

6/9/20	RESPONSES TO AMHERST INDY ASKING READERS TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS FOR DELIVERING EDUCATION IN AMHERST SCHOOLS IN THE FALL
Check all that apply	What suggestions/ideas do you have for how to deliver education in Amherst in the fall?
Resident of Amherst that doesn't fall into any of the above categories, mother and grandmother of present and former students	i am most concerned that "home schooling" enhances the class divide, hence the ability to get higher education and a fair-paying job. I see private school kids working full days in virtual school but ARHS siblings doing relatively little. Having computers, having parents for tech support, having good internet connections--especially in the hill towns is problematic. I suggest summer school for all who want it, seven day week sounds intriguing. I fear the consequences if we don't fix the school equity issue.
Parent/guardian of a child in the Amherst Regional middle or high school	I think it is very important for the mental health of teens that they have time outside the home with peers. I work with teens and am noting a strong uptick in mental health issues. Small groups, (classes outside under a tree like in. college), a continuation of clubs capped at ten students are some ideas. Having classes in bigger spaces where students can space out, like auditoriums, and focusing on the type of work —hands on, visual, dialogic that is harder online is important. Also Google Classroom is sooo bad for communication, there are lags and people can't easily avoid talking over each other. Zoom please it's much better in this regard. Finally, can the colleges and other town departments pitch in so our kids can have the space they need to get to school. Say for the middle Team A1 and Team A2 Meet at Amherst in two larger spaces, and so forth at UMass, the library and even the parks on ok days too? Let's think outside the box and work creatively on solutions that address the special vulnerabilities of teenage youth at this time.
Parent/guardian of a child in the Amherst Regional middle or high school	<p>Standardize on using live online (synchronous) instruction to augment current distance learning methodologies. Despite the challenges and limitations of synchronous instruction, it would enable the students to simulate social interaction while pandemic conditions prevail, and allow the teachers to employ a broader range of their skills in engaging students than when they are restricted to asynchronous-only instruction.</p> <p>Developing the flexibility to implement live online instruction also serves as a contingency in the event of a COVID-19 resurgence, and to allay concerns of parents who may be considering private or charter schools that offer more robust remote learning capabilities.</p>
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school	In presence education will be almost impossible, with cases popping up requiring deep cleaning and quarantine of all contacts, providing a back and forth from the school. The quarantine would not only affect kids, but parents as well since they too should be quarantined in that case. The district should use the summer to develop a more consistent online teaching, with small group teaching. There could be one morning meeting on Monday to set up the tone for the week, and then each day the teacher would meet with small groups for 30? minutes of instruction. The times could rotate during the week. The groups could be the same throughout or different for each topic so that kids would interact with more peers during the week. The current format of sending links and offering office hours by request does not work. It should be required to check in every day at some point during the day or every other day.
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school, Parent/guardian of a child in the Amherst Regional middle or high school	<p>Given the likelihood of continued need for virtual learning during at least part of the week, I support the idea of teachers at all grade levels providing whole group virtual lessons as well as virtual office hours and small group meetings to maintain engagement.</p> <p>In the context of virtual learning, it is vital for parents of upper grade students to have access to teacher updates regarding their child's level of engagement. This might include power school updates regarding the amount and quality of work being submitted as well as regular advisor email check-ins with parents regarding student participation. These check-ins could be brief and do not have to entail weekly conferences. Given that adolescents are more likely to spend time away from other family members and are less likely to approach parents for academic support, the virtual model will have to incorporate some feedback mechanism for parents so that they can facilitate success to the greatest degree possible.</p>
Retired teacher living in Amherst but taught in different district.	This summer students should meet one to one with educators and volunteers who will assess where they are in terms of state standards. As a community we should give any student who is behind one to one fun, summer tutoring in outdoor sessions which could be offered by volunteers. In the fall, classes should be held outside for as long as possible with focused instruction with writing and art across the curriculum. In addition we should provide antibody testing to students, volunteers and teachers so we know who has likely immunity and won't infect others.

