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Brendan Hoffman
Interim Director of
Student Services

To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: April 21, 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 cases of students testing positive. However, 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 declined since the last update on April 7, 2021 but remains high. We continue to see more people vaccinated and, at the same time, an increase in variants in the state. We need to keep using the universal guidelines including masks and social distancing to reduce community transmission.

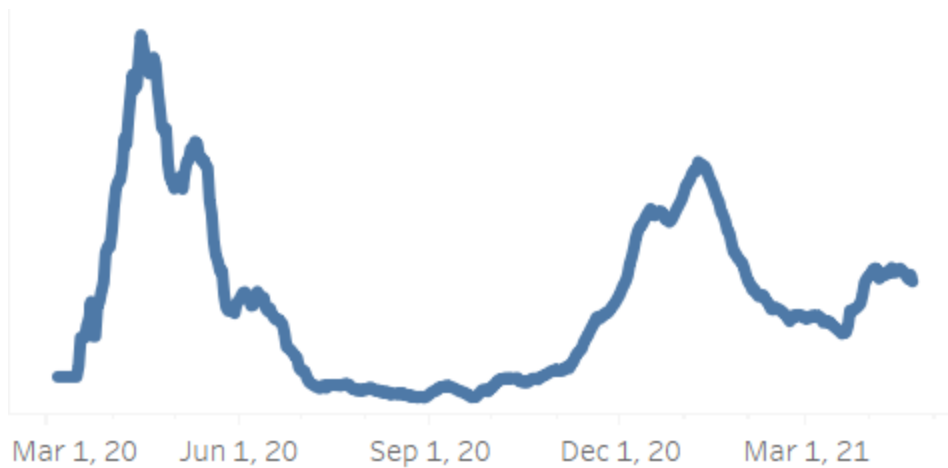
TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Criteria	11.18	12.1	12.7	12.15	12.28	1.6	1.20	2.17	3.3	3.17	4.07	4.21
COVID-19 PCR test positivity 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%	5.2%
New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	240	442	508	787	613	739	769	315	274	267	417	395
New hospitalizations/ 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: PCR Test Positivity Rate (last seven days)



The chart shows the flattening of community transmission in the past two weeks. The charts for “New Cases per 100,000 Population” and “New Hospitalization per 100,000 prior 14 days” are not shown because they are 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	Enrolled on 10.1	Exclusions											
		01.20		02.17		03.03		03.17		04.07		04.21	
		Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff
PES	711	14	2	49	7	9	1	12	2	2	2	22	3
PMS/SAU	433	17	1	20	1	11	2	26	4	41	4	4	2
PHS	606	12	6	22	1	12	0	8	1	34	2	14	0
Total	1,750	43	9	91	9	32	3	46	7	77	8	40	5

We have 40 in school students currently excluded from school and 5 staff members. The decrease from April 7 is the result of fewer cases in school and smaller numbers of close contacts. We continue to have no evidence of **transmission with the schools**.

Attendance today (April 21) is at 94%, including exclusions so the level of **student absenteeism** is low. **Staffing capacity** remains strained. We have 5 exclusions along with non-COVID-related leaves and resignations. Currently custodians and IAs present our most significant challenge. The second vaccination clinic for staff was on 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	04.21
Transmission within schools	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low	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	6% 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	Strained Medium

Low

Medium

High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Mask Mandate

Although New Hampshire’s mask mandate has expired, the Pelham School District still requires everyone to wear masks when in school and at school functions. Our plan to reopen safely has always been based on the assumption that everyone is wearing masks correctly and consistently. As Governor Sununu wrote, “we continue to encourage folks to wear masks when they are unable to socially distance.” Dr. Benjamin Chan, State Epidemiologist, added, “the lifting of the mandate does not diminish the importance of wearing a face mask. The threat to health from COVID-19 is real. Even as restrictions are reduced, we are still in a pandemic and levels of COVID-19 remain high across the State.”

Conclusion

With community transmission decreasing, 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. This could include a decision to pivot to remote for a group, a class, a school, or the district for a period of time.

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