

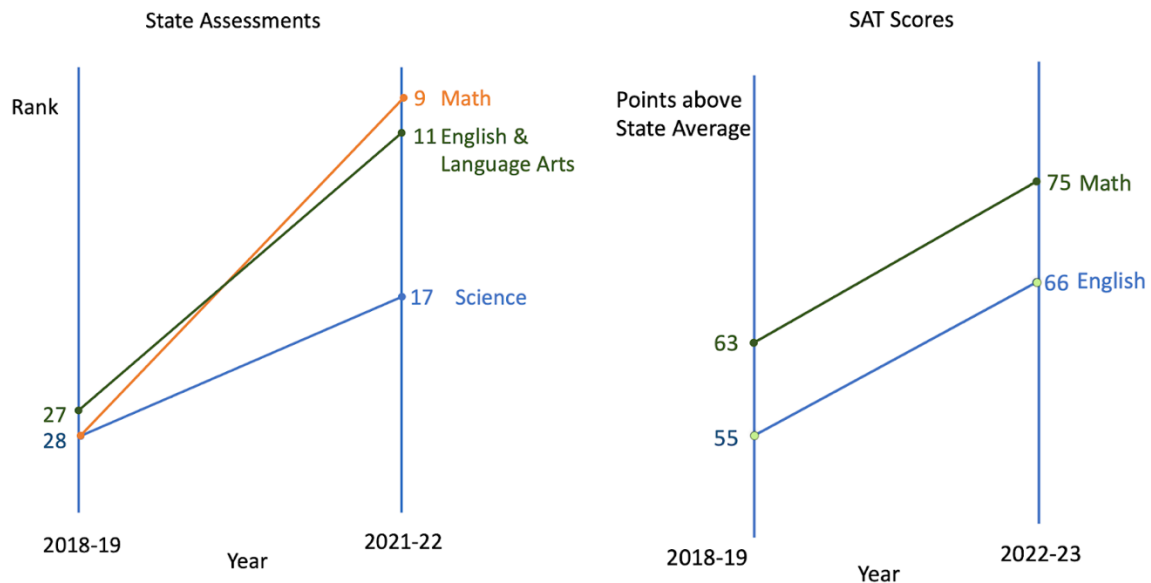
Our schools are the pride of our community. The Amity Board of Education celebrates their achievements and remains committed to maintaining their excellence

The last few years have been challenging for schools, educators and students. The pandemic disrupted the ability to teach in person, negatively impacting student performance nationwide. It was also a period of great worry for many parents, struggling to ensure that their children's education did not suffer. In this article, the Board takes stock of Amity's academic performance and curriculum over this challenging period. We highlight four areas that demonstrate the strength of our schools.

1. Amity demonstrated resilience in academic performance through the pandemic

Despite the challenges, Amity students improved performance during the pandemic.

- **State Assessments:** Amity High School's statewide rank on state assessments surged in 2021-22 relative to 2018-19.
 - Math: from 28th to 9th.
 - English and Language Arts (ELA): from 27th to 11th.
 - Science: from 28th to 17th.
- **SAT Performance:** Amity routinely scores well above state average. Amity SAT scores have improved since 2018-19.
 - English: from 55 points above state average to 66 points.
 - Math: from 63 points above to 75 points.



2. Amity's performance remains strong in 2022-23

Amity students have strong performance relative to national and local peers

- **Amity's students rank 5th in State in National Merit Scholar Competition**
 - 27 Amity seniors of 315 (8.6%) qualified as Commended Scholars or Semifinalists, about **three times the national average**.
 - Amity **ranked 5th** among Connecticut public schools for the number of National Merit Semifinalists - & **all** our Semifinalists advanced to Finalists.

- **Amity outperformed peer districts in academic performance in 2022-23 relative to 2021-22**
 - Amity middle schools increased to 3rd place from 6th in English and 2nd place from 7th in Math.
 - ARHS juniors tied for 3rd place in SAT English college readiness and 4th place in Math college readiness.
 - Eleventh graders were ranked 10th place among peer districts in science.

3. Other markers of excellence

Our students were recognized in scholastic and non-scholastic activities in 2022-23.

