

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 BOARD OF EDUCATION
MAY 10, 2021 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:30 P.M., 100 Ohman Avenue, Orange, CT

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

John Belfonti, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Shannan Carlson, Paul Davis, Steven DeMaio, George Howard, Andrea Hubbard, Sheila McCreven (remote), Robyn Berke (remote), Dr. Jennifer Turner (remote)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Carla Eichler, Patrick Reed

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Alison Bowler (remote), Caroline Chen (remote)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Jennifer Byars, Theresa Lumas, Kathy Burke, Stephan Ciceron, Anna Mahon, Dr. Jason Tracy

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Belfonti called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited by those present

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Board of Education Regular Meeting - April 19, 2021

*MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, Second by George Howard, to approve minutes as submitted
VOTES IN FAVOR, 9 (Belfonti, Browe, Cardozo, Davis, Howard, Hubbard, Berke, McCreven, Turner)
ABSTAINED, 2 (Carlson, DeMaio)
MOTION CARRIED*

b. Board of Education Annual District Meeting - May 4, 2021

*MOTION by George Howard, Second by Christopher Browe, to approve minutes as submitted
VOTES IN FAVOR, 7 (Belfonti, Browe, Cardozo, Davis, Howard, Hubbard, Turner)
ABSTAINED, 4 (Carlson, DeMaio, Berke, McCreven)
MOTION CARRIED*

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4. RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS

a. CABE Student Leadership Awards 2021

Presented by Kathy Burke, Anna Mahon, and Dr. Jason Tracy

b. SCASA Superintendents' Student Awards 2021

Presented by Kathy Burke, Anna Mahon, and Dr. Jason Tracy

5. STUDENT REPORT

a. Monthly Report

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Summarized by Chairperson Belfonti

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Discussion and Possible Action on Diversity in Action Signage

MOTION by Christopher Browe, Second by Shannan Carlson, to approve the construction and installation of the Diversity in Action sign at Amity Regional High School as presented until the end of the 2021-2022 school year with possible bi-annual reviews.

MOTION withdrawn by Christopher Browe

b. Personnel Report

c. Superintendent Report

d. COVID-19 Updates

8. CORRESPONDENCE

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9. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairperson Belfonti announced the following:

- The annual review of Dr. Byars will be done by the Board of Education in June 2021.
- The Board of Education will schedule an annual retreat for self-assessment in June 2021.

a. Committee Reports

- 1. ACES**
- 2. Ad Hoc School Safety**
- 3. CABE**
- 4. Curriculum**
- 5. District Health and Safety**

6. District Technology

a. Monthly Report

7. Facilities

a. Monthly Report

8. Finance

a. Presentation and Discussion of First Quarter 2021 Executive Summary Review of Amity Pension Fund, Sick and Severance Account and OPEB Trust

b. Discussion and Possible Action on Contracts over \$35,000

1. 1:1 Devices – FY21 funds

MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, Second by Shannan Carlson, to award the 1:1 student device lease to Whalley Computer Associates of Massachusetts, at the bid price of \$346,920.00 (\$319.00 per device with extended service of \$123.50 per device)

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

2. Copiers – FY22 funds

MOTION by Steven DeMaio, Second by Shannan Carlson, to authorize the Director of Finance to sign the Xerox contract for copiers, the laser printer management program, and the PaperCut Print Management

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solution, for the monthly charge of \$11,929.26 for the period of June 6, 2021 through June 5, 2027

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

3. Student Accident Insurance – FY22 funds

MOTION by Paul Davis, Second by Andrea Hubbard, to award the Student Accident Insurance bid to H.D. Segur Insurance of Wallingford, CT at the bid price of \$33,000 for Interscholastic Sports, including Student Activities and \$2,910 for Catastrophic Accident Coverage

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

4. Field Drainage – AMSO – FY22 funds

MOTION by Christopher Browe, Second by Patricia Cardozo, to waive the bid process and award the field drainage project at Amity Middle School-Orange to Sports Turf of CT at a price of \$42,900.00

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

5. Roof Restoration and Repairs – ARHS – CNR funds

MOTION by Shannan Carlson, Second by Paul Davis, to waive the bid process and award the roofing restorations and repairs to Tremco Industries for \$395,141.40

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

c. Discussion and Possible Action on Healthy Food Certification

MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, Second by George Howard:

- 1. Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Board of Education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.*
- 2. The Board of Education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held.*

