learning is a reckless idea at this particular time. Our COVID positivity rate is hovering between 6 and 7 percent. The full effect from the Thanksgiving holiday is just beginning, and we won't know the full effect for a week or two. Why choose this particular day to change to full in-school learning?

I am especially worried about the teachers. Amity has amazing teachers who love to teach and are very effective. But teaching while they are very concerned about getting sick can't be optimal. My two children went through Amity and were well prepared for good colleges and life beyond school. However, if they were still in middle school, even though their risk is less, I definitely would not want them back into full classrooms. Even pre-COVID, classrooms were crowded and hallways packed.

From what I've heard from teachers and friends with school-aged children, the hybrid model, while not ideal, seems to be working. Students have the technology they need and teachers have adapted their teaching to include effective online lessons.

Why change now when our positivity rates are rising? I am hopeful you will reconsider what I think is a serious misjudgment.

Sincerely,  
Faith Miller  
Retired English Teacher and Media Specialist  
78 Woodcutters Drive  
Bethany, CT

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** BUTC <debutt@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:39 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Please submit this as part of the 12/8 Board of Education meeting

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Good evening Pam,

The purpose of this email is to state my absolute support for the students of Amity Regional High School to return to in person learning. Not only am I in favor of the current hybrid model but I would also be in favor of all high school students returning to in person learning 5 days a week. I know the Board of Education has done their due diligence in consulting with the local health officials and I have read that even the CDC has confirmed that schools are not a contributing factor to the spread of COVID-19. Even Dr. Fauci has said on multiple occasions that kids "belong in school".

Beyond helping ensure educational advancement, K-12 schools offer nutrition, mental health, socialization, and other services and experiences that are critical for our nation's youth. If the board determines it is safe for schools to be open to in person learning (and they are and should be) then the teachers should be in the building to teach unless they have a health condition that puts them at a higher risk of infection.

The board is making the right call in this instance and I support them wholeheartedly.

Respectfully,

Eric Butt

489 Carriage Drive

Orange

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** David Audie <daudierph@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:50 PM  
**To:** Jennifer Byars; John Belfonti; Steven DeMaio; Pamela Pero; Kathy Burke; Neil Holt  
**Subject:** Amity Middle School return to school

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

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Hello,

I am writing this email in support of the decision of the school board and superintendent to return the Amity Middle School to in person learning five days a week. I am glad that you made the decision to return the students to a more normal, effective and proper way of educating them. I suspect however that this attempt like the last one will be short lived. I figured this when I dropped my son off this morning and saw several teachers congregating outside. My guess was that they were speaking about the return to full time learning, and I suspect they were not happy with the decision. My guess was later confirmed when I picked Michael up from school, and he said the teachers had a protest about going back to school. And now as I type this, I learn about a teacher walk out and news crews all over Amity. Seems to me as if someone is trying to pressure you into reversing course a second time. I hope that doesn't happen. Unfortunately, I am not surprised. My son Michael has shared many things with us regarding comments from teachers regarding how they don't want to be there and don't want to be teaching him.

You are making the right decision by having the kids return to in person learning. Frankly it is 3 months too late and should have been done on day 1. There is literally no reason they should not be in person. All the data and all the evidence and experience from other schools both in our community and throughout the country and world have shown that schools do not act as a major source of spread of the virus, and that children in particular have not been shown to spread the virus to adults and have been shown to have better outcomes with this virus than seasonal flu. I hope you remain steadfast in your decision and not cow to pressure from the union or individual teachers.

I know from experience that my son has not been given the education he deserves, Amity is known for or frankly, that I pay for through my exorbitant taxes. His test scores and grades are down, and he doesn't have any meaningful opportunity to engage with his teachers or other students. It is absurd to think that having a class for 30 minutes especially when it is virtual is enough. He is not capable of teaching himself Algebra, Science or any other of his subjects. We are doing tremendous damage to an entire generation of kids, and we will be reaching a point of no return if more isn't done to correct these errors. It is high time to stand up for what is right, act with courage and resolve to ensure we give our kids what they deserve.

In support of your decision, I figured I would share some publications which can help you with your decision making process. We supposedly live in an era of science, so I hope you take some time to review and familiarize yourself with these articles and their implications.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2029717>

This article published in the New England Journal of Medicine attempts to evaluate the impact that mitigation strategies (lockdowns) have on the spread of the virus. The study evaluated 3,402 Marine Corps recruits of which 1,848 were enrolled in the study arm where they were required to implement strict mitigation strategies much more aggressive than what we expect even today including limiting contacts, frequent sanitizing of surfaces, and frequent testing. Of note, the strict quarantine group had a higher rate of infection than the control group that didn't implement the aggressive mitigation strategies. Showing once again that these non pharmaceutical strategies are not effective in reducing the spread of the virus and only serve to put undue burdens on otherwise healthy people.

<https://news.yale.edu/2020/10/16/child-care-not-associated-spread-covid-19-yale-study-finds>

In this study conducted at Yale, researchers surveyed 57,000 child care providers across all 50 US states including Washington DC and Puerto Rico. They showed no differences in COVID-19 outcomes between workers who continued to provide in-person care for young children and those who did not. Essentially they concluded that child care providers assumed no heightened risk compared to individuals who did not provide child care services. This has important implications for school administrators, superintendents and teachers as it shows there is not an increased risk of infection and poor outcomes from teaching or caring for students.

<https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/press-release/2020/study-suggests-possible-new-covid-19-timeline-in-the-us.html>

In this study, the CDC looked for antibodies in blood samples collected between December 13th, 2019 and Jan 17th, 2020. The results identified that blood samples collected as early as December 13th in some states and December 30th in CT have antibodies for SARS-COV 2 the virus that causes COVID-19. The implications of this are significant and in my opinion, not to be overstated. It significantly alters the timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic and means that it was circulating as early as November in some parts of the country and as early as December in CT. Yet, there were no mitigation strategies, no social distancing requirements, no universal masking, and more importantly no concerns about rising hospitalizations, deaths or other things we have heard since late March and April 2020. Seems to me like this would be something worth asking Dr Mohammed and the Public Health Director from Quinnipiac Valley. Frankly, I have no idea why this isn't getting more attention as this challenges so much of the conventional narrative.

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-6817>

I can't help but share this study. It really isn't relevant to the discussion, but I just enjoy sharing it. This study evaluated the use of masks among healthy volunteers and attempts to determine if masks reduce the risk of infection for wearers. This is the largest study to date and is a randomized controlled trial which is the gold standard. I know the "fact checkers" will say that masks don't protect the wearer, they protect other people. Unfortunately that is fundamentally absurd at face value and doesn't deserve much consideration. It's like saying if I take Tylenol you won't get a headache. I know everyone thinks these masks we all wear are doing a great job of reducing viral transmission. I hate to burst anyone's bubble, but they are the equivalent to shaking a stick at the sky to stop the lightning.

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6932a1-H.pdf>

This is the final study I will share at this time and frankly the most important. Everyone needs to recognize there are negative side effects of all the mitigation strategies being implemented including school closures. A CDC report published August 14th surveyed people to assess anxiety, depression and suicide. ***Of note, 1 in 4 people aged 18-24 seriously contemplated suicide in the preceding month.*** This is a shocking statistic. While our kids and the children in the Amity Middle School are not represented in the report, it is not hard to imagine the impact on younger children. The past 9 months has placed a tremendous amount of stress on people and in

particular young people. If people do not have hope then they become lost. We cannot allow a dystopian future to destroy our children and force them into a life of anxiety, depression and despair.

Students deserve a quality in person education. They should be able to interact with their friends, and they should be able to participate in all the events that make school special. I implore you to stay the course and to pursue your plan to bring the kids back. Everyone needs to wake up and recognize that the draconian effects implemented in March and April did more harm than good, and we cannot make the same mistake twice.

If you question anything I say above, please ask and I will be happy to share relevant publications.

Please feel free to share with other members of the Amity BOE.

Thank You,

David Audie, PharmD  
Concerned Parent and Former Amity Graduate.



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Tracey Russo <tracey@russolawct.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 8:58 PM  
**To:** John Belfonti; Pamela Pero; Anna Mahon; Jennifer Byars  
**Subject:** Special BOE Meeting/Support of Continued In Person Learning

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Dear Board of Education:

I am a parent, former board of education member, and daughter of and sister to public school teachers. I believe in public education and have been impressed with our District's response to the COVID crisis and extend my thanks to each of you, our teachers, and our staff for your continued service to our District.

I will not pretend to understand the complicated science that factors into the choice between hybrid, in-person learning versus remote instruction. I do understand how difficult the past several months have been on our children and believe that they are best served academically and emotionally by in-person instruction and hope that we are on track to increase to a full 5 day schedule before the school year ends.

I also understand that what is equally important is the health, safety and welfare of our teachers and staff.

Amity is a unique community -- we all come to this debate with our own opinions but, truthfully, this decision should not be based on opinion.

Our teachers and staff are as essential to success of our community and I hope that you listen to their concerns about their health and safety. I hope that you listen to the concerns of parents regarding their children if we are fully remote.

More than anything, I hope that our Board of Education reaches a unanimous decision through understanding and compromise that is, above all else, grounded in science and facts. We live with enough fear -- facts are what we need.

All my best,

Tracey Russo  
684 Heritage Hill Road  
Orange, Connecticut

**Tracey Lane Russo, Esq.**  
The Law Office of Tracey Lane Russo LLC  
501 Boston Post Road, Unit 23  
Orange, Connecticut 06477  
Tel/Text: 203.298.4289  
Fax: 203.842.4255  
[www.russolawct.com](http://www.russolawct.com)

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Fran Dow <fran\_m\_dow@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:01 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity middle school

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I am in support of a full return for amity middle school and a hybrid model for amity high school. I am a tax paying parent of both a middle schooler and a high schooler that are eager to return to their school, teachers and their friends. Please give them a chance to do so.  
Frances Dow

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Federico, Melissa <Melissa.Federico@hearstmediact.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:12 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Special Meeting-Public Comment

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Good Evening—

My name is Melissa Federico, I currently have a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Amity High School in Full Remote status. I am also a graduate of Amity High School myself. I am writing today to urge the Board of Education to listen to our teachers, while also considering the metrics and taking into consideration how the beginning of this year has gone so far.

Our teachers are some of the best in the state. If they don't feel safe or heard now, what is going to stop them from leaving? Are we, as a District, willing to potentially lose our teachers just to prove a point? Losing our teachers would be detrimental to our whole school community and I urge the BOE to take that into consideration. Our teachers don't feel heard and that is never acceptable. When/if an employee doesn't feel heard, valued, or appreciated it makes them look elsewhere for where they will feel valued.

I understand current metrics have changed. Our 3 towns are in red. The State of CT was just put into Red Status by the White House COVID Task Force. Please see this article: <https://www.newstimes.com/news/article/White-House-warns-Connecticut-privately-COVID-19-15782782.php>

I also think it is important to look at how our students and parents are behaving outside of school. As we all know, parties are happening, students are going out after school and hanging out with friends. Which is obviously causing for the spread amongst the students, as the many COVID letters have stated. If the parents cannot control their own kids, why are we willing to risk others due to the carelessness of a few?

Please do right by our teachers and our whole community.

Thank You.

**Melissa Federico**

**HEARST** | Strategic Account Manager  
100 Gando Drive | New Haven CT, 06513  
phone: (203)-850-6633  
cell: (203) 410-0430  
[melissa.federico@hearstmediact.com](mailto:melissa.federico@hearstmediact.com)

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Christy Wooldridge (via Google Docs) <christyw167@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:18 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Jennifer Byars; Anna Mahon  
**Subject:** [SPAM] [LIST] Support of Amity Hybrid  
**Attachments:** Support of Amity Hybrid.pdf

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christyw167@gmail.com has attached the following document:



Support of Amity Hybrid

Google Docs: Create and edit documents online.

Google LLC, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA

You have received this email because christyw167@gmail.com shared a document with you from Google Docs.

Google™

Christy Wooldridge  
598 Wingfoot Road  
Orange, CT 06477

Dear Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Byars, Principal Anna Mahon, and the Amity Board of Education,

I am respectfully writing this letter to show my FULL support of the Amity School District going to a hybrid model. These children need to be in school, learning at home is less than ideal. The social, emotional and mental health of our children should be first and foremost, not the teacher union. And additionally, those parents that are concerned about sending their children ultimately have the right to keep their children home. Why do us, parents that want for our children to be in school not have that right. And how about our children that so desperately want to be in school....when does that matter, when is that enough of a reason? If the powers to be met, including the local health officials, and they made this hybrid model decision I strongly hope it is upheld.

I have watched my daughter's bedroom transform during this pandemic from a sanctuary to an asylum, which is quite honestly heartbreaking. My daughter is a freshman and from the first day she went to preschool up until this year she has loved going to school and learning. She thrives in school and works hard, this year has definitely challenged that yet she has persevered. However, the rollercoaster ride of all the back and forth and changes in decisions is emotionally unfair to our children. I know she will be okay, but what about those that will succumb to depression, anxiety or even worse suicide. And lets not forget those children that were very successful academically pre-pandemic yet have lost their way and are now failing. These are the reasons I support in person learning.

I have always been a cheerleader for our community, and more specifically our school district so this is disheartening. These past 9 months have really shown us another side of our school district. My son's 5th grade teacher in the spring last year was literally missing in action and deserted his teaching responsibilities completely until he was finally forced to for the last 3 weeks of school-too little, too late. My daughter last school year, in middle school had very few teachers teaching live; they would just post work to be done. She was saddened by the lack of care they showed the minute they were no longer in person. She truly cared about them but felt they no longer cared about her. All the open house night talks that my children are their children....this was put to the test and they failed. However, this school year both the Orange and Woodbridge School Districts have answered the call for our kids with full in person instruction. It is insulting and frankly embarrassing that Amity teachers are bemoaning teaching in a hybrid environment nonetheless while their district colleagues show up in person to teach all their kids every day.

My husband, Ed is a retired Detective with the CT State Police and I am also a retired police officer. Ed is currently a Westport police officer, assigned as the Staples High School, School

Resource Officer. Staples has been in a hybrid learning model since the beginning of the school year consisting of 2 Full days for the split alphabet. Staples shut down for 2 weeks over the Thanksgiving breaks as most districts did. When the pandemic first hit and the state was shut down, Ed was re-assigned to patrol in what was the Covid hot spot at the time. He had no choice but to show up and do his job, as safely as possible in uncontrolled environments. He has worked to date without incident. We have many friends and family that work in public service as well as healthcare professionals, they have all been working throughout the pandemic in uncontrolled environments or even directly with Covid-19. It is time for our teachers to do the same.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Christy Wooldridge

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** D. Casperowitz <dcasper70@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:21 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Middle school

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I wanted to voice my support for the middle school remaining hybrid. It's been working well and is so much safer. Please wait until after the holidays and then reevaluate. Now isn't the time to change it up. It's not responsible.

Thank you  
Deb Casperowitz



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Peter Higgins <pdh214@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:27 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Union Request response  
**Attachments:** PDHletter.docx

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Please see response attached

December 7, 2020

In response to the request of the Amity teacher's union request/demand for exclusive virtual learning I would like to share some brief thoughts. First, we appreciate what you do, have done, and will continue to do as educators for the Amity school system. Your dedication to being exceptional is the reason we moved into the district. Second, we understand the stress and the uncertainty about all of this... and your willingness to go the extra mile thus far.

However, as we all navigate this wave of the pandemic, it is clear the measures taken by the state, towns and administration in preparation of containing the spread of COVID have mitigated the risk. While imperfect, and evolving almost daily, they are keeping the environment safe. This is a testament to your willingness to heed the advice of the experts.

While my opinion as a parent is valid, I too lean on experts for how I came to my conclusion to send my child back to school. The American Academy of Pediatrics concludes that the benefits outweigh the risks as outlined in late summer and reiterated since. In JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association, they write about the "COVID slide" and a return to school as a "urgent national priority." Their suggestions for a safe and sound environment [distancing, identify at risk students, public health interaction, etc.] are being followed and an arbitrary shift to a full virtual environment seems excessive. Lastly, the CDC has continued to update their guiding principles to ensure the least amount of risk. Again, I believe the school system has done an excellent job controlling what they can control.

As the son of an educator and administrator I want to again reiterate my appreciation for what you have done. My folks have shared they have no idea how you are able to manage it all. Also, I understand that tomorrow, or next week or next month all of this may change, for better or worse, and we should be flexible to support the safest environment for you and my child. Until then, until the state, local health departments and/or other experts suggest that in person school should be suspended, we should continue hybrid and/or in person [where viable] learning.

Regards,

Pete Higgins

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Dennis Santulli <densantulli@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:28 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Supporting In School Learning

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I attached 2 photos that clearly show the mortality rate for COVID 19 and our yearly flu for children and young adults. I'm an essential healthcare worker and I see our teachers as essential workers. As a father of 3 girls and a husband to a teacher, it is vital that our children go back to school. This distance learning has so many negative affects on our children with an increase in depression, suicide, abuse and isolation. Our children are not meant to be locked in a home staring at a computer screen. They should be socially interacting with other children and learning face-to-face. Some of these kids aren't even going on the computers. They are not learning! Some of the kids are home alone and who knows what the environment is like. Most child abuse cases are picked up by the teachers. Education should be about the children and if you want what is best for the children we need to send them back to school. We should follow the science and the science tells us that our children are not affected by this virus. Teachers are essential workers and those under a certain age without underlying conditions should know how to distance themselves, use proper PPE and follow the guidelines that the CDC recommends to return to work. Thank you and wishing all much peace and happiness!

AA

google.com



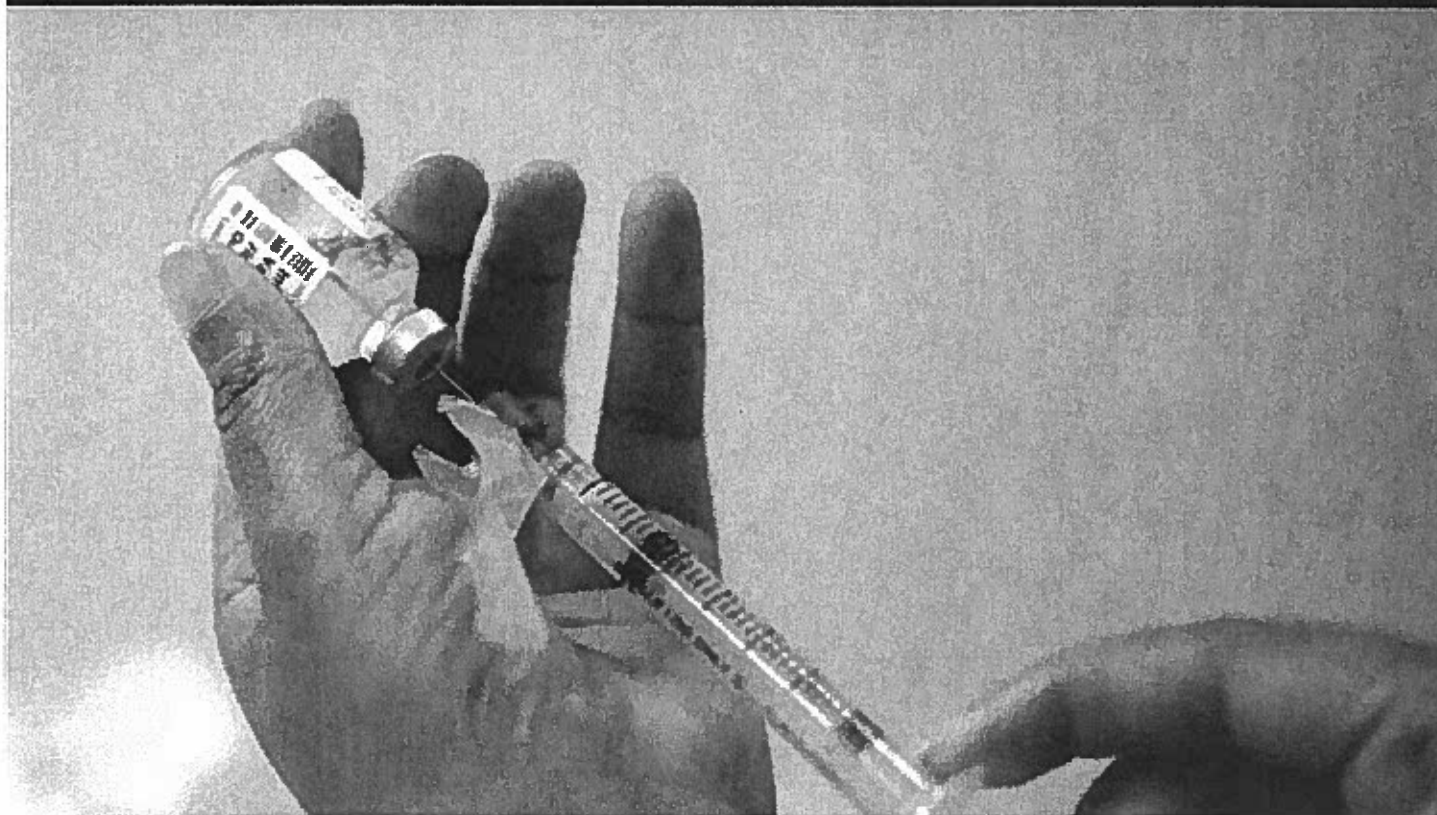
nbcnews.com



HEALTH NEWS

# Child flu deaths hits record high for 2017-2018

172 children died of flu



## Table Preview

View Data

Create Visualization

Data ...	Age g...	COVL...	Indic...	Sex
12/2/2020	0-4 years	45	Age	All
12/2/2020	5-18 years	104	Age	All
12/2/2020	19-44 years	7,007	Age	All
12/2/2020	45-64 years	43,570	Age	All
12/2/2020	65-74 years	53,590	Age	All
12/2/2020	>75 years	145,262	Age	All
12/2/2020	All ages	249,578	Age	All
12/2/2020	0-4 years	17	Sex	Ferr
12/2/2020	5-18 years	48	Sex	Ferr
12/2/2020	0-4 years	28	Sex	Mal
12/2/2020	5-18 years	56	Sex	Mal
12/2/2020	0-4 years	15	Race and ...	All
12/2/2020	0-4 years	1	Race and ...	All
12/2/2020	0-4 years	1	Race and ...	All
< Previous      Next >				

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a sophomore at Amity. I am in support of the hybrid model that we have been doing since September. I do not want to go full remote. I hated being fully remote in the spring. I missed my friends and my teachers, but mostly because I learn better in school with a teacher. Closing school isn't going to stop the spread because the spread isn't happening in school. Closing schools will probably have the opposite effect because social distancing and masks won't be enforced. Please allow us to stay in school as long as the CDC and Governor say schools can remain open.

Thank you,

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Amy Tirollo <Amy@tirollo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:34 PM  
**To:** pamela.pero@amityschools.org  
**Subject:** Public Comment

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Hello,

My name is Amy Tirollo. I am a 6th grade teacher happily teaching five days on a shortened schedule in a neighboring district. I am a mother of three daughters attending Amity Regional High School, and we own one of the bus companies that provides transportation in town. I am wholeheartedly in favor of the hybrid model at the high school.