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Parent/guardian of a child in the Amherst Regional middle or high school	<p>I have many concerns with schools starting back too soon and before it has been substantiated that returning to normal won't create a new spike in Covid-19 cases. S. Korea recently closed many schools after briefly re-opening and seeing a spike in new cases.</p> <p>I strongly believe that the school year should start with the Distance Learning model currently in place for the 1st month. The online classes follow the same schedule as the one that students would use when they return to school. If there are no spikes in Covid-19 cases in Amherst/Hampshire County after the first month then classes could start at school with alternating days of in-school classes and at home distant learning.</p> <p>Follow CDC guidelines including: Smaller class sizes No shared desks Desks spaced 6 feet apart: all facing same direction</p> <p>Hand sanitizers at all classroom entrances: 1 inside the classroom and 1 outside. Longer time allowed between periods to allow students to wash hands. Currently there is not enough time between periods for students to do so.</p> <p>All classroom tables and chairs wiped with sanitizing wipes between all classes OR have teachers go to student classrooms rather than students going to a different classroom for each class and having to sit at a desk used by 6 or more students each day.</p> <p>Later start: 8:30</p>
	<p>Lunch Concerns: 1. Consider early release and omit lunch. Public schools in Italy do not have a lunch period. Schools start at 8:30 and dismiss at 1:30. Students go home for lunch. ARMS students that get school lunch could remain for lunch which would help solve the number of students all trying to eat at once. 2. Alternative: have students that bring lunch from home eat in the classroom and students that get school lunch eat in the cafeteria. 3. Provide paper placemats for students eating in the classrooms. <input type="checkbox"/> Cafeteria tables need to be sanitized between periods. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>PE Classes: No contact sports or activities that use equipment touched by others: basketballs, Frisbees, etc. Only activities such as running, calisthenics that do not involve contact.</p> <p>All clubs should meet only virtually for the first half of the year.</p> <p>Masks required. All students need demonstrations and guidance of proper use/wear/care. The majority of most people, including adults, currently wear their masks improperly including: removing and replacing, touching, not covering both mouth and nose, not fitting securely.</p>
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school	<p>This year when making the composition of the classes the teachers should ask the parents which friend has been in their "bubble" and expected to continue like that throughout the years. It is fundamental to minimize the cross between groups therefore if two kids spend time outside the school together, they should be in school together, otherwise you have a crosslink between the two classrooms defying the purpose of small groups.</p>

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Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school	<p>Two suggestions for elementary schools:</p> <p>1) Don't treat them all the same and force a one-size-fits-all approach. The Amherst elementary schools may have different needs than the regional schools (Pelham, Shutesbury, Leverett). The regional elementary schools might be able to open up in different ways due to their smaller size/population. They can even pilot different approaches to see how it goes, with measures in place for assessment along the way. The different Amherst schools might also be able to try different approaches at each school.</p> <p>2) This is the time to promote outdoor learning. Forest kindergartens are outside all day long, rain or shine. At the elementary level, we could do a significant amount of teaching while outside -- this would lower the risk of virus spread and improve our children's health and wellbeing in multiple ways. This would require some teacher training and parent education so that everyone is comfortable. Also some school-provided equipment, such as rain gear for kids/teachers and outdoor awnings or spaces established for "classroom" settings. This can be done and would be hugely beneficial to our children, including lowering their dependence on technology. Again, this could be piloted at a smaller regional elementary school. I am a parent in Pelham and I think there would be strong interest here to try this. We have a new principal and a very engaged school community of parents/volunteers to support and assist. There are also great resources locally, such as the Hitchcock Center, Kestrel Land Trust, UMass, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and more.</p> <p>Thank you!</p>
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school	Remote learning does not work for young children. I do hope that Amherst will reopen in the fall. My children are falling way behind.