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3. *The Board of Education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1)the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the beverage sales.*

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

d. Discussion and Possible Action on Capital Projects Change Orders and Budget Transfers

MOTION by Shannan Carlson, Second by Steven DeMaio, to consider all change orders and budget transfers listed at the same time

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Christopher Browe, Second by Shannan Carlson, to approve the following:

- *Change order 1a to include electrical conduits, trenching and backfill to Comboxes (8) and empty conduits to home side poles for cameras totaling \$11,133.00*
- *Change order #1 for price increases of \$59,060.13*
- *A transfer from Bond Contingency Account to the HVAC Project Account for increased engineering costs.*

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
17-00-15-0053-5720	Bond Contingency	\$10,000	
17-00-15-0048-5720	HVAC Projects		\$10,000

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by George Howard, Second by Patricia Cardozo, to approve the following:

- *A transfer from Bond Contingency Account to the Athletic Project Account. Add empty conduits to 8 locations and to the home side poles for cameras at the stadium at Amity High School:*

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
17-00-15-0053-5720	Bond Contingency	\$11,133	
17-00-15-0047-5720	Athletic Projects		\$11,133

- *A transfer from Bond Contingency Account to the Athletic Project Account to cover the price increases change order #1.*

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
17-00-15-0053-5720	Bond Contingency	\$59,061	
17-00-15-0047-5720	Athletic Projects		\$59,061

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

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- e. **Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements**
- f. **Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under \$3,000**
- g. **Discussion and Possible Action on Budget Transfers of \$3,000 or More**

MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, Second by Steven DeMaio, to approve the following budget transfer to cover the leasing of 784 devices.

<u>ACCOUNT NUMBER</u>	<u>ACCOUNT NAME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
05-15-2512-5255	Medical	\$55,010	
05-14-2350-5330	Professional Technical Services		\$55,010

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Shannan Carlson, Second by Christopher Browe, to approve the following budget transfer to cover the cost of filling the fuel tank at Bethany Middle School.

<u>ACCOUNT NUMBER</u>	<u>ACCOUNT NAME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
03-14-2600-5621	Natural Gas	\$15,300	
01-14-2600-5620	Fuel Oil		\$15,300

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)
MOTION CARRIED

h. Discussion and Possible Action on Standard Year-End Transfers

MOTION by Paul Davis, Second by Andrea Hubbard, to authorize the Director of Finance and Administration to make the necessary budget transfers to salary and benefit accounts and to pay other standard charges. These budget transfers may exceed \$3,000. The Director of Finance and Administration will report all budget transfers made to the Amity Finance Committee and Amity Board of Education.

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)
MOTION CARRIED

i. Other Information Items

- 1. **Capital Project Expenditure Report- informational**
- 2. **Food Service FY22**

9. Policy

a. First Read

- 1. **Policy 4115 Evaluation and Support Program**

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2. **Policy 4117.4 Administrative Leave/Suspension/Dismissal**
3. **Policy 4117.41 Suspension**
4. **Policy 4118.11 Non-Discrimination/Equal Employment Opportunity**

b. Second Read

1. **Policy 4111 Recruitment and Selection**
2. **Policy 4111.3 Minority Recruitment**
3. **Policy 6172.4 Title 1 Parent and Family Engagement**
4. **Policy 4112.8 Nepotism: Employment of Relatives**

MOTION by Shannan Carlson, Second by Christopher Browe, to vote on all Second Read policies at the same time:

- *Policy 4111 Recruitment and Selection*
- *Policy 4111.3 Minority Recruitment*
- *Policy 6172.4 Title 1 Parent and Family Engagement*
- *Policy 4112.8 Nepotism: Employment of Relatives*

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Steven DeMaio, Second by Shannan Carlson, to approve all Second Read policies at the same time:

- *Policy 4111 Recruitment and Selection*
- *Policy 4111.3 Minority Recruitment*
- *Policy 6172.4 Title 1 Parent and Family Engagement*
- *Policy 4112.8 Nepotism: Employment of Relatives*

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

c. Informational

1. **Policy 5145.5/4118.112/4218.112 Prohibition Against Sexual Harassment**

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10. Personnel

MOTION by Shannan Carlson, Second by Christopher Browe, to enter Executive Session and invite Dr. Byars and Theresa Lumas for the following:

- *Discussion of Contracts and Salary Increases for Unaffiliated Employees for the 2021-2022 School Year*
- *Discussion of Amity Administrator Contract*
- *Update on Paraeducator and Nurses Negotiations*

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

- a. **Discussion of Contracts and Salary Increases for Unaffiliated Employees for the 2021-2022 School Year (Executive Session)**
- b. **Discussion of Amity Administrator Contract (Executive Session)**
- c. **Update on Paraeducator and Nurses Negotiations (Executive Session)**

ENTERED EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:45 P.M.