Throughout this pandemic, scientists, doctors, and board of health members have not agreed on much, but what they DO agree with is that school is the SAFEST place for students to be. Let's be real here. Families are not staying home like they did in the spring. If kids aren't in school, they are no doubt out with friends... without masks... without social distancing, getting sick and spreading it to families. Covid is not spreading in school because they are social distancing and wearing masks. I could not be more confident in Mrs. Mahon's efforts along with the rest of the staff working to keep the staff and children safe. School is healthy for students social and emotional well being as well as their future academic success. If remote learning could be done in a way that had no measurable effect in the quality of education offered, I'd be all for it, but that is simply not the case. The students need to be in school with teachers teaching. Amity has a reputation of high academic standards and success. That is one of the reasons I agreed to stay in Orange (my husband's hometown.) That reputation will quickly deteriorate if they take any more time away from education.

Thank you for your attention,  
Amy Tirollo

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Cheryl Wirth <cwirthsantulli@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:40 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In support of in school learning

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Greetings,

I support In School learning. I believe teachers are essential workers. As a teacher in another district I witness first hand the negative effect remote learning is having on children. Children are becoming more sedentary, depressed, immersed in technology continuously, isolated, and losing their thirst for knowledge and desire to learn. They are staring at screens, complaining of headaches and eye strain. Children are home alone without any adult supervision and, yes, even high school students need support and guidance. Is anyone looking at the long term ramifications of keeping children home? Teachers will have to rethink what and how they are teaching and how to get the students caught up. Children are fearful that they will be behind and not prepared for life beyond high school. Some students will be fine, but I already see many students giving up because they are not in an environment conducive to learning. For some students, school is where they feel safe and where they feel empowered. For others, they need human interaction to learn. The kids need to be in school. Has anyone asked the kids how they feel? There is a push for social emotional learning, but what message are we sending if we are keeping them home? Do we shut down for the flu? What's next? Life is not without risks. We must be cautious and follow all safety protocols, but we must be forward thinking. Amity has created a safe environment for our students. My children want to be in school and will continue to attend as long as Amity's doors are open.

Thank you and I appreciate all that Amity has done to keep our children safe.

Be well-  
Peace,  
Cheryl Wirth

Sent from my iPhone



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Tom Snyder <tsnyder@snet.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:47 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** teacher input for Board Meeting

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Amity Board members,

First, I need you to know that I thank you for your time and energy and commitment to Amity. You certainly did not sign up for these COVID complications. That you are meeting, yet again, to review our path forward is greatly appreciated. I have been with Amity's junior high and middle schools for 37 years now. We have established ourselves as a premier district. This will continue. But now, we have to deal with how to make the best of a very bad situation. This is a time for risk management, not risk taking.

Logic, safety, consistency, and the sanity of your staff say that we should be instructing our students fully remotely until mid-January.

There is great confusion undermining our present situation. We went fully remote for the week following the Thanksgiving gatherings. That was a grounded, sound, and safe path. We are now being directed to a full return 3 days later. This amid an epic outbreak that has only just started! We are faced with the tip of the iceberg. Knowing what lies below the surface, the captain of the Titanic would never have proceeded. Why are we continuing on this path into that very tip of the iceberg for two weeks? Our holiday break is a mere two weeks away. I am guessing that you will be deciding whether to go fully remote for the first weeks of January (for the same reasons you took that path post-Thanksgiving)? And then what?

Logic, safety, consistency, and the sanity of your staff say that we should be instructing our students fully remotely until mid-January.

Again, thank you for your time and passion and energy. Please consider my thoughts, Tom Snyder

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Ray LaPlante <raylaplante@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 9:55 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for public comment BOE

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Please include my attached letter in the public comments portion of the Board of Education meeting.  
Thank you!

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to express my support of the in-person learning model for the middle school. As a parent of an 8th grade student, I have witnessed that his learning style is best served when he is able to be in the classroom environment. Since his mother and I are both considered essential workers, our son is home alone on remote learning days. This lack of supervision and support during the school hours, coupled with his own tendency to be easily distracted, naturally has shown this school year to be his weakest at meeting expectations.

While there is certainly an element of personal accountability to blame for this measurable academic slide, I know that his ability to learn is impacted greatly by the controlled environment within the walls of Amity. Having the structure, better access to teachers and support staff, and the personal connections that can't be replicated by electronic means are the conditions that provide the best climate for learning... and I'm confident that is the case for more than just my son. In fact, a recent study featured in the New York Times showed that students in remote learning environments are not keeping pace with where they would be if they were in a classroom learning environment.

Lastly, the impact of emotional and social well-being may be harder to measure but remains equally important. Our kids need the emotional support both for their mental development and their academic progress. I have no doubt that the truth of this rings out to the choir to which I'm preaching, which is why the school district has gone to such lengths to provide a safe environment while the kids are in the Amity environment. I feel completely comfortable sending my son to school during this pandemic because I have personally witnessed the measures in place to keep him safe.

I urge this Board to consider the needs and the safety of the students above the unfounded scare tactics recently submitted to you. The personal protective equipment and safety protocol measures are necessary, and they are WORKING. Your administrators, your support staff, and other public health officials are doing an exceptional job at handling this public health crisis... please let them continue to work. This school district has already made many unprecedented accommodations to ease the burden on the teaching staff, but this is also their time to shine and meet the challenges we all are facing. We support our teachers in their efforts to make

the best of this set of circumstances, but we also have to expect that they'll see the same data that our public health professionals use to state that a return to school is appropriate and recommended.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond LaPlante  
538 Ridge Road  
Orange, CT 06477

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Emily Melnick <melnick.emily@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 10:05 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** For BOE public comment 12/8/20

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As a concerned AHS parent I want to understand why AHS remains open when, for example Region 9 where the current leading indicators for their 2 towns is the same as Orange and Woodbridge e.g. 35 and 25 per 100,000 has CLOSED until January 4th based on "strong recommendations" from their Health Department.

We need to understand how 2 districts can come to polar opposite conclusions.

We also need to understand why Amity is taking the risk, as teachers are vehemently opposed and many more families opt out of in person. There was, for example, only 1 student in my daughter's math class Monday while 20 were on line.

Why is AMity not taking the prudent path such as Region 9 (see letter below) and instead continuing to be both dismissive of the inherent health danger of widespread community Covid transmission and the emotional and physical wellbeing of our teachers and students?

Thank you.  
Emily Melnick

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Dear ER9 families, faculty and staff,

Yesterday, we received the latest health report for Easton and Redding. Currently, the leading indicator (the number of new cases 14 day avg per 100k pop.) and the secondary indicator (positivity rate) remain in the red. Last week Easton and Redding health officials shared that we should anticipate a post-Thanksgiving increase in the number of positive cases. They warned that the increase will likely impact our community next week (10-14 days after Thanksgiving) and cause staff absences due to district-related quarantines, pending test results and childcare issues as a result of school closures in surrounding towns.

In today's meeting, our local health officials urged us to adopt a proactive approach rather than reacting after students and staff are exposed.

Based on their strong recommendations, we will remain in distance learning at least through December 23rd and will plan to return to in-person instruction on January 4th.

Determination of the learning model (hybrid or in-person) will be communicated prior to the return from the winter recess and will be made based upon the health metrics at that time.

There are no universally agreeable solutions to the complicated circumstances of this pandemic. While I am fully aware of the challenges this shift will create for many of our families, I believe this measured approach is the best way to safeguard the health and safety of our students and staff, and will provide more runway for families to have stability in terms of the model we're using. This plan also eliminates the continued disruptive adjustments for both families and employees that result from the week-to-week waiting and unpredictable nature of multiple changes. As we move forward, we will continue to refine our distance learning model to ensure students continue to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Thank you for your continued support, flexibility and understanding during these unprecedented times.

Best,

Rydell Harrison, Ed. D

Superintendent of Schools

Easton-Redding-Region 9 School Districts

654 Morehouse Road

Easton, Connecticut 06612

Phone:

(203) 261-2513

Email:

rharrison@er9.org

Twitter: @RydellEdLeader

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** David & Liz Audie <dlaudie@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 10:15 PM  
**To:** Jennifer Byars; Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Kathy Burke  
**Subject:** Amity Middle Schools' Learning Model

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Dear Dr. Byars and the Amity BOE,

I was pleasantly surprised to get the email on Friday stating the students were going back to school, AND the middle schoolers were going to start going everyday! Finally! Today, I was disappointed to see Amity made the news because the teachers don't want in person learning. I was not surprised since my son came home from school saying his teachers protested going back to school.

As an educator, I understand this pandemic has brought about new ways of teaching and the challenges of juggling distance learners, in person learners and possibly personal situations. Frankly, it is hard to have sympathy for these teachers when the Board of Ed gave them the day before Thanksgiving off, and these teachers get out 1.5 hours early everyday. (I also see some of teachers leaving school before all the students have left for the day.). These same middle school teachers have several times throughout the year voiced their displeasures about being in school. My son has been told by teachers that the administration cares more about the students' education than that particular teacher's health and life, and the teachers miss distance learning Wednesdays when they could work in their pajamas. Now, they don't even want to be in school at all! And this is how they thank everyone for their free day off before Thanksgiving? The elementary teachers, who have been full time since the beginning of the year did not get a day off or get an extra 1.5 hours of planning time everyday.

Distance and hybrid learning has detrimental affects on the students, both socially and academically. My kids say school is like jail, little interaction or movement. It is not ideal learning for students (or teaching for teachers). Internet connections go in and out. Tests are taken over the course of multiple days, partially taken at school, partially taken at home without the ability to ask for clarification. Little to no feedback on assignments. My son played email tag with a teacher asking for extra help, and she gave him five minutes notification to log on. (Needless to say he didn't see it in time.). If the teacher is "out" during distance learning, there is no substitute/class for the day, so no learning goes on. My son's grades are slipping. While he was in the gifted and talented program in elementary school, he is not capable of teaching himself algebra, chemistry/physics, Spanish, English or his other classes. It is also very concerning that his SBAC scores from September 2020, were lower than his September 2019 scores, presumably due to lack of instruction. We pay taxes for our teachers, essential workers, to do their jobs and educate our children, not portray their personal fear and opinions on our children, giving the students the impression the teachers don't really care or feel that education isn't important.

Please keep the students in school (in person) five days a week.

Thank you for trying to do what's in the best interest of our student's education.

Liz Audie

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Eleanor Stephens  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 10:33 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Eleanor Stephens  
**Subject:** Letter for the Board of Ed Meeting

Dear Board of Education,

I am writing in regards to the return of school with all students on Wednesday December 9th. I teach at the Amity Middle School in Orange and have been a resident in Orange for over 36 years . I have had two children go through the Amity system. It is a great school but things like this just make me question the plans being put into place.

Since September we have been hybrid. This has worked out very well. There are a maximum of about 10-12 students in classes, 10-12 students at home. I feel that we have really gotten to know these students being in a close group. The alternating of groups daily and on Wednesday has worked out well . Last week when we were remote, the students were wonderful and engaged. I feel that because they had no masks, they were more comfortable. I teach everyday so that students at home and in school get the same instruction and are joining in classroom work.

We have been doing so well and now with all of what is happening in the town and state, we are going back to full? We have three more weeks until break. Why not continue at least in hybrid. We have not even experienced the result of the Thanksgiving break and what effects it will have.

We all would love to enjoy time with our family. Other than hospital workers, pretty much everyone is home working. We want to be safe. I did not see my family for the holidays, as I am around too many people. It is a sacrifice, but one I am willing to make.

We have "cohorts", but we do not. There are special ed students who travel to other groups such as the resource room, Math help, reading help etc.

We also have students (different teams )mixed for art and tech, reading and health, going to different rooms with different students.

There is terrible internet and when the internet does not work we have to go to the cafe, sometimes with different teams, Teachers are not able to teach because they have all this talking from the other teacher and students. One day we were in there with a class that was eating with no masks on. Inappropriate.

When there are even two teachers out , the sub has to take both these classes to the cafe three times a day, the two classes and academic success and students sit in random spots, no names are placed on the tables and how do we contact trace in

the event that there are issues?

In the hall students are moving from place to place and there is not enough supervision in the halls to tell them to separate.

When we go for a mask break, used to be 10 minutes ( after 3.5 hours of sitting in one spot), they are now only

allowed a few minutes. they often stand too close together and when it is inclement weather, there is not ample room .Students are barely 2 feet apart, now with twice as many students, there will be no room.

How does this make sense?

In one of the classrooms there will be 20 plus students, one row is against the wall and a student has her desk facing a

brick wall. They are about 3 feet from each other, nose to nose.

We want to teach, we just want to be safe. If you can only imagine how much time teachers spend with technology beyond the

actual lessons to prepare for their students. I have been teaching for over 40, 39 years at Amity and spend more time than I ever did.

We volunteer and do so much for these students and the school which ultimately gives Amity a great name . Show us some respect

and protect the teachers and students and their precious families. Our goal for the year is SEL, for teachers and students and staff.

Young people are just as vulnerable as those of other ages.

Sincerely submitted,

*Ellie Stephens*  
*Team Leader/Math Teacher*  
*Amity Middle School-Orange*



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Marissa N <marissanall77@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 10:53 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment for BOE meeting  
**Attachments:** Letter to BOE 12\_7\_2020.pdf

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Hello,

Please submit the attached letter for public comment at the emergency meeting of the Amity Board of Education on Tuesday, December 8th.

Thank you,  
Marissa Nall

Monday, December 7, 2020

Dear Members of the Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to you as a middle school teacher at Amity Middle School Bethany regarding the recent proposed changes to the instructional models in Amity Middle Schools and High School, respectively.

As you know, on December 4th, we were informed about the plan to move Amity High School back into the hybrid model of instruction and the two middle schools to full in-person learning. I hold major reservations about this decision. Firstly, based on the indicators outlined in Addendum 4--namely the massive community spread of Covid in Connecticut--this is not the time to be increasing in-person contact amongst students and staff. In both the letter to the community and the press statement to FOX61 News, Dr. Byars stated that a full in-person opening in December would be a perfect amount of time to test the model and that "if we were successful," the model could be maintained into the new year. This statement was deeply troubling to me. We are people; we are not part of an experiment. What does success look like? No cases? 5% of the population? 10%? I am not willing to risk my own health, the health of my students or colleagues in trying to find out.

In my career, I have spent the entirety of it living and breathing Amity. I am a proud member of the school community and so proud of the work produced by me, my colleagues, and the students we hold so dear. Of course, I want all of my students back in the building, full time. I want to be able to share a table with them and hear about their world. I want to allow them to run and play with their friends during free time. I want to let them put their heads together, literally and figuratively, to learn and collaborate. **But, it is not safe right now.** In the middle schools, a full in-person model would put up to 22 students in a small classroom and it would be exceptionally difficult, or even impossible to keep the students distance 3 or more feet apart. Mask breaks, especially as winter and inclement weather approaches, would be increasingly risky. Hallways will be busier at the start and end of the day, and when students pass to their elective classes. The elementary schools have successfully kept students in-person for most of the school year. However, this is a false equivalence because the middle schools cannot cohort as effectively. Students break their cohorts several times a day: on the bus, for support classes, for specials like PE and music. Every student spends between  $\frac{1}{8}$  and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of their day out of cohorts. Further, the full in-person instructional model is that in name only. The Amity re-opening plan allows for families to opt-out their student(s) and teachers to instruct remote students synchronously. Because of this, the full in-person model is not "normal" school. Teachers will still be on Zoom with a handful of students from each classroom, still tied to a computer in the front of the classroom, still teaching in two separate models, and still reliant on technology to provide instruction to students not in the building. But now, we will have more students sitting in the room, deserving of our time and attention, but assuming more risk to them and ourselves.

As a final point, please consider what the Amity teachers have sacrificed this year. We have been in the classroom each day, finding new ways to meet the needs of all learners despite increasingly difficult and stressful circumstances. Some of us have gotten sick from Covid, or seen our family members fall ill. We cannot socialize with our colleagues or find time to decompress together. We are balancing teaching in a pandemic with all the normal responsibilities of teaching. In my own family, our collective risk is massive: I am in the Amity district, my daughter is in kindergarten in another town, my husband works on the front lines in a hospital, as do several other immediate family members. Because of our risk, we have had to make difficult decisions regarding childcare for my daughter and infant son. We are asking my mother-in-law and aunt, both over the age of 65 and not always in good health, to put themselves at risk to care for our children. The more

exposure we have, the more risk to them. At some point, our family members who have been so generous with their time, may make the decision that the risk is too much and they can no longer watch our children. We have spent 9 months taking every possible precaution-- wearing masks, staying home, sanitizing, having essentials delivered. I do not want to be the one that ends up causing illness for any of my family but I also need to work. We also have no other options to help instruct and care for my children at home. I know many of my colleagues and I have not slept for weeks with the stress levels of entering our building every day. We feel scared and left out of the loop. We are trying our best but we are exhausted. We all love our own children and our Amity kids. I also deeply care about my colleagues, their wellbeing and that of their families. We need our teachers strong, comfortable, and mentally available to help Amity students.

At this time, I would ask the Board to consider keeping the whole district in fully remote learning until mid-January. This will allow time for the Amity staff to make appropriate plans to welcome back all students in the New Year. It will also keep students at home through the holidays and any gatherings or travel that may occur. Most college students will return to campus by this point and spread within households will be less likely. Based on Governor Lamont's December 3rd press conference, many teachers and high-risk individuals may be eligible for a vaccine by this time as well. When it is safe, we are willing and ready to return to the school building and begin a return to life as we knew it. We just ask for time and transparency.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.  
Regards,

Marissa Nall  
Grade 7 Teacher, Amity Middle School Bethany

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Marika Wissink  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 11:05 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity Board of Education Meeting 12/8

FYI, I did try to send this from my personal gmail as I felt that was more appropriate to write as a constituent of the Amity district, rather than using my work email. However, the email bounced right back to me, defeated by our email security system here at Amity... So I am sending it from this email instead...

December 7, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I have the privilege of being a Woodbridge resident, a parent of a former Amity student, and an Amity teacher. As a teacher, I was really moved by the thoughtful video you shared with staff before Thanksgiving. It was beautiful and communicated a feeling of appreciation that helped uplift our spirits during a difficult teaching experience. I also appreciated the gift of the day before Thanksgiving, there is nothing more valuable than time with family. Thank you for that gift.

On Friday afternoon, I was completely surprised by the sudden announcement to bring back all of the students to the middle schools this week. This abrupt change in our model with such short notice was not something I would have predicted. I am concerned about the safety of our students as they will spend 5 hours a day in classrooms with full rosters. My son attended the middle school in Bethany and had a wonderful experience supported by a caring staff. However, this rush to bring all of the students back after Thanksgiving and leading up to the winter holidays does not represent the kind and caring culture that my son had the good fortune to experience. I can think of no stronger argument than to admit that I would not send my own son to our schools at full capacity. If I cannot do that as a parent, I feel obligated to say that as a teacher, I am not comfortable with our current plan to bring back all of the students this week. Please reconsider this rush to bring all students back to the middle school.

Sincerely,  
Marika Wissink  
39 Sunbrook Road  
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Marika Wissink  
Team Black

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Sabrina Dressler <embeans19@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 11:06 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity HS - parent feedback

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Hello,

I would just like to reach out as a parent of two amity high schoolers, with my support of the hybrid model for the high school at this time, unless it is deemed unsafe for students and teachers to continue to do so. Students learn so much better in person but obviously everyone's safety is still a top priority.

What I hope does not happen is that teachers are able to opt out or not come teach in person (without a strong medical case/reason). Because then what is the point of having the students come in when they are still being taught "remotely." If many/most of the teachers will be teaching from home (allowed that option), then keep the kids home too. It seemed that right before Thanksgiving break many of my boys teachers were not actually teaching in the classroom and if that is the case- then allow the students to stay home and learn full remotely also- as a whole (not an opt in/out kind of thing).

Sincerely,  
Sabrina Dressler Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Lee B <gleeannp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 11:10 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment for 12/8/2020 Board of Education Meeting

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Dear Members of the Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to express my concerns about the recent instructional model decisions that have been made for the high school and middle schools. Connecticut's new positive COVID cases are the highest they have ever been in the past few weeks and there were 8,129 new positive cases reported on Monday (12/7/20). COVID hospitalizations and deaths are on the rise. New Haven has issued an executive order for businesses. Almost all Connecticut towns and cities are in the COVID "red" zone. Many school districts across the state have moved to remote learning models until early to mid January and I urge you to do the same for our Amity schools. Keeping students, their families, and yes, teachers and our families safe should be the priority at the critical time.

I have been a social studies teacher for over 24 years and 17 of those years have been spent serving the students in Amity schools. Like my colleagues, I care deeply about my students, my work, and my profession. Teaching is our way of life, not simply our job. Our dedication to our students is paramount. Yet, our present working conditions are having a detrimental effect on so many of us. Many of us do not feel safe. I have a medical condition that puts me in the "might be at increased risk" category should I contract COVID-19. My husband has *three* medical conditions that put him in the "might be at increased risk" category and my oldest son has one condition putting him in that same category. My rheumatologist has warned me that I will likely be one of the coronavirus "long-haulers" should I contract COVID-19. Needless to say, my family takes COVID safety precautions very seriously and we are doing everything in our power to keep ourselves safe. Since I don't fall into the "at increased risk" COVID category, I show up to work each day with the same dedication and commitment I always have. I do so under significant stress and I mask that stress from my students. I am not alone. Many of my colleagues also have medical conditions that may put them at increased risk. Some of my colleagues are pregnant. Some are fathers of newborns. Some have medically fragile children. Yet we continue to show up and do our jobs to the best of our abilities. I ask you to please consider this as you make decisions that affect our lives and the lives of our families. The students of Amity get to opt out of in-person instruction. The teachers and staff do not.

Respectfully,  
LeeAnn Browett  
Social Studies Teacher  
Amity Regional High School

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Lisa MacMaster-Jurzyk <lmacmasterj@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:03 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE Meeting- statement

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Dear Amity Board Members-

I am writing to express my support for the return to in person learning at Amity High School. I understand teachers have concerns for their safety and so do many other professionals and employees who are deemed essential. These essential workers have been on the job throughout this pandemic ensuring that folks have medical care, groceries etc. I am certain that many were fearful about contracting Covid on the job but they went to work and modified their work flow to incorporate safety measures. They did this for the greater good.

We can agree that education is also essential and that it is not one size fits all. Many students are disengaged with remote learning, and it does not replace the richness of in person school. In the high school setting, teachers are less likely to need to be physically close to students. The likelihood of mask-mask transmission is low and from what I hear from kids they are compliant with mask wearing. That being said, school administrators worked very hard to make changes in the school environment to minimize the risk of Covid transmission. These measures, along with physically distancing and mask wearing, appear to have been working because there is NO

EVIDENCE OF IN SCHOOL transmission. If faculty and staff wear masks properly, wash hands, and maintain social distance, their risk of contracting Covid from a student is slim to none.

The American Academy of Pediatrics statement on Covid advocates strongly that students be physically present in school. Attending in person school and its associated extracurricular activities are important components to the social, emotional, and academic development of children in all stages. The data on Covid cases in our district supports the in person instruction model. Both health departments in our district advise that faculty and students can be in school safely and have NOT advised the closure of school. If school was an unsafe place because students and faculty were getting each other sick, the requests of the teachers union would be validated. Currently there is no evidence that this is the case.

The overarching objective has always been for our children to receive the best possible educational experience. Lets not lose sight of that as we navigate this pandemic. Thank you for your time and dedication to our children.

Lisa Jurzyk  
23 Hedgefield Court  
Orange



## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Patrick Cumpstone  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:14 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Cumpstone, Public Comment 12\_8\_20.pdf  
**Attachments:** Cumpstone, Public Comment 12\_8\_20.pdf

Hi Pam,

I attempted to send this from my personal email, but it was blocked. Please see attached the letter I'm submitting for public comment at the 12/8 BOE meeting.

