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To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: June 16, 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. Given our current indicators, this model will remain in place for the remainder of the year.

Level of Community Transmission

The level of community transmission has declined since the last update on June 2, 2021 has shifted from moderate to **minimal**. We continue to see more people vaccinated including 135 students (ages 12 and up) who are participating in our voluntary Student Vaccination Clinic and will be fully vaccinated by June 18!

TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Criteria	11.18	12.1	12.7	12.1 5	12.2 8	1.6	1.20	2.17	3.3	3.17	4.07	4.21	5.5	5.19	6.2	6.16
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	3.4	3.2	2.2	1.4
New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	240	442	508	787	613	739	769	315	274	267	417	395	242	137	66	27
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: New Cases per 100,000 (last 14 days)

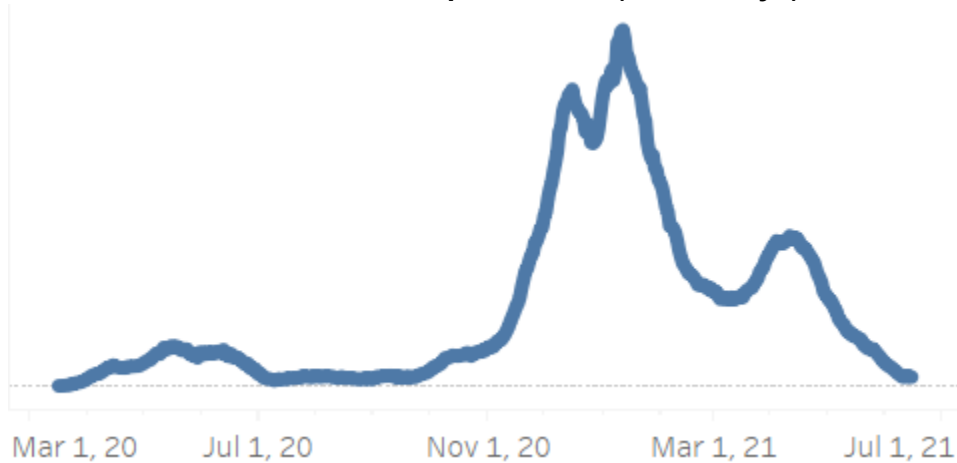
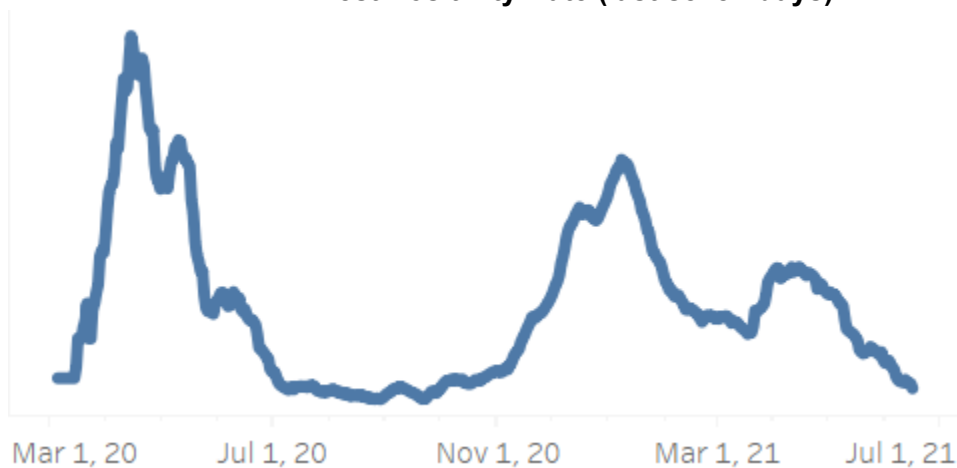


CHART: PCR Test Positivity Rate (last seven days)



The charts show the decline of community transmission in the past two weeks and has returned to the levels seen during the first three months of the school year.

Notes: The chart "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 remains at **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	Total	Exclusions																			
		1.20		2.17		3.3		3.17		4.7		4.21		5.5		5.19		6.2		6.16	
		Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	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	0	2	5	0	13	0	5	0
PMS/SAU	433	17	1	20	1	11	2	26	4	41	4	4	2	11	1	1	1	7	0	4	0
PHS	606	12	6	22	1	12	0	8	1	34	2	14	0	6	0	1	0	1	1	2	1
Total	1,750	43	9	91	9	32	3	46	7	77	8	40	5	17	3	7	1	21	1	11	1

We have seen a decrease in the number of in-school students currently excluded from school. It went from 21 on June 2 to 11 today. The primary reason is the need to exclude students with COVID-like symptoms. We also have 1 staff member currently excluded. We do not currently have any exclusions due to exposures at school and continue to have no evidence of **transmission with the schools**.

