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*Superintendent*



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To: Pelham School Board  
From: Chip McGee, Superintendent  
Re: Pandemic Response  
Date: December 1, 2021  
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. We have several significant changes from the previous update.

### **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 remains **medium** and has increased.
- At PES, we have identified three clusters, which means there is an outbreak there.
- At PMS, we have identified two clusters, which means there is an outbreak there as well.
- At PHS, we have not identified any clusters. Because of siblings and shared bus transportation, these outbreaks at PES and PMS have an impact on PHS.
- As a result, the students and staff in the entire District are required to wear masks during the school day while inside until January 3, 2022.
- The free onsite asymptomatic PCR testing clinic is open to all who are interested on a weekly basis and after school.
- The second free voluntary optional onsite vaccination clinic for children ages 5 - 11 is scheduled for Friday December 10 at PES.

### **Level of Community Transmission**

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and increasing. In Pelham, new infections increased from two weeks ago. As of today, there are 1,046 new infections per 100,000 in Pelham, which equates to 146 people out of the population in Pelham of 14,155. Pelham has a PCR test positivity rate of 12.9%, which is high. In Hillsborough County there are 947 new cases per 100,000 and a PCR test positivity rate of 12.7%.

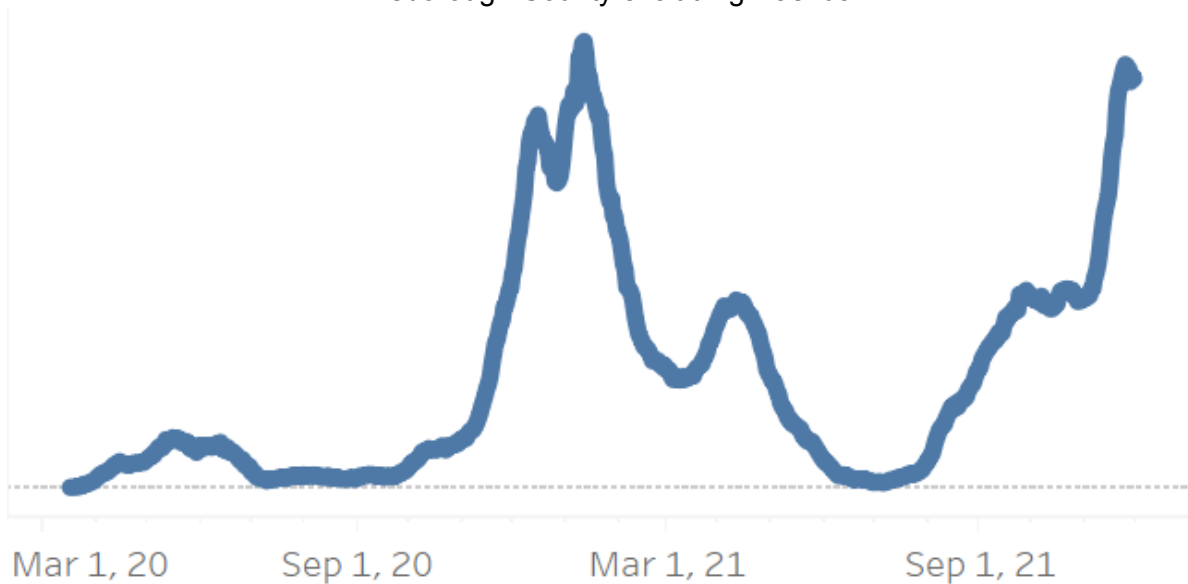
**TABLE: Level of Community Transmission**

Level	Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11.17	12.1
Pelham	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	8.7%	8.7%	3.5%	5.1%	4.5%	2.6%	3.3%	7.3%	12.9%
	New infections / 100k prior 14 days	276	473	579	643	692	431	311	523	1,046
Hillsborough County (excluding Nashua)	COVID-19 PCR test positivity % 7-day avg	6.3%	6.5%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	6.1%	7.2%	10.1%	12.7%
	New infections/ 100k prior 14 days	182	270	343	439	430	430	428	680	947

