

Eric "Chip" McGee, Ed.D.
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Deb Mahoney
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Holly Doe
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To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: March 2, 2022
Cc: Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator
Sarah Marandos, Assistant Superintendent

This memo provides the Board and community an update on the District operations in light of the ongoing pandemic.

Key Takeaways

- The Pelham School District remains fully open to students.
- The level of community transmission remains **substantial** and has continued to decrease since February 16.
- The level of school impact remains **low**.
- Masks and distancing are optional throughout the District. Starting on Monday March 7, this includes school buses.
- Those wishing to return after only 5 days from isolation or quarantine will still be required to wear a mask.
- The Pelham School District will begin accepting at-home rapid tests for COVID-19 starting Monday March 7.

Level of Community Transmission

The level of community transmission is **substantial** but has decreased significantly since the last update on January 19. In Pelham, there are 247 new infections per 100,000 in Pelham, which is substantial. This equates to 35 people out of the population in Pelham of 14,155. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 5.2%, which is moderate. In Hillsborough County there are 267 new cases per 100,000 which is substantial and a PCR test positivity rate of 5.4% which is moderate.

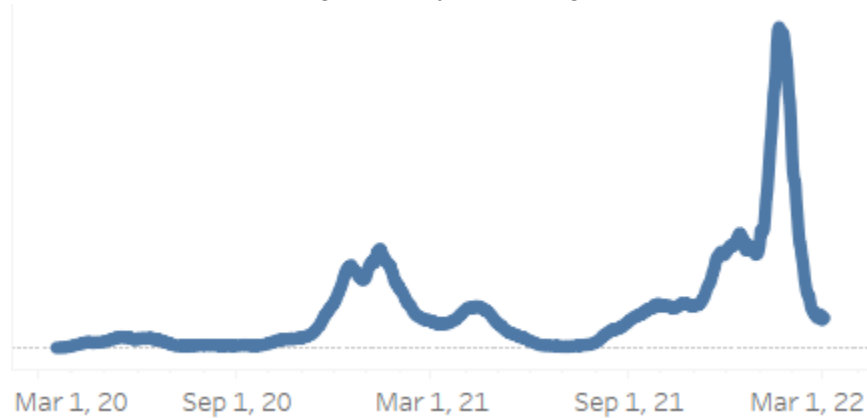
TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Date	Pelham		Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua)	
	PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	New infections per 100k prior 14 days	PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	New infections per 100k prior 14 days
8.17	8.7%	276	6.3%	182
9.1	8.7%	473	6.5%	270
9.15	3.5%	579	4.4%	343
9.29	5.1%	643	4.2%	439
10.8	4.5%	692	4.0%	430
10.20	2.6%	431	6.1%	430
11.3	3.3%	311	7.2%	428
11.17	7.3%	523	10.1%	680
12.1	12.9%	1,046	12.7%	947
12.15	13.7%	1,109	11.3%	1,057
1.5	26.2%	1,250	21.5%	1,000
1.19	25.3%	4,225	23.3%	2,811
2.16	4.8%	467	7.1%	474
3.2	5.2%	247	5.4%	267

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. The chart indicates a rapid decrease in community transmission since January 19. This data is for Hillsborough County excluding Nashua. Town-level trendlines are not provided by NH DHHS because of the lower population.

CHART: New Cases per 100,000 (last 14 days)
Hillsborough County excluding Nashua



Notes: This chart does not reconcile precisely to the table above because the chart is updated daily while the table is updated before each School Board meeting. The chart for PCR test positivity rate is not included because it was not updated by NH DHHS since February 1, 2022.

Level of School Impact

The level of impact on the school remains **low**. This change is based on three criteria: transmission within the schools, student absenteeism, and staff capacity.

TABLE: Level of School Impact

Date	Transmission in schools	Student absenteeism	Staff capacity
8.17	Low	N/A	Normal
9.1	Low	4.6% - Low	Normal
9.15	Medium	7.5% - Low	Normal
9.29	Medium	9.0% - Low	Normal
10.8	Medium	8.5% - Low	Normal
10.20	Medium	5.4% - Low	Normal
11.3	Medium	5.4% - Low	Normal
11.17	Varied	9.0% - Low	Strained
12.1	Varied	9.6% - Low	Strained
12.15	Varied	7.8% - Low	Strained
1.5	Medium	20.0% - Medium	9.2%* - Strained
1.19	Varied	9.1% - Low	11.0%* - Strained
2.16	Low	5.0% - Low	6.7%* - Normal
3.2	No New Data	No New Data	No New Data

Low Medium High

*Percent certified staff absent.