Thank you!

Pat Cumpstone

Dear Mr. Belfonti and Amity Board of Education,

My name is Patrick Cumpstone, and I am a history teacher at Amity Regional High School, as well as a member of the AEA Executive Board.

In line with our demands as a union, I am asking that the Amity Board of Education vote this evening to place our school district in the remote instructional model until what the state defines as the "key leading indicator" proves that it is safe to return to hybrid in-person learning.

We are 8 months into a brand new virus. Though we know more than we did in March, we cannot continue pretending that we are no longer in a pandemic by essentially returning to business as usual except with masks. This is a dangerous path to continue down.

I have a 2 month old son. While there is an ongoing body of research on how COVID-19 impacts adolescents and adults, there is far too little known about health risks in newborns. Because I'm being asked to report to work at a time when community spread is at record highs, I cannot experience the joy of greeting and holding my son when I come home from work every day. Instead, I have to remove my shoes, throw my clothes in the wash, shower, and sanitize all of the physical materials I brought home from school. This includes my phone, pens, and, yes, even the handles of my laptop case.

I have colleagues that live with elderly parents who they've had to relocate out of fear that they could infect them due to their exposure at school. I have colleagues with "at increased risk" health conditions who risk their lives each day they step in the building to teach our students. And I have colleagues who've contracted COVID-19 whose cases were never reported to the community by district administration as they should have been out of courtesy for the safety of our staff and students.

**\*\*We have put all of this at risk to avoid one thing: remote learning.\*\*** But why? My 2.5 week experience with remote learning from 11/16-12/4 was the most fulfilling experience I've had since March. I had Wi-Fi that worked. I had all of my students together. I was able to cultivate a true classroom community for the first time this year. My students performed just as well as they had in the physical classroom. All the while, I was able to keep myself safe, my colleagues and students were able to do the same, and I was able to hold my son.

Again, I urge the Board of Education to vote this evening to place our school district in a remote instructional model until the leading indicators defined by the state show that it is safe to return in a hybrid model.

Thank you for your time,

Patrick Cumpstone  
History Teacher, ARHS  
AEA Building Representative

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Christina Colby <crcolby@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 7, 2020 7:28 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** For 12/8 meeting

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Hi Ms. Pero,

I have boys in 8th and 11th grade and I want to say I fully support the current plans at AMSO to go full time. I also appreciate that the HS is staying hybrid.

Thanks!  
Christina Colby

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jennifer Kneeland <zoladrum@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 4:03 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE

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The numbers of cases on the rise mixed with a sincere desire to protect students and teachers demands for remote learning until a marked decrease in covid positive testing. All students learn better in person, but it is a fallacy that they are only contracting it outside of school or in sports. Also, I do not believe in going against the wishes of the teachers and the teachers union. There will always be families that learn best in person, but that is not nor should be the guiding thought when faced with a real life changing virus. Protect all. Go remote.

Best always,

Jennifer Kneeland, LMHC  
Conscious Counseling  
[www.consciouscounseling.com](http://www.consciouscounseling.com)  
401-743-3212  
Paypal: [paypal.me/consciouscounseling](https://paypal.me/consciouscounseling)  
Venmo: @Jenny-Kneeland

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Valerie Cournoyer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 6:38 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Teacher letter in support of remote learning through January 2021

Dear Pam,

I am a science teacher at Amity High School. I have been teaching for the Amity District for twenty one years. I am writing this morning in support of remote learning through January 2021.

As a 60 year old with underlying conditions I have been coming to work since August with great trepidation. When we returned to school the positivity rate was low and the hybrid model allowed for 6 foot social distancing. Now, the positivity rate has dramatically increased and is projected to go much higher. The addition of more students to the building has reduced the ability in some spaces to maintain the 6 foot social distance.

Adding to the stress of the situation is the unavailability of my regular medication due to the pandemic. I have had to switch to something new this month and I am uncertain about its effectiveness.

In March, I had family members in the hospital with COVID and they have long lasting effects from the infection. I also know someone who was on a ventilator for 8 weeks and his wife was asked three times if she wanted to take him off life support. He ended up surviving but with serious debilitating results. The possible impact of this virus is very real to me.

I am concerned for the health of myself but also for my colleagues, staff and students at Amity High School. I urge you to support remote teaching through January 2021.

Sincerely,

Valerie Cournoyer

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Stephanie Kennedy <kennedystepha@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 6:38 AM  
**To:** Stephanie Kennedy  
**Cc:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Supporting In person learning for AMSO

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Dear Board of Education, I think I may need to provide more detail in my email. My very bright 8th grade student wants and needs to be in school in person. Prior to remote learning in 7th grade, he was beginning to struggle with organization, but had passing grades with a mix of A, B and C grades. He is now a student with mostly Fs on his report card. His self-worth is being affected. His doctor is recommending we medicate him. His mental health is suffering. He is being offered the opportunity to go to school in person every day as an accommodation, but feels very self-conscious. He was so happy to hear all middle school students were going back.

There are other, permanent health implications due to remote learning that need to be considered. For my child, there are risks and side effects from medication and mental health issues along with a grave impact on his educational progress and outcome. My bright, curious, well rounded child is on the path to becoming a high school drop out. He already feels like he is not college material in 8th grade. Let me add to this that he recently took a private school entrance exam and scored in the 75th percentile. He is clearly capable and has the intellect! The obvious reason he is failing is remote learning.

Parents have the option to have their child go full remote if they wish. Teachers have the option to go full remote if they have a medical condition. Why is everyone being forced to abide by their wishes? Everyone should have the option for in school learning. It can be done safely and is working in other districts including the elementary schools. Let the students/parents choose how and where they learn best.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Kennedy  
150 Christian Circle  
Orange CT 06477

203 823-7374

Sent from my iPhone

> On Dec 7, 2020, at 5:44 PM, Stephanie Kennedy <kennedystepha@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Hello, I am writing in support of in person learning at the middle school. I am in support of the decision for students to go back on Wednesday.

>

> Stephanie Kennedy

>

> Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** kardann7@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 6:38 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** president@aea5.org  
**Subject:** Board of Ed Letter

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Hi Pam,

Kindly submit my letter to our Board of Education's meeting tonight.

Thank you,  
Karen Steele  
AMSO

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Karen Steele  
214 Hyland Ter  
Orange, CT  
Teacher- AMSO

December 8, 2020

To the Amity Board of Ed,

The fact that you are meeting this evening gives me hope that our current teaching model will revert back to remote learning for all buildings. I have dedicated my life to teaching for the Amity School District and it would be ironic that after 39 years, I would lose my life because of my career. I chose to return to my building this fall, trusting that I would be in a safe work environment when I could have requested to teach from home. I no longer feel that my workplace is safe. I am now being unnecessarily placed at greater risk. I get upset thinking that I am considered "disposable".

Since the start of the school year, I spend most of my time in the company of only my students. I do not visit my friends. I have not travelled out of state to see my grandson who was born last June. I do not dine out. I do not go shopping. I have been doing all that I can to remain safe yet circumstances beyond my control are now jeopardizing my safety.

I worry now that I will bring covid home to my husband. He has his own health concerns. I would like to invite my mother in law to visit and stay over with us for Christmas. She is alone in her home at age 89. However, I could never forgive myself if she contracted covid from me. Last spring, there were terrible stories in the news of many family members dying from covid. I



do not want to be one of those families.

I also worry about the increased health risk to my friends/staff, my students, our families and our communities. I'd rather be safe than sorry at this most critical time of the pandemic.

I hope you reconsider our current teaching model and allow us the safety of teaching remotely.

Respectfully,  
Karen Steele  
Teacher  
Amity Middle School - Orange

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** jenniferlynn719 <jenniferlynn719@att.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 6:40 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE special meeting comments

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Good morning,

As a parent of an Amity Middle school student as well as Orange Elementary, and another in Daycare, I am in full support of Amity schools reopening five days. My son has a 504 plan and a learning style that is not compatible with remote or even hybrid learning. This has impacted not only his grades but his mental well being and the relational dynamics of our family. An in person structured daily routine is where he excels and has excelled until March. Supports put in place are minimally effective and we have looked forward to the day of a full return.

I am an employee within another school district that has been in person 5 full days since the beginning of the year and with measures in place, our school is doing well. I am thankful to them for remaining open as it best let's me support my students needs and request the same from the Amity district and teachers.

Many members of our community are expected to work out of the home and risk exposure because their job simply cannot be done remotely. While some students do well with a remote model allowing teachers to teach remotely, many do not. The differing learning styles would therefore mean teachers are not able to effectively do their jobs remotely.

I urge you to please take into account all students unique needs during this very difficult time.

Thank you,  
Jennifer

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Amy Goodwin <aegoodwin35@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:19 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Re: Public Comment for Board of Ed special meeting

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I am writing in support of the Amity School District being hybrid/full in school learning. Many school districts, including high schools are back full time or hybrid with full days. There has been no proof of transmission of COVID-19 in school. Those students/teachers who have contracted the virus have gotten it outside of school, not in school or from school activities. If our elementary schools can be in school full time following the guidelines provided to them then certainly the Amity District can be in school at least hybrid. It is believed that school is the safest place for our students, as well as good for their mental health and learning.

Masks, handwashing, sanitizing work! I work in healthcare and am in the faces of COVID patients not by choice, but because it is my job. I did not choose to put myself in this position, but either did anyone else. It is our duty to help one another get through this pandemic. I believe the Amity School District has done a fantastic job and continues to minimize risk to the fullest extent for everyone, students, staff, teachers, and administrators!

In support of hybrid/full time learning!

Amy Goodwin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Joseph ALICKI <j.r.alicki@optimum.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:20 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** teacher union demands

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To whom it may concern,

I am a parent of 3 children in the Orange School System and I have been sending my children to school with no issues. I will tell you that I am not very happy about having to send my children with masks on their face, knowing that they DO NOT provide any protection because if they do, why is it that everywhere is going backwards? These so called leaders have going too far in all their orders. These orders have done nothing to improve anything and too many small businesses have been destroyed because of them. I, along with many others are fed up with the overreach of power and disregard for our constitutional rights and liberties. As for the dangers of this so called pandemic, how could there be such a disregard for its 99.6 percent survival rate. CDC states that 0-19 years of age have a survival rate of 99.997, 20-49 years of age have a 99.98 survival rate, 50-69 years of age have a 99.5 survival rate, I'm sorry, but that does not require any change in everyday life or peoples lives to be controlled. It absolutely baffles me how so many people would give up their freedoms and liberties for a common cold or Flu. Those numbers alone prove that teachers are not being put in danger. There is no legitimate reason for teachers and the union to be demanding remote learning as they WILL remain safe keeping schools in person. This is no different than a common cold, or at worse the Flu. People need to wake up and realize that life is not going to stop, it goes on. For the teachers and the union to be demanding school be remote is absolutely ridiculous. Too many people are using this as an excuse not to work, we all have to get up and provide for ourselves and our families. If I and others can get up and go to work, so can they. I thought I lived in America? I also am getting very disgusted with having to worry about everyone else's feelings! When the way I feel is not considered. I think it is time that we start holding people accountable for their own actions and stop allowing them to push the responsibilities on to others. The other thing that gets me are all the fools that believe the government actually cares about their health, when the government allows for preservatives and chemicals to be put in the food we eat, they allow cigarettes to have thousands of chemicals in them and then they want to pretend they are doing this for our safety and health. So no, there is no reason for kids not to be allowed to be in person in school, stop playing with their lives and stop using a virus as an excuse not to get up and go to work, these people chose to be teachers nobody forced them to be teachers, if you don't want to do your work get another job. We do not live in a perfect world, we face dangers everyday and we cannot stop life because some are afraid.

Thank you

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Sarah Kingston <sarahkingston23@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:32 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter to BOE from Sarah Sharkey  
**Attachments:** Sharkey - Letter to Amity BOE Dec 2020.docx

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

December 8, 2020

Members of the Amity BOE,

I write to you as a teacher who has served this district for 20 years. I am sure you have given much consideration to the data which has been shared with you. However, given the current circumstances, I implore you to consider all that you may not see.

Your decision, in Dr. Byars' words, to put the middle schools into full in-person, "*the two week window will provide an opportunity to adjust models if full in-person is not successful with little impact on the instruction that students receive,*" is in effect an uncontrolled experiment. It is an experiment aimed at determining safety. Testing safety at the height of this pandemic seems irresponsible. I ask you, what is the cost to students and staff if full in-person is not successful. Sickness? Unknowable long-term health complications? Deaths? Why are teachers and students being treated as if we are expendable?

I know firsthand the power of virus, the destructive power of the invisible. My daughter developed Type 1 Diabetes after exposure to a common, childhood virus. At two years old, because of a virus, her entire life was forever altered. And so were the lives of everyone close to her. One cannot even begin to grasp the depths of the cruel, compounding, life-long, impacts a virus imparts, until you are personally affected.

Amity teachers are dedicated and exceptional professionals who are working tirelessly for our students. However, we are more than just employees tasked with educating students. We are real people, with lives outside of the buildings, and with families of our own to safeguard.

We have lost family members and friends whom we could not be with in their last days and whom we could not bury. We were not able to comfort them or say good-bye and are left with the pain of knowing they died alone.

Our families are grieving unthinkable losses, without the possibility of closure.

Some of us live alone, isolated.

Some of us have spouses or partners who have lost their jobs and are hanging on the best we can, trying not to lose our homes, trying not to lose our families, under the burden of all of this.

Some of us have children learning fully remote, their schools shuttered, because of Covid or to preemptively stop the spread.

Some of us are comforting children devastated by all kinds of loss.

Some of us are in isolation because of our own chronic health conditions.

Some of us are parents of children with life-threatening conditions that Covid insidiously hunts.

Some of us are parents trying to keep our own children' heads above water, trying to keep the anxiety and depression that results from a pandemic at bay.

Some of us are taking care of our own immediate families in addition to risking ourselves to care for older parents who can't go anywhere for food or medication.

We have parents and grandparents in inaccessible nursing homes, and we are tormented waiting for the likely inevitable phone call that will come.

Some of us live every day knowing our partner or someone we love is serving as an essential worker, at risk each and every day.

Some of us have absolutely no respite from our responsibilities as mother, father, daughter, son, husband, wife, partner, caregiver – none.

And this is all on top of the exponential stress and anxiety of fearing each and every day that we could bring the virus home.

And the list goes on.

And yet, our exceptional teaching goes on.

We are teachers, but we are also human beings with families of our own. All of us face real and unfathomable consequences because of the change in working conditions to which you are willing to expose us at the very height of the pandemic. We have devoted our lives to your children, to your families. We often, as our professional dedication runs so deep, do so at the expense of our own. My family knows firsthand the devastation a virus can cause; my hope is that as many of us as possible can be spared from contracting the Covid-19 virus. Help us best protect both Amity families and our own families during the worst part, so far, of this unprecedented pandemic. Please send Amity schools fully remote until mid-January. Choose the most measured way to safeguard the health and safety of Amity teachers and students.

Respectfully,  
Sarah Sharkey  
AMSO

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jack Nork <jack@nork.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:44 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Opposition to putting students and teachers at increased risk.

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Amity Board of Education.

As the infection cases rise and the winter flu season is upon us I'm shocked that the School District would put both students and staff at risk by reopening the High School and Middle Schools.

With the new vaccines on the cusp of approval, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I'm sure both students and teachers are looking forward to a day when they can return safely. Those days are coming, but for now we need to hunker down and do whatever we can to slow the spread of Covid-19.

I'm concerned by the lack of planning for this change, the timing of the change, and the overall risk the students and staff will face as a result.

Please reinstate the remote learning model to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Jack Nork



**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Susan Cassidy <ss\_cassidy@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:53 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE meeting comment

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To the Amity BOE -

I have two children at ARHS. I am in support of returning to school as the district has currently outlined. I particularly support the hybrid model. I trust our teachers and administrators to continue enforcing COVID protocols and I believe that our children are best served spending at least some time at school.

I could go into all of my reasons, but I thought it important to keep this brief. I will say that if we would all commit to eliminating private gatherings, we probably wouldn't have to worry about whether our kids can go to school.

Susan Cassidy  
Woodbridge

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Laryssa Kaiser <thekaisergirls@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 7:50 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Full remote support

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Good morning,

In regards to the emergency meeting this evening, I would like to send in my support for full remote learning at this time. I've two kids in high school and one is fully capable of learning remotely and the other struggles at times. There is no replacement for in person learning but that can be accommodated, there is no replacement of life. Amity's student body is just too big to try and keep this virus contained or away. These kids are still gathering and it's not fair to the teachers and other staff to be exposed as well as those kids that do comply with the rules. Obviously this isn't an ideal situation but for the time being, I believe it's the only solution to keep all safe.

Best Regards,  
Laryssa Kaiser

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Katie Irwin <kathrynirwin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:14 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE Special Meeting Public Comment

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Greetings,

I am writing as the mother of a 7th grader. I am deeply concerned with the decision to go back full time right now. My son wants to be in school so badly, but the current metrics do not agree with opening up schools to 300 students at the same time. Just as the town leaders and state are telling us to stay home and stay safe, the district is pushing to send hundreds of students into cramped classrooms, where they are barely 3 feet apart. Again, this goes against everything that the leading scientists in our country are recommending.

I am respectfully asking the board to please hold off on returning our children to the school building until the current surge has passed and our health care workers and most vulnerable can get vaccinated.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Katie Irwin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Coughlin <kathycoughlin@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:45 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In Person Learning

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Good Morning,

We would like our daughter Kaitlyn Coughlin 8th grade to go to school in person full time. She also wants to be in school full time and was looking forward to Wednesday.

Remote learning is not preparing her to be successful in high school.

Kathy Coughlin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Alsgaard, Victoria <Victoria.Alsgaard@YNHH.ORG>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:56 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** To the Board of Education

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Dear Amity Board of Education,

As a healthcare worker I am incredibly concerned about the predicted and continued rise in Covid-19 cases in New Haven county, and in particular our school district. I am shocked that the Amity School District has elected to return students and teachers to school at this time. With the vaccine just around the corner it would only make sense to remain remote until we are able to slow the spread of the virus. Even in major healthcare systems, employees that are able to do their jobs from home – are doing so. Yale University has kept the majority of this staff home since March, with no plans to return until after the new year if not later. Please not only consider the lives of our students and staff, but the lives of their families, young and old. This virus is unpredictable.

Please do your part to stop the spread.

Thank you,

Victoria

Victoria Alsgaard, BSN, BA, RN, SCRNP  
Nurse Coordinator  
Smilow Breast Center  
35 Park Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
P 203 200 2318  
F 203 200 2082

This message originates from the Yale New Haven Health System. The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential. If you are the intended recipient you must maintain this message in a secure and confidential manner. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and destroy this message. Thank you.

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Rick Bourdeau  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:56 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Decision to have students return to in person learning

Hi Pam,

Please forward this to the Amity BOE.

Not only am I an Amity High School teacher, I am a Woodbridge resident, an Amity graduate myself, and the parent of an Amity graduate. I oppose Dr. Byars' decision to return students at this time.

I understand the need for students to be in the buildings. They clearly learn best in-person and it is best for their emotional wellbeing. However, the metrics are such so that the medical risks outweigh these factors. This is especially true in the middle schools, where the classrooms tend to be smaller. For those who argue that my interpretation of the metrics is faulty, why are other districts going full remote based on the recommendations of their local health boards with very similar metrics?

Finally, most discussion focuses on the health and wellbeing of the student population. That is of great importance, yes, but that does not mean at the expense of teacher safety. I personally felt safe at the high school when we were in hybrid before. I set up my room so that I am at least six feet from anyone at all times. I know this is not possible for some of my colleagues, especially at the middle schools. With the metrics as they are now, and the holiday season upon us (where frankly I anticipate too many families will ignore the guidelines for the size of family gatherings, like we saw over Thanksgiving), I think the prudent decision would be to stay remote at least until school resumes after the holiday break.

Sincerely,

Rick Bourdeau  
Social Studies Teacher  
Amity Regional High School

75 Maple Vale Dr.  
Woodbridge

Hello,

My name is . I am a senior at Amity and I support Amity's decision to return back to the hybrid model. I do not wish to see the school district decide to go full remote because Covid has been proven to not be spreading in the schools due to the safety protocols set in place. Closing schools will not stop the spread of Covid, if anything it would make it worse because of the lack of social distancing. Closing schools now would just make the return to school in the 2021 school year even more difficult. Lastly, the quality of education is compromised being full remote. It is very difficult to learn and comprehend new knowledge without the teacher present in the same room. In the end, I believe that the safest place for people as of now is in schools. Although this may change due to unpredicted spikes of cases, I know that the Board of Education will make the educated decisions on what needs to be done. But until that happens, being in school is important and necessary to me and many others.

Thank you,

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Michelle Wachsmann <mwachsmann@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:03 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for Tonight's BOE Meeting - Public Comment

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December 8, 2020

Amity Regional School District # 5  
Board of Education  
25 Newton Road  
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

**Re: Re-Opening of Amity Middle Schools and High School**

Dear Board of Education Members,

I would like to express my gratitude for your service to our community, especially during this global health crisis. I know that the safety of our children, teachers, school staff, families and communities is of utmost importance for all of you during these very difficult times and that you will take this request very seriously.

I write as a Woodbridge parent of two children at two schools in the district, Amity Middle School Bethany and Amity Regional High School. Probably, like most people, I want my children to return to school. However, I was very surprised with the district's decision to return our middle schools to a 5-day in person instruction and our high school to hybrid instruction, and I vehemently oppose a reopening of our schools for all children at this time.

Coronavirus cases are at an all-time high in Connecticut with our 3 towns being on red alert. Schools can't be seen isolated from the communities they are in, and our communities are in bad shape at the moment. Returning the school population, either partially or completely, is a dangerous decision that will only end in an increase of cases, endangering not only the children, teachers and school staff but also their families and other community members, and the schools being shut down again in the short-term.

Additionally, the holiday season is upon us and a safe reopening is unlikely given current patterns of local behavior. We are already starting to see holiday parties and gatherings taking place! Although these events occur outside of school, they have an impact in the school community, as we saw recently, either we like it or not. Until people in our towns understand the consequences of this type of behavior, community spread will continue unabated.

I understand that you have many voices pleading for your attention. I understand that it's tempting to say that this decision is "hard" and "complex." But, in the end, it is not: schools cannot safely reopen, and thus they cannot be reopened. Nothing is safe these days! Many surrounding schools are operating remotely until January. I believe that this is the right, responsible thing to do. It is my opinion that the district should continue the remote instruction until mid-January, at least, while it monitors the situation and consults with the health experts to



determine how the numbers are affected during and after the holidays and can unmistakably determine its impact on the community.

I very much appreciate your time and consideration of this letter and I hope that you will make the best decision for us and on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wachsmann

*Michelle Wachsmann*  
203.213.9593

*"Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." ~Melody Beattie*

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Kristen Donovan  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:05 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** hybrid

To Whom It May Concern:

We teachers at Amity are quite concerned about our safety as per the increase in Covid cases in CT.

Our union has asked to stay fully remote but to no avail.

I am particularly concerned as my five children are in another fully remote school system through the holiday break. My elderly parents (ages 80 and 81) are left to care for my children and risk their own health.

I know that I personally feel severe anxiety upon this hybrid return to work. I do not feel that it is in anyone's best interest to be physically present in school when working remotely is a SAFE and possible alternative.

