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To: Pelham School Board  
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent  
Re: Pandemic Response  
Date: January 19, 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 is **varied** by school.
- With the guidance of the NH DHHS, we identified five clusters at the high school and two at Memorial School. Both schools are considered to have outbreaks. Yesterday, we identified one cluster at PES as well.
- As a result, our approach will remain the same. All students and staff in the entire District are required to wear masks during the school day while inside until at least January 31, 2022.
- As of January 10, we adjusted to the new "5 Day" and "Up-to-Date" standards recommended by the NH DHHS isolation and quarantine guidelines, reducing the time students and staff are out of school.

### **Level of Community Transmission**

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and continues to increase. In Pelham, new infections increased from our January 5 report. As of today, there are 4,225 new infections per 100,000 in Pelham, which equates to 598 people out of the population in Pelham of 14,155. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 25.3%. In Hillsborough County there are 2,811 new cases per 100,000 and a PCR test positivity rate of 23.3%. These are the highest levels we have seen over the course of the pandemic.

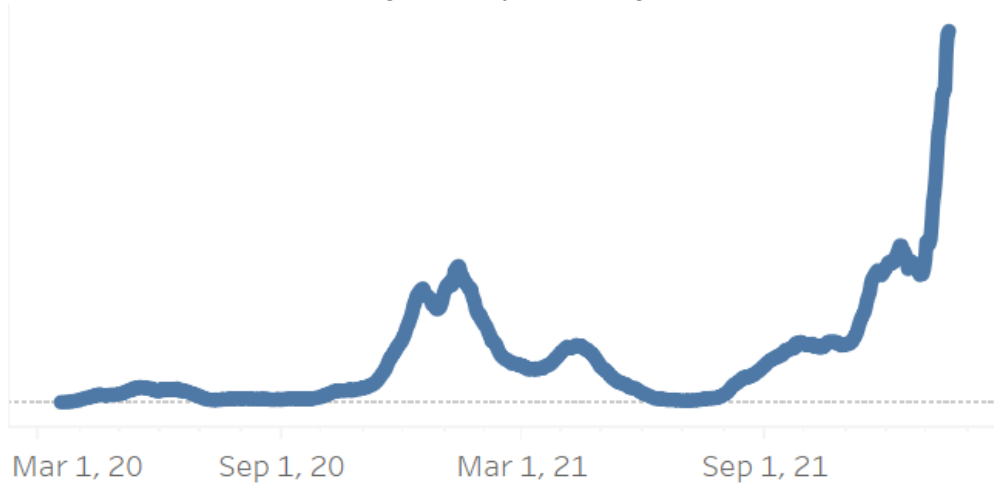
**TABLE: Level of Community Transmission**

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	8.7%	276	6.3%	182
9.1	8.7%	473	6.5%	270
9.15	3.5%	579	4.4%	343
9.29	5.1%	643	4.2%	439
10.8	4.5%	692	4.0%	430
10.20	2.6%	431	6.1%	430
11.3	3.3%	311	7.2%	428
11.17	7.3%	523	10.1%	680
12.1	12.9%	1,046	12.7%	947
12.15	13.7%	1,109	11.3%	1,057
1.5	26.2%	1,250	21.5%	1,000
1.19	25.3%	4,225	23.3%	2,811

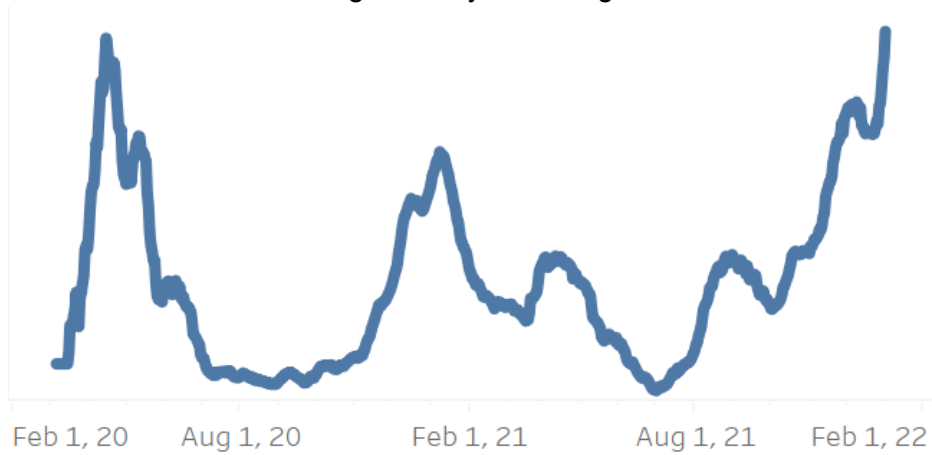
Minimal Moderate Substantial

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

**TABLE: Level of School Impact**

Date	Transmission in schools	Student absenteeism	Staff capacity
8.17	Low	N/A	Normal
9.1	Low	4.6% - Low	Normal
9.15	Medium	7.5% - Low	Normal
9.29	Medium	9.0% - Low	Normal
10.8	Medium	8.5% - Low	Normal
10.20	Medium	5.4% - Low	Normal
11.3	Medium	5.4% - Low	Normal
11.17	Varied	9.0% - Low	Strained
12.1	Varied	9.6% - Low	Strained
12.15	Varied	7.8% - Low	Strained
1.5	Medium	20.0% - Medium	9.2%* - Strained
1.19	Varied	9.1% - Low	11.0%* - Strained

Low Medium High

\*Percent certified staff absent.

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

Transmission within the schools - We now have clusters, defined by NH DHHS as three or more cases likely to have been spread in school, at all three schools. We have multiple clusters at PHS and PMS, meaning both schools have outbreaks. This means transmission in both schools is high. At PES we have one cluster that was identified yesterday (1.18.20) so transmission at PES is medium. As a result of all of this information, transmission within the schools is **varied**.

**All Known Positive Cases of COVID-19 for Students and Staff as of 1.19.22**

School	Current			Total for 2021-22 (recovered and current)		
	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks
	Students	Staff		Students	Staff	
Pelham Elementary School	16	3	1/0	212	44	6/1
Pelham Memorial School	6	0	2/1	130	22	6/2
Pelham High School	11	1	5/1	163	4	5/1

Student absenteeism - Student absenteeism is at 9.1%. This is a decrease from January 5 when it was 20.0%. This is impacted by the new “5 day” guidance from NH DHHS. Student absenteeism is considered **low**.

Staff capacity - Our staff attendance has continued to enable the District to operate in person. Today we had 11.0% of our certified educators absent. This is a new data point we are tracking due to the increased number of positive cases. 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 necessary absences due to illness, household contacts, and child care demands. As a result, staff capacity is **medium**.

### Decision Grid

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and increasing and the overall level of school impact is **medium**. 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 31, 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.

### Updated Isolation and Quarantine Guidance

On Monday January 10, Pelham adopted the [NH DHHS Guidance](#) regarding the length of time your child must be out of school due to COVID-19. Generally, the requirement is now to stay home for at least 5 days. Previously, it was at least 10 days. I am grateful that these new guidelines from NH DHHS have allowed some students to return to school sooner. In order to stay safe at school, our other guidelines remain in place. Students who do not follow these guidelines, including face coverings and screening, will be sent home.

### 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. Some of the news is very challenging - the highest rate of cases in Pelham we have seen to date. Some of the news is encouraging - the new variant appears to be less lethal than previous variants and students and staff are being excluded from school for less time, generally. We will continue to follow our plan based on the guidance of NH DHHS. 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.