EXITED EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 9:00 P.M.

- d. **Possible Action on Contracts and Salary Increases for Unaffiliated Employees for the 2021-2022 School Year**

MOTION by Patricia Cardozo, Second by Robyn Berke, to approve the following:

- *Contracts and Salary Increases for Unaffiliated Employees for the 2021-2022 School Year*

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

10. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Discussion and Possible Action on Meeting Model for the June 14, 2021 Amity Finance Committee meeting and Board of Education meeting**

MOTION by Sheila McCreven, Second by Shannan Carlson, to continue hybrid meeting model and allow Public Comment via email through June 30, 2021

VOTES IN FAVOR, 10 (Belfonti, Browe, Cardozo, Carlson, Davis, Howard, Hubbard, Berke, McCreven, Turner)

VOTES OPPOSED, 1 (DeMaio)

MOTION CARRIED

11. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA – Due to Chairperson by May 28, 2021

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12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Robyn Berke, Second by Paul Davis, to adjourn meeting

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (unanimous)

MOTION CARRIED

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Pero

Pamela Pero, Recording Secretary

May 10, 2021

Dear ABOE members,

We are Woodbridge residents and currently have a child at Beecher Elementary School and another who will be entering the public school system next year. We are writing to let you know why we voted NO on the Amity Budget Referendum that occurred on May 5th. We voted NO because we are extremely concerned about what is happening at Amity and what appears to be a lack of oversight on the part of the ABOE.

Over the last several weeks, we have heard several concerning stories from parents and students about the racism and intolerance that continues to flourish at Amity High. Intolerance is not new at Amity. In June of last year, Woodbridge held a Black Lives Matter Rally during which Amity alumni spoke about their experiences with racism growing up in Woodbridge and attending Amity High. Lest our community think that the intolerance is solely focused on race, less than three years ago swastikas were carved on surfaces throughout the school.

What is most concerning to us about these recent events is the lack of response by the administration and the fact that year-over-year nothing seems to be changing. It is the ABOE's responsibility to oversee the Amity superintendent. The lack of response by Superintendent Byars to recent incidents and her apparent inability to foster a learning environment in which all students feel welcomed and safe should be cause for alarm among the ABOE.

As her boss, ultimately, you are all responsible for what happens next. Your actions will determine whether current children and our children, in the future, will have to attend a school in which students report that they are bullied by teachers, called derogatory names by peers, and scared to raise concerns to the student government and administration over fears of retaliation.

It is our belief that the ABOE needs to work with Superintendent Byars to create a multi-year strategic plan with measurable goals for how the school will actively address diversity, equity, and inclusion at the student, staffing, leadership, and board levels. At this point in time, it is clear that Superintendent Byars needs outside support and coaching in order to fundamentally change the school environment. In the event that after these steps have been taken the learning environment at Amity is not improved, the ABOE must consider that a change in leadership may be necessary. All children in our community deserve a safe and nurturing learning environment in which they can thrive. You have the power and charge to ensure that this occurs.

Sincerely,



Erin Williamson

Asher Marks

21 Hemlock Hollow Rd.

Mr. John Belfonti
Chairman, Amity Board of Education
c/o 25 Newton Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525

May 10, 2021

Dear John,

I am writing to make official my resignation from the Amity Board of Education, effective July 1, 2021. This date coincides with the start of the term on the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen to which I was elected on May 3rd, and also allows me to conclude my service on the ABOE with the close of the school year, participating in any Board self-evaluation and Superintendent evaluation meetings taking place before June 30.

Although it would have been possible to serve on both the ABOE and WBOS simultaneously, I feel strongly that it's important to help make room for community members who wish to step forward to serve the Amity District in a leadership position as a Board member. My hope is that the Board will benefit from the diversity of perspective that new membership can bring.

My departure from the Board, after nearly seven years of membership, comes at a time of uncertainty as we grapple with the effects of the COVID pandemic on our community, as well as renewed calls for our schools to focus attention on ensuring a learning environment that is inclusive, equitable, and welcoming to all students. I believe members of our community are looking to the Board to fully inhabit its role as part of Amity's leadership team, and I am eager to see the Board embrace a thoughtful process to respond to the challenges the District faces.