I hope that the BOE reconsiders the hybrid return to school, takes our health and safety seriously, and allows us to work from home.

Thank you,

Kristen Donovan

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Elizabeth Smolinski  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:09 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Keith Smolinski  
**Subject:** letter for the BOE meeting

Greetings

I have been an Amity teacher since 2008, and my husband has been an Amity teacher since 2014. We are completely committed to this district, our students, and our colleagues. We strive to be the best teachers we can each day. Over the past few months, our lives have been at an unprecedented stress level due to our school situation and the pandemic. The district's decision to return to in-person learning after Thanksgiving break has brought us a new level of stress and anxiety, and it's not just us. I have witnessed the educators I admire and respect the most completely fall to pieces from stress and worry about school and health safety. These are highly dedicated, beloved, award-winning teachers, and they are feeling absolutely broken. The heavy challenge of teaching in hybrid mode has been time-consuming and stressful, and the fact that we have returned to in-person teaching at the height of this pandemic has added a significant amount of fear to the mix of emotions. This decision has greatly impacted my family. We are very worried about potential exposure to Covid-19 at school, and how that could impact our health and our family's health. We have a child with pulmonary issues, and older parents with a series of health issues that put them at high risk. Because our children's school district is fully remote, we have been relying on our parents to watch and educate them, and we are terrified of exposing them to Covid-19. The anxiety in my household is extreme, and we find it hard to sleep or concentrate on quality time with each other. At this time of year when families often do fun bonding activities like decorating, cooking, watching holiday movies, etc., my husband and I find that we cannot fully enjoy these things because we are multitasking (doing school work) and worrying about our safety. My husband and I are very dedicated teachers, but I would like to remind the Amity district that WE are parents, children, and spouses FIRST. The safety of my family and the PEACE OF MIND that we are not exposed to others is more valuable to me than in-person learning. We are excellent at remote teaching, and I have every confidence that our students will enjoy and learn from their experience in our courses remotely.

I would like the Amity district to consider switching to a full-remote model until we return to school in January, and to carefully re-evaluate the situation in early 2021 before a decision is made about that return.

Respectfully,  
Elizabeth Smolinski  
AHS teacher and Woodbridge resident

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Ronnette James <ronnettejames@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:12 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero; Jennifer Byars; Kathy Burke  
**Subject:** Return to In Person Learning

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Dear Esteemed Amity Board of Education Members,

I am writing in support of Dr. Byars' decision to bring the middle school back to full in person learning and return the high school to hybrid. I have full confidence in the Health Departments' support/recommendations. It has become clear that school is the safest environment for students AND teachers are far as the spread of the virus is concerned. Study after study supports this and all of the experts agree that students need in person learning as it is far superior to online models.

I commend the teachers and staff of all our schools for the job they have done this year as we all try our best to navigate the current circumstances. I am sure it has not been easy. However, I think it is disgraceful that the Amity teachers union and staff would protest and object to returning to in person learning. Are they not professionals? Everyone, everywhere has had to return to work/life and make adjustments. Are they not satisfied that they get to go to work in an environment that has been deemed among the safest? Will there be cases in school? Yes, we are all living through a pandemic and the virus is out there. Are those cases spreading in school? NO! The mitigating strategies are working! So what is the problem??

Thousands of teachers across the state and the country have gone back to full in person learning and are doing just fine. Their students are thriving and receiving best instruction and much needed normalcy in routines and socialization! The Amity student population deserves to be in person 5 days a week! Please do not allow the crybaby union and unprofessional staff members to reverse the superintendent's decision and outweigh science! As BOE members you were elected to do what is right and best for the education of our children and not placate to a group that does not want to do the jobs they were hired to do!

Please stand by our superintendent and support 5 day in person learning for the middle schools and the hybrid model for the high school! We are counting on you!

Sincerely yours,  
Ronnette James  
AMSO Parent

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Meghan Beardsley <meghan.beardsley@amityschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:18 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Special Meeting Information

**Meghan Beardsley** <[megquinnbeardsley@gmail.com](mailto:megquinnbeardsley@gmail.com)>  
to pamela.pero

Hello-

My name is Meghan Beardsley and I would like to share some information about how teaching during covid has affected my personal life.

I am a veteran teacher. 22 years total. 20 at Amity. I am also a single mom.

It used to be that in the mornings my ex mother in law would come over and have breakfast with my youngest and make sure that he got on the bus. She now feels unsafe coming over in the mornings. I purchased home security cams to be able to talk to my son through and make sure he gets on the bus on time all by himself. I sometimes have to do this during my first period class because to be honest my first priority is to my children and not my students. I also wake him up about an hour earlier to make sure that he is awake, showered and fed before I leave for work.

My elderly parents live down the street from me. My dad recently underwent surgery for pancreatic cancer and my mom is a lung cancer survivor. Since covid started I have been their lifeline. I do their grocery shopping, drive them to appointments and in general I am their connection to the outside world. In the spring and this summer I was able to spend time with them since I was able to safely distance myself from others. Now I leave food at the doorstep and only drive them to appointments as needed while we all wear masks. I can no longer safely spend time with my parents since we are teaching in the hybrid model.

I also have 2 autoimmune diseases. I have psoriatic arthritis and multiple sclerosis. I am terrified of contracting covid since viruses tend to trigger MS relapses for me. 2 years ago I had a relapse simply because of a flu vaccine and it set me up needing to have massive doses of IV steroids for a week and then I was on oral steroids for a month after. Sometimes my relapses make it difficult to walk. Other times they give me double vision. It all depends. I certainly do not want to relapse because of covid as it is completely avoidable with proper precautions if I am able to stay away from other people.

Students have the option to learn remotely. Teachers do not have the option. My autoimmune diseases do not make the list of high risk for effects of covid so I don't qualify in that way. My parents do not physically reside in my home so I do not qualify in that way either even though for all intents and purposes I reside in a multigenerational household even though it is physically apart.

I keep my fingers crossed and hope for the best. It's all I can do. The stress is taking a toll on my mental health. I felt compelled to cover classes for colleagues who were out sick because of the guilt coming from the main office here at the high school. I never knew if the teacher might be out for possible covid symptoms.

I am told that teachers cannot be considered a close contact of a student because we don't spend enough time near them. However, I think that is terribly convenient to keep us in the dark and it makes me fearful to do anything other than teach from my desk in the corner of the room.

I could get into a whole litany of why teaching hybrid is more difficult and less effective for me than teaching remote.... but I am sure that other teachers will make that clear.

I just wanted to remind you that I am a human with a life outside of Amity and a family that I care for deeply that isn't getting the best of me because we are in person. I would like to be fully remote until at least after winter break. This may be the last holiday season either of my parents have and spending it on zoom isn't how I would like to remember them.

Thank you for listening.

Meghan Beardsley

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Paul C <pcanadori@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:25 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity Back-to-School

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My wife & I fully support the school system's efforts to keep kids in school.

We feel the administration has done an excellent job of keeping the building safe, and of notifying its community of any changes/developments.

We urge that you stay the course- you have our full support. I also believe there is a less-than-vocal majority who feel the same. Or at least feel it should be an option.

Regards,  
Paul Canadori  
203-974-9450

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Kara DelVecchio <karadelvecchio@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:26 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** supporting keeping schools open  
**Attachments:** Amity BOE.docx

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Chris and Kara DeVecchio

12/8/2020

234 Currier Dr

Orange, CT 06477

To the Board of Education-Amity Regional School District #5:

I'm writing to express my support for the current hybrid model of learning being employed at Amity Regional High School, and the resumption of full-time onsite instruction at Amity Regional Middle School.

I understand the concerns and empathize with our dedicated teachers. They want to be kept safe, and I strongly believe that they are safe. They have been provided high quality PPE, proper building ventilation, contact tracing and access to prompt testing.

I believe our students are also safe. New York state recently started publishing comprehensive data for all of its schools. This data was analyzed by Emily Oster, a professor of economics at Brown University and co-founder of the website "Covid-Explained." Her conclusion is that schools are not sources of superspreading. For high-school students and staff, rates of COVID-19 infection are similar to case rates in their surrounding communities. For elementary and middle school students they're lower, reflecting the lower disease rate in younger children. During the four-week period reflected in the data, roughly 80% of schools in the state reported no cases at all. Of the schools that did report cases, rates of infection could not support a claim that students and teachers are catching the disease from each other.

Many of us have witnessed firsthand the negative impact lockdown measures have had on the mental health of our children. A CDC report published Nov. 13 confirms this problem is significant and widespread. It found that mental health-related ER visits among children 18 and younger have increased significantly this year. It began in April and remained elevated through October. Dr. John Whyte, chief medical officer of the healthcare website WebMD recently stated "we need to recognize and address the impact of lockdowns and school closures on children's mental health. Many parents are reporting behavioral issues that previously their children had not exhibited. This is most likely a result of the loneliness, anxiety and anger that many children are experiencing. Kids often have more difficulty than adults in expressing their emotions, and that's why we are seeing these physical manifestations related to a decrease in kids' mental wellness."

To summarize, I believe the data increasingly shows that the best way to protect teachers and students both isn't to shut down schools, but to continue focusing on measures to stay safe outside of it. It is my belief that the benefits of onsite learning outweigh the potential burdens

associated. I do not believe teachers or students are being put at unreasonable risk. I urge the Amity BOE to move forward with the current plan.

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Joy Drakonakis <joy.drakonakis@amityschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:27 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** please reconsider

To the members of the Amity Board of Education:

I am writing to you as both a Woodbridge resident and an Amity Middle School -Bethany Campus teacher. Like many other Amity teachers, I was shocked by Dr. Byars' announcement on Friday that we will return to full student capacity on Wednesday. Current Covid 19 metrics do not support returning to school in full. Rather, a move to remote learning would be the safe choice at this time. We are unable to maintain safety protocols in most classrooms should we return in full. In the hybrid model, desks are 3 feet apart at best. If all students return, we will no longer be able to meet this minimum spacing requirement in many classrooms. Despite what has been shared by the superintendent, cohorts can not be compared to the elementary model, as students "break cohort" for music, physical education, and special services. Increasing students in the building further compromises the cohorts. I do not feel safe with this sudden decision, which will have dire consequences for our community. Returning all students to school as the virus is peaking is reckless and puts us all at risk.

I sincerely hope you will consider recommending a change to the remote learning model at this time, as it is in the best interest for students and teachers. We are asking you to please keep us safe.

Respectfully yours,

**Joy Drakonakis**  
Reading Consultant  
Amity Regional Middle School - Bethany  
190 Luke Hill Road  
Bethany, CT 06524  
(203) 393-3102 ext. 1211  
[joy.drakonakis@amityschools.org](mailto:joy.drakonakis@amityschools.org)

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jennifer Brechlin  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:46 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter to Board of Ed for Tonight's Meeting

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am in my 15th year here at Amity High School and 21-year Veteran overall to teaching in CT. I am writing to you in emergency crisis mode pleading that you listen to the teachers of this community who are in the trenches day to day especially during this Pandemic. We NEED to remain in Remote Teaching bare minimum through Winter Break and possibly a week after Winter Break. This is to help mitigate the strain on our three towns, the area hospitals and undue stress, sickness, lingering effects and possible deaths to teacher, student and community members.

Leading Indicators from the State of CT show we should be in Remote Learning as Orange is at 36.4, Bethany at 27.4 and Woodbridge at 24.3 per 100,000. I know not all Thanksgiving time period testing has not come back yet, but those increased positive numbers will only make our town numbers climb. I am also concerned because all surrounding towns are higher. As you know Governor Lamont stated on Thurs. that we are at the highest ever for COVID-19 rate in the state at 7.13% and that is alarming. Many other towns with the same or less rates are remote through at least Winter Break. Others are through MLK Jr Day or indefinitely. Doctors around the state are pleading with Lamont to shut down the state.

<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Reopening/ddy2-ijgu/>

<https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-data-tracker>

I am also concerned with how our School District goes about everything related to COVID. Contact Tracing with many school districts means quarantining everyone including the teacher and the class itself when someone tests positive not just those directly around. My husband is also a teacher and his school district along with many other friends' schools are doing this. They even go remote after 1-2 cases. Amity does not. We do quarantine a whole sports team though. Just at the High School we have had over 15 cases I believe before we shut down and went remote. Many more teachers and students got sick while remote and the School District did not report those to us in a letter email like they traditionally have. 6ft at Amity High School in classrooms is not 6ft. Desks are literally 3-4 feet apart. Where I stand in the front of the room or even my desk is not 6ft from the closest student desk next to me. Teachers have heard again and again that both heads of the two Health Departments we are working with are in disagreement whether to be remote or hybrid.

The lack of consistency and lack of safety is alarming. We all have families. We are stressed out beyond max. We of course want to see our students, but remote learning DOES work and Amity students DO show up. They understand that we are in a pandemic and the full magnitude of that. Personally, I don't have to worry about the WIFI Not working in the building (which we have had tons of glitches with this year), I don't have to worry about students not being able to hear each other because 1/2 are in class and 1/2 at home on my computer. We are seriously lacking in the right technology. Many districts invested to make it more seamless in the classroom. Myself and many teachers have spent a good deal of money on tech to make it more bearable and work best for kids. This should not be this way.

Many families are also opting out students these past two days. I literally just had a class of 2 (L-Z) last period when it should have been a class of 11. Many of my classes are much higher whether A-K or L-Z but that's going to change I believe over the next few days if action is not taken. That might be the strongest message being sent to the BOE and Dr. Byars. Parents do not feel this is safe either. Again, the facts and numbers don't lie here as I've expressed in this letter.

I thank you for your time and support. We need to put not only kids first, but also teachers and everyone's families. You will be remembered for whether you made rational decisions or not in moments of crisis. Teachers, Parents and the Community are counting on you to do the right thing.

Sincerely,  
Jen Brechlin

Jennifer Brechlin  
Social Studies Teacher  
Model UN Advisor

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jen W <jwentworth99@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:49 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Concerns about school

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Hello,

My name is Jennifer Pascale and I have been a teacher at Amity High School since 2004. I am writing my concerns about our return to a hybrid model at the high school and the full return at the middle school. I believe we should be remote, given the current health indicators and Covid cases and I will explain my other reasons.

Social distancing is not possible with the amount of students and size of the classrooms. The desks were measured to be three feet apart at the point of where the students sit. In larger cohorts, we are unable to space them further apart.

More students are opting to be remote since the decision to go back to hybrid. I and other teachers also do not feel safe in these current conditions.

My spouse is one of the people who is high risk for Covid. If I were to bring it home, he would be in danger of a serious illness. I am very concerned about him and we take precautions to stay away from anywhere that might pose a threat. I do not trust the precautions put in place at school to keep me safe from this, however.

Please have schools return to the remote model of learning.

Thank you,

Jennifer Pascale

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Michele Alguard <michele.alguard@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:51 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** AHS

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Hi Pam,

I just wanted to express my concern with kids remaining at home full time for distant learning. While I am a healthcare worker and understand the risks of COVID I feel that the school has done its best to protect the children while they are in class. While I understand under the circumstances the school district is trying to do its best, I truly believe that having the children go to school IS BEST. I have seen ZOOM classes only last a fraction of the time allotted for class time and truly believe that the kids WOULD DO BETTER while in school. My other concern is why does the day end at 12:47???? Really whether they are at home or in class they should be there a full day.

I truly believe everyone is trying their best but I believe the BEST for the kids would be back in the classrooms.  
Michele Alguard

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Shannon Martin  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:52 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Comment for Tonight's BOE Meeting  
**Attachments:** BOE letter (1).pdf

Hi Pam,

I apologize if you received this twice from me. I sent a public comment letter from my personal email account, but it was kicked-back to me and I am assuming it did not go through. I did not want to send this from my school account, but I fear I don't have another option with the impending deadline. Attached is my comment.

Thank you so much!

Shannon

Personal email: [baldinos2@gmail.com](mailto:baldinos2@gmail.com)



Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to you to urge a reversal of the decision bringing our community back to hybrid learning, and to keep our schools remote until at least January. First, I'd like to share that I came to Amity from a previous district as the reputation for high academic achievement and supportive administration was very attractive to me. I have not been disappointed, and I am proud to be an Amity teacher and I hope to have a long career in this district. I also would like to make clear my support for the Amity High School admin team: Monica Kreuzer, Miguel Pickering, Frank Barretta, and Jill LaPlante. I want to also explicitly share my gratitude for Principal, Anna Mahon: She has handled an impossible situation with transparency and grace, and I have felt completely supported by her during this very difficult time- I do not know how she does what she does everyday and I am very grateful for her efforts. With that being said, I have several concerns with the return to hybrid teaching that can be rectified by a reversal from the board:

1. There are several districts in the state (Naugatuck, Shelton, Oxford, Hamden, Region 9, etc. to name a few) that have chosen to stay remote until after the holidays, some even choosing to stay remote until at least the end of January. This is concerning to me as they are using the same indicators as we are, and have similar situations of community transmission than we do. Why not us? It is no surprise that the COVID numbers are the highest they have ever been, hospitals are past capacity, and over 5,000 people have died in our state alone- this includes relatives of my colleagues and my students. Therefore, why wouldn't we follow the leading indicators as these other districts have chosen to do?
2. In a letter that was sent to the middle school community, it was noted that the decision was "deliberately selected to begin [on] December 9th, as this will give us a two-week window to assess the impact on our school community prior to an already scheduled winter break,"- the impact being the post Thanksgiving uptick. I do not feel that it is appropriate, nor responsible, for impact to be assessed simply because we have a break on the horizon- a break where, if people are (God forbid) sick, they can convalesce during the holiday. If we are aware that there could possibly be an impact, why are we risking being in school then?
3. I worry about learning gaps for my students. We, as teachers, are better equipped to teach remotely than we were in the Spring. This is not the Spring- I am better than I was then, and the last three weeks for me was "business as usual" with a location change. I felt confident and comfortable providing a consistent education to my students as there were no wifi issues, I could see everyone in one platform, and our class was more of a human experience as we were all able to be unmasked and we could see facial expressions. I fear that the "covid whiplash" of the back and forth, in school and out, is what really will be detrimental to the learning experience. When we know the numbers are not safe, and other districts have already put the safety of their students and staff first, why are we not following suit?
4. Finally, I and my husband are both "high risk" individuals with a small child to care for. We, thankfully, have not yet been sick. But we have seen family members and friends become sick- some asymptomatic, some desperately ill. Every day, I mask up and come in for my students. I mask up, and teach my classes. What my students don't see is how

every day I live in fear that today will be the day I get sick and bring it home. They don't see that this level of anxiety has affected my personal life in ways that I can not begin to describe as it is deeply personal.

Please, I implore you to listen to the voices of the teachers, parents, students, community members, and health professionals on the severity of this illness, the effect it is having in our community, and the danger it poses to us all. Remote teaching is a safe and effective way to operate school until it is safe to return. Why must we gamble with the safety and well-being of our community when, in fact, it is not necessary?

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope you will consider my plea.

Sincerely,  
Shannon Martin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** vanzandt <avanzandt@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:59 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** kbob26@optonline.net  
**Subject:** Support of Hybrid instruction model at Amity High School

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Dear Amity Board of Ed members,

We will make this quick as we are sure you are being inundated with messages from the community today. As parents of a freshman, we support the return to the Hybrid instructional model at Amity High School without hesitation. As educators ourselves, we witness first hand the value of in person instruction, and while we fully understand that there are factors that preclude full-time in person learning, as our sixth grade daughter is doing, the benefits of the Hybrid model far outweigh a long-term period of full remote instruction. Our son came home yesterday thrilled to be back in school. Unsolicited, he shared that in addition to the social aspect of seeing his friends, he feels that access to teachers to ask questions and to clarify assignments is much easier in person. We asked him if he feels safe at school to which he responded affirmatively since he is consistently masked and following the social distance protocols. He readily acknowledged that this is not the case for every student, and we understand that this may make the staff uneasy. I trust that Amity is doing all they can to keep staff and students safe and that if short-term school closures are warranted or wise, as was the case prior to and following the Thanksgiving break, Superintendent Byars will act accordingly. Bottom line, being in person is a significant factor in our son's success as a student and implore the Board to stay the course. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to either of us.

Sincerely,

Amy VanZandt & Bob Cewe (Parents to Ben Cewe)

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Sarah Beth Realtor <sabalu80@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:02 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** dandelprete@gmail.com  
**Subject:** CONCERNED PARENT ABOUT NEW LEARNING PLAN

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Amity BOE,

As a concerned parent and citizen of the district I am writing to express my concern in what feels like a rash decision to return to full, in-person learning while COVID numbers and cases are rising in the state. I would like the district to provide information on how they determined this was a wise and, most importantly, safe choice for our students, their families and our teachers.

According to my child, I am told that students are already not able to keep 6 feet distance in the classroom, as they don't have enough space. How do you plan to add more students and create a safe classroom environment? A safe hallway with double the students? It feels to me that the district is barging ahead with a full in-person learning agenda, yet does not have a plan for safe learning conditions. Aside from wearing a mask and offering hand sanitizer stations and encouraging distance, please tell me what else has been done to prepare for this switch.

I am a believer that in person is best for our students, but I also recognize that we are in a pandemic and we must react responsibly and safely. This decision feels irresponsible and I am disappointed in the district.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important matter,  
Sarah Beth Del Prete

Sarah Beth Luce - Del Prete  
**Seabury-Hill, Realtors**  
233 Wooster Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
Cell: 203.887.2295  
Fax: 203.772.2907  
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## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Rowland, Robert <Robert.Rowland@lanxess.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:11 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** 'rgrhewr@optimum.net'; rgrhewr@gmail.com; Sheila McCreven; bheller@woodbridgect.org  
**Subject:** Amity should return to Remote Model (and stay there)  
**Attachments:** Amity\_Regional\_School\_District\_Reopening\_October\_Update.pdf; ABOE Rowland 103020.pdf

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Dec. 8, 2020

To: Amity Board of Education

Re: Comment prior to emergency meeting, Dec. 8, 2020.

Given that we are all pressed for time, we will not burden you with an additional lengthy opinion piece. The comments that we submitted on Oct. 30 remain true today (attached).

What has changed is that the rate of community spread has gone up dramatically, as most public health experts predicted. The most recent data available from the state has our local Covid-19 rates/100,000 at 27.4 (Bethany), 36.6 (Orange), and 24.3 (Woodbridge). <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/q5as-kyim> . This puts the **overall Amity community rate at 30**. Bringing students back into greater contact at this time is thus **directly at odds with the Amity Reopening Plan October 2020** (attached, pp 2-3).

Dr. Birx has privately notified Connecticut authorities to take greater precautions against Covid-19 (Emilie Munson, *Connecticut Post* (online) 12/7/2020). The majority of public health officials are urging people to limit their exposure as to others as much as possible. The country will easily exceed 300,000 deaths by Christmas.

Dr. Byars has been quoted as saying that decisions to (change model) are “**based on data, not opinion**” (Pam McLoughlin, *New Haven Register* (on-line) Nov. 2, 2020). Based on the now ubiquitous data, it is absurd to return to even hybrid instruction for teens at this time. **The District should be making plans to support remote learning for several more months**. We may be well into spring before it is appropriate to bring students back.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robert G. Rowland Ph.D. Amity '78, Parent '21

Holly E. Rowland Ph.D. Amity Parent '21

Woodbridge

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Christina DeLouise  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:18 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** letter to BOE  
**Attachments:** letter to BOE.docx

Dear Ms. Pero-

Respectfully submitted for your review.

