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*Superintendent*



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To: Pelham School Board  
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent  
Re: Pandemic Response  
Date: November 17, 2021  
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. We have several significant changes from the previous update.

### **Key Takeaways**

- The Pelham School District remains fully open to students.
- The level of community transmission remains **substantial** and the level of school impact remains **medium**.
- We identified a COVID-19 cluster in the Sixth Grade Upstairs Team at PMS which will affect the group until November 23.
- We have identified two clusters at PES, which is considered an outbreak. This will affect the school until November 30. This outbreak increases the level of school transmission at PES to high.
- The free onsite asymptomatic PCR testing clinic is open to all who are interested on a weekly basis and after school.
- A free onsite vaccination clinic for children ages 5 - 11 is planned for Friday November 19 and Friday December 10.

### **Level of Community Transmission**

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and increasing. In Pelham, new infections per 100,000 increased from two weeks ago. As of today, there are 523 new infections per 100,000 in Pelham, which equates to 74 people out of the population in Pelham of approximately 14,000. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 7.3%, which is medium. In Hillsborough County there are 680 new cases per 100,000 and a PCR test positivity rate of 10.1%.

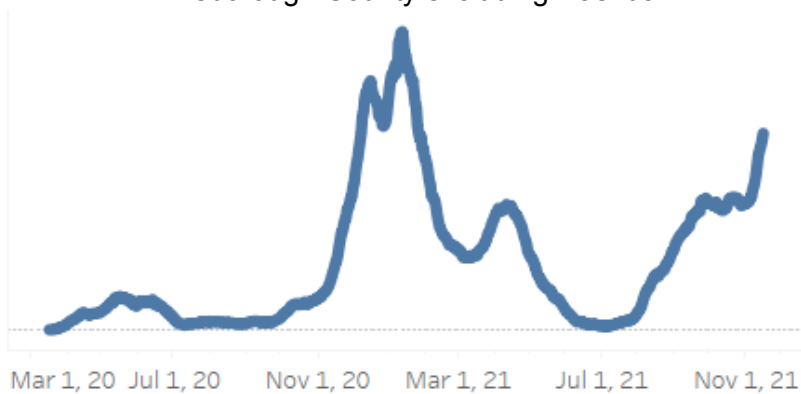
**TABLE: Level of Community Transmission**

Level	Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11.17
Pelham	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	8.7%	8.7%	3.5%	5.1%	4.5%	2.6%	3.3%	7.3%
	New infections / 100k prior 14 days	276	473	579	643	692	431	311	523
Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua)	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	6.3%	6.5%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	6.1%	7.2%	10.1%
	New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	182	270	343	439	430	430	428	680

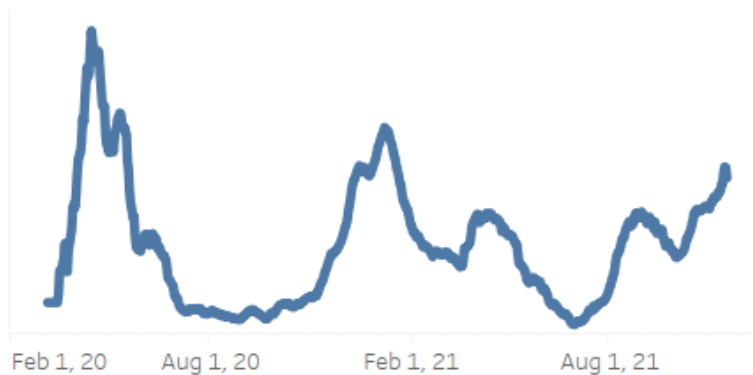
Minimal Moderate Substantial

NH DHHS trendlines for this data from the start of the pandemic provide a visual representation of the level of community transmission. Both charts indicate an increasing spread of COVID-19 regionally compared to two weeks ago. This data is for Hillsborough County excluding Nashua. Town-level trendlines are not provided by NH DHHS because of the lower population. The charts show the increase in community transmission since March of 2020.