In my remaining time on the Board, I hope to contribute ideas to the discussion of these and other topics that align to our District goals, especially with regard to fostering a supportive climate for all students and attending to social and emotional wellbeing at Amity.

I would like to thank you and the other members of the Board with whom I have had the pleasure to serve over the years for the opportunity to contribute my volunteer energies in this capacity.

I feel honored to have represented Woodbridge constituents in this role, and I look forward to many more years of active involvement in our community's shared endeavors as we continuously improve educational opportunity for students attending our public schools.

Very best regards,



Sheila McCreven
63 Center Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525

From: [Chandra Prasad](#)
To: [Pamela Pero](#)
Subject: Letter/public comment for upcoming BOE meeting
Date: Saturday, May 8, 2021 2:44:56 PM

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 BOE members,

Back in November 2018 when my family and I first moved to Woodbridge, I remember being shocked and horrified by the racist and Anti-Semitic incidents taking place at the high school. I asked Dr. Byars three questions: “First, what steps will the administration be taking to ensure that ALL STUDENTS are better protected against hateful activity, and what steps will be taken to encourage students to be more tolerant and respectful of one another? Second, what penalties, if any, will the offending students face? And finally, why did the administration claim to be “shocked” by the anti-Semitism when students have been complaining about it for an extended length of time?”

Dr. Byars emailed back the following:

- “1) Administration is developing an action plan with support from the greater BOW community. The preliminary plan will be established by November 30, 2018 and will include both short-term, mid-range, and long-term action steps to make Amity a place of welcome for all marginalized groups.
- 2) The students involved received appropriate consequences. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act prohibits school officials from sharing what those consequences are.
- 3) I cannot respond to your third question – not having had the opportunity to experience the climate or culture of the district prior to last Thursday.”

Now, three years later, it is clear that whatever the administration has been doing over the past three years can't have been sufficient or effective, or else Black History Month wouldn't have been reduced to a short video of Kanye West claiming Black History Month is needless and depleting. If decent “short-term, mid-range, and long-term action steps” to promote diversity and equality had truly been implemented, then it would have been clear to Ms. Byars and to her staff that erasing Black History Month was a terrible idea, and worse, that not having a counterpoint or candid discussion after this offensive video essentially silenced a confused and misled student body.

After a year in which violent hate crimes against Asians, Blacks, Jewish people, and other groups have risen, along with dangerous white nationalist rhetoric and action, Amity simply MUST do more. North Haven recently took the step of hiring a Diversity Consultant, and I believe this is an investment Amity must also make to avoid further division, pitfalls, student ostracism and mental health problems, and even the possibility of violence.

Furthermore, in the time I've been a parent at Amity, I've observed an important math teacher, Mrs. Fleishman, be eliminated; the erasing of the wonderful, competitive after-school math program—MathCounts—that Mrs. Fleishman coached; attempts to eliminate Mandarin Chinese, despite its popularity and necessity, especially in a time of anti-Asian sentiment; and a staunch refusal to perform inexpensive lab tests on artificial turf field materials that undeniably contain lead, mercury, and other toxic chemicals. In essence, I've been disappointed by some of Amity's leadership and decisions. The elimination of a math teacher, in particular, is simply ridiculous given that Amity is known for academic excellence AND has a surplus budget year after year. I can't speak for Orange and Bethany, but most of the families I know who live in Woodbridge move here ONLY for Amity's educational reputation. The more that is sullied (and believe me, the decision to run this Kanye West video did great damage), the more backward and unappealing Amity will be to both families already here and families thinking of moving here.

I hope that when the ABOE schedules both a self-assessment and the Superintendent's evaluation before the conclusion of the school year (June 30), these matters are taken into account. On what dates will these assessments take place? Would it be possible for Ms. Byars to take some mandatory diversity trainings herself as she and the Board consider ways to improve the way equity, diversity, and inclusion are taught at Amity? Finally, I ask again that you please consider hiring a diversity officer like the one North Haven and many other school districts have hired. It would be a huge step in the right direction and it would show students and the greater Amity community that the administration is committed to improvement.