Best,

Christina DeLouise

December 8, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education-

I am a teacher at Amity Regional High School. I am a member of the community; I live in Bethany. I am writing to you to respectfully request that we remain in the remote learning model until January 4<sup>th</sup>. I am asking this for the safety of my family. I am asking this for the safety of my colleagues. I am asking this for the safety of all students.

We are in a global pandemic.

More and more information and data regarding the number of Covid cases in Connecticut, and particularly within the BOW community indicate that cases are on the upswing. Fewer and fewer of our students are in class. Fewer and fewer teachers are in school.

I understand that the desire to "get things back to normal" is the goal. I am not even sure what that is anymore. We need to adjust as new norms evolve.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health Town-Level Covid Response Framework supports the case for remote learning. According to that framework if there are 15 + cases per 100K per day, then the community should "consider more distance learning above 25." Cases in Bethany are at 27.4. Cases in Orange are at 36.4. Cases in Woodbridge are at 24.3. Surrounding towns have even higher numbers: Derby has a rate of 58.2, Ansonia 57.2 and Prospect 62.7.

I do not mean to bore you with data that you already know. I would like to preface this by saying that it is disruptive to our students, to our families and to everyone's well-being when we are constantly jockeying back and forth between models.

As a staff, we talked this year about making sure that the social and emotional learning for our students is paramount. We understand that students cannot learn in an environment where they do not feel safe. What has not been taken into account is the social and emotional well-being of staff members. With all due respect and no offense, there has been a lack of transparency between the Board and the school community. We do not feel safe. We do not feel like we are given the knowledge to make informed decisions about our own health. We are real people, with families, lives, children, grandchildren. We love our work, we love the students, but do not feel that our health, and the health of our loved ones should be collateral damage.

Respectfully,

Christina DeLouise

Reference Links:

<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Reopening/ddy2-ijgu/>

<https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-data-tracker>



## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Jason Holt <jasondholt05@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:19 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Please keep school open!

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Distance learning is not nearly as beneficial to the students!!!!

**Pamela Pero**

---

**From:** Liane Page <lijpage@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:23 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In Person Learning

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Hello Ms. Pero,

I am contacting you regarding in-person learning at Amity Middle School and Hybrid Learning at the high school. I am certain the decision during a pandemic is not easy, however, during a pandemic, nothing seems easy this year! My children and many others in the district need some continuity, I am watching my daughter (sophomore) and son (8th grade), becoming depressed. Getting out of the house for school is the **ONLY** thing that makes them happy as they are no longer staring at the same four walls and are actually **LEAVING** the home.

Furthermore, although the teachers are doing a great job, learning from online is just not working for the kids. My daughters grades have dropped drastically from last year, and although my son is doing fabulous grade-wise, I know it is due to a "group effort" with other friends when working together through Facetime.

Please don't fall to the demands of the teachers claiming they need to be remote. **MANY** school systems have been going to school full-time or hybrid, without any issues, I am certain Amity can do the same! It is imperative for the mental and academic well being of our kids.

Best,

Liane Page  
203.623.3200

**Pamela Pero**

---

**From:** maureen o'brien <o'brien.maureen1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:23 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Hybrid teaching

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Dear Ms. Pero,

Please take into account the emotional toll the hybrid model of teaching is having on the students, teachers and staff of the Amity school district. Moving to distance only learning until 1/04/2021 seems prudent. As a mental health professional, I see first hand the extreme stress my clients are under with in person contact in school settings.

Sincerely,  
Maureen O'Brien, LCSW  
57 Woods Rd  
Bethany CT 06524

Sent from my iPhone

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** CHARLENE BOBBIE <char195@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:26 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Emergency meeting

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Amity BOE,

I hope this message finds you well! I'm the mother of an Amity middle schooler and writing you regarding my concerns for full in person learning.

We are still deep in this pandemic. While I understand there is a drive to return to full in person learning, I still believe it would be safest for our teachers and students to remain in remote or hybrid mode. There are many schools that have returned to in person learning and have been shut down because of rise in cases and lack of teacher attendance due to need to quarantine.

I strongly feel it would be best to avoid an inevitable shut down by remaining fully remote or returning to hybrid mode until after the holidays.

Thank you for reading!

Stay safe,

Charlene Bobbie

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** theater15@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:28 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** letter for tonight's BOE meeting  
**Attachments:** BOE letter.pdf

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Good morning,

I've attached a letter for tonight's BOE meeting.

Thank you.

Victoria Hulse

December 8, 2020

Dear Board of Education Members and Dr. Byars,

It is my fervent belief that the Amity Regional School District must remain in a remote learning format until after the holidays when the situation can be re-evaluated. As the numbers in the three towns have greatly increased over the past month, it is no longer safe to be in school. Teachers, their families, students and their families' lives are at stake.

I am not sure if the board is aware to what extent students are exhibiting unsafe behavior. It's quite disconcerting to return to school after a period of remote learning and overhear conversations amongst students discussing all of the family events and parties that they've recently attended and plan to attend next weekend. While this might not be the majority of the student population, it is clear that many are disregarding CDC and local health department guidelines. It's unfortunate that community spread due to such events is occurring, but these outside choices are affecting our ability to safely remain in school.

Additionally, as the school year has progressed, it is clear that "Covid fatigue" is impacting our students. When we returned to school in August our students were diligent about following our Covid protocols. This has changed, as on a daily basis, I personally am reminding students to properly wear their masks, to follow the arrows in the hallways, and practice social distancing. Unfortunately, more and more students are simply disregarding these rules, which is creating an unsafe working environment for the staff, but also creating a very unsafe environment for our students as well.

The decision to continue in-person learning is greatly affecting my personal health and home life. I am suffering from terrible anxiety and have been experiencing insomnia, both of which I have never experienced before. I have experienced an increase in migraine headaches. All of these issues affect my home life, which is truly unfair to my own children.

To be clear, I want to be in school as I truly love teaching and working with our fantastic students and staff. However, at this time, my family's safety and health are paramount, and this risk is unnecessary and reckless.

Sincerely,

Victoria Hulse  
Amity Regional High School  
Library Media Specialist

## Pamela Pero

---

**From:** Lauren Clark <laurenclark08@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:38 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In Person Learning AHS

This message has originated from an External Source. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

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Good Morning,

I am writing this email to share my request to continue in person learning at Amity Regional High School. I believe we have an obligation to our students education, mental well being and their futures.

We have heard from our Government and many other leaders of our state and country have said that schools are one of the safest places to be and our children should be there learning. I understand there is fear among the teachers, I also understand that not one person in the entire world is experiencing fear of this virus. The grocery store workers, the nurses, Drs., janitors, plumbers, electricians, restaurant workers, etc. all have a choice; go to work and be paid or stay home and not get paid. All of those workers have to do their best to stay safe and quite honestly have more of a challenge staying safe than I feel teachers at this level do. Our leaders have worked tirelessly to do all possible to keep staff and students safe. We owe it to our children to educate them. Remote learning is absolutely no substitute and I know you will find for many, many kids; mine included this has been a lost year so far.

There are other high schools in this state full in and have been since day one, if they can do it so can Amity.

I commend our Superintendent for working so hard to get us back to school safely. I thank Mrs. Mahon and the entire staff at AHS for all the work they do every single day on behalf of our community.

Please keep our children in school.

Sincerely,  
Lauren Clark  
ARHS parent  
1005 Brookside road  
Orange, CT 06477

Sent from my iPhone



## Pamela Pero

---

**From:** Katie Irwin <kathrynirwin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:41 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

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Good Morning,

I am writing as an employee of Amity Region 5 in opposition of the change in learning model for December. I have major concerns for the health of myself and my coworkers. Many of our students are participating in sports, social events and other outside contact that could result in them coming into school asymptomatic and thus spreading the virus to the adults in the building. I have a high risk adult in my circle of exposure (my son's father) and I have maintained my own isolation in order to protect him and others. I did not see my mother for her 70th birthday. I did not have any family over for Thanksgiving. I have not been to a restaurant or public gathering since March 11, 2020. I was hoping to be isolated for the next 2 weeks so that there was a chance I could see my parents for the holiday, but that will no longer be possible.

I want to know why the decision to go full time in person is now. Why not wait until the indicators are trending down? Why not wait until the physicians and medical personnel feel like the hospitals are not dangerously crowded? Why are you forcing us into a very unsafe and dangerous environment for two weeks prior to a holiday vacation?

I wonder what statistical data Dr. Byars is using when she said "If we remain successful, we will know that we can safely return in January to full in-person learning..." -- does that mean no one died?? Does that mean that only a fraction of our teachers and students are infected? To me, that one line sums up the disrespect and disregard the district has for our teachers and staff.

We all want to return to normal. We all want to return to regular school. There is a promise of a new year with a vaccine and declining numbers. The district needs to wait until the indicators are trending down and the vaccine has been administered to health care workers to ensure everyone's safety.

Thank you,  
Katie Irwin

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Helena Connolly <helena.lunts@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:44 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Remote learning

This message has originated from an External Source. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

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Dear Ms. Pero,

We have neighbors who are teachers at Amity High School and are concerned about being in a hybrid model. They are concerned about their own safety and that of the students. We are writing in support of them, as they are uncomfortable with what is being asked of them. Please consider their requests to remain remote until January. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Helena Connolly

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Traci Cipriano <TraciCip@optimum.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:45 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BoE Public Comment for 12/8/2020 Special Meeting

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

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Dear Members of the Board of Education –

The decision to move to full in-person learning at AMSB comes as quite a shock when town and district metrics fall within the state guidelines for remote learning. In addition, county data, which the guidelines also recommend be taken into account, shows a major surge in New Haven County, as well as a shortage of hospital beds. It would be helpful to know why the state guidelines are not being followed.

Existing data related to school transmission does not reflect the current level of virus in the community. The data also does not reflect asymptomatic transmission. Although we have not seen a lot of evidence of transmission in schools, there are still many unknowns. This is especially concerning when the state guidelines are not being followed.

The decision to move to full in-person learning goes against student educational, social and emotional interests by forcing many families who would otherwise continue with the hybrid learning model to opt for remote learning out of fear, as well as confusion and misunderstanding resulting from conflicting information.

This decision, which goes against parent and teacher expectations based on criteria set out by the state, also creates a lot of unnecessary distress for teachers, parents and students.

Please share the reasons why the district does not think it necessary to follow state guidelines for learning models.

Sincerely,  
Traci Cipriano

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Konstantine Drakonakis <kdrakonakis@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 10:52 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Please reconsider - move to remote

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Dear members of the Amity Board of Education,

I am writing to you as a concerned resident of Woodbridge and husband of an Amity Middle School - Bethany teacher. Dr. Byars' decision to move the middle schools to a full student return and the high school to the hybrid model at this time is ill advised. Current data clearly shows that Covid 19 cases are on the rise, suggesting that a move to remote learning would be in everyone's best interest. For the sake of our teachers, students, and our community, please consider a change to Dr. Byars' plan and switch the Amity schools to a fully remote learning model until public health conditions are safer.

Respectfully yours,

Konstantine Drakonakis

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** sockfoot <sockfoot@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:01 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Please let the children keep attending school under the hybrid model. The social and psychological damage of not having anywhere to go or anything to do outweighs the controlled risk of attending school.

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David Crow, Esq.

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S9, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Debra Marino <[dmarino@marinofamilylaw.com](mailto:dmarino@marinofamilylaw.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:01 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** follow up to my first e mail

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Pam:

**Ignore my e last e mail please.** I misread the e mail sent to me. I understand that the issue for tonight is the teachers not wanting to be in school. My position on that is that they **SHOULD** have to be in school. It is their job and they are essential to our kids' education. I **DO** support the hybrid model and the choice to opt out. But, I do not think that the teachers should have an option.

Deb Marino

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**Attorney Debra B. Marino | Law Offices of Debra B. Marino, LLC**

657 Orange Center Road | Orange, CT 06477 | P: 203.298.0611 | F: 203.298.0613  
[dmarino@marinofamilylaw.com](mailto:dmarino@marinofamilylaw.com) | [www.marinofamilylaw.com](http://www.marinofamilylaw.com)

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Good Morning,

I just wanted to write to you and say I feel more comfortable that I learn from home till after break. I say this because I'm a diabetic and it's important for my health that I'm safe and I was already told a few times before the few weeks we went remote that there was a student in at least each of my classes that got Covid. I find that we have the choice to go back to school when the Covid cases are rising in our state a bit disturbing and not safe. I also sent this email because I would like my teachers to feel that they're safe and not bringing it back to their families.

Thank you,

(Freshman)

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Aldon Hynes <aldon.hynes@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:13 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Beth Heller; Sheila McCreven; Robyn Berke; Pat Cardozo; patrickreed@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Public Comment for the Amity Regional Board of Education Special Meeting 12/8/2020  
**Attachments:** AMITYBOESpecialMeeting.docx

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Attached is my public comment for the Amity Regional Board of Education Special Meeting on 12/8/2020. Please include this in the public comments.

Aldon Hynes  
10 Barberry Ln  
Woodbridge, CT 06525



Superintendent Byers, Chairman Belfonti, members of the Board of Education,

My name is Aldon Hynes. I reside at 10 Barberry Lane in Woodbridge, CT. I work at Community Health Center helping with our statewide COVID activities and have been working seven days a week helping the public get tested for COVID and raising awareness of what is currently going on. I am speaking on my own behalf as a resident of Woodbridge, and not on behalf of the health center.

The special meeting concern Amity's COVID planning has been brought to my attention, and I would like to provide some comment on it. First and foremost, it is my opinion that the Amity School district has grievously failed in its responsibilities to the communities it is part of in keeping people informed. As part of my job at the health center, I help produce a weekly Zoom meeting which also gets streamed to Facebook and other platforms. It includes the Mayor of Middletown, the health director, the Superintendent of the public schools, and representatives of the health care community, the business community, and the non-profit community. There are frank discussions about the combined response to the pandemic. Such communications needs to take place within BOWA as well.

I have looked at the Amity Regional School District Reopening updates and they appear to be misleading the public. Of particular note, is the graph of Percent positivity rate. The graph shows a major peak during the month of April and the positivity rates do not approach anywhere near that level in the rest of the graph. This is grossly misleading. In April testing was just getting underway and only those who were most likely positive were tested. During the month of April, 24,712 people were tested in New Haven County. During the month of October, that number was 224,600.

Another piece of misleading information is in the Percent Test Positivity presented for Bethany, Orange, and Woodbridge. It observes a decrease in positivity over the past two periods. Anyone who is paying attention to the news will know that around Thanksgiving, there were extremely long lines for testing. In fact, if you look at the data from the state, during 11/23-11/25, 32,198 people from New Haven were tested. That is more than was tested during the whole month of April. As a result of this, the results are delayed in being released. Positive results are delayed the longest because of processing and reporting requirements.

If you take all of this into consideration, and produce a graph for positivity rate in New Haven County from the period 7/1/2020 through 11/30/2020, you get a very different result, included below. You will see that from July through September, the positivity rate for the most part, remained very low, below 2%. By the end of November, it had climbed very significantly, with New Haven now having the second highest positivity rate in the state at over 7%.

If you look at the State's data tracker you will see that the current cases per 100,000 for Orange, as of 12/3 is 36.4, for Woodbridge it is 24.3, and for Bethany it is 27.4. The state defines the red zone as having a current case rate of over 15. Orange is over twice that rate and Bethany is approaching that twice that rate.

The State's guidelines say that Pre K-12 schools in collaboration with Local Health Department and Superintendent should consider more distance learning above 25. It appears from the data that Amity should be considering more distance learning at this point. Until these rates are substantially lower, ideally below 15 for at least two consecutive weeks, Amity be looking at ways to decrease the number of

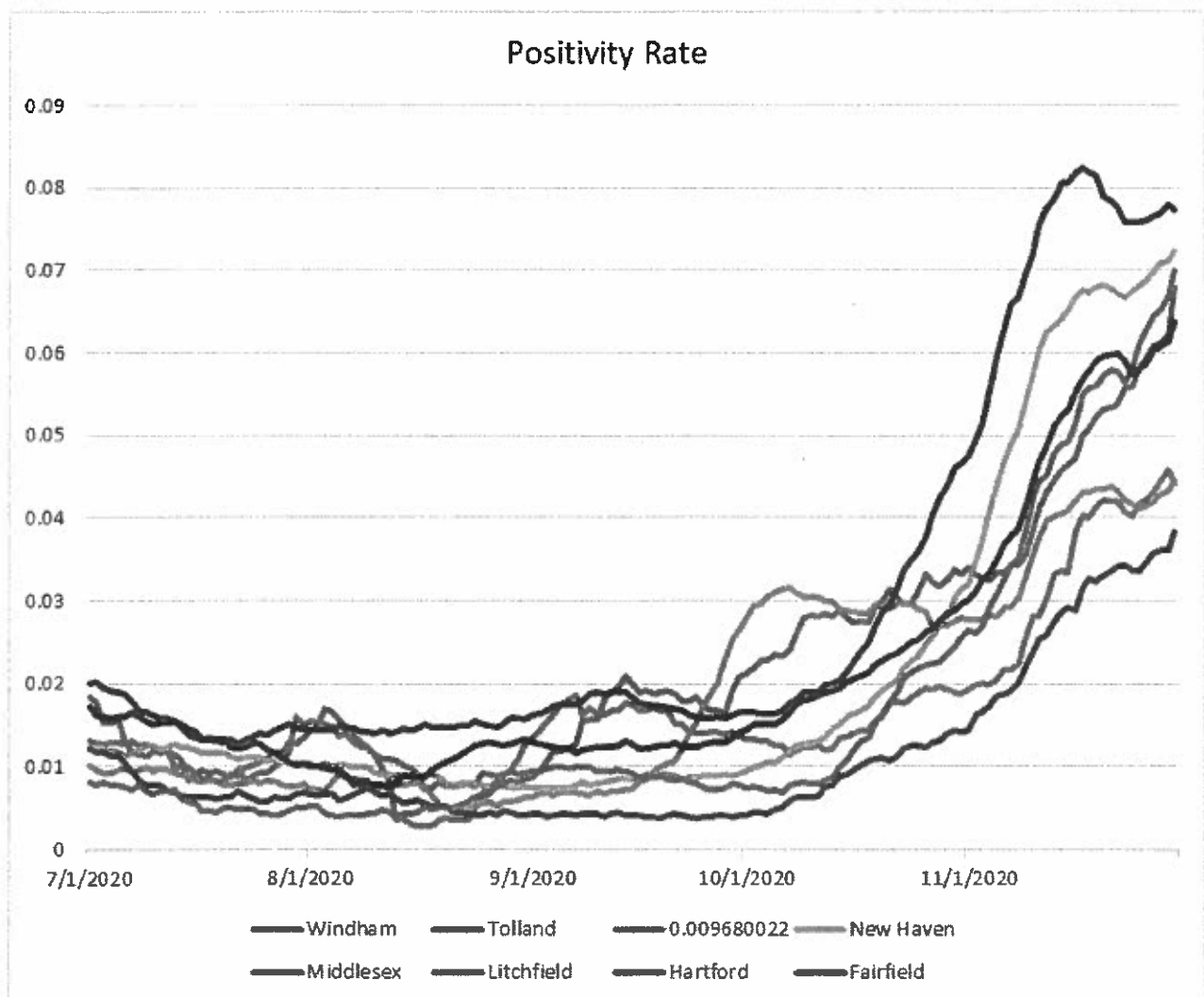
people in the schools and should not consider any action that would result in more people, students, teachers or staff being in the schools.

Related to this is the issue of contact tracing. I have not seen any reports on the ability of the school district in conjunction with the local health districts about their capacity to do rapid and thorough contact tracing. Reports about the contact tracing capabilities of the school district and local health districts should be made available and should demonstrate the ability to rapidly contact anyone who has had a potential exposure. Until that is clearly demonstrated, there should be no expansion of people in any of the schools.

The data I have used is all publically available from the State on its COVID-19 Data portal. I would be happy to go over any of this data in further detail, time permitting, to the extent there are questions.

Sincerely

Aldon Hynes  
10 Barberry Lane  
Woodbridge, CT 06525



## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Mary Carlson  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:22 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter to Board Of Education  
**Attachments:** Amity Board of Ed Letter.pdf

Hi Pam,  
I am respectfully submitting this letter for the Board of Education meeting.  
Thank you,  
Mary Carlson

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am a teacher at Amity Regional High School. I am writing to respectfully request that we return to remote learning. I am asking this for the safety of my colleagues, my students, and now that I am recovering from the coronavirus myself, the safety of all our families.

We as teachers understand the need to "get back in the classroom". We understand that our students learn better when they are in person. We teach better in person, but not under these circumstances. Not when our safety is at risk. I am asking respectfully that you take teacher's concerns into consideration when making the decision that affect our health. We have children and extended family also.

You know the numbers; you make the decision that affect our safety. You are elected to make the hard decisions, and this is one of them. We do love our jobs, let us do our work safely.

Respectfully,

*Mary Carlson*

Mary Carlson

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Rosa <sockfoot@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:23 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Keeping Amity hybrid

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Please keep Amity open. My son is a senior who has a few AP course this year. I feel it is imperative that he attend in person as much as possible.

At the least have only the seniors come to school. It is their final year of high school and they deserve some "normalcy".

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,  
Rosa Rinaldi-Crow

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Katz, Stuart M. <SKatz@cohenandwolf.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:27 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Katz, Stuart M.  
**Subject:** Dec. 8th BOE Meeting Regarding Instructional Models  
**Attachments:** Addendum-4-Interim-Guidance-for-DecisionMaking-Regarding-the-Use-of-InPerson-Hybrid-Blended-or-Remot (2).pdf

This message has originated from an **External Source**. Please use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am a Woodbridge resident and parent of a student at Amity Regional High School. I am writing regarding the decision announced on Friday, December 4, 2020 to move the high school from the full remote instructional model back to the hybrid model, beginning on December 7<sup>th</sup>. I understand that “more in person learning” has been the goal all along and that when the decision was announced to move to a full remote model for the week after Thanksgiving, the plan was to return to the hybrid model on December 7<sup>th</sup> unless the indicators for school instructional models suggested otherwise.

Based on prior communications from Dr. Byars, I understand that the Amity district is following guidelines established by the CSDE in determining the appropriate learning model. Among those guidelines is reference to an “Addendum 4” (attached) which sets forth certain metrics, including the “leading” and “secondary” indicators, that are monitored in order to determine whether there should be more or less in person learning. The most recent statistics available to the public (updated on 12/3) reflect infection rates of 24.3 per 100k for Woodbridge, 27.4 per 100k for Bethany, and 36.4 per 100k for Orange for the two week period of 11/15 – 11/28. These infection rates, unfortunately, were higher than the rates reported for the prior two week period and seem to be consistent with elevated infection rates throughout the state and elsewhere. Accordingly, these rates appear to indicate that “less in-person learning” is appropriate according to Addendum 4, as do the secondary indicators. While recognizing that more in person learning is preferable in general, it is difficult to understand the decision to move from full remote to hybrid in the high school at this time.

Although there have been relatively few Covid cases reported in the high school, the fact that there is no testing of students or faculty, coupled with the fact that there is no compulsory reporting of positive tests to the school, suggests that it is not entirely clear how many students and faculty have contracted or been exposed to the virus. Based on media reports, many people disregarded guidance about traveling and gathering for Thanksgiving and that trend is likely to continue throughout the holiday season.

