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To: Pelham School Board
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent
Re: Pandemic Response
Date: December 28, 2020
Cc: Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator
Sarah Marandos, Director of Curriculum

Based on a careful review of the current state of the pandemic and district resources, I am recommending the following schedule for reopening the Pelham School District safely.

- January 4 - 8 Most students remain in remote instruction.
Preschool and current students receiving in-school special education instructional remain in-school.
Staff assigned to teach remote from the start of the year, on leave, with an accommodation, or with exceptions in place with Human Resources are able to work remotely. Others work at school.
Staff review updated guidance including room configurations and lunch and break protocols.
- January 6 Kindergarten returns to in-school instruction for those families that have chosen in school.
- January 11 Grade 1 - 12 return to in school instruction for those families that have chosen in school.

To make this possible, we have made adjustments to several areas of our guidelines.

1. Each school principal is revising the protocols for lunch and breaks to allow for six feet of physical distance.
2. Each teacher will review the seating arrangements in classrooms.
3. Administration will revise and republish the Reopening Guideline by January 6.

Additionally, staffing levels, particularly for Instructional Assistants (IAs) and substitutes, will be strained when we reopen. In order to prepare, we are making additional adjustments.

1. We have created new floating sub positions at each school for lunch recess time coverage.
2. In addition to our recruiting efforts at colleges and universities, on all education job sites, and our own employment advertisements, we have reposted on social media and in weekly announcements.

3. We are readjusting sub pay for IAs covering for a teacher to match the new sub pay rate.
4. We are suspending non-essential professional development leave for the remainder of the year.

Finally, I am requesting the Board support these two cost items.

1. Adding two teacher positions for the balance of the year to create an additional Grade 2 and Grade 3 classroom. This would lower the class size in these grade levels to allow for increased physical distancing. We estimate this cost to be \$79,761.
2. Allowing unused personal leave for 2020-21 for PEA, PESPA and hourly employees be paid out at the per diem rate at the end of the fiscal year. This would serve as an incentive for staff not to use such leave. The estimated cost of this is \$179,161.

The cost items will be offset by the budget freeze from August through December, open positions originally budgeted for the pandemic response, and anticipated underspent accounts in professional development, responsibility pool, and co-curricular activities.

This recommendation is based on the same metrics used by the Pelham School District since the start of the pandemic: the level of community transmission and the level of school impact.

Level of Community Transmission

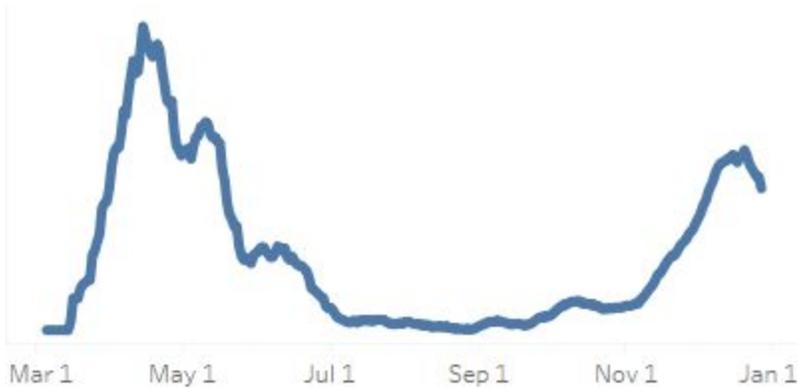
The level of community transmission remains substantial but is now declining. The average test positivity rate has decreased from 9.8% to 8.3% from December 15 to December 28. This is considered moderate spread. The number of new infections per 100,000 for the past 14 days has decreased from 786.6 to 613.4, which is still considered substantial. The rate of hospitalizations has remained the same at 0.9 during this time, which is considered minimal.

TABLE: Level of Community Transmission

Criteria	Nov 18, 2020	Dec 1, 2020	Dec 7, 2020	Dec 15, 2020	Dec 28, 2020
COVID-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	3.8% Minimal	4.8% Minimal	7.7% Moderate	9.8% Moderate	8.3% Moderate
Number of new infections per 100,000 population prior 14 days	240.4 Substantial	441.6 Substantial	508.4 Substantial	786.6 Substantial	613.4 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	0.9 Minimal

NH DHHS provides trendlines for this data from the start of the pandemic that provides a visual representation of the level of community transmission. This data is for Hillsborough County excluding Nashua. (Note: These charts do not provide a y-axis scale. One can get a sense of the scale by comparing the peak data from December 15 in the table above to the peak data in the charts.)

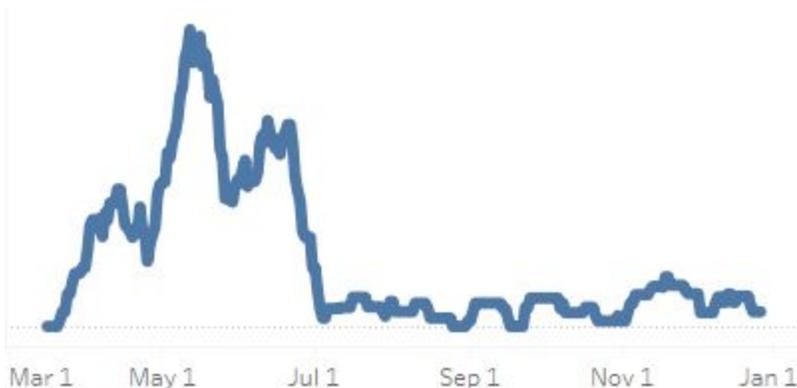
CHART: Antigen and PCR Test Positivity (Last Seven Days)



Rate of New Cases per 100,000 Population



New Hospitalizations per 100,000 Population



Level of School Impact

The level of impact on the school continues to be strained but has stabilized. This has happened for several reasons. The Board increased our daily rate of pay for substitutes, and we have added 11 additional substitutes to our roster in the month of December. Our goal is to add four more by January 11. We have also clarified our practices for staff members requesting to work remotely. This has resulted in greater clarity on staffing needs for January 11.

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 and the high school.

TABLE: 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	31	16	2	8
PMS/SAU	433	161	60	9	8	4	3
PHS	606	218	33	36	12	5	3
Total	1,750	626	155	76	36	11	14

We have had 11 positive students and 14 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.

TABLE: Level of School Impact

Criteria	Nov 18, 2020	Dec 1, 2020	Dec 7, 2020	Dec 15, 2020	Dec 28, 2020
Transmission within the schools	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Student absenteeism	5% Low	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff capacity ³	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium	Strained Medium

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Conclusion

Our recommendation to reopen on January 11 is based on the data. Community transmission is declining, and we have made further adjustments to our practices in school to reduce (but not eliminate) the impact of the pandemic. The reopening plan will require the whole district, families, staff, and students to remain committed to our universal practices and our culture of grace.

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.