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Transmission within the schools - Prior to the February break, all clusters at all three schools had ended. The number of students and staff who have tested positive has decreased dramatically. There are currently a total of two students and no staff members who are excluded as a result of testing positive. This means transmission within the schools remains **low**.

All Known Positive Cases of COVID-19 for Students and Staff as of 3.2.22

School	Current*			Total for 2021-22 (recovered and current)		
	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks
	Students	Staff		Students	Staff	
Pelham Elementary School*	2	0	0/0	254	54	8/2
Pelham Memorial School	0	0	0/0	149	25	10/2
Pelham High School	0	0	0/0	171	14	5/1

*Current cases were counted on 3.2.22, which is during school vacation week when new cases are not being reported to the schools.

Student absenteeism - Student absenteeism can not be measured during school vacation week. It was considered **low** on 2.16.22.

Staff capacity - Staff absenteeism could not be measured because of school vacation week. It was considered **low** on 2.16.22.

Decision Grid

While the level of community transmission is **substantial**, it continues to decrease. The overall level of school impact is now **low**. The new decision grid (below) recommends **Emphasis on Pelham Data**.

Decision Grid		Level of Community Transmission ⁴		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	Masks Optional	Masks Optional	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶
	Medium	Masks Optional	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶	Masks and Distancing
	High	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

As a result, masks and distancing remain optional throughout the District. Staff and students wishing to return from isolation or quarantine after only 5 days will need to wear masks according to [NH DHHS Guidance](#). As of March 7, students on the school buses will no longer need to wear masks because of a change in [federal regulations](#) on 2.25.22. PHS and PMS will post close contacts on [the Pelham School District pandemic response webpage](#) instead of sending out notices through email. PES moved to that system last week. We will continue to monitor all variables in case further change is needed.

Accepting At-Home Rapid Tests Starting Monday, March 7, 2022

The Pelham School District will begin accepting at-home rapid tests for COVID-19 starting Monday March 7. Once the results are submitted, the school nurse will contact you and clear your child during school hours. Submitting the test does not mean your child is automatically cleared to come back to school. Before returning to school, symptoms must be mild and improving and students must be fever free for at least 24 hrs without the use of fever reducing medications.

The Big Seven

We will continue to follow the universal guidance described in our Reopening 2021 Plan. Our mitigation measures are (1) face coverings, (2) distancing, (3) hand sanitation, (4) screening, (5) ventilation, (6) vaccines, and (7) testing. Although face coverings and distancing are optional, they remain on the list as potential tools for future challenges. Students and staff will still be required to self-screen and the District will continue its efforts related to providing additional ventilation, encouraging vaccines and providing optional testing.

Conclusion

We continue to adjust to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. The pandemic we face today is not the one that arrived in Pelham in March of 2020. I am hopeful that we are now in a position to manage the pandemic, rather than have it drive so much of what we do. It could be an opportunity to get to work on all the other challenges/opportunities we have in the Pelham School District. I want to thank staff, families, and students for their friendly, kind, and patient approach. If circumstances change further, we will adjust and persevere.

Metrics Scales- Reopening 2021

Criteria	Level of Community Transmission		
	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
New - Town of Pelham - Covid-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	<5%	5 - 10%	> 10%
New - Town of Pelham - New infections per 100,000 over the prior 14 days	<50	50 - 100	> 100
Hillsborough County Excluding Nashua - Covid-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	<5%	5 - 10%	> 10%
Hillsborough County Excluding Nashua - New infections per 100,000 over the prior 14 days	<50	50 - 100	> 100

Criteria	Level of School Impact ¹		
	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 ⁷		Level of Community Transmission ⁴		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	Masks Optional	Masks Optional	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶
	Medium	Masks Optional	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶	Masks and Distancing
	High	Emphasis On Pelham Data ⁶	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

Notes:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Staff capacity includes a school's ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.
4. Level of Community Transmission is determined by PCR test positivity as a 7 day average and new infections over 14 days per 100,000 individuals. All are determined at the county level and not the community level since Pelham is relatively small and within Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua). The level of community transmission will not be a single determining decision-making variable. Rather, it will be used in conjunction with school impact and positive test rates.
5. A medium level of school impact does not necessarily mean that masks and physical distancing are required. It depends on the type of school impact and will be determined by administration in conjunction with public health officers.
6. "Emphasis on local data" means that decisions about increasing safety measures including masks and distancing will be based on Pelham data over county, state or national data.
7. The Decision Grid was received by the School Board on February 16, 2022.