All things considered, the primary goal should be to protect the faculty, staff and students at the high school, and remaining in the hybrid model – while not perfect educationally – represents the best approach to meeting that goal.

Sincerely,



## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Allan DeYoung <allan@brandcrystal.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:30 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity BoE emergency meeting: rescind decision to have full-time in person classes

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As a Woodbridge resident and having the last of my 3 kids now a senior in Amity HS, I am flabbergasted with the lack of planning and decision to have our students return to school in person when the majority of CT and our towns are RED with COVID rates continuing to rise.

This is unsafe overall and the specifically for 20 middle school students in a small classroom during a pandemic just in time to force quarantines on families for the winter break.

Please rescind this decision.

Allan DeYoung



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Gabriela Kurpios <gabrielakurpios@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:30 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** public comment

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Dear Amity Regional School Board Members,

I am a parent of Izabela Kurpios grade 10. I'm writing this email to advise you that I'm in full support of hybrid and in-person learning.

The lack of interaction with teachers and students is a huge drawback. My daughter is naturally a very determined and studious child however when Amity was fully remote back in March Iza was not the same kid. She was withdrawn, had difficulty finishing her assignments, and quite frankly just stopped caring altogether. FULL REMOTE LEARNING IS UNHEALTHY.

I believe the plan we have in place with hybrid at the high school now, is working. Our principal Anna Mahon and her faculty members are doing a phenomenal job of keeping kids healthy and safe. Sending kids home for remote learning should be the last resort.

Please ask yourselves, have you exhausted all the options before considering to deprive my daughter of a proper in-person education?

Thank you for your consideration,

Gabriela Kurpios  
348 Lindy St, Orange, CT 06477

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a 10th grader at Amity High school and I am fully in support of hybrid learning as is currently happening.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Spodick <jonspodick@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:40 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Father of Bethany 7th grader

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Hello thank you for holding this meeting!

A quick note I wanted to express my strong opposition against Miles Spodick going back full time this week at Bethany Jr High. A limited hybrid model is much more logical during the next month. Please pause this decision and revisit in the new year taking into account where we are with the pandemic surge.

Thank you for your tireless efforts

Jonathan Spodick

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Marissa Altimari  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:41 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE letter  
**Attachments:** BOE letter.docx

Hi,  
Here is my letter for the meeting tonight.  
Thanks so much,  
Marissa Altimari

12/8/20

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to express my concerns regarding the recent decision to move back into the hybrid instructional model. I was hoping to stay in the remote learning model until after the holidays. By having students and teachers return to a hybrid model only two weeks before the holidays does not make any sense. We are increasing our chances of coming into contact with covid, or any illness, and we will be bringing this home to our families for the holidays. The break is a time to rest and recharge. We will not be doing that if we are home sick, only to return to work in a week. This has been a difficult year academically, socially and emotionally for many students and adults, and I think that everyone can benefit from the break. I am hoping that we can return to remote learning until after the holidays so that we can stay safe. The decision to stay in the hybrid model is careless, and it shows that we are neither valued nor appreciated. Our lives and safety do not matter. I am hoping that you will reconsider this decision.

Marissa Altimari

Spanish Instructor

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** CANALORI, LAUREN <LAUREN.CANALORI@new-haven.k12.ct.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:41 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Support for in-person learning

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Ms. Pero-

In response to tonight's emergency BOE meeting, I am sending a quick message in support of continuation of the hybrid learning model at Amity High School. I have a freshman and a junior at the school and they both need the support of in-person learning for at least the 2-3 days they are able to come to school. Additionally, the science is clear that the virus is not being spread in schools with the mitigation efforts in place. In-person learning should continue, with *all* staff, students, and families being aware of the expectations outside of school for their choices and behavior.

Many thanks to the superintendent and the administration at the high school for all their efforts.

Best,  
Lauren Canalori

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**Lauren D. Canalori**  
Literacy Coach  
***L.W. Beecher Museum Magnet Academy***  
[lauren.canalori@new-haven.k12.ct.us](mailto:lauren.canalori@new-haven.k12.ct.us)

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Sheila McCreven <sheila.mccreven@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:51 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Jenny Turner; Robyn Berke  
**Subject:** Letter for 12/8 meeting public comment  
**Attachments:** Special\_ABOE\_Meeting\_request\_12.7.20.pdf

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H, Pamela -- please include the attached document as public comment for tonight's meeting and distribution to the full Board.

Many thanks, as always!  
Sheila

Mr. John Belfonti, Board of Education Chairman  
Amity Regional School District No. 5  
25 Newton Road, Woodbridge CT 06525

December 7, 2020

Dear Mr. Chairman,

We value open communication within the Amity community, the more so in a pandemic when people are tired, stressed, and uncertain.

Families in our community are confused about how we prioritize in-person learning and the changes in the instructional model of our schools in this pandemic, from shutdown in the spring to increasing in-person time in a surge of cases this fall. We would like to hear from the Superintendent, our medical advisor, and both health departments how thinking on schools' roles in pandemics has evolved and why they have made the choices they have. We hope to increase community understanding and trust by having all parties in the (virtual) room.

Responding to the pandemic has required sacrifices and accepting non-ideal circumstances from us all. As Amity approaches the mid-point of this school year, we would like to hear from each building administrator and teachers what is working and what is not, so that we can find ways to better support our school community where possible. We further request a survey of both students and families to assess coping and where different supports may be needed.

To begin this process, we write to officially request that you call a Special Meeting for the Amity BOE, in accordance with Board Bylaw 9321(a) (attached).

The purpose of the requested meeting is threefold:

- 1) To receive information regarding changes to the district instructional model in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,
- 2) To receive correspondence on this topic,
- 3) To discuss and act as necessary.

We request this meeting be held as soon as possible, in light of the pressing nature of the topic. It is our understanding of public notice requirements that provided notice of the meeting time, place, and purpose is posted by close of business Monday, December 7 that the meeting can be held Tuesday, December 8.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

  
Sheila McCreven

  
Robyn Berke

  
Jennifer Turner

Amity Board of Education members



## **Time, Place and Notification of Meetings**

### **1. Regular Meetings**

- A. The Board of Education shall set a calendar of regular meetings for the ensuing year at the first regular meeting in December.
- B. In compliance with the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, the Chairperson shall file this calendar with the Town Clerk by December 31st , and not later than January 31st .
- C. Normally the Board shall schedule regular meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month of the year.
- D. If at any point in the meeting the Board of Education should not maintain a quorum, then the Chairperson of the Board will adjourn the meeting and declare the time and place of the resumption of the meeting, which shall be reflected in a written order of adjournment. A copy of the written order of adjournment will be posted on or near the door of the place where the meeting was held within twenty- four hours after the time of adjournment.

### **2. Special Meetings**

- A. Special meetings may be held when determined by the Board, when so called by the Chairperson, or upon written request of three members of the Board.
- B. No special meeting shall be held unless a notice stating the time, place, and purpose of the meeting has been given to each member and to the Town Clerks, twenty-four (24) hours before the time stated for the meeting to convene.
- C. When a majority of the members agree that an emergency exists which has made a regular notice impossible such a meeting may be called at a time or place which may be most convenient. In case of such emergency meeting, a copy of the minutes setting forth the nature of the emergency and the proceedings occurring at such meeting shall be filed with the Town Clerk no later than seventy-two (72) hours following the holding of such meeting.

### **Notice of Meetings**

Notice of meetings will be mailed to persons filing a written request renewable in January of each year. The Board of Education will charge a fee for these notices based upon cost of the service, as provided by law.

### **Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes**

- 1-225 Meetings of government agencies to be public.
- 1-228 Adjournment of meetings. Notice.
- 1-229 Continued hearings. Notice.
- 1-230 Regular meetings to be held pursuant to regulation, ordinance or resolution.
- 7-3 Warning of town and other meetings.
- 7-4 Record of warning.
- 10-218 Officers. Meetings

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** PETER LESZCZAK <pleszczak@snet.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:55 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** in person learning

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Hi,

I am writing to express my opinion that the children should remain in the hybrid learning mode that restarted this week. I have a freshman and a senior at the high school and virtual learning has been a challenge. We do not feel they are getting nearly as much out of their classes as they should at this point.

Please keep the students in the classroom. The administration has done an excellent job migrating the risk for students and teachers. The Health Department assessments showed most of the exposure to be transmitted outside of school.

Thank you.

Wendy Leszczak  
523 Wolcott Lane  
Orange, CT 06477

**Peter Leszczak**

203.401.1994

## Pamela Pero

---

**From:** Chantelle Bunnell <chantellepe@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:57 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity Middle School letter -not for remote learning

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To the Amity Board of Education:

12/8/20

I am writing as a parent to request that the Amity Middle School **does not go fully remote**. It is my understanding that overall rates at the middle school have been low and any positive covid cases have primarily come from students playing sports. Currently, sports have been placed on hold so if they continue to be in school rates should stay low.

My son, up until Covid, has always been able to maintain good grades. Teachers, in person, would remind him of things, and have person to person interactions which enabled him to do the work he needed to get done. He thrived in the classroom and enjoyed the social aspects of seeing his friends in school. Since Covid home school - it has been a nightmare. He gets numerous F's per week for missing turning things in and overall teachers do not send any reminders. As a mom, I have now taken on the role of teacher while working from home. He has been able to adapt socially but adapting academically has not been easy.

I know that this is a difficult time for all. But, most importantly, we need to make sure that our kids have the ability to work in person and attend school. Remote work is not conducive to a good learning environment. I cannot tell you scientific facts to support this but I know my child and his friends all want to be in school. They all have struggled with staying home, not interacting and not getting in person instruction. **I am asking the Board to keep the Middle School open and do not have the kids go fully remote.** Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I appreciate all the hard work and dedication each of you put in on the Board of Education.

Sincerely,

Chantelle Bunnell

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Rick Jurzyk <rick@ricksplumbing.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:53 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** We Support: Amity High School In Person Learning

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Dear Amity Board-

I am writing in support of return to in person learning at Amity High School. I saw the news broadcast and understand that school staff may be fearful but like many other occupations during this pandemic, some require a level of in person contact. The school has implemented plans and guidelines to keep students and staff safe and there has been no documented transmission inside the school. With this being said, school seems to be a relatively safe place. Please consider this as you weigh the outcome of a generation of our kids losing nearly a cumulative school year of in person academic instruction.

Thank you for your support, time and careful consideration.

Rick Jurzyk  
203-410-3331  
23 Hedgefield CT,  
Orange, CT 06477

Rick Jurzyk  
Rick's Plumbing Service, Inc.  
1050 Bridgeport Ave, Ste D1  
Milford, CT 06460-3191

Office: 203-874-6629  
Fax: 203-877-0818  
E-Mail: rick@ricksplumbing.com  
www.Ricksplumbing.com

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Keith Soldra <ksoldra@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** KEEP AMITY SCHOOLS OPEN

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To whom it may concern.

We are contacting you in support of keeping the Amity Schools open. We believe the Amity High School Administration has taken the necessary precautions and have done everything necessary to mitigate the transmission and spread of Covid-19 within the school. We feel our son (Andrew) is safer in school physically, academically and mentally. We want him in school, even if it's hybrid. Families deserve the right to choose. Closing the schools takes OUR choice away.

Please submit this email at this evening's emerge board meeting in support of our Amity School's remaining open. We trust and believe in our Administration keeping our kids safe.

Thank you in advance.

Keith & Gina Soldra

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Debra Goldstein Kidder <debrakidder@live.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:05 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Submit to BOE Meeting tonight, please

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Hello,

Thank you for allowing email contributions to this meeting.

I have serious concerns about Amity School District returning to the hybrid instructional model while the metrics in Connecticut are trending up from an already elevated place. The predictions are dire until a vaccine is widely available. While the administrators and teachers have worked very hard to keep the schools safe, and the spread has largely come from outside the schools, it is only a matter of time before the spread begins INSIDE the buildings. And why are we waiting for that to start?

Are these decisions following the re-opening outlines presented in August? I do not believe they are. I know you are committed to keeping the student in school as much as possible and I applaud that, keeping students home not only keeps the students safe but additionally stops the spread to all the adults in the buildings that most people lose sight of in this discussion--the teachers, paras, nurses, counselors, building staff, security staff, secretaries, therapists, food service workers, coaches, and administrators, to name only a part of the school community. Unless someone has been employed in a school community, they have no idea how many people are inside a school building at any given time, how many people can be affected by COVID.

Most importantly, is this decision driven by science and medical advice?

Please re-assure us that this body is not bending towards the annoyance of parents who just want their students in school because....they think the schools \*should\* be open. Please listen to the experts.

No matter which model Amity follows, this is all temporary.

Debra Kidder

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** David Ortoleva <davidortoleva@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:11 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** letter to The Amity BOA, public comment for meeting Dec. 8, 2020  
**Attachments:** AMITY VIRUS .docx

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Dear Pam,  
Here is our letter for the BOA meeting.

Dec. 8, 2020

Greetings

My husband and I felt that it was very important to express our views on the latest activities of the Amity School District. We are retired educators and even though we did not teach in the Woodbridge district, we have been keenly aware of the present upheaval.

We live in Westville, on the border of Woodbridge. Our daughter and son-in-law are teachers in the Amity system. We are in constant contact with them, both physically and via phone. We also educate their own children whose school has operated totally remote for the whole school year thus far. I assure you, their children are doing well educationally and, despite the current uptick, we are all able to concentrate on learning AND NOT JUST SURVIVE THE VIRUS! Why would Amity allow their teachers to continue to do hybrid learning? Have any of the people who made these decisions been in the classroom? Do any of them have their own children with medical issues at home? Is there ANY concern that the TEACHERS ARE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC ANXIETY? Do parents know that their children have subs? How much information has been hidden thus far? It's mind boggling how fast important decisions have been made lately. It's almost as if the mantra has been "Decide this on a Friday afternoon and maybe no one will notice."

The truth is now out there. WE HOPE THAT AMITY WILL GO BACK TO FULL REMOTE LEARNING.

Sincerely,

David and Kathleen Ortoleva



## **Pamela Pero**

---

**From:** Deirdre OLeary  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:13 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Amity BOE- Public Comment 12/08/2020

Hello,

*Daily Mail News* reported today (12/8) that "Connecticut becomes America's hotspot with the highest number of cases per capita." I am writing to urge the Amity BOE to reconsider its decision to send all Amity Middle School students and staff back to school full time in person on December 9th. I am asking the BOE to allow Amity Middle School students and staff to remain in the hybrid model or go completely remote until January 1<sup>st</sup>, and thus making their priority the health and safety of teachers and students.

Thank you,  
Ms. Deirdre Culligan O'Leary  
AMSO- Orange Campus

Thank you,  
Ms. Deirdre O'Leary  
Gr. 7 English  
Team X

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Lori <lmar@snet.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:20 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE Meeting 12/8/20

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In regards to the decision to have our students return to school, please be aware that we are in full support of remote learning.

My daughter has been in remote since the 3rd week of school and she is thriving. The quality of education is the same as being in the classroom. Teachers are excellent at giving support to our students and it shows in their grades.

With remote learning, there is no worrying about the students who do not social distance or the random coughs or sneezes. There is no worrying about the non-sanitized surfaces in each classroom. Remote learning allows my daughter to fully focus on her school work and not on the virus.

Whatever the decision is, we will remain remote and thank you for this choice.

Lori Marinko

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Zito, Christina <CZito@newhaven.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:29 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In support of in person learning

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To the BOE and administration of Amity Region 5-

I am writing this letter in support of our schools continuing to have hybrid or in person learning. The science and data is clear: our schools are doing a great job at mitigating the spread of COVID. The data supports that COVID is not being spread at school. The benefit of in person learning far outweighs the current risks associated with potential COVID exposures at school. Parents or teachers with concerns have a choice to opt-out of in person learning, or to teach remotely. The rest of us would like to continue to be in person for as long as it is safe to do so. I have full confidence that our administration will continue to monitor the situation and adapt our learning model based on facts and data, taking into consideration the spacing, cohorting and safety measures that we are able to put in place in our district.

Sincerely,  
Christina Zito  
Woodbridge resident  
Parent of a 10<sup>th</sup> and a 12<sup>th</sup> grader.



University of  
New Haven

Christina Zito, Ph.D.  
LECTURER

College of Arts & Sciences  
University of New Haven  
300 Boston Post Rd. West Haven, CT 06516

T: 203-479-4299  
E: CZito@newhaven.edu  
W: www.newhaven.edu

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## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Andrea Drewry  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:30 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Fw: letter for BOE meeting  
**Attachments:** December 9.docx

Andrea Drewry  
Reading Consultant  
PPS Team Leader  
Amity Middle School- Bethany  
190 Luke Hill Road  
Bethany, CT 06524  
phone 203.393.3102 ext. 1017  
email: andrea.drewry@amityregion5.org

---

**From:** Andrea Drewry <andreadrewry@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:28 PM  
**To:** Andrea Drewry <andrea.drewry@amityschools.org>  
**Subject:** Fw: letter for BOE meeting

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Hi Pam,  
I am submitting this letter for the BOE meeting tonight.

Andrea Drewry

December 8, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education Members,

First, I would like to say thank you for all of the time and dedication you have put into this position. Not sure this is what any of us had prepared for this year.

I would like to respond to the decision to bring all students back to full in person learning at the middle schools. I am a member of the staff at AMSB and feel this decision needs to be reconsidered.

Current COVID- 19 metrics do not support a return to full in person learning. As a member of the reopening schools committee, I felt that the precautions put into place to start the school year were appropriate and did everything necessary to promote student learning and engagement while keeping in mind the safety of everyone in our school community. A return to full in person learning at the middle school does not provide me with the same sense of safety for everyone in the school community. This for me personally will become a huge safety risk for myself as well as my elderly mother for whom I am the primary caregiver.

For the sake of our students, teachers and staff please reconsider the decision to return to full in person learning. Please keep us safe.

Respectfully yours,

Andrea Drewry

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** jash810 <jash810@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:35 PM  
**To:** pamela.pero@amityschools.org  
**Subject:** amity high school

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Dear Mrs. Pero,

I hope this email finds you and your family well. I know these past months have not been easy ones for any of us. It has come to my attention that there will be an emergency meeting tonight to discuss future plans for our children's learning.

As a current high school social worker I can speak to many different levels of this subject. I can understand and sympathize with our hard working teachers who have had to conquer many obstacles, both inside and outside our classrooms. However, as a mental health professional and one who is seeing things from the inside I can tell you our students mental health is at risk. I have seen more anxiety, depression, and self isolation than ever before. Children need the face to face interactions with each other and teachers. They flourish with in school learning. I have a senior and a freshman and I can tell you both of them hope every day they can go back to in school learning. Besides the mental health risk I cannot begin to tell you the rise of F's I am seeing on students report cards. We are losing these kids and they are losing out on an education. Are all of these students who fail all of these subjects meant to stay back another year? How are we supposed to support these kids when they are barely getting out of bed to attend class online? They need structure and a reason to get up and out everyday. Now, I know these times are scary and we can't predict the future but I can tell you our job as educators are to provide a solid education to our students and by going all remote I do not believe we are doing what is in the best interest of our students. We are essential workers, just like doctors and nurses. We are on the frontlines and our student's education and well being are at stake!

I appreciate your time and consideration regarding this subject matter and I hope and pray you consider keeping our students in school, even if it's only in a hybrid model. Be well.

Sincerely,

Kristine Windsor

Kristine Windsor

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jim McGonigal <jim@leadingedgeteams.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:36 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Comments for Amity BoE Emergency Meeting

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BoE,

I was shocked, and quite honestly appalled to learn this past weekend that on Friday a decision was announced to return the middle schools to a fully in-person model. Making such an alarmingly moronic decision, a week out from thanksgiving, during the worst time period of this pandemic to this point can be described only as extreme gross negligence. Negligence that will cost lives in our community. Negligence that will drastically affect the short term and long term health and wellbeing of many members of our community. Shame on you.

From the very start of this pandemic, experts have warned us loudly and often that this fall and winter would be the worst time period of this crisis. Their warnings have proven true as anyone capable of accepting reality can see. They have also been warning loudly and often that the spread of the virus during the Thanksgiving holiday would likely be bad. Knowing that, and making this decision before allowing the proper time to pass to see exactly what that Thanksgiving spread would look like is again, extreme gross negligence. Shame on you.

Seeing as this decision flies in the face of common sense, it begs the question, why is this decision being made? There is literally no valid answer to this question. None. Now if we take into account what is happening in this country politically with this pandemic, I have to assume that politics are playing a part here. In which case I must say again, shame on you. Deep, deep shame.

Far too many people seem to be pretending that schools cause no spread. This is truly a dangerous level of stupidity. How on earth could anyone be allowed to continue to have a career in education if they are so willing to put students, teachers, and their families at unneeded and additional risk during the absolute worst time of this global pandemic. Shame on you.

I get it. I also wish everything was back to normal. Yet, it isn't, and it won't be for quite a while. Our federal and state leadership has and is failing us. Now our local leadership is as well. Shame on you.

I'm truly disgusted by every single "adult" that was a part of making this dangerous, negligent, and asinine decision.

Jim McGonigal

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Julie Chevan  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:38 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for Public Comment at BOE meeting  
**Attachments:** letter to BOE.12.8.20.docx

Hi Pam,  
I've attached my letter to the BOE, hoping for it to be included in the Public Comments for this evening's special meeting.  
Thanks so much,  
Julie

*Julie Chevan*  
English Department Chair  
Amity Regional High School



December 8, 2020

To the members of the Board of Education,

I have taught in the Amity district for over twenty years, always putting my students first and showing up to work faithfully, happy to be a part of such a supportive community that values education and values teachers.

While I don't doubt that recent decisions to move back to in-person learning reflect that valuing of education, I don't feel they reflect the same value of teachers. With numbers in the State at an all-time high, a vaccine on the way, and the holidays upon us, I was surprised that we couldn't wait it out the next few weeks, at least through the holidays, until this health crisis turned around a bit and it felt safer and smarter to return to school in person.

I can speak from extremely recent, raw experience in that I just lost my dad to COVID-19. While it is true he was 91, he was relatively healthy until COVID swept through his nursing facility, infecting the majority of the residents, many of the health care workers, and killing six of the residents. While, for months, the facility has successfully kept the virus out, meticulously following protocols and limiting exposure, once the virus breached the facility, it spread like wildfire.

While none of us seems to know the actual numbers at Amity, I know that many students, their family members, and an alarmingly high number of faculty members have become infected. There are just too many variables, too many things we can't control and too many members of the community non-COVID compliant to feel confident that transmission isn't happening here in the building.

I truly can't wait to be back in my classroom with ALL of my students safely in person. There is truly no substitute. But waiting a few more weeks seems to me the safest and smartest course of action. A few more weeks will not damage our students irreparably – COVID could.

Respectfully,

Julie Chevan.

Faculty member

Amity Regional High School

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Lindsay Benjamin <lindsayodded@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:40 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Correspondence for Tonight's Meeting

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To Whom it May Concern:

It is with great concern that I write to you regarding the return to full in person learning effective tomorrow at AMSO.

This letter below is from Region 9. The current leading indicator for their 2 towns is the same as Orange and Woodbridge e.g. 35 and 25 per 100,000.

They CLOSED until January 4th based on "strong recommendations" from their Health Department.

We need to understand how 2 districts can come to polar opposite conclusions.

We also need to understand why Amity is taking the risk as teachers are vehemently opposed and many more families opt out of in person. When the staff feels the school is unsafe, we as parents lose confidence in sending our children to school.