Attendance today (June 16) is at 94%, including exclusions, so the level of **student absenteeism** is low. **Staffing capacity** remains strained. Custodians and IAs continue to present our most significant challenge. The signing bonus and recruitment bonus for custodians, contracted services, and the vaccination clinic for staff also appears to have helped stabilize staffing levels.

TABLE: Level of School Impact

Criteria	11.18	12.1	12.7	12.16	12.28	1.6	1.20	2.1	3.3	3.17	4.7	4.21	5.5	5.19	6.2	6.16
Transmission within schools	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low	Low	Low	Low	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	6% Low	4% Low	6% Low	6% Low
Staff capacity ³	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain	Strain

Low Medium High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

The Big Six: Masks, Distancing, Hand Sanitation, Screening, Ventilation, and Vaccines

We will continue to follow the universal guidance described in our Reopening Safety Plans through the end of this school year on Friday. This includes requiring everyone to wear masks when inside school. Outside, masks are now optional and recommended. These six tools, including masks, are needed to all work together to allow us to keep our schools open safely. Our Extended School Year (ESY) program starts on July 6. While many things are still in flux, we have provided the following guidance for ESY staff and families.

- We will provide in-school instruction and services for our students.

- Face covering and distancing guidelines will be optional.
- Screening/exclusion and hand sanitation guidelines will be required.
- Families whose child is invited but do not want to participate in the in-school program can either decline to participate or request a remote option.

The guidance assumes that the level of community transmission of COVID-19 will be **minimal** and the level of school impact will be **low**. If this changes, we will need to adjust this plan.

Reopening 2021 Task Force

The Reopening 2021 Task Force, including parents, teachers, students and administrators, has met twice to provide feedback on our draft Reopening 2021 plans. The draft plan is to make face coverings optional and to not require social distancing. Our goal is to have a school year as close to normal as possible. For example, we anticipate having regular capacity on buses, regular use of lockers for students, and regular meals in the cafeteria. We are making these plans because of the continued decrease in community transmission of COVID-19 and the increasing number of people who have been vaccinated. At the same time, the draft plan is to continue screening and excluding people with COVID-19, close contact, and/or symptoms. We will also continue following hand sanitation, sanitation and ventilation guidelines. This guidance assumes that the level of community transmission will be minimal and the level of school impact will be low by the start of the school year and would be adjusted if the pandemic returns. The Reopening Plan will be presented to the Pelham School Board on July 7.

Limits on COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements

The NH DOE has provided [guidance](#) regarding vaccination and school reopening plans for the 2021-2022 school year. The NH DOE “acknowledges that some operational modifications may continue to be a necessary” and that “the 2021-22 school year will almost certainly open with a COVID-19 vaccine(s) available to some portion of New Hampshire school-aged children.” As a result, they have shared two important positions that the Pelham School District has also adopted for 2021-22.

1. The Pelham School District will not require COVID-19 vaccination for attendance for the 2021-22 school year.
2. The Pelham School District will not “tether” vaccinations to mask wearing. In other words, students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine will not be required to wear a mask when vaccinated students are not required to do so. Also, students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine will not be required to occupy different physical spaces than vaccinated students.

Why Not Change Our Approach for the Last Days of School?

Several community members have asked why the District is not changing its approach to the pandemic for the last days of school. There are many reasons including a commitment to the guidance as shared with families and staff who opted for in-school instruction for the final term of the year and the reality that no students aged 12 and under have access to the vaccine. Perhaps the clearest explanation came from NH DHHS’s [updated guidance](#) on May 17, 2021 that reads, “NH DHHS continues to recommend that everybody wear face masks and physically distance in certain settings, including . . . schools . . . where a high proportion of people may not be fully vaccinated. . . . Population-level mitigation measures (face mask use, physical distancing, etc.) will end the pandemic more quickly, protect the vulnerable and people unable to be vaccinated, and enable return to more normal societal functioning.”

Conclusion

With community transmission decreasing, vaccinations increasing, and the school impact remaining steady, the Pelham School District anticipates continuing with the Family Choice Model through the end of the school year on June 18. We plan on increased flexibility for our summer Extended School Year (ESY) programming and look forward to the completed work of the task force.

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