To the Board of Education members,

I am a Hamden High School senior who has been plagued with college applications, homework, hours upon hours of Zoom classes, and a rapidly decreasing ability to maintain my mental health. For these reasons and more I have found that the asynchronous Wednesdays that were built into the Hamden Middle School and Hamden High School's schedule during distance learning have been immensely helpful. I have found solace in knowing that on Wednesdays I need not worry about logging into Zoom, but can instead focus on pressing matters that otherwise may not be attended to. Having these Wednesdays affords me the greatly needed time to catch up on schoolwork, finish my college applications, and simply have time to breathe. As we are now going back to the hybrid model this coming week, these asynchronous Wednesdays will be a thing of the past. I implore you to consider allowing us to continue having these asynchronous Wednesdays, even as some students return back to school. This would also allow for more consistency, as Cohort A students could attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays and Cohort B students on Thursdays and Fridays. I know that many of my peers echo this sentiment and also wish for Wednesdays to stay asynchronous. It would be to the benefit of the students and staff, in gifting time in the form of maintaining these asynchronous Wednesdays throughout the year.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Indigo Irwin

Hamden High School Student

Dear Board Members:

I am very concerned that the BOE is planning to start in-person classes beginning January 19th, 2021.  Schools across Connecticut waited far too long in the fall to move to distance learning and now the entire state has been seeing 40 to 100+ cases per 100,000 (7-day average) since Thanksgiving and a positive test rate above 10% state-wide since early December.  The surge in cases coincided with the start of the school year.  While correlation does not show causality, it is not a huge leap of faith to conclude that having students and teachers spend an entire day in the same room with other students and teachers has contributed significantly to the spread of COVID.

I keep hearing members of the administration saying that the schools are safe and that there has been no indication of student to student, teacher to student, or student to teacher spread of the virus within the building.  Those statements lack evidence and are frankly irresponsible.  Mask wearing and social distancing may help reduce the rate of transmission, however, even if every student and teacher wears a mask properly and practices social distancing, transmission would only be reduced, not eliminated. N95 and surgical masks have been shown to reduce outward particle emission rates by 90% to 74% according to one study (see the link below).  However, the same study showed that some homemade cloth mask materials have been shown to provide far less protection and in some cases have even been shown to even increase outward particle emission.

[Efficacy of masks and face coverings in controlling outward aerosol particle emission from expiratory activities | Scientific Reports (nature.com)](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-72798-7)

The bottom line is that the BOE can save lives by keeping students home until the vaccines are available to the general population.   It would be negligent for the administration and the board to let students return to in-person learning at this point in time.  If things were serious enough to move to distance learning on November 22nd, then how does it make any sense to return to the hybrid-model with the number of new cases higher than they have ever been?

I included today's data below from COVIDACTNOW.org.  As you can see from the charts, this is clearly not the time to return to in-person school.

In addition, I do not believe that the administration has shown any evidence that students were learning more in the hybrid-model than they are learning now with all students learning remotely.  I suspect that if surveys were conducted and the data was analyzed, we would find that having all students learning remotely with one day a week of asynchronous learning is far more effective than the hybrid-model.  To risk the lives of our students and teachers, without having any evidence that there is a benefit to reinstating the hybrid model, is simply irresponsible.

I ask that the board postpone the return to in-school learning until the administration is able to provide the data to support that decision.

Avi Kamrat

135 Dessa Dr Hamden CT (graphs provided to BOE members

To the Hamden Board of Education,

As a Hamden educator, I am writing to express my concern over the reopening of school buildings on January 19th. While I understand the importance and benefits of having school buildings open for children’s education - the number of weekly COVID-19 cases has risen since we went remote in November by more than 45%. The New York Times reports CT’s cases rising 35% in just the past two weeks.

The logistics of keeping reopened buildings staffed during soaring infection rates will be challenging until vaccinations become more readily available. I implore you to consider the health and well being of our students, families and educators and postpone the reopening of school buildings.

Sincerely,
Susan Martinez Sendroff
45 Augur Street, Hamden, CT

Good morning

Is it possible to have each family and staff tested before returning to the building? This way every family has an idea of where they are ( we know asymptomatic spread has been the biggest contributor) and quarantine if needed. I'm not sure if it's legal to make that a stipulation of their child entering the building, but it would put the school system in a better place for the first few weeks, ie. the daily recordings and pods needing to quarantine. Just a thought.

Namaste,

Dani

Dani Nixon

87 W Easton St

**Hello,**

**I first want to start this letter by stating that I very much want to get back into the classroom with my students again and get back to "normal". This has not how I ever envisioned teaching elementary school. However, children are strong and resilient. They have learned many life skills, in addition to technology skills as they have adapted to learning online. There is so much positive to focus on in regards to what student have encountered and overcome these last few months in teaching and learning. Teachers are working hard to make sure social emotional health is addressed and students remain engaged, active and challenged all the while feeling safe and supported. These are unprecedented times and we need to remain vigilant in our pursuit of health, safety and well-being of everyone. We cannot give in to Covid-fatigue. I understand the need, and want, for things to return to "normal". I am a working parent feeling the same struggles as many other working parents. I can whole heartedly sympathize!**