This immediate pivot from full remote to full in person learning during a time of increased transmission is ill advised and needs to be reconsidered.

As mentioned above, please take the time to read the correspondence below.

Lindsay Benjamin

Dear ER9 families, faculty and staff,

Yesterday, we received the latest health report for Easton and Redding. Currently, the leading indicator (the number of new cases 14 day avg per 100k pop.) and the secondary indicator (positivity rate) remain in the red. Last week Easton and Redding health officials shared that we should anticipate a post-Thanksgiving increase in the number of positive cases. They warned that the increase will likely impact our community next week (10-14

days after Thanksgiving) and cause staff absences due to district-related quarantines, pending test results and childcare issues as a result of school closures in surrounding towns.

In today's meeting, our local health officials urged us to adopt a proactive approach rather than reacting after students and staff are exposed.

Based on their strong recommendations, we will remain in distance learning at least through December 23rd and will plan to return to in-person instruction on January 4th.

Determination of the learning model (hybrid or in-person) will be communicated prior to the return from the winter recess and will be made based upon the health metrics at that time.

There are no universally agreeable solutions to the complicated circumstances of this pandemic. While I am fully aware of the challenges this shift will create for many of our families, I believe this measured approach is the best way to safeguard the health and safety of our students and staff, and will provide more runway for families to have stability in terms of the model we're using. This plan also eliminates the continued disruptive adjustments for both families and employees that result from the week-to-week waiting and unpredictable nature of multiple changes. As we move forward, we will continue to refine our distance learning model to ensure students continue to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Thank you for your continued support, flexibility and understanding during these unprecedented times.

Best,

Rydell Harrison, Ed. D

Superintendent of Schools

Easton-Redding-Region 9 School Districts

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## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Amy Benton  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:44 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for BOE Meeting 12/8

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I find myself in the unique and dual positions of parent and educator in the Amity School District. Out of respect for our great district and the amazing students I have the privilege of teaching year after year, I have made it my practice to support the decisions made by the district as I believed these decisions represented the best interests of our students, including my own child. I was even given the chance to help develop some of those decisions because Amity is great at giving teachers a voice in so many of the essential initiatives that help shape our students' educational experience.

I am what my mother would have called a "company girl." However, I can no longer remain silent as I witness what I consider a misstep by administration. I can only speak to the teaching conditions at Amity Middle School Bethany, but I believe that the conditions are not safe to bring back all students. The decision to do so was published on Friday afternoon and planned for Wednesday of this week. Teachers, students, and community members were shocked by this change in status because of the spiking rates of COVID positive cases in our state as well as the two towns that attend our middle school. Additionally, this abrupt and unexpected change in model gave teachers only 48 hours to prepare.

An "all in" approach is often touted as the ultimate goal of the re-opening committee. I participated on the re-opening committee this summer because of my overwhelming concern for the health and well-being of my students and my fellow teachers. And I agree whole-heartedly that the goal for re-entry should strive for an in-person experience for all students, only if and when the conditions are safe and responsible to do so. We are not there yet.

The hybrid model has certainly posed its share of challenges for teachers and students alike. However, Amity teachers have risen to that challenge, learned new teaching platforms, and engaged students in creative and previously undiscovered ways these past few months, and they will continue to do so until this crisis subsides. I have watched our students rise to this challenge as well, making new friends in a cohort of students that were previously unfamiliar to them. I have watched with pride as students choose again and again to support each other's learning on a daily basis. I witness firsthand the beauty inherent in hardship, and trust me when I say, that our students have empathy in abundance.

No offense to the precious elementary school students in our communities, but the young adults who attend AMSB should not be compared to the children of the elementary schools. It is true that they are both cohorted, but please be aware that our middle school students break their cohorts for at least two classes per day, including physical education, band, choir, Mandarin, and special services. Doubling this hallway traffic will be detrimental to their safety and increase their potential exposure. Please understand too, when comparing our students to those in the elementary schools, that our classrooms are significantly smaller than those found in either elementary school, and our students are significantly larger than their elementary counterparts. Our rooms do not allow for 3-4 feet of distance between students.

Please understand that the change to an “all in” model at the middle schools will not translate to an increase in educational opportunity for our students. Since parents have the option to opt their children out of in-person learning under the Amity re-opening plan, teachers will still have the responsibility of educating those students at home synchronously. This means that teacher attention will still be fractured between the two groups of students while the challenges and delays of constant technology failures take time away from learning for all parties involved. Essentially, students will be at an increased risk while receiving no increased benefit.

Therefore, as a parent and an educator, I respectfully request that the Amity Board of Education consider the health of its students and teachers as the highest priority and consider moving all learning to the remote model at least until after the holiday break.

*Best,*

*Amy Benton  
Team Black - English Content Leader  
AMSB*

## Pamela Pero

---

**From:** Joanna Garfinkle <joanna.garfinkle11@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:48 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Support for the Hybrid model

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Dear Ms. Pero,

I am writing to voice my support for continuation of the hybrid model for Amity Regional schools. It appears that the hybrid model has been an effective and safe mode of instruction for our students, providing vital in-person contact with teachers while at the same time minimizing risk. Given the increasing rate of Covid-19 cases in the state, it does not seem like a safe decision to move to fully in-person at this time.

Thank you,  
Joanna Garfinkle

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Loredana Pfannenbecker (US - Tax) <loredana.c.pfannenbecker@pwc.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:49 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BoE Public Comments for 12/8/2020 Special Meeting

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Dear Members of the Board of Education -

I appreciate your time this evening and I would like to understand the Board and Superintendent's decision to move to full in-person learning at AMSB as well as hybrid at Amity High School. To say that I am disappointed by this decision is an understatement as town and district metrics fall well within the state guidelines for remote learning let alone full in-person learning. Further, there is currently a major surge in New Haven County (and most of Connecticut), which I would have expected would further justify the decision to safely remain remote, as most neighboring towns are currently doing.

With such a major surge in New New Haven County, as well as increasing demand on our front line workers and shortage of hospital beds, my expectation would have been that we continue to try and keep our communities as safe as possible. This does not appear to be the right time to rush back to school when we should be focusing on containing the spread in our community. I fully appreciate that we may not have seen a lot of evidence of transmission in schools directly (albeit we did have an outbreak after Halloween). However, do we know how many students unknowingly brought the virus home to their parents/family members?

I further understand that each family has the right to keep their child fully remote, as our family has chosen to do, and for that I am grateful. However, do we not have a responsibility to our community to try and keep everyone safe? Have we taken into account the safety of our teachers and faculty members? It is my understanding that our teachers, in a unified manner, have expressed their concern for returning to school at this time and their voices really should be heard. They should be commended for everything they have had to endure this year and I do not believe they are given the recognition they deserve.

It is for these reasons that I do not support a return to school at this time and I would like to understand the rationale behind your decision, which does not appear to follow state guidelines.

Sincerely,

**Loredana Pfannenbecker**

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## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Kantor <kantolupe@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 12:59 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for tonight's BOE Meeting

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December 8, 2020

Dear Amity Board of Education and Dr. Byars:

While I am not a resident of Bethany, Orange, or Woodbridge, I have been an Amity teacher, primarily at AMSO, for over 25 years. I am proud to be an "Amity Lifer." I am fortunate to work alongside such a talented, passionate family of educators, and Amity students have always been a source of joy for me. I desperately long to be back in school with all my students for a full, "normal" day. However, in light of the alarming rise in the COVID positivity rate, I realize just how dangerous this would currently be. I respectfully request that you allow Amity District 5 to remain fully remote until January 11.

Let us not confuse quality education with daycare. I am positive that our dedicated administrators will attest to the fact that Amity teachers continue to provide rigorous, quality instruction regardless of being in-person or remote. We strive to collaborate with colleagues and students to create engaging lessons and offer specific feedback -- whether we are in-person or remote.

I understand many parents' frustration that remote learning makes it difficult for them to work. Trust me, I have two children of my own who have been remote for about a month now. One of my daughters definitely could use more support with remote learning, but she must manage on her own. I would love for my daughters to be in school, but I respect the decision of their district to protect everyone -- staff and students alike. Furthermore, I have had to address my children's increased anxiety as they question my safety because I am returning to the building when so many other districts are now fully remote. Beginning tomorrow, I will be expected to be in a classroom where students will be less than three feet apart. Our fear is justified.

I truly believe that better times are very soon ahead. I was thrilled to be back in school and to have made it this far into the school year. Now, however, is the time to take a pause. The sooner we do this, the sooner we can be back together fully in person and for a longer period of time. Please do not let the fact that parents need us to provide daycare be the driver in your decision making. Please consider all your stakeholders. Your teachers and staff need to stay healthy so that we can continue to work with our treasured students.

Respectfully yours,

Marie Kantor

Grade 7 English

Team Leader, Team Y

Orange

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Michael Lee <mdlee1@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Schools re-opening

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Hello,

I am a resident of Bethany and wanted to put my thoughts forward about the decision to re-open our schools next week, and return to in-person learning.

I disagree with this for two reasons.

Firstly, **safety for both students and faculty**. Cases in Bethany are at 27.4. Cases in Orange are at 36.4. Cases in Woodbridge are at 24.3. Surrounding towns have even higher numbers; Derby has a rate of 58.2, Ansonia 57.2 and Prospect 62.7.

Secondly we need a **consistent approach for our students, parents and faculty**. Going back and forth every few weeks must be very unsettling for everyone. For parents to arrange their schedules to students ability to focus. And faculty to do their job.

Lets just make a decision to keep all education remote until 4 January.

Respectfully,

Michael lee.  
43 Bethany woods rd, Bethany.

**Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Amy <4amymc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE Meeting Tonight

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Hello,

I am writing in support of the teachers' request for Amity to go fully remote until January 4th when the Covid statistics can be evaluated again. With the holidays quickly approaching and the likelihood some will not follow guidance and hold gatherings with those outside of their families, as well as a general uptick in cases in the State, it seems wisest to take caution in the coming weeks. Amity has done a fine job engaging kids when they are remote. There is no need to risk the teachers' health, the kids health, or anyone in their immediate families.

Sincerely,  
Amy McNamara

Sent from my iPhone

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** SAL J MELCHIORE JR <smelchiore@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:55 AM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public comment

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I'm Sal Melchiore and live at 546 Lambert Rd. I have two kids in Amity 5. One is a Sophomore the other is in 7th grade. It's time to see in a public forum what the fail rate comparison is for school year 2020 to years past. Then we all can judge. We will have a permanently left behind group of kids that will take years to rectify. If what I and others think is true. This report should be eye opening. We want to know.

Follow the Science not the fear!

Sent from my iPad

To whom this may concern:

Hello my name is . I am a seventh grade student at Amity Middle School Orange.

During online schooling I found it very mentally tiring and stressful. I sit at my screen all day, without my family because they are at work or at their own schools.

Constant hours staring at the same screen isn't good for my learning, and I get very distracted while doing my work. Without my family I feel lonely and deserted. I do not think it's good for us kids in junior high to just sit all day in the same chair at the same screen even with breaks, it gets very upsetting.

I don't feel that I can do my best work like this academically or emotionally. It is very difficult to learn without being present with a teacher especially for math IM in the top math group and many times I can't see what she's doing with this technology and the glare from the screen in the whiteboard.

If given the opportunity to go to school, I will make sure I wear my mask, wash my hands properly, and social distance because attending in school is very important to me. I will be able to see my teachers and perform much better than I am now. I need to be with people and I can't see how much longer this can be like this for kids. I will do a lot better personally and academically.

Please consider keeping the Amity Middle School open with live teaching from the teachers because if not I'm just going to be alone all day, being taught by the computer and not my actual in person teacher, not being able to ask questions and get answers immediately, and therefore make everything harder and more stressful.

We are different from the high school! Most of us have never even been left alone and now we are required to do everything by ourselves and be alone all day. We do not rotate like high school classes and we stay in the same class all day with the same group of kids. We are allowed to get up and stretch a little bit but that's basically it.

Thank you for your consideration.

AMSO

7th grader

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Allyson Wuerth  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:09 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE letter  
**Attachments:** Amity Board of Education.docx

Thank you!

Allyson Wuerth



Amity Board of Education,

I am an Amity teacher and parent writing to express my concern for Amity's return to the hybrid model for the high school and full-in person instruction for the middle schools. Amity is my family, my community; it truly means everything to me. I believe wholeheartedly in the model of community Amity has projected during my tenure at the school. I carry those ideals into my home life and model them with my own children, one of whom is a freshman at Amity this year. The other will be a student at the middle school next year. My children understand Covid statistics; they understand that the majority of children do not get sick from Covid or experience symptoms to even know that they have it. They wear masks to protect others, people around them who may be more vulnerable to such a virus. This is part of being a good citizen, a productive member of a community. We don't leave our home unless we need food, medicine, or other necessities. Unfortunately, this is not true of many, many people in our community. As a teacher, I had several student emails over the long holiday weekend from students asking for extensions on assignments because they were traveling home after Thanksgiving. I don't think you need me to tell you about Covid, but I've had at least one friend test positive after more than 14 days after exposure. This is why my own son will be remote learning until things are safer and clearer in terms of infection. Perhaps I am overly sensitive to this illness, but I am one of those people with "underlying conditions." As a long-time type 1 diabetic, Covid could mean a death sentence for me. In 2003, when I was just 25 years old, I contracted influenza from a colleague who came to work sick. Consequently, I spent 5 days in the ICU in ketoacidosis (a deadly condition that results from uncontrolled high blood glucose levels—usually from infection) with a blood glucose level hovering in the 600-900 range (a non-diabetic might have a blood sugar of 85-100). My doctors could not get my blood glucose level down, and when they finally did, one doctor told me I was the closest he's ever come to losing a patient. That was the flu. We know Covid is more deadly than the flu. According to the CDC, 5 out of 10 diabetics who contract Covid will end up on ventilators; 3-10 will die. *This* is why my son kept his mask on at all times while at Amity (even in gym when many of his classmates did not wear masks). He was so anxious and scared he would bring Covid home to me. How many students might be in my son's position? How many students walk the halls of Amity wondering if this might be the day they infect a parent or grandparent who will not be able to fight off what a teenager can? We are all in this together. Right? I believe that Amity students working remotely through winter break is a community service. We work so hard for our kids (students and actual kids!). I give up hours upon hours of free time to work with students who need extra help, college recommendation letters, or need me to moderate a club. Is it that foreign a concept to consider students doing something for adults? It's their turn to protect us. This is what it means to be a compassionate, productive member of a community, to be an effective world citizen. Our incredibly hard working and caring administrators have built a school community upon these very principles. Let's honor their hard work and dedication as well!

I am lucky and ever so grateful that Amity granted me the privilege to teach remotely. But right now, we should all be working remotely. Despite the prevailing rhetoric, teachers are NOT front line workers, or "essential workers." If the last 9 months have proven anything at all, they've proven, though not ideal, we CAN do our job from home. And if I am "essential," or "front line," where's my December 2020 Covid vaccine? Where's my proper PPE provided by my employer?

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Allyson Wuerth

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Keith Smolinski  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:15 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter for this evenings meeting

Dear Pam,

I hope this finds you well. Here is a letter that I wrote for tonight's board of ed meeting. Can you please ask that the person be careful summarizing this? Last time they did, it was interpreted differently then intended and reflected poorly on our school and myself. I hope it does not look insulting? I always try to be cordial.

Dear board of education members,

I would first like to thank our nurses, custodians, secretaries, and building administrators (Mr. Doyle and Dr. Tracy) for their efforts during this extraordinarily difficult time.

I would also like to thank the board for their service and the time they have volunteered in trying to make the best decisions for our schools during this pandemic.

I am writing this letter as a concerned teacher, parent, and community member. I am deeply saddened by the conversations that are occurring amongst faculty, students, and community members.

There appears to be a great deal of distrust and uncertainty among faculty and community members about decisions being made on their behalf by the boards of health and boards of education. Frankly, teachers feel left out and extremely confused and there are more questions than answers. Let me use examples that have led me to that conclusion.

1. The CDC guidelines about level of risk and recommendations coming from our own first selectman and towns seem to conflict with the assessments being made by our health boards and school officials. Other towns with similar metrics (i.e. region 9) have health officials telling people they strongly recommend remote learning. How can two towns, so similar, have such vastly varying opinions?
2. There is also an increasing distrust from the lack of notification about cases in the schools. Multiple parents have shared examples of instances where they were notified several DAYS after their child was potentially exposed in their class. One such example was from a parent whose son was notified 7 days after being exposed in the class. Can you imagine the number of people he could have infected within that time? His own elderly grandmother included? This seems to demonstrate that our health department cannot keep up with the amount of contact tracing being completed? Along this line, there also seems to be a discrepancy between the positive cases we are told about and the positive tests that have actually occurred. This impacts informed decisions about the safety of the schools and does not allow for families to make difficult risk assessment choices. Many schools in the area are reporting every case, regardless if the student is remote, in person, etc and that would be useful information to have.

3. There has been a disconnect between what is happening in schools and within the community. **Teachers have found out about private sports leagues, social events, and even private Halloween parties from students and parents without any information about these activities from the board of health or school board. These activities endanger teachers and teachers do not feel safe knowing that these are happening and we could be possibly exposed by these community actions. With many staff living or caring for in-laws, or trying to protect loved ones from exposure, this seems like a dangerous reality for staff members, especially when sitting with large groups of individuals for 5 hours plus a day.**
4. There has been no anonymous surveys given to parents and teachers to truly assess the level at which people are interacting with others. Students have made it clear that they have traveled during the holidays and have been seeing circles of friends and family. No one is going to rightly admit about violating "the rules." This data would be useful to assess how much POTENTIAL exposure could be coming to our schools, especially during the holiday season.
5. Teachers have not been asked for any feedback regarding the status of their classrooms, their safety concerns, and their well being. I have witnessed people breaking down emotionally and physically from this. **TEACHERS ARE EXHAUSTED.** And by bringing everyone back does NOT make it easier on anyone. As long as we are running these virtual meetings simultaneously at school via Google Meet or Zoom, it is a massive amount of work to manage classroom discipline and protocols while also instructing those at home.
6. We are sandwiched between two major religious holidays. I don't know the percentages, but I am certain a great number of our district families celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah. Many students, faculty, and community members were hoping for some sort of semblance of celebration, albeit small. By increasing risk, many are now contemplating nullifying visits with immediate family. This could have happened if the district had decided to remote at least during these religious times. This has a serious emotional impact on people and we as a district are a business which embraces diversity and people.

There is much more to this, but I encourage the board to reach out to teachers. Reach out to the community. Reach out to religious leaders. Reach out and have some conversations. We just went through a major professional development training dealing with difficult conversations. Why are we not having them together? The more teachers and community members are left out, the greater the loss of trust. I do not want to see that happen for trust is a very difficult thing to get back and all of this impacts our students directly.

I wish you all a blessed holiday season. I hope that you stay safe and healthy. I pray that you walk a mile in our shoes for one moment and reflect upon this difficult time.

Respectfully,  
Dr. Keith Smolinski

*Dr. Keith Smolinski*

**From:** >  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:16 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE 12/8 Comment

Greetings,

I hope that this email finds everyone reading and watching well and healthy. These are difficult and unprecedented times we are living through. Right now, it is crucial that we work cooperatively to respect the emotional and physical boundaries of those around us. The near arrival of a vaccination brings good news and hopes. If anything, now is the time to be extremely precautionous.

I would like to begin, first and foremost, to discuss where I stand on the reopening of Amity Regional School District #5. In my view, the district should absolutely be full-remote right now. This pandemic is currently at a record surge due to the newly-mutated coronavirus strain that has become all the more contagious. One of the most common ways the virus manifests via community and pod outbreaks. As the virus poses a threat to teachers, faculty, and students in our community, many teachers are quarantined from home. The reopening of Amity High School, and the full reopening of the middle schools, sends a message that the nature of this virus is not as serious and deadly as it truly is. This virus is a matter of human life. We all want to return to normalcy, and we must work together to make this happen as soon as possible.

In addition, I would like to stress that the "choice" to stay full-remote is not a choice for everyone. Members of the district are living with high-risk individuals. Online learning is not easy for anyone. Staring at a computer screen for over five hours every day, coupled with the trauma many face during these times, is proven to be detrimental for emotional and cognitive health. The school code requires cameras and/or microphones to be on at all times. This dismisses the reality that everyone's home environment is different, and many cannot turn their cameras on for extenuating circumstances. I ask that the administration adjust this rule to make online learning equitable.

Despite all of this, going back to school is not the right move. These circumstances are unique, and therefore, we need to adapt. Otherwise, the current measures take a toll on much of the community.

I thank you for your time, and I hope you strongly consider what I have to say.

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jackie Valenzuela  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:31 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** letter to the BOE

My email was blocked from my personal email.

Dear Amity BOE Members,

As a teacher at Amity Regional High School, I am completely committed to my students, my district and the school community at large. Since March, I have seen us grow together as both a school community and family. It is in times of uncertainty that we really begin to realize how much we need to support one another. With that said, I've watched beloved colleagues and friends break down, become clinically depressed and express the notion of generally feeling like a failure. It has broken my heart. I've had the ability, for my own safety as a high-risk individual with several health concerns, to stay home since September. I've been able to both establish genuine and caring relationships with my students and their families and still maintain my own safety. I only wish my colleagues could have this experience and right now they don't. My friends and colleagues are not only stressed about how teaching in the hybrid model is effective, but also how safe they truly are in the school building itself. Right now, teachers cannot fully engage with students under the hybrid model because of the distancing that needs to happen as well as the fact that teachers are spread thin through trying to navigate technology, students at home and in the classroom. It is difficult to say the least - especially in the arts. I have found that by teaching remotely, I've had the opportunity to engage fully, and more personally. I've been able to meet the demands of both my students and their families by being one on one with them and by holding them accountable through zoom classes. I've been able to give personal feedback through face-to-face interactions in zoom. My students have succeeded through this platform and I can only hope to make you realize that every other teacher has this ability as well. Every teacher I know at Amity is dedicated to the success of students in the building as well as their safety. It is with this that I can only hope that you consider, for the safety of both teachers and students, to move to a remote option until January or when indicators dictate a safe return to school. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jackie Valenzuela

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Barbara Ceneri  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:42 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** RE: BOE letter - Invitation to view

December 8, 2020

Dear Dr. Byars and members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the decision to return to the full in-person model of teaching.

My main concern is for the safety of students and staff. It is December and we are in between major holidays. As teachers, we cannot control what our students are doing when they are not with us. Putting us in closer proximity to our students puts all of us at a higher risk.

I hope you will reconsider and postpone this change until the numbers of positive cases lowers. No one should be afraid to attend school, and the changes you are planning to implement are creating an environment of anxiety and doubt.

Respectively submitted,

Barbara Ceneri  
AMSO Reading Specialist  
Orange resident

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**From:** Pamela Pero <Pamela.Pero@amityregion5.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:59 PM  
**To:** Barbara Ceneri <Barbara.Ceneri@amityregion5.org>  
**Subject:** RE: BOE letter - Invitation to view

Hi, Barb.

If possible, would you please email your public comment directly instead of sharing as a Google doc?

Thanks,

*Pam Pero*

**From:** Barbara Ceneri (via Google Docs) <[drive-shares-noreply@google.com](mailto:drive-shares-noreply@google.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:34 PM  
**To:** [pamela.pero@amityschools.org](mailto:pamela.pero@amityschools.org)  
**Subject:** BOE letter - Invitation to view

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barbara.ceneri@amityschools.org has invited you to **view** the following document:



**BOE letter**

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Google LLC, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA

You have received this email because barbara.ceneri@amityschools.org shared a document with you from Google Docs.

