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*Superintendent*



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To: Pelham School Board  
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent  
Re: Pandemic Response  
Date: January 5, 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 increased.
- The level of school impact remains **medium**.
- As a result, our approach will remain the same for the coming week with all students and staff in the entire District required to wear masks during the school day while inside until at least January 17, 2022.
- The NH DHHS isolation guideline for a person who tests positive for COVID-19 remains at 10 days.

#### **Level of Community Transmission**

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and continues to increase. In Pelham, new infections increased from our December 15 report. As of today, there are 1,250 new infections per 100,000 in Pelham, which equates to 177 people out of the population in Pelham of 14,155. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 26.2%, which is high. In Hillsborough County there are 1,000 new cases per 100,000 and a PCR test positivity rate of 21.5%.

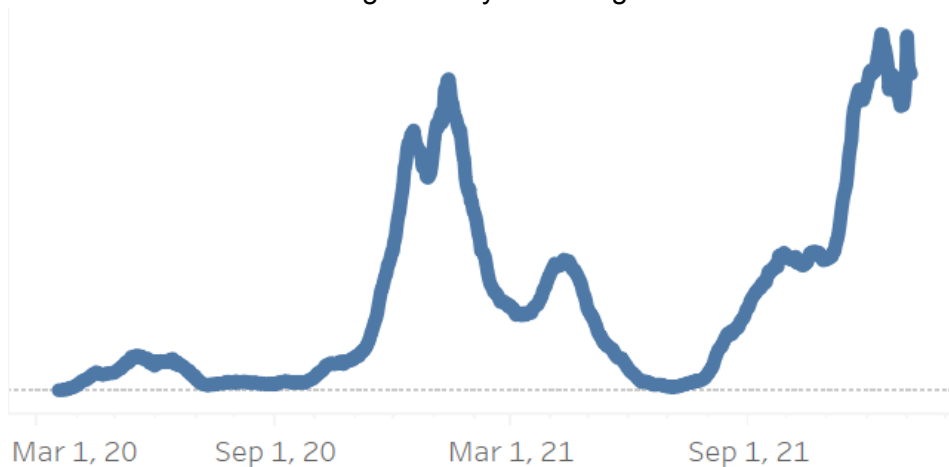
**TABLE: Level of Community Transmission**

Level	Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11.17	12.1	12.15	1.5
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%	12.9%	13.7%	26.2%
	New infections / 100k prior 14 days	276	473	579	643	692	431	311	523	1,046	1,109	1,250
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%	12.7%	11.3%	21.5%
	New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	182	270	343	439	430	430	428	680	947	1,057	1,000

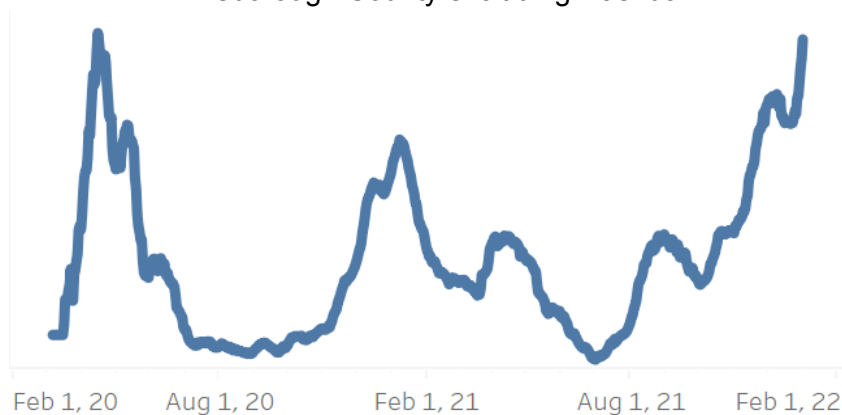
Minimal Moderate Substantial

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 and the highest rates since we started tracking. 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



**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**. This is based on three criteria: transmission within the schools, student absenteeism, and staff capacity.

Transmission within the schools - We have seen an increase in the number of students who are currently excluded from school because they have tested positive. At PES, we currently have 35 students excluded because they tested positive compared to 10 students on December 15. At PMS, we have 16 compared to 4 on December 15. At PHS we have 31 compared to 11 on December 15. At the same time the clusters, defined as three or more cases likely to have been spread in school, have ended. They ended because the holiday break from December 23 to January 2 meant the virus could not be spread in school during that time. At the high school, we have three sports teams with clusters: boys basketball, indoor track, and winter cheer. Athletics were practicing and competing over the break but since this was not during school, these were not included in the count of clusters in school. As a result of all of this information, transmission within the schools is **medium**.

**All Known Positive Cases of COVID-19 for Students and Staff as of 1.5.22**

School	Current			Total for 2021-22 (recovered and current)		
	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks
	Students	Staff		Students	Staff	
Pelham Elementary School	35	3	0/0	155	29	5/1
Pelham Memorial School	16	6	0/0	84	17	4/1
Pelham High School	31	0	0/0	112	3	0/0

Student absenteeism - As of today, student absenteeism is at 20.0%. This is an increase from December 15 when it was 7.8%. Absences over 15% are considered **medium**.

Staff capacity - As we resumed school in the new year, our staff has been able to continue our operations. As of today (1.5.22) we had 10% of our certified educators absent. I cannot express fully my gratitude to all our staff for their continued effort throughout the nearly two years of pandemic response. We do continue to look for instructional assistants and custodians. We also face increasing necessary absences due to illness, household contacts, and child care demands. This has increased the strain across the district and at PES in particular. As a result, staff capacity is **medium**.

**TABLE: Level of School Impact**

Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11.17	12.1	12.15	1.5
Transmission within schools	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Varied See above	Varied See above	Varied See above	Medium
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	9.6% Low	7.8% Low	20.0% Medium
Staff capacity <sup>3</sup>	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Strained	Strained	Strained	Strained

Low Medium High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

### Decision Grid

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and increasing and the overall level of school impact is **medium** and increasing. The decision grid recommends **masks and distancing**.

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>	<b>Masks and Distancing</b>
	High	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

As a result, the students and staff in the entire District are required to wear masks during the school day while inside until at least January 17, 2022. We will continue to monitor all variables in case a change is needed. Like last year, staff will provide students with the opportunity for masks breaks periodically when they are physically distanced.

### Isolation Period

For those who test positive, [NH DHHS Guidance](#) remains that isolation is for 10 days. According to the NHDOE, “State public health officials have reviewed the press statement issued by the CDC regarding isolation and quarantine and look forward to reviewing the CDC’s complete guidance once published. Once official guidance is available, the State will be able to determine how best to implement these changes in New Hampshire for the general public and in settings such as healthcare, residential facilities and schools. At this time, residents should continue to follow NH’s current [isolation guidance](#) and [quarantine guidance](#).”

### 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

We continue to adjust to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. 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. 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:

- 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.
- 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 includes a school's ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.
- 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.
- 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.
- "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.