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To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: April 7, 2021
Cc: Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator
Sarah Marandos, Director of Curriculum

The Pelham School District continues to operate under the Family Choice model with approximately 75% of our students in school full time and 25% remote full time. We continue to have multiple cases of students testing positive, which required the district to pivot our elementary school to remote for the week of March 26 - 30. Our universal guidelines and exclusion practices appear to be providing sufficient protections for school to remain open moving forward.

Level of Community Transmission

The level of community transmission has increased since the last update on March 17, 2021. According to our Pelham Public Health Officer, we are seeing an increase in people being vaccinated and an increase in variants in the state. We continue to need to use the universal guidelines including masks and social distancing to reduce community transmission. The cases in Pelham are mostly families starting with those ages 16 - 25, an age group that is not getting vaccinated yet. Hopefully, once their age group opens up for the vaccine we will start to see a decline. We have requested that Walgreens and NH DHHS offer a Vaccination Clinic for our students of that age. It is not yet available.

TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Criteria	11.18	12.1	12.7	12.15	12.28	1.6	1.20	2.17	3.3	3.17	4.17
COVID-19 PCR test positivity as a 7-day avg	3.8%	4.8%	7.7%	9.8%	8.3%	11.1%	8.7%	4.6%	4.2%	3.7%	6.2%
New infections per 100k prior 14 days	240.4	441.6	508.4	786.6	613.4	736.7	768.9	315.1	274.0	266.6	417.4
New hospitalizations per 100k prior 14 days	1.4	1.4	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.8	0.9	--	--	--

- Minimal
- Moderate
- Substantial

NH DHHS trendlines for this data from the start of the pandemic provide a visual representation of the level of community transmission. This data is for Hillsborough County excluding Nashua. (Notes: These charts do not provide a y-axis scale. One can get a sense of the scale by comparing the peak data in the table above to the peak data in the charts.)

CHART: Rate of New Cases per 100,000 Population

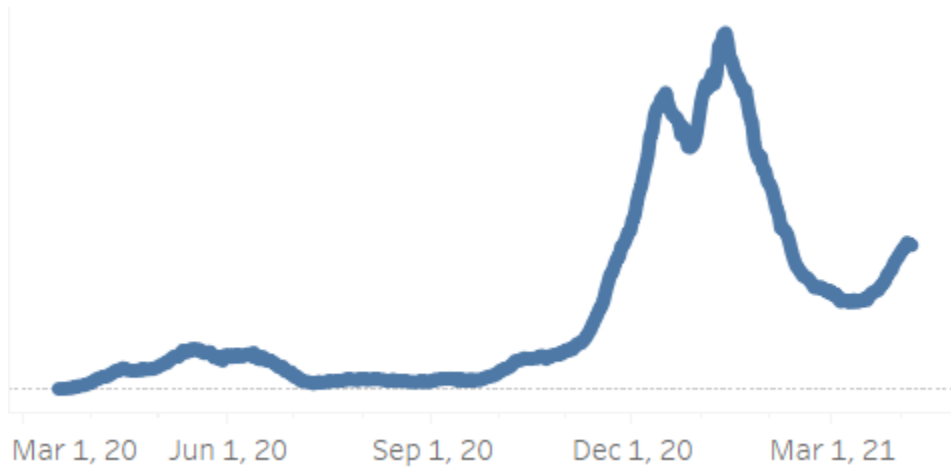
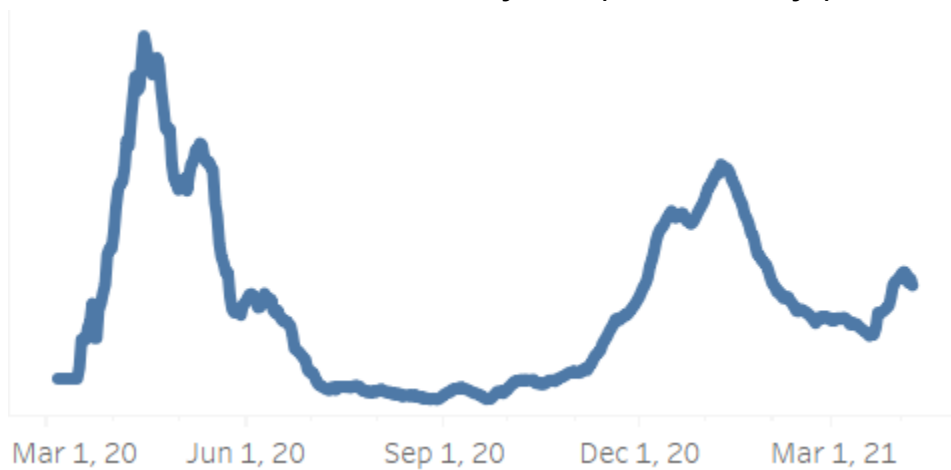


CHART: PCR Test Positivity Rate (last seven days)



Both charts show the rebound of community transmission in the past two weeks. The chart for “New Hospitalization per 100,000 prior 14 days” is not shown because it is no longer provided by DHHS. These charts do not reconcile precisely to the table above because the charts are updated daily while the table is updated before each School Board meeting.