**However, I am feeling very confused as of late. Stated on the Hamden Public Schools website (**[**https://www.hamden.org/coronavirus/hamden-covid-19-information**](https://www.hamden.org/coronavirus/hamden-covid-19-information)**) is a very clear graphic created by the Connecticut Departments of Public Health and Education called the Learning Model Indicators. I thought it was being used to inform Hamden's decision-making process on remote vs. in-person learning for pre k through grade 12. It clearly states the leading indicator in the decision-making process to be the number of new cases of Covid (14-day average of new cases per 100,000 population per day). It also clearly states 25+ new cases puts us in the "red zone" of less in-person learning. Then the website goes on to indicate that New Haven County (updated as of 1/7/21) has the number of new cases of Covid (7-day average of new cases per 100,000 population per day) to be currently at 57.5. Which is more than double the 25+ to indicate "red zone" and less in-person learning. Yet, we are being told that students are to return to school in less than a week. This is very confusing to me.**

**How can Hamden Public Schools publicly state that they are using these Learning Model Indicators to inform their decision-making process, then completely ignore the fact that all indicators are pointing to a high-risk environment that we are sending our children back into? The risks are higher now than they were before when it was decided it wasn't safe. What is making it safe now? The current Covid situation has gotten worse. We are all feeling Covid-fatigue but we cannot give in, especially as a vaccine is almost available.**

**This shouldn't be a hard decision. We are talking about the health and safety of children. That is what is most important. They are learning! It just looks different this year. They are safe! It just feels different this year. They will continue to make gains academically and socially...it will just be different this year.**

**Thank you for listening to my viewpoint.**

**Sincerely,
Jessica Essenter**

**3rd Grade Hamden Teacher**

**From:** Zoe Hoffmann Kamrat <zoeshaina@gmail.com>
**Sent:** Monday, January 11, 2021 8:14 PM
**To:** input, public <publicinput@hamden.org>
**Subject:** January 12 Board of Education Meeting

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11 January, 2021

Dear Superintendent Goeler and Members of the Board of Education,

We understand that the current goal is to return to the hybrid model starting January 19, 2021. While we recognize the benefits of having some students go to school in-person, we wanted to share our experiences with the Board of Education. We have been at home since the beginning of the year, opting for the full-distance model because our parents don’t feel that going in-person is safe. Since the district moved to distance learning for all students, we have found it significantly easier to learn. In addition, we have also found the asynchronous Wednesdays very helpful as a day to catch up on work and to meet one-on-one with our teachers.

When the hybrid model was in effect in the fall, teachers were struggling to split their attention evenly between students in their classrooms and students online. The majority of teachers focused more on the students in-person. Since teachers didn’t have the technology and resources to properly connect the students in the classroom and those at home, it was impossible to interact with our classmates who were in school. We couldn’t hear them if they spoke, making it difficult to engage in class discussions. In the hybrid model, students online were typically silent for the entire class, while students in-person got to participate regularly. In science classes with labs, we even had to watch our classmates complete labs, while we sat at home observing. Occasionally, teachers would supplement the lab work with YouTube videos for the distance learners, while the in-person learners still had the opportunity to learn in the hands-on environment of the classroom. This made it extremely difficult for anyone at home to gain the same level of understanding as the students who actually had a chance to do the labs. While the hybrid students only had to be on the computer for half the week, full-distance students had to be on every single day, for the full 5.5 hours. Staring at a screen every day for that long made it hard to concentrate in class. Since teachers were at school, they weren’t very understanding of the struggles distance learners were facing. Overall, our learning experience as full-distance students was very poor, until we switched to everyone being at home.

Now that everyone is in one place, we can have full class discussions, and we can actually hear what our classmates are saying. The teachers have now adapted their materials so that they are easily accessible online, and they are able to give their full attention to every student, every day. In our lab science classes, our teachers now make videos in which they walk the students through the lab. We no longer have to rely on YouTube videos and guesswork to complete our labs. Rather than watching our classmates get to do labs while we sit at home, we can all equally participate in them and learn from them together. This was the first time we actually fully understood the material in our classes this year. Teachers have also been much more understanding in terms of late work, Internet issues, headaches, or other problems students may face at home, because they are also working from home. With Wednesdays now being asynchronous, we have the much needed break from the computer, time to complete any late work, and even the opportunity to meet with our teachers individually to receive extra help. We have met with teachers nearly every Wednesday. This has been really helpful for us and many other students. With this break from the screen in the middle of the week, we are able to learn much more effectively.

We recognize that for some students, being at home presents safety issues, and the learning environment can be very distracting and stressful. However, going into school for 2-3 days a week doesn’t make much of a difference, as students will still be exposed to their home atmosphere for a significant portion of the week. We also appreciate the safety precautions the school has been taking to ensure that the virus is contained. However, with COVID cases on the rise and new mutations emerging, many students are afraid to go back to school.

While we miss being in school, and wish we could go back, our parents don’t feel that it is safe for us to return, so we will continue to learn from home. It has been a significantly better experience with everyone at home, and we hope that we can continue with everyone learning remotely. This way, we can interact with all of our classmates at the same time, and we can receive the same resources and help from teachers as the other students. We hope you will consider continuing a full-distance plan for all students until it is safe for everyone to return to school.

Sincerely,

Zoe and Mia Hoffmann Kamrat

*Senior and Sophomore*

*135 Dessa Drive, Hamden CT*