Regards,
Chandra Prasad
Woodbridge/Amity parent

From: [Emily Melnick](#)
To: [Pamela Pero](#)
Subject: Public Comment for 5.10.21 ABOE Meeting
Date: Monday, May 10, 2021 9:58:41 AM

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 Members,

We are Woodbridge residents and parents of a current Amity High School student writing to let you know why we voted NO on the Amity Budget Referendum on May 5, 2021 .

We voted NO because we are extremely concerned about what is happening at Amity High School regarding how racism and intolerance is being tolerated, minimized and even perpetuated and how poorly are children are being educated on issues of diversity, tolerance, and bias.

Our NO vote is a vote of no confidence in the current Amity administration in this critical area of education and school climate. The ABOE is tasked with overseeing the Amity superintendent, who has oversight responsibility for the Amity curriculum and Amity teachers implementing that curriculum. The February Spartan Seminars discussions on Black History Month reflect a very poor handling of that curriculum. The lack of sensitivity and understanding associated with the decisions to promote this lesson are ignorant, offensive, and tarnish Amity's reputation.

Superintendent Byars' response to recent incidents and her apparent inability to foster a learning environment in which all students feel welcomed and safe should be cause for alarm among the ABOE. Superintendent Byars' "you can't reach all 1500 students perfectly" response in the recent WNPR story shows a complete tone deafness and insensitivity toward not only how diversity, equality, and fairness ought to be presented, but also toward national current events involving racially, ethnically, and religiously motivated hate crimes that have increased exponentially over the last 12+ months.

We believe that the ABOE and Superintendent Byars are failing to use this incident as a "teachable moment" to implement real, actionable change, and instead seem to have decided to do "damage control."

As the Amity superintendent's boss, ultimately, you are responsible for what happens next. Your actions will determine whether AHS students will continue to attend a school in which students report that they are bullied by teachers, called derogatory names by peers, and

scared to raise concerns to the student government and administration over fears of retaliation.

We live in a community that will not sit idly in the face of implicit or explicit racism and bias. We are demanding real action to mitigate the damage done and to take proactive steps to build and foster a school culture and climate that are affirming of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or background. All children in our community deserve a safe and nurturing learning environment in which they can thrive.

The ABOE must work with Superintendent Byars to create a multi-year strategic plan with measurable goals for how AHS will actively address diversity, equity, and inclusion at the student, staffing, leadership, and board levels. The ABOE must also provide Superintendent Byars with support and coaching in order to fundamentally change the school environment.

We believe it is imperative that ABOE turn its attention fully and urgently to this matter.

Thank you.

Emily Melnick and Matt McDermott

From: [Shari Storeygard](#)
To: [Pamela Pero](#)
Subject: Public Comment for Amity Board of Education meeting
Date: Monday, May 10, 2021 9:40:38 AM

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Hello Pam!
Thank you for submitting this public comment for us.
Shari Storeygard

April 10, 2021

Dear Amity Board of Education Members,

We are writing as Woodbridge residents and parents of children at Beecher Rd. School and Amity Middle School- Bethany. While aware that our society harbors tremendous racism and bigotry, we were extremely sad and angry to learn that it is very apparent in our school community. We have listened to stories of students at Amity High School - those that have had ugly racial slurs said to them, those who have had extreme difficulty finding allies and mentors in teachers, and those who were dismissed in their attempts to be involved in the planning of Black History Month. We are writing to ask that the Board of Education and school leadership take an active role in addressing these issues.

We sincerely applaud your efforts and are grateful for the tremendous work that has gone into keeping school open and safe for our children during the COVID-19 pandemic. We realize that an inordinate amount of time has been devoted to allow the basics of education to happen during the pandemic. During the pandemic - a time when humans have been busy and tired and devoted to the basics of life - issues related to diversity, racism, and inclusion have *erupted* in our communities. We *cannot* ignore them. We have a moral obligation, a human obligation, to work on this NOW. Our obligation as families, communities, and education systems is to work to make every person be safe, seen, included, and respected. This means facing head-on what is happening and having difficult conversations. We want our communities to be doing this and we believe that these conversations are the true mission of what great education is. A great education system fosters children to become citizens who can think critically and live and work in the larger world that includes people who look or think or pray differently than they do. That can only happen when everyone feels safe and seen and when the children see adult leadership show with their words and their actions that this is the most important of all things to learn.

This must be addressed now and not later. I believe our community has the capacity to do this. We need you to acknowledge its utmost importance.

Sincerely,

Shari Storeygard
Matthew Storeygard