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school, Substitute teacher at ARPS	Children need their social emotional health cared for in addition to their education. Clamping down completely on children's socialization will not help them learn and may increase anxiety related to school. That needs to be considered in addition to their health. A child psychologist should be helping set up the reopening guidelines.
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school	I would like to see kids with IEP get priority on learning in the building. Remote learning is particularly not well suited to special needs students. Also, a regular schedule would be helpful. Even if it is mornings vs. afternoons or only 3 days a week that each kid is in the building. For it to be the same every week, so parents can more easily plan around their kids "new" schedule. And for some thought to be given to travel time/time in the building ratio. Like, if my kid has to take the bus 40 minutes each way, to only be in the building 3 hours, that doesn't make much sense.
Parent/guardian of a child in an Amherst elementary school, Parent/guardian of a child in the Amherst Regional middle or high school	<p>Families who are able/want to continue remote learning could opt into such a plan, at least for the first semester, thus helping to reduce in-person class sizes while maintaining structure and support from the district. There could be a date by which families would have to opt in, so staff can plan. This could help some people alleviate the anxiety around being unable to plan.</p> <p>This would also provide a structure for students to shift to in the event that all teaching has to shift to remote learning at some point.</p> <p>We can do our jobs from home and don't think we will send our kids to school until there's a vaccine, for many reasons, including the concern that teachers will be under so much pressure to enforce ppe and social distancing rules.</p>

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Resident of Amherst that doesn't fall into any of the above categories	<p>Below, I list a few of the things I would like to see, focusing, not on the logistical and infrastructural challenges but rather on how we might re-imagine the curriculum and pedagogy.</p> <p>So much of the discussion about reopening the schools has been focused on logistics – e.g. how will we manage safe social distancing. And rightly so. But I am interested in having us think about how we can use this moment to truly re-imagine public education and not just return us to some semblance of stability. But here are four of the big ideas that I've been talking to others about- things I'd like to change.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education for Independent Inquiry – so many kids are struggling with distance learning and home schooling right now and this could be partially ameliorated by preparing kids to be independent learners. This is not a new idea at all and goes back to some of the earlier American educational theorists like Dewey. The goal of preparing independent learners was greatly undermined by the testing and standardization movements. And there are plenty of good reasons to do this besides preparing for the next quarantine. 2. Teaching for Black Lives – Anyone notice what's going on in all fifty states right now? It might lead us to ask, how has education prepared our kids for this moment? How can we insure that our children are educated in a way that leads them to create and sustain a just society? How do we insure that our kids are prepared to be the solution for what ails our nation right now? These questions ought to be central to any re-imagining of post-pandemic education. 3. Education inequities – the pandemic has revealed (and is also a result of) deeply entrenched inequities in our society. Now is the time for us to address those inequities including those in the educational system (especially since most public school systems are going to be hit with post-pandemic austerity budgets) and also create curriculum and pedagogy that subverts those inequities. 4. There's been much written about how the pandemic has produced considerable emotional stress for kids for all kinds of reasons. And so it would be useful to consider how we prioritize curricula and pedagogies that address the emotional well being of children when they return to the classroom.
Resident of Amherst that doesn't fall into any of the above categories, Parent of two graduates of Amherst Public Schools	<p>Ask the community for help- retired teachers, parents, retirees, students, people who have recovered from covid19. Split classes by half into morning and afternoon sessions, with volunteers helping in classrooms, taking kids outside, on field trips, in gym, walks, recess, helping kids stay separate at lunch, wash hands, assist in lessons, behavior and social distancing in halls, the library. Basically helping teachers. Kids could read outside and do writing. Use extra space like the Hitchcock Center, South Common School, the extra space at the Middle School or Fort River. Spread out the school year by starting in August. Run Monday to Saturday for fewer hours a day. Or spread the day by going longer. Ex. Middle and high school classes could run from 8 am to 6 pm with fewer students in the building per hour. Or split students into 2 sessions each day for four days a week.</p>