

Eric "Chip" McGee, Ed.D.
Superintendent



Sarah Marandos, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent

Deb Mahoney
Business Administrator

Joan Cote
Director of Human Resources

Holly Doe
Director of Technology

59A Marsh Road
Pelham, NH 03076

T:(603)-635-1145
F:(603)-635-1283

Brendan Hoffman
Director of Student Services

To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: September 1, 2021
Cc: Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator
Sarah Marandos, Assistant Superintendent

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

Key Takeaways

- The Pelham School District opened fully to students on Monday, August 30. Teachers were excited and prepared. They reconnected with their students and worked on the routines and rituals of in school learning.
- The free onsite PCR testing clinic is scheduled to begin September 8. The registration/consent form went out to staff and students today.
- The level of community transmission remains **substantial** and the level of school impact remains **low** so the decision grid indicates masks and distancing. That 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 This applies to the whole district.
- If there is an increase in the level of school impact, we may need to increase our use of mitigation strategies including masking.

Onsite PCR Testing

Voluntary onsite PCR testing for students and staff registration was sent out today. Testing is free to students and staff and the District. This will add another layer of protection and mitigation for our schools. It is possible through Federal funding and provided by Convenient MD. Our first priority is to test students who are younger than 12 because they are unable to be vaccinated and students engaged in interscholastic athletics because they are at higher risk due to their close interactions with students from other schools. It will be held at Pelham Elementary School on Wednesday afternoons. Families of students under 12 will have the option of having the testing done during the school day or returning after the school day ends. All other students and staff will be able to have the testing done after school.

Level of Community Transmission

The level of community transmission has continued to increase since the last Board meeting on August 18. In Pelham it has remained **substantial**. As of today, there are 473 new infections per

100,000 in Pelham, which equates to 67 people out of the population in Pelham of approximately 14,000. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 8.7%. In Hillsborough County the level of community transmission is lower though still **substantial**. There are 270 new cases per 100,000 and a PCR test positivity rate of 6.5%

TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Level	Criteria	08.17	09.01
Pelham	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	8.7%	8.7%
	New infections / 100k prior 14 days	276	473
Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua)	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	6.3%	6.5%
	New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	182	270

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. Town-level trendlines are not provided by NH DHHS because of the lower population. The charts show the increase in community transmission since July 7.

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

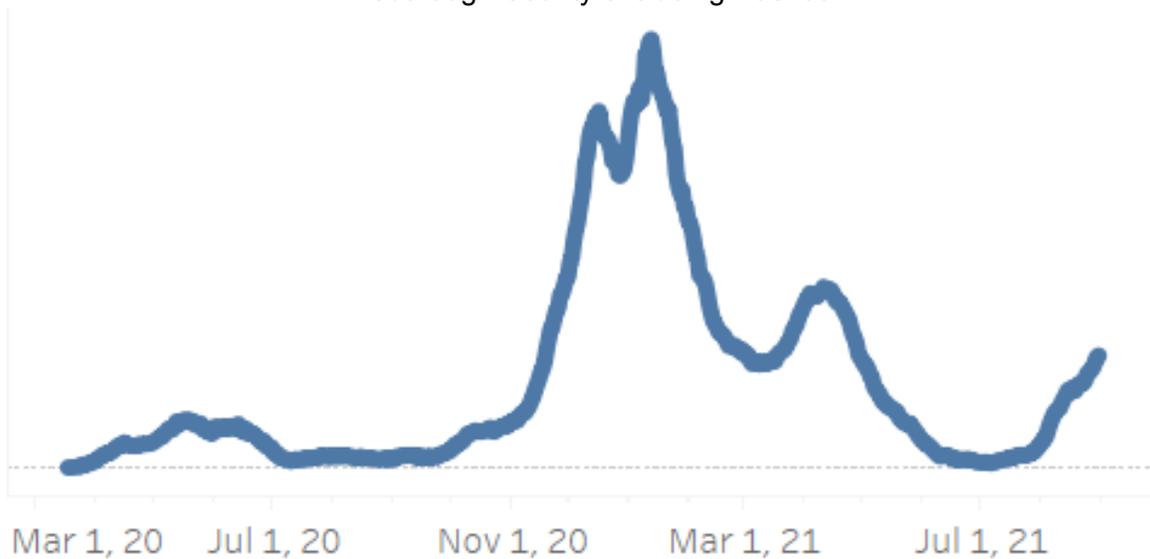


CHART: PCR Test Positivity Rate (last seven days)
Hillsborough County excluding Nashua



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 **low**. We have had three students test positive in the first two days of school. At the same time, we have not identified a cluster or outbreak. That means transmission in school is **low**. Student Absenteeism in the first week of school is at 4.6% which is **low**. This was 77 students absent out of 1,690. Although we continue to struggle to find sufficient staffing given tight labor markets, the summer break has allowed the District to fill many positions. We do continue to look for instructional assistants and custodians. Additionally, professional and support staff started the year with great enthusiasm. This means our staffing capacity is **normal**.

TABLE: Level of School Impact

Criteria	8.17	9.1
Transmission within schools	Low	Low
Student absenteeism	N/A	4.6% Low
Staff capacity ³	Normal	Normal

Low Medium High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

With the level of community transmission at **substantial** and the level of school impact **low**, 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 This applies to the whole district.

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

Clusters and Outbreaks

If the school impact increases from low to medium, we may need to increase the use of masks and distancing. This would be triggered by a cluster or an outbreak in school. The full NH DHHS definition for these terms can be found in it's [guidance to schools](#). 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. An outbreak is the same but if it is clear the cases are linked to the group. We will consult with NH DHHS to determine whether cases constitute a cluster or outbreak.

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

Our approach continues to be based on the current local data regarding COVID-19 and the recommendations of the NH DHHS. If the level of community transmission changes or the level of school impact changes, we may need to adjust this plan. 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 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		Level of Community Transmission ⁴		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	No Masks No Distancing	Emphasis on Pelham Data ⁶	Masks and Distancing
	Medium	No Masks No Distancing ⁵	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 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.