**Google**<sup>™</sup>



## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Jonathan Hawes <jdhawes333@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:40 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In school learning.

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I am strongly in favor of my child returning to school full time as soon as possible. It's very hard for him to stay focused at home. He needs to be at school and see his teachers everyday.

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Courtney Campbell  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:42 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero

Good Evening Board of Education Members,

This is a trying time for all, we all know that. I think the only thing that has kept me sane is my family. I think that remaining in the remote learning model makes sense because this gives everyone the chance to remain away from a dangerous environment that could impact our ability to spend that needed time with family now and in the upcoming weeks. I have to say, the last three weeks of remote learning and my interactions with students have been calm, relaxed, and met with far less stress than when the hustle and bustle of balancing both in-school and remote learning, all the while being nervous about being in the building. We all have someone in our lives that is high risk and we need to worry about. Social emotional wellness is at the forefront of our educational system and the values at home, so if family is such a crucial part of the process of healing and staying focused, then why are we acting as though we are in a situation we cannot control when we can. We can control how much exposure we have with others when we are safe in our homes doing our jobs. I really appreciate all that everyone has been doing to maintain as safe an environment as possible while trying to normalize things as much as possible.

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Ditas Benipayo <ditasj@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:44 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** Lily Johnson  
**Subject:** Amity Reopening for In-Person Learning

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To whom it may concern,

With the coronavirus outbreaks surging and increasing, in-person learning is presently very unwise and risks everyone's health, those of students, school staff, and associated families. Please reconsider.

Thank you for your time,  
Family of Lily Johnson, Grade 12

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Alisha Nappi <alisha.nappi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:46 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Parent letter in support of the reopening of middle school

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To whom this may concern:

As a Yale university employee working in the health plan taking care of all the students and a front line worker during coronavirus, I do know all the facts and the transmission information. I also know that you are doing a wonderful job keeping our kids safe at school. I know you have their best interest at heart and not only are you trying to keep them safe but you are affectively keeping the staff safe as well. This letter is in support of your decision to let the Amity Middle School students go back full-time in person. I think this is the best decision for everyone. I think the kids are out and about in social situation and a less controlled way when they don't have school hours or supervision.

My son Emerson Nappi is a seventh grader at Amity Middle School orange. Having him go back yesterday was like a breath of fresh air for him and for our house. He has done a wonderful job with social distancing and with handwashing and wearing a mask. He is so eager to get on the bus and his face was just so different the whole evening having seen his teachers and people in general and not being home alone while we were at work.

I am in support of your decision to go back full-time for Amity Middle School given the close monitoring you guys are doing and I fully trust you guys and your decision. I think you are able to do tracing very well and the staff and students are committed to being safe.

I fully support the in person full-time instruction at the middle school level given the pod has worked so efficiently and they are going to stay in the same room and have the teachers move around. This is very different from high school.

Also, middle school students are very different from high school students and need more nurturing and a different learning environment. It is too much to go from an elementary education to know in person education at all and I believe Amity Middle School has done a

great job keeping the kids safe. I think the best place for them is to be with his teachers at the school!

It is ultimately your decision please stand strong and know that many parents out there and students out there support your decision. When you all decided to do hybrid in the summer we were also in support of your decision knowing that you have everything you need to make wise choices for our children.

It is ultimately your decision. please stand strong and know that many parents out there and students out there support your decision. When you decided to do hybrid in the summer we were also in support of your decision knowing that you have everything you need to make wise choices for our children.

Please do not change your decision and go remote for the middle school students. I know this is not a one size fits all approach and I appreciate the fact that you will still allow some families to do remote learning. Given that they have this option, why do the rest of the middle school students have to suffer? If you guys think it's safe for them to go and their parents do as well and there is a large number of students that want to be back in school, then I think that you should stick to the plan.

Please do not change your decision and go remote for the middle school students. I know this is not a one size fits all approach and I appreciate the fact that you will still allow some families to do remote learning. Given that they have this option, why do the rest of the middle school students have to suffer? If you guys think it's safe for them to go in their parents do as well and there is a large number of students that want to be back in school, then I think that you should stick to the plan with constant monitoring of the situation of course.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alisha and Sean Nappi  
AMSO Parent of a 7th grader

Sent from my iPhone

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Dori Buonanno <dorib2260@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:47 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Regarding- Emergency Meeting Tonight

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My child is in 3rd grade at BCS elementary and I am nervous about school being open this month. I am in favor of doing online school at least until January.

Thank you,  
Concerned Parent

Dear Ms. Pero,

I would like to share a few comments/questions for today's Board of Ed meeting. I would really appreciate it if my comments were shared anonymously, but it okay to say that they are from a current Amity HS student.

Although I don't know the focus of the emergency Board of Ed meeting, I would like to comment on the workload at Amity HS this past semester during the pandemic. I am a high honor roll senior who is applying to colleges. I would also like to ask several questions.

This semester, many Amity high school students (on remote learning days) are spending about FIVE HOURS on Zoom, to attend synchronous classes. In addition, every single day, students like myself are spending an ADDITIONAL 7-8 HOURS on a computer screen trying to keep up with the demanding homework load. My peers and I are trying our best to to keep up with Amity teachers' high expectations and trying to maintain good grades, but it is a LOT given the pandemic that we are also dealing with.

Some students are unduly stressed out by this situation. It does not feel to many of us that Amity HS teachers, on the whole, have made ANY modifications to the work load or to their grading expectations. The result is that many students are working around the clock trying to manage their work, leaving very little to no time to relax or decompress. Many students are dealing with mental health issues because of this.

Here are my questions for the Amity HS administrators and the Board of Ed:

- (1) What has the administration done thus far to regulate the amount of work we are being given, given the pandemic?
- (2) Are you aware that, from the perspective and experience of students, there has been NO DISCERNIBLE adjustment to the work load/expectations?

(3) What will the administration or Board of Ed do to try to learn more about how students are feeling? What will you do to further regulate the work load and expectations, if you agree this should happen?

(4) Although formal midterms were canceled, are high school teachers ALLOWED to still give “informal” midterms? If yes, why is this allowed? (Please note that deciding to allow informal midterms but to cancel formal midterms makes no sense to me.)

Thank you so much for time,  
(senior at Amity)



Hello,

I am writing in regards to the reopening of the Amity schools for in person learning. I, along with many parents, many other students, and the teachers' union, believe that the the Amity schools should be operating fully remotely and that the decision to return to any in-person learning whatsoever is a disservice to our community. The decision to reopen the high school for hybrid learning and fully reopen the middle schools for full in-person learning poses a huge risk to the health and well-being of our community. Especially with the holidays underway, coronavirus cases are surging in record numbers, far more severely than what was deemed unsafe in March. The school district must operate accordingly.

While it is true that many students have struggled with remote learning, the very lives of our community members are at stake.

I urge you to reconsider your decision to reopen the Amity schools.

Class of 2021

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Conners, Jennifer <Jennifer.Conners@YNHH.ORG>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:54 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Cc:** 'Jennifer Antalik'  
**Subject:** Public Comment

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December 8, 2020

Dear Jennifer P. Byars Superintendent of Schools, Anna Mahon, Principal, Amity Sr. High School, Jason Tracey, Principal, Amity Middle School, Bethany, Kathy Burke, Principal, Amity Middle School, Orange, and respected members of the Amity Regional School District #5 Board of Education; Andrea Hubbard, Jennifer Turner, John Belfonti, Christopher Browe, Shannan Carlson, Paul Davis, Carla Eichler, Steven DeMaio, George Howard, Robyn Berke, Patricia Cardozo, Sheila McCreven, Patrick Reed;

As a former Mental Health Care Worker and Genetic Epidemiology Research Scientist, I feel compelled to write to you about my concerns regarding the possibility of our school district returning to a fully remote learning template. The coronavirus pandemic has taken a significant toll on all of us as we cope with stressors at home and the anxiety and uncertainty about the future. But, we are adults. Imagine for a moment what our children are going through. On top of worrying about the pandemic, their families, their friends, the state of the world, our politics, our lives, our wellbeing, our jobs, our economy, our income and everything else these children should never have to stress about for many years, they suddenly have to re-learn how they learn in order to adapt to distance learning. I've spoken to several students and so many of them feel that even though they try, they can't "turn it off" while learning from home. Others in a worse scenario, are having difficulty getting motivated to "turn it on". In either case, their sense of structure has been taken away; the very platform from which everything else is cultivated, grows and flourishes.

Unfortunately, this all too often becomes a trigger for adolescent mental health issues such as severe anxiety, loneliness, difficulty concentrating, depression, suicidal ideation, intentions of self-harm, and so much more. Also, keep in mind that often educators, school administrators and counselors are a first line of defense when a student is struggling with their mental health. But when schools close, so too does their window into students' wellbeing because in-person interactions between students and those who would typically help them ceased. So, yes, statistically child abuse complaints will drop during this time, but not because the abuse had stopped. Instead, the drop in reported cases will be due to the fact that children will no longer be interacting with the people who they typically trust and to whom they report their concerns.

I believe pandemic-related mental health will be among the most prevalent concerns in both the immediate and distant future. I was recently reading an article about a study that sited nearly a quarter of people in the United States are experiencing symptoms of depression, nearly three times the number before the COVID-19 pandemic began. As we know, stress and anxiety stemming from the pandemic can bring about new mental health issues for those who have not needed help before and can exacerbate problems for those whose mental health is already compromised. But, children are especially susceptible because their wellbeing and world views are

shaped by routine. When that routine is upended, such as was the case when schools and day cares suddenly closed, sports activities and summer camps were cancelled and students were separated from friends and family, it can be catastrophic for their mental wellbeing. Isolation has been another top concern for students during the pandemic.

With all due respect, I'd like to express that this decision is not at all about us or the teachers or the parents, or the administrators, or any adult. It never was and in the history of education it never will be. We wouldn't be educators or administrators, or healthcare workers or parents if it were. It's about our kids and what's best for them and their well-being. It's about the freedom to learn and be taught appropriately amid the chaos. It's about finding structure or reforming it when it's lost. It's about maintaining a routine for our students, for their mental health. It's about when this is all over sending them off into the world as best as we can with all the possible tools we can give them to succeed. It's about giving them the best possible education we can, face to face with as much human contact as possible. For them, and their mental health.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope you see a way to agree with my words of passion.

Sincerely and with respect,

Jen Conners

Working to "enable every Amity student to become a lifelong learner and a literate, caring, creative and effective world citizen." District Mission Statement

*Jennifer Conners. MSW, ACRP-CP*  
Genetic Epidemiology Research  
Radiology and Biomedical Imaging  
Yale New Haven Hospital  
55 Park Street  
Floor 3R, Suite 340  
New Haven, CT 06512  
(203) 688-7432  
(203) 688-6228  
[Jennifer.Conners@ynhh.org](mailto:Jennifer.Conners@ynhh.org)

**YaleNewHavenHealth**

This message originates from the Yale New Haven Health System. The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential. If you are the intended recipient you must maintain this message in a secure and confidential manner. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and destroy this message. Thank you.

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Elena Serapiglia <elena.serapiglia@amityschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:56 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Fwd: For Board of Education meeting this evening

Dear Pam,  
My email from my personal email was blocked, so I am sending it from my school email.  
Elena

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Elena Serapiglia** <elena.serapiglia@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tue, Dec 8, 2020, 1:55 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: For Board of Education meeting this evening  
**To:** Elena Serapiglia <elena.serapiglia@amityschools.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Elena Serapiglia** <elena.serapiglia@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tue, Dec 8, 2020, 1:54 PM  
**Subject:** For Board of Education meeting this evening  
**To:** <pamela.pero@amityregion5.org>

Dear Amity Board of Education,

I am writing as a resident of Woodbridge and as an employee of the Amity School District.

First, thank you for all of the time and effort that you spend in creating an incredible school district for our students. It is also a wonderful place to work. I have a great deal of respect for our Superintendent, Dr. Byars, well as for our high school administration, led by principal Anna Mahon. I know that all of you have worked to create a safe learning environment.

This is why I am so surprised by the decision to return the high school to the hybrid model and to move the middle schools to full enrollment in the weeks between Thanksgiving and winter break.

In a year that has already been so stressful, the attempt to shield my students, my own children, and my parents from the situation I am in is taking a toll on my well being.

This year, I purchased disability insurance with the thought that I might get Covid from school, hopefully survive, but deal with long term (and still unknown) effects that would make me unable to continue working in a job that I love so much.

Like so many others, I have limited my errands when I can, opting for contactless deliveries and curbside pick up when possible. I have stopped seeing friends in person and have only occasionally seen my parents and in-laws because my children and I are potential dangers to them. This has been incredibly difficult for my kids,

who are used to seeing their grandparents weekly. It has been very upsetting to my parents and in-laws whose identities are shaped by their relationships with their grandchildren.

During this holiday season, please keep in mind that while some parents have the option to have their students attend school remotely, in order to be able to celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Christmas with their families this year, many school employees will not be able to celebrate with others because we are exposed to hundreds of people per day, and do not want to endanger our at-risk family members who live outside of our households.

Please reconsider in-person learning between now and the end of 2020 to support the social-emotional well-being of the many members of the school community.

Respectfully,  
Elena Serapiglia  
Woodbridge resident  
Amity employee

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Christina Allen <christina.allen@amityschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:57 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero; Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE letter

Dear Board of Education Members,

I am a proud Amity teacher. I love my students, this school, and this community.

However, while I truly feel a deep dedication to my students and my craft, that passion is currently being overshadowed by the intense fear I feel as I walk into the building each school day.

The COVID numbers statewide are higher than they've ever been. Because of that, I rarely leave my house. My family and I take the threat of this virus and the dangers it poses to our health very seriously. While the percentage of people who survive is reassuring, we are only beginning to learn about the long-term effects of this disease.

Entering the building, where I am indoors with hundreds of other people, makes me incredibly nervous. I hear students talk about their plans for the weekend, the sleepovers, and family get-togethers they are having. Many students and their families are not following the recommended safety guidelines. Even with sports cancelled, students are still practicing. In fact, one of my students told me last period about a practice she attended with friends yesterday.

In my household, I am the person most exposed. My husband, like many other people I know, has been working from home since March. My children have very limited contact with others. Because of the numerous contacts I have throughout my workday, I know I am the greatest health risk to the people I love most. I'm afraid to hug my own children for fear of exposing them.

Remote learning is not ideal, but it is safest. I am safer at home than I am in school. My family is safer when I work from home. My students and their families are safer if they stay home. I believe safety should be our number one priority right now. With a vaccine on the horizon, why risk the lives of so many?

Remote learning also allows for students to interact with each other more than they would inside of the classroom, where I try to maximize the few feet they're able to social distance. When students are all joining class using the same platform, they are able to collaborate more easily because of significantly fewer issues with technology.

When we started back to work in August I was scared, but the plans the state published for a shift to distance learning and the low covid numbers statewide were reassuring. Now the numbers are staggering and the primary indicators for transitioning to remote learning seem like a suggestion. Many districts in the state are making the decision to keep their students and their staff safe by moving to distance learning until at least January. It is my hope that Amity puts safety first and switches to remote learning immediately.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns and for your continued hard work for our district.

Respectfully,

Christina Allen  
English Faculty

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Peter Downhour  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 1:58 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Public Comment

Dear Mr. Belfonti and the Amity Board of Education,

I would like to thank you and the BOE for taking the time to meet and consider the current crisis we are facing. The teachers care for our students greatly. To suggest otherwise is disingenuous. We recognize that in-person instruction is most effective, to do this we first must ensure the health and well-being of our teachers, staff, students, and the greater community.

The leading indicators published by the state show the infection rates in our area are high. These numbers tell us that we should be in our remote learning model, they most definitely do not demonstrate that we should be moving the middle schools to full-in person. I am looking at the guidance in the plan and the data coming from the state of Connecticut that has been presented to the BOE and the teachers to reach this conclusion.

I am asking you to be proactive and not reactive. We have established parameters that inform us. Friday's decision, short timing, and use of new, and not widely known or understood, factors in the decision making, is disturbing. Do not create a situation to see or test if it will spread. Other health departments in the state have advised other districts, based on a very similar situation, to go remote until after the holidays. It is the more prudent measure.

I am asking that allow us to be at the lowest possible risk level. We are education professionals, we are the ones in the classrooms, and we first and foremost want to be back in school with our students. This can only happen when it is safe for all of us.

Regards,  
Peter Downhour  
President, Amity Education Association

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** LUCIA DITTMANN <radtech7@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** In-person learning

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Dear Board of Education members,

Please be advised that I fully support in-person learning at Amity Regional High School. I understand that some parents prefer to have their child continue fully remote, however, the level of education with remote learning for my child does not compare to in-person learning.

As a front line healthcare worker I understand the risks. With proper precautions I believe students can safely return to the classroom if that is made an option.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Regards,

Lucia Dittmann  
789 Litchfield Tpke  
Bethany, CT



## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Ken Clark  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** Letter/Public Comment for Tonight's BOE Meeting  
**Attachments:** BOE Letter.pdf

Hi Pam,

Attached, please find my written comments to the Board of Education.

Thank you,

Ken Clark

Dear Amity Board of Education,

My name is Ken Clark, and I am a proud Amity Regional High School teacher. As I have never written to or otherwise formally addressed you before, I'd like to preface my comments by sharing that I love what I do, and I love who I get to do it with. Teaching isn't just my job—it's my calling, and I simply can't imagine doing anything else. I also can't imagine doing it anywhere else; even after over eight years in the district, my colleagues' brilliance, passion, and dedication never ceases to amaze me, and I can honestly say that Anna Mahon is the best principal any teacher could possibly hope to work for. I'm also incredibly fortunate to work with an amazing group of students; day after day and year after year, I learn as much from them as they learn from me. In short, Amity is my home, and it's where I hope to remain for many years to come. Under normal circumstances, there is nowhere I'd rather be than in my classroom at Amity Regional High School; however, the circumstances are anything but normal. With all of that being said, I am writing to you today to express my serious concerns with the district's return to hybrid and, in the case of the middle schools, fully in-person learning. I urge you to reconsider this decision and to return the entire district to the remote learning model until at least the end of the calendar year.

Several other school districts in our area—all of which are relying on the same indicators in their decision making and many of which find themselves in very similar circumstances with regard to COVID-19 positivity rates and community transmission—have decided to remain fully remote until after the upcoming holidays; some have even chosen to remain remote until later than that and will begin the new year in a fully remote model. I am concerned that Amity's decision is so markedly out of step with these districts when our circumstances are so similar.

I appreciate the concerns surrounding student learning. However, I also believe that absolutely nothing matters more than the safety of the faculty, staff, and students in our schools. Health and safety should be our highest priority during this pandemic, and returning to our school buildings now seems an unnecessary risk, especially with the release of vaccines on the horizon, when we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. I also believe that teachers have learned a lot about and gotten much better at teaching remotely over the last several months, and at this point, I think we will actually be able to provide a more consistent educational experience to our students if all of us are remote—we will all be “together” online, able to see one another's faces (without masks), and able to engage with one another meaningfully and with minimal interruptions to our Internet connectivity.

I also urge you to consider the impact of this decision not only on students but also on faculty and staff. Personally, I can't begin to describe the stress and anxiety that being in the school building has caused me this year, nor can I begin to describe the way it impacted my personal life. I fear, too, for my colleagues who are considered “high-risk” or who live with or care for high-risk family members. Having to walk into school each day takes away their decision to do what they believe is in the best interest of their own health and the health of their families. If one of them gets sick and the worst should happen, I simply do not believe it will be worth it. Remote learning is effective learning, but more importantly, it is safe. Staying remote means avoiding any risks to our lives and the lives of our students and families.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ken Clark

## Pamela Pero

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**From:** Sharon Remigio  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** letter for tonight

Dear Amity Board of Education-

I am a counselor at Amity Middle School Orange and a resident in the Town of Orange. I have 2 elementary school children at Peck Place School and one currently in the middle school. I am writing in response and concern to the recent decision to move from hybrid to full-instruction on Wednesday, December 9th. There are many reasons that I feel strongly that we should not be moving to the full-in person learning model at the middle school, but I am writing to share the personal impact it will have for my family.

I enjoy seeing all the faces of my students day to day and having live conversations with them. Having children of my own of the ages of 13, 11 and 7, I know the positives of full-instruction for academic and social reasons. However, I am at the point where I am grateful daily to be able to come to school and that I am alive to be working through this pandemic. This arrangement brings a huge amount of concern knowing that every working day attending school increases my risk of catching Covid. My husband is living with a high risk condition at home. He too needs to attend work, however, his contact with people is minimal. As a counselor, I have daily contact with students, however, my children are in the classrooms daily with many students. I have had to send them to school not by choice, but because of the need for me to attend work myself. My family therefore, has taken a chance in sending them to school knowing that safe protocols have been in place to help reduce risk of obtaining the virus under the hybrid model and the remote models. At the middle school, the setup is highly different from the elementary schools, which I know first hand. My elementary school children have less contact than my middle schooler. This contact for my middle school daughter will further increase when students return in full. My husband and I will therefore be making the choice to keep our middle schooler home to work remotely, to further reduce her risk of obtaining the virus and passing it on to family and especially my high-risk husband. If he gets Covid the situation will not be positive. In addition we have already lost 2 cousins to Covid. This virus has taken the lives of direct family members. I would like my children to be able to spend their holidays with grandparents who will not otherwise be able to be seen due to safety. We value family as the most important factor above everything and personally to me it does not make sense to increase our family risk in the last 2 weeks prior to a break that could actually continue to mitigate spread if they are kept remote. I believe that I am not alone in this view and would request your understanding and reconsideration of factors such as these which would impact not only my family, but the families of other Orange residents as well.

Thank you for your time and energy that you have put into decision making for our district and I thank you in advance for consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sharon Remigio,  
Orange resident and faculty/staff of AMSO

## **Pamela Pero**

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**From:** Jen Bshara  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:00 PM  
**To:** Pamela Pero  
**Subject:** BOE letter  
**Attachments:** BOE and community members.docx

Pam, I am in a workshop today and did not have a lot of time, but here is my brief letter.  
Jen

BOE and community members,

As a teacher in AMSO, I want nothing more than to teach my students in person, all of us together. But I also have to balance that desire with safety. Right now does not seem to be the time to have full student body in school. Numbers in CT are higher than ever.

I also do not want the middle schools to serve as "guinea pigs" of sorts, for a 2 week trial experiment. Our safety is at stake, as well as the safety of our students.

I am worried about lack of social distancing in classrooms, mask break ability, the continuation of sports in the community, etc.

I am worried about school tomorrow. I do not feel as if this was a good move for now. In January, fine, Now? No.

Jen Bshara

Current COVID Data

	+ Cases	Quarantined
AMSB	2	3
AMSO	6	6
ARHS	11	19
ATA	0	0
Oct. 19	5	59
Nov. 9	11	100
Nov. 23	18	138
Dec. 8	19	28

Data on Quarter 1 Grades

<b>Quarter 1 - Number of Fs</b>	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Amity Middle School Bethany	13	38	16	105
Amity Middle School Orange	27	7	11	78
Amity Regional High School	76	84	88	268
All Schools Total	116	129	115	451

Opt Outs December 8, 2020

School	Enrollment	Opt Outs	% of optouts
Amity Regional High School	1457	388	26.63%
Amity Middle School Orange	350	69	19.71%
Amity Middle School Bethany	363	85	23.42%