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To: Pelham School Board  
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent  
Re: Pandemic Response  
Date: August 24, 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 as the 2022-23 school year starts. The rate of positive cases continues to decline. The community has additional tools including effective vaccinations for all ages and highly accurate at home testing. We face a much less lethal strain of the virus as well.

### Key Takeaways

- Based on the current state of the pandemic, I recommend this update shift from every Board meeting to an "as needed" basis.
- The level of community transmission remains **substantial** and the level of school impact remains **low**. This means we are emphasizing Pelham data.
- Masks remain optional throughout the District.
- All staff, students and visitors are still required to self screen for symptoms of COVID-19. Those with symptoms will be required to provide a negative COVID-19 test or a different diagnosis to return to school.
- Based on updated NH DHHS guidance, only those who test positive and wanting to return to school from isolation after 5 days will still be required to wear a mask. Those who have a household contact will no longer be required to quarantine.

### Level of Community Transmission

The level of community transmission remains **substantial**. In Pelham, the number of cases per 100,000 in the last 14 days is 184. This is 26 new cases out of the population in Pelham of 14,155. In Hillsborough County there are 164 new cases per 100,000. The threshold for substantial transmission is 100 new cases per 100,000 residents. PCR Test positivity rates are no longer being reported by NHDHHS. These levels remain substantial though they have declined compared to June 1, 2022 and August 17, 2021.

**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
8.17.21	8.7%	276	6.3%	182
6.1.22	8.9%	544	10.2%	459
8.24.22	Not Reported^	164	Not Reported^	184

Minimal Moderate Substantial

^ NHDHHS Data for positivity rate is no longer reported.

### Level of School Impact

The level of impact on the school remains **low**. This is typically based on three criteria: transmission within the schools, student absenteeism, and staff capacity. However, we do not yet have school transmission data or student absenteeism data. We have been fortunate to have been able to staff our open positions reasonably well for the start of school so our staff capacity is normal despite a very challenging job market for employers.

**TABLE: Level of School Impact**

Date	Transmission in schools	Student absenteeism	Staff capacity
8.17.21	Low	N/A	Normal
6.1.22	Low	6.3% - Low	Normal
8.24.22	No Data	No Data	Normal

Low Medium High

\*Percent certified staff absent.

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

### Decision Grid

We will continue to follow the guidance described in our Reopening 2021 Plan. The level of community transmission is **substantial** and the level of school impact is now **low**. The decision grid recommends **Emphasis On Pelham Data**. As a result, we will maintain masks being optional. We will continue to monitor all variables in case further change is needed.

### The Big Seven

Our current mitigation measures are (1) hand sanitation, (2) self-screening, (3) ventilation, (4) vaccines, and (5) testing. Face coverings and distancing are optional, although they remain on the list as potential tools for future challenges. Vaccinations and testing are now available broadly in the community so will no longer be provided by the school.

## 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 <sup>7</sup>		Level of Community Transmission <sup>4</sup>		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	Masks Optional	Masks Optional	Emphasis On Pelham Data <sup>6</sup>
	Medium	Masks Optional	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 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.