- **Worldwide**
 - Amity's Investing Team placed 2nd in the *world* in the 2023 at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business Investing Challenge. The challenge started with ~3,000 teams before narrowing down to the top 10 teams from around the world for the final competition.
- **National**
 - Amity's Academic Decathlon Team won the state competition. At Nationals, won the 2023 Rookie of the Year award, with 6 individual medals in the Essay, Science, and Interview competitions.
 - Amity's student newspaper, The Trident, placed 1st in the nation (for the 2nd year in a row) among schools with 1,000-1,700 students in the American Scholastic Press Association's annual student newspaper competition.
 - Amity's Science Research students competed in eight science competitions at the local, state and national levels, earning over 70 awards for their research. Highlights include a Coca-Cola National Scholarship Semifinalist, a Regeneron STS Top 300 National Scholar. Students awarded more than \$95,000 for innovative work.
 - National Jr. Scholastic Map Contest: AMSO student won the 2023 contest that had over 1500 entries.

Statewide

- Amity's Math Team placed 1st (Large School Division) in the CT State Association of Mathematics Leagues competition, beating long-time winner Greenwich High School.
- Sports: The Spartans had 2 SCC Players of the Year, 2 SCC Athlete of the Month, and 3 SCC Coach of the Year honorees. 80 student-athletes were named SCC All-League and 26 earned CHSCA all-state recognition.
- Theater Arts: Sondheim Nominations in 8 different categories, including Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Costumes for the 2023 musical *Beauty and the Beast*.

4. Overall, the Amity curriculum is both rigorous and inclusive

Amity's curriculum includes programs targeted to students with varied interests and needs to prepare them for success after high school.

- **Science research program:** Amity’s Science Research program prepares students for science research in college and beyond. The program consistently produces winners at the State Science Fair.
- **AP Capstone humanities research:** Capstone students earn higher scores and college grades in English, history, politics, social sciences and sciences. Capstone prepares students for rigorous college programs and boosts academic research in college.
- **Collaborations with local universities:** Students take college course work and do research with mentors at Yale, UConn and SCSU.
- **Manufacturing pre-apprenticeship program:** Students develop manufacturing skills and graduate applying up to 2,000 hours of on-the-job experience to their registered apprenticeship programs.
- **Amity SAILS and Transition Academy:** Helps prepare students with intellectual disabilities for future employment with programs at Amity, Albertus Magnus and University of New Haven.
- **Spartan Prep:** Supports students with emotional dysregulation.
- **Senior experiential learning programs:** Connect seniors to community while teaching them job search and on-the-job skills.

Community concerns about recent magazine and website rankings

As a school district, administrators and the Board focus on standardized state assessment tests and national tests such as PSAT and SATs as markers of excellence. These metrics provide validated measures of student performance and provide diagnostics for improvement. Amity students have excelled on these metrics and remain in the top echelon of schools in the state.

While we recognize the impact that rankings in U.S. News and Niche can have on public perceptions of our schools, it is crucial to recognize their limitations. These companies often rely on information that is easy for them to find, whether or not it truly reflects school performance. To fill gaps, they rely on internet comments or plug in years-old data for current rankings. While they provide a convenient, quick way to compare schools, they fall short in capturing complete, reliable, or well-rounded measures of school performance. The Board believes that focusing on fundamentals and official metrics of excellence will ensure that Amity remains strong in the long term.

One of our colleagues on the Board, Dr. Sudhir Karunakaran, has analyzed the U.S. News and Niche rankings and written two articles in local newspapers explaining why Amity’s rankings slipped, even though its academic performance remains strong.

We celebrate Amity’s achievements, and we are committed to maintaining its excellence

The Board is proud of Amity’s excellent performance, and congratulates its students, teachers and administrators in maintaining school academic performance during these challenging times. Our students consistently perform among the very best in the state. We appreciate the incredible dedication and hard work of our students, teachers, and staff that makes this possible.

The Board remains focused on maintaining Amity’s excellence as we continually explore opportunities to ensure that our students get the best education possible. Even as we celebrate improved performance, administration, staff and the board support interventions for students to

mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on learning. We are committed to providing a holistic and inclusive education that equips all our students for success, both academically and in life. Our focus on academic excellence and developing the whole student will lead to well-prepared graduates, and in turn, superior rankings. Together with the teachers and administration, the Board will strive to provide a world-class education for every student, nurture their talents, and prepare them for a future filled with promise and opportunity.

Sincerely,

The undersigned members of the Amity Board of Education

Mr. Chris Browe, Orange

Ms. Shannan Carlson, Orange

Mr. Paul Davis, Chair, Orange

Ms. Carla Eichler, Orange

Mr. Sean Hartshorn, Orange

Ms. Andrea Hubbard, Bethany

Ms. Christina Levere-D'Addio, Orange

Dr. Carol Oladele, Woodbridge

Mr. Patrick Reed, Woodbridge

Ms. Donna Schuster, Woodbridge

Dr. K. Sudhir, Woodbridge

Ms. Amy Tirollo, Orange

Dr. Jennifer Turner, Bethany

October 20, 2023