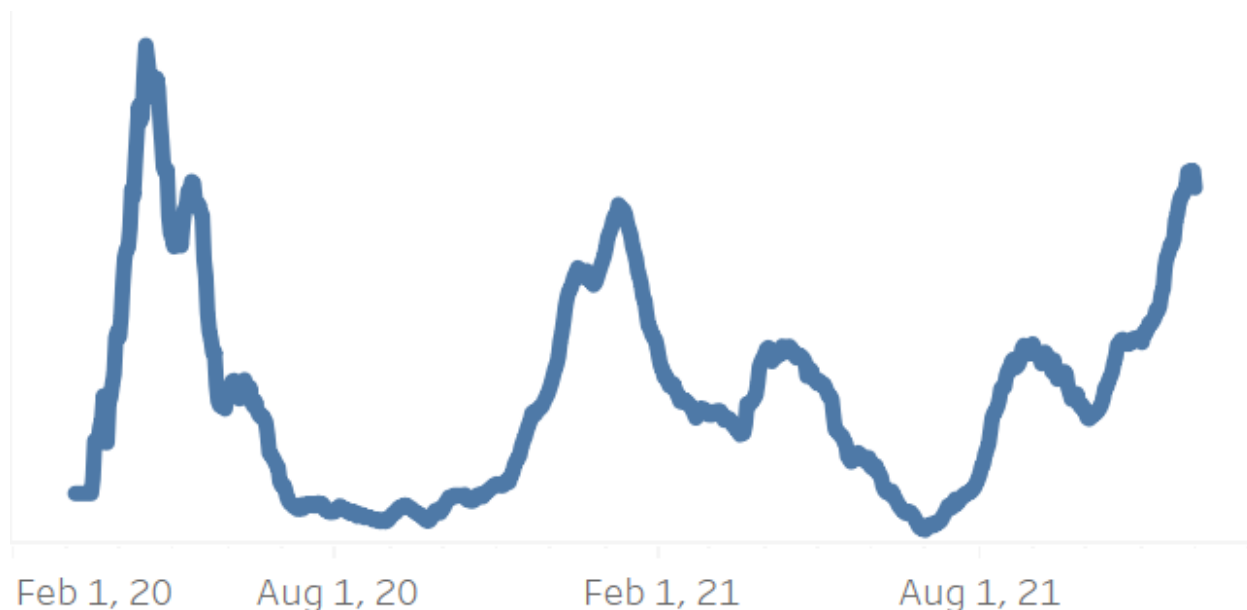
Minimal Moderate Substantial

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 compared to two weeks ago. 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 March of 2020.

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

Transmission within the schools - We have 10 students and two staff at PES, six students and three staff at PMS, and two students and one staff at PHS who are currently excluded from school for having tested positive for COVID-19. This data can also be found on the [Pelham School District COVID-19 Dashboard](#) and is updated every week.

**All Known Positive Cases of COVID-19 for Students and Staff as of 12.01.21**

School	Current			Total for 2021-22 (recovered and current)		
	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks	Positive Cases		Clusters/ Outbreaks
	Students	Staff		Students	Staff	
Pelham Elementary School	10	2	3/1	88	18	3/1
Pelham Memorial School	6	3	2/1	53	5	3/1
Pelham High School	2	1	0	38	2	0

The transmission within the schools is varied.

- At PES, we have identified three clusters, which means there is an outbreak there. Therefore school transmission there is **high**.

- At PMS, we have identified two clusters, which means there is an outbreak there as well. Therefore school transmission there is **high**.
- At PHS, we have not identified any clusters, which means school transmission there is **low**. Because of siblings and shared bus transportation, these outbreaks at PES and PMS have an impact on PHS.

Student absenteeism - As of today, student absenteeism is at 9.6%, which was 161 students absent out of 1,675. This is an increase and the highest percentage we have reported. Nevertheless, it is still considered **low**.

Staff capacity - We continue to struggle to find sufficient staffing given tight labor markets and exclusions. We do continue to look for instructional assistants and custodians. We also face increasing necessary absences due to illness, household contacts, and child care demands. This has increased the strain across the district and at PES in particular. As a result, staff capacity is **medium**.

**TABLE: Level of School Impact**

Criteria	8.17	9.1	9.15	9.29	10.6	10.20	11.3	11.17	12.1
Transmission within schools	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Varied See above	Varied See above
Student absenteeism	N/A	4.6% Low	7.5% Low	9.0% Low	8.5% Low	5.4% Low	5.4% Low	9.0% Low	9.6% Low
Staff capacity <sup>3</sup>	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Strained	Strained

Low Medium High

Source: Pelham School District data sources.

### Decision Grid

The level of community transmission is **substantial** and increasing and the overall level of school impact is **medium** and increasing. The decision grid recommends **masks and distancing**.

As a result, the students and staff in the entire District are required to wear masks during the school day while inside until January 3, 2022. Like last year, staff will provide students with the opportunity for masks breaks periodically when they are physically distanced.

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

**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**

It continues to be challenging for the entire community as we adjust to the circumstances of the pandemic. The current local data regarding COVID-19 and the recommendations of the NH DHHS provided the information needed, and we are following our plan. 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.