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



**CHART: PCR Test Positivity Rate (last seven days)**  
Hillsborough County excluding Nashua



*Notes: 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 currently **medium**. We have 16 students and four staff at PES, eight students at PMS, and three students at PHS who are currently excluded from school for having tested positive for COVID-19. This data can also be found on the [Pelham School District COVID-19 Dashboard](#) and is updated every week.

**All Known Positive Cases of COVID-19 for Students and Staff as of 11.17.21**

School	Current			Total for 2021-22 (recovered and current)		
	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks
	Students	Staff		Students	Staff	
Pelham Elementary School	16	4	2/1	74	16	3/1
Pelham Memorial School	8	0	1	40	2	3
Pelham High School	3	0	0	29	0	0

The level of school transmission is varied by school. We identified a cluster in the Sixth Grade Upstairs Team at PMS which will affect the group until November 23. Generally, a cluster is three or more people in a group (like a class or a team) who test positive within a set amount of time and no clear reason for why they did besides being the group. This means the level of school transmission for PHS is **low** and PMS is **medium**.

We have identified two clusters at PES, which is considered an outbreak. This will affect the school until November 30. Generally, an outbreak is defined as two or more unrelated clusters in a school. This means the level of school transmission for PES specifically is **high**. As a result, all students and staff in Pelham Elementary School are required to wear masks until November 30. Like last year, staff will provide students with the opportunity for masks breaks periodically when they are physically distanced. The rest of the District will continue to have the current rule, which is that masks are required only when people are within three feet of each other for more than an incidental amount of time. Otherwise they are recommended but not required.

Student Absenteeism today is at 9.0%, which is an increase but still considered **low**. This was 151 students absent out of 1,679. We continue to struggle to find sufficient staffing given tight labor markets and exclusions. We do continue to look for instructional assistants and custodians. This plus the necessary absences due to illness have increased the strain at PES in particular pushing staff capacity to **medium**.

**TABLE: Level of School Impact**

Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11/17
Transmission within schools	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Varied See above
Student absenteeism	N/A	4.6% Low	7.5% Low	9.0% Low	8.5% Low	5.4% Low	5.4% Low	9.0% Low
Staff capacity <sup>3</sup>	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Strained

Low Medium High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

## Decision Grid

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and the level of school impact is **medium**. The decision grid recommends **masks and distancing**. This is why our current rule is anyone within three feet of another person for more than an incidental amount of time must wear a mask. Otherwise, masks are recommended though not required.

For PES, school impact is **medium** but higher than at PMS and PHS. That is why we have proceeded with increased masking requirements. Given the increased availability of other mitigation strategies including asymptomatic testing and vaccinations, we recommend using every single tool available to keep school open.

Decision Grid		Level of Community Transmission <sup>4</sup>		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	No Masks No Distancing	Emphasis on Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Masks and Distancing
	Medium	No Masks No Distancing <sup>5</sup>	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Masks and Distancing
	High	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

## 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.

## Conclusion

This was a challenging week for the community with the need to adjust our approach yet again. The current local data regarding COVID-19 and the recommendations of the NH DHHS provided the information needed and we are following our plan. I want to commend staff, families, and students for their friendly, kind, and patient approach to these changes. If the level of community transmission changes or the level of school impact changes, we will adjust again. In order to make decisions about the need for these adjustments, the District will continue to consult with the COVID-19 Education Liaison at the NH DHHS and the Public Health Officer for the Town of Pelham.

### 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 <sup>1</sup>		
	Low	Medium	High
Transmission within the schools	Zero or sporadic cases with no evidence of transmission within the schools	One cluster <sup>2</sup> in the school	Two or more unrelated clusters <sup>2</sup> in the school
Student absenteeism	<15%	15-30%	>30%
Staff capacity <sup>3</sup>	Normal	Strained	Critical

Decision Grid		Level of Community Transmission <sup>4</sup>		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	No Masks No Distancing	Emphasis on Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Masks and Distancing
	Medium	No Masks No Distancing <sup>5</sup>	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Masks and Distancing
	High	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	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 is 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.