Level of School Impact

The level of impact on the school is medium due to the continued strain on staffing resulting from requests for leave as well as resignations. We have seen a decline in exclusions and quarantines for staff.

The updated Staffing Capacity Data table lists the number of current exclusions. (The previous table has been moved to the end of this memo for reference). An exclusion means a case where a person is told to not come to school for reasons related to COVID-19 such as a close contact.

TABLE: Staffing Capacity Data

School	Enrollment on 10.1	Exclusions									
		01.20		02.17		03.03		03.17		04.07	
		Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff
PES	711	14	2	49	7	9	1	12	2	2	2
PMS/SAU	433	17	1	20	1	11	2	26	4	41	4
PHS	606	12	6	22	1	12	0	8	1	34	2
Total	1,750	43	9	91	9	32	3	46	7	77	8

We have 77 in school students currently excluded from school and 8 staff members. This is an increase from two weeks ago. The increase is the result of positive cases at Memorial School and Pelham High School. While we do not have evidence of **transmission with the schools**, we are working closely with **NH DHHS** to track whether any of our in school positives were epidemiologically linked.

Attendance today (April 7) is at 91%, including exclusions so the level of **student absenteeism** is low. **Staffing capacity** remains strained. We have 8 exclusions along with non-COVID-related leaves and resignations. Currently custodians and IAs present our most significant challenge. The second vaccination clinic for staff scheduled for April 16. All staff who participated will be fully vaccinated by April 30, which will help stabilize staffing levels.

TABLE: Level of School Impact

Criteria	11.18	12.01	12.07	12.16	12.28	01.06	01.20	02.1	03.03	03.17	04.07
Transmission within schools	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Student absenteeism	5% Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5% Low	7% Low	6% Low	6% Low	9% Low
Staff capacity ³	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium

Low

Medium

High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Governor’s Executive Order #89

Governor Sununu issued an executive order last week about schools. The order requires NH schools to make in-school instruction available for five days a week to all families who elect it as of April 19. It also requires districts to continue to provide a remote option for families that elect it. Despite our occasional setbacks, Pelham has provided both of these choices for families from the beginning of the school year. From what I can understand of the executive order as of now, it does not affect us here in Pelham. In the case that the district or a school needs to pivot to remote for more than 48 hours, that change must be approved by the state government.

Conclusion

With community transmission increasing again, vaccinations increasing, and the school impact remaining steady, the Pelham School District anticipates continuing with the Family Choice Model for the foreseeable future. If NH DHHS were to identify an outbreak, the District finds its staffing situation becoming critical, and/or other changes in our decision grid, we would have to reevaluate our capacity to provide this option.

Metrics Scales

Criteria	Level of Community Transmission		
	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Covid-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	<5%	5 - 10%	> 10%
Number of new infections per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days	<50	50 - 100	>100
Number of new hospitalizations per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days	<10	10 - 20	>20

Criteria	Level of School Impact		
	Low	Medium	High
Transmission within the schools	Zero or sporadic cases with no evidence of transmission within the schools	One cluster ² in the school	Two or more unrelated clusters ² in the school
Student absenteeism	<15%	15-30%	>30%
Staff capacity ³	Normal	Strained	Critical

Decision Grid		Level of Community Transmission		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	Family Choice	Family Choice	Family Choice ⁵
	Medium	Family Choice	Family Choice ⁵	Primarily Remote
	High	Primarily Remote ⁴	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

Notes:

Thank you to Salem School District for sharing their materials.

- Level of School Impact is determined by the three identified criteria – transmission rate within the school, student absenteeism, and the staff’s capacity to conduct classes and school operations. Capacity to maintain operations is a subjective factor.
- A cluster is defined as 3 or more individuals confirmed with COVID-19 who are part of a related group of individuals (e.g. a classroom) who had the potential to transmit infection to each other through close contact within the last 14 days. Two or more clusters are defined as those with onset (based on source case symptom onset dates) within 14 days of each other.
- Staff capacity is a subjective assessment. Account must be taken for a school’s ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.
- Rate of community transmission with a high impact on schools will very likely be determined by local public health officials in conjunction with school officials. High impact on schools is defined as greater than 30% student absenteeism and critical effect on school operations.
- Level of Community Transmission is determined by PCR test positivity as a 7 day average, new infections over 14 days per 100,000 individuals, and new hospitalizations. All are determined at the county level and not the community level. Consequently, the rate of community transmission determined with input and guidance from local or state public health officials. The level of community transmission likely will not be a single determining decision-making variable. Rather, it will be used in conjunction with school impact and positive test rates.

PREVIOUS TABLE: Staffing Capacity Data (used 11/18/20 to 01/06/21)

School	Enrollment as of 10/1	Exclusions				Positive Cases since Pivot on 11/25	
		As of 12/7		Since 12/7			
		Student	Staff	Student	Staff	Student	Staff
PES	711	247	62	31	21	2	10
PMS/SAU	433	161	60	20	11	8	4
PHS	606	218	33	65	16	17	3
Total	1,750	626	155	116	48	27	17