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To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: December 16, 2020
Cc: Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator
Sarah Marandos, Director of Curriculum

The Pelham School District will remain in a remote status until at least January 4 in order to maintain our student and staff health and safety during the pandemic. I will make a recommendation for January 4 and beyond at a special meeting of the Pelham School Board on December 28. This memorandum updates the Board regarding the key metrics for decision making.

Level of Community Transmission

The Level of Community Transmission is one of the key metrics the district used to make this decision. The average test positivity rate has increased from 3.8% to 9.8% from November 18 to Dec 14. This is considered moderate spread. The number of new infections per 100,000 for the past 14 days has increased from 240.4 to 786.6, which is considered substantial. The rate of hospitalizations has dropped from 1.4 to 0.9 during this time, which is considered minimal.

Level of Community Transmission

Criteria	Nov 18, 2020	Dec 1, 2020	Dec 7, 2020	Dec 15, 2020
COVID-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	3.8% Minimal	4.8% Minimal	7.7% Moderate	9.8% Moderate
Number of new infections per 100,000 population prior 14 days	240.4 Substantial	441.6 Substantial	508.4 Substantial	786.6 Substantial
Number of new hospitalizations per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days	1.4 Minimal	1.4 Minimal	0.5 Minimal	0.9 Minimal

The overall Level of Community Transmission is considered substantial by [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Schools Dashboard](#). This data is for Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua). Additionally, the [Harvard Global Health Institute's COVID Risk Level Map and COVID Suppression Guidance](#) indicates that New Hampshire is at a "tipping point." This data is for the second congressional district of New Hampshire.

Level of School Impact

The level of impact on the school continues to be difficult to evaluate because most students are attending school remotely. The updated Staffing Capacity Data table lists the number of exclusions through 12/7 and since 12/7. An exclusion means a case where a person is told to not come to school for reasons related to COVID-19. The largest impact on students and staff is at the elementary school.

Staffing Capacity Data

School	Enrollment as of 10/1	Exclusions				Positive Cases since Pivot on 11/25	
		As of 12/7		Since 12/7		Student	Staff
		Student	Staff	Student	Staff		
PES	711	247	62	12	10	2	6
PMS/SAU	433	161	60	6	2	4	3
PHS	606	218	33	10	6	2	2
Total	1,750	626	155	28	18	8	11

We have had 8 positive students and 11 positive staff since we pivoted on 11/25. Because students were not in school, we avoided significant additional close contacts and exclusions. As a result, we likely have avoided transmission within the school, which is, ultimately, the purpose of the pivot.

Level of School Impact

Criteria	Nov 18, 2020	Dec 1, 2020	Dec 7, 2020	Dec 15, 2020
Transmission within the schools	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A
Student absenteeism	5% Low	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff capacity ³	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Although we cannot measure in school student attendance, we continue to have some families who selected in school instruction reporting a strong desire to have their children return to school. Staff capacity remains limited due to quarantine requirements, childcare challenges, and limits on our ability to find substitutes. This is straining our capacity to safely supervise students when in school.

Review of Key Updates

- School buildings and the SAU offices remain open throughout this time period and are following the same universal guidelines for staff and students using the school.
- Preschool will be in session during the pivot.

- We continue to provide in-school special education services on a case by case basis.
- We are collecting and reviewing requests from staff for temporary exceptions to working in school and anticipate completion of this process by Dec 23.
- Principal Van Vracken and her team have determined that we are currently unable to bring Kindergarten back into school. We are making every effort to do so by January 4.
- The Family Choice survey for Pelham High School was distributed on December 11 and is due back on Dec 18.
- Pelham High School athletics will complete tryouts this week and will suspend team activities during the school break.

Conclusion

Although there is no recommendation at this time, it is important to highlight several key aspects of this pandemic response update.

- The level of community transmission is substantial and continues to rise.
- Staffing levels remain strained with the largest impact in terms of exclusions and positive cases happening at the elementary school.

Ultimately, we continue to place safety as our highest priority and once we can be assured that students and staff can be at school safely, we are committed to resuming in school instruction for those that have chosen it.

Metrics Scales

Criteria	Level of Community Transmission		
	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Covid-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	<5%	5 - 10%	> 10%
Number of new infections per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days	<50	50 - 100	>100
Number of new hospitalizations per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days	<10	10 - 20	>20

Criteria	Level of School Impact		
	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		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	Family Choice	Family Choice	Family Choice ⁵
	Medium	Family Choice	Family Choice ⁵	Primarily Remote
	High	Primarily Remote ⁴	Primarily Remote	Primarily Remote

Notes:

Thank you to Salem School District for sharing their materials.

- 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. Capacity to maintain operations is a subjective factor.
- 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 is a subjective assessment. Account must be taken for a school's ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.
- Rate of community transmission with a high impact on schools will very likely be determined by local public health officials in conjunction with school officials. High impact on schools is defined as greater than 30% student absenteeism and critical effect on school operations.
- Level of Community Transmission is determined by PCR test positivity as a 7 day average, new infections over 14 days per 100,000 individuals, and new hospitalizations. All are determined at the county level and not the community level. Consequently, the rate of community transmission determined with input and guidance from local or state public health officials. The level of community transmission likely will not be a single determining decision-making variable. Rather, it will be used in conjunction with school impact and positive test rates.