



Pelham School District

Initial Plan for Reopening Schools

July 1, 2020

Prepared by Chip McGee, Superintendent of Schools

Goal

The goal of this initial plan is to position the Pelham School District in the best way possible to reopen our schools safely in the fall of 2020. This initial plan serves as a starting point that will enable us to respond rapidly to forthcoming guidance from the state of New Hampshire. It will also provide a flexible platform to adjust as new information about public health conditions becomes available. More importantly, the initial plan will allow families and staff to provide feedback on our planning process through the Pelham School District Reopening Task Force. Pelham will successfully navigate this challenging time by doing the work together.

Guiding Principles

Using the efforts of other school districts in New Hampshire and around the country, we have developed these guiding principles for planning.

- Safety First – The health and safety of our students, faculty, and community is our highest priority. We must have our safety protocols in place before we can proceed. This includes addressing our student’s social and emotional well-being.
- Get Back to School - While our remote learning efforts have been our best effort in a difficult situation, it is not equivalent to, or a replacement for, in-person teaching and learning. Students deserve the best education we can provide when it is safe to do so.
- Pelham Families and Community Need This - Reopening schools is an important factor to support economic recovery. Parents need to work and not continue providing childcare during work hours.
- Data drives our Decisions – The reopening decisions will be based on epidemiological data and will be guided by Public Health Officials and Emergency Management partners.
- Be Flexible - Our decisions will need to be fluid. That means we may progress or regress through the stages as public health conditions change. Reopening is not a simple “open or closed” decision. Flexibility includes potential differences depending on students' ages and needs.
- Be Equitable and Personalized - Reopening must support educational equity for all of our students and the personalization of learning for all students.

Background

Pelham School District faced a truly unprecedented disruption this spring. It was a change that also affected the rest of New Hampshire, our nation, and the world. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pelham School District closed on March 13, 2020. The transition to remote learning was an enormous undertaking for teachers, students and families. In Pelham and throughout the country, communities found that remote learning does not fully replace in person teaching and learning. Families needed to adjust schedules, teachers needed to adapt course materials to an online environment, and students had to learn in a completely new way with greatly limited human interactions. Then in the month of June, our national community was roiled again by the death of George Floyd and the social upheaval regarding racism that followed. These dual challenges form a backdrop for the work in Pelham to reopen our schools.

Remote Learning Surveys

The Pelham School District surveyed parents, teachers, and students about the remote learning experience. Summary results can be reviewed here:

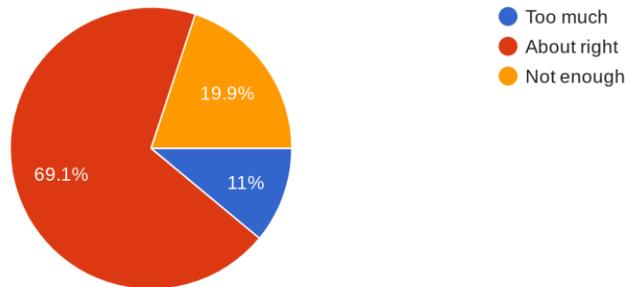
- [Parent Survey Results \(n=814\)](#)
- [Teacher Survey Results \(n=102\)](#)
- [Student Survey Results \(n=250\)](#)

The survey results provide background information that will help inform our reopening process. These are some key conclusions.

- For parents, teachers and students, the comments suggested that, going forward, any remote learning would be improved with more detailed instructions, structure, and expectations for students.
- Parents felt the amount of work assigned was about right - 69% of parent respondents reported the amount of schoolwork assigned was “about right”.

How do you feel about the amount of school work assigned by your child’s teacher (s) during remote learning?

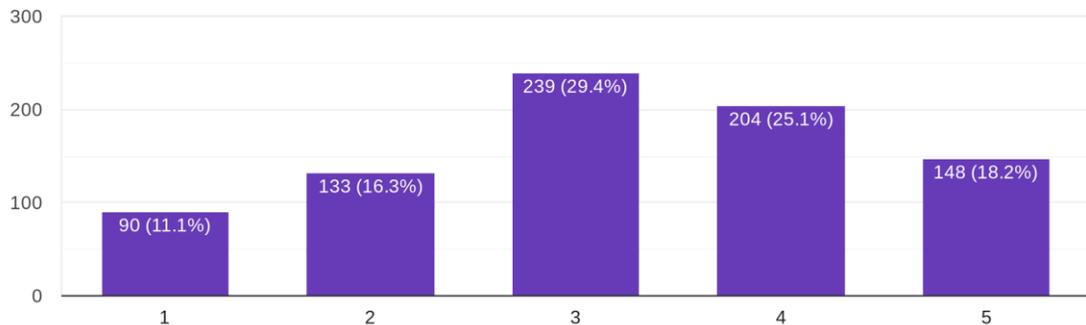
808 responses



- Parents were moderately satisfied with their child’s learning during this time. (The largest response was 231 parents who rated their satisfaction 3 out of 5).

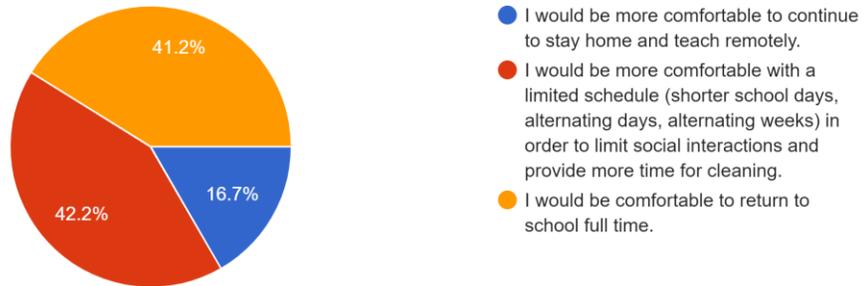
Overall, how satisfied are you with your child’s learning program through this period of Remote Learning?

814 responses



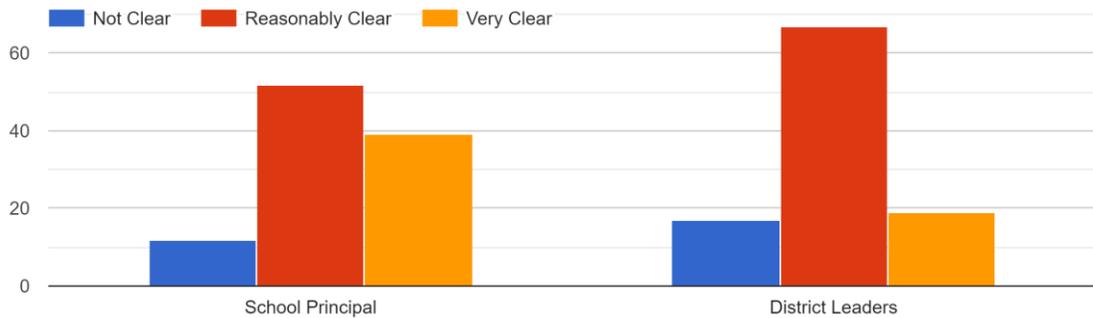
- Only 16.7% of teachers reported that they would be more comfortable continuing to stay at home and teaching remotely in the fall. The full question reads, “Pelham School District is committed to following the most up-to-date state and federal guidelines for safely reopening the school. Assuming those are in place for the start of school, how comfortable are you with returning to school in the fall?”

Pelham School District is committed to following the most up-to-date state and federal guidelines for safely reopening the school. Assuming those are ...table are you with returning to school in the fall?
102 responses



- Teachers reported that district and school level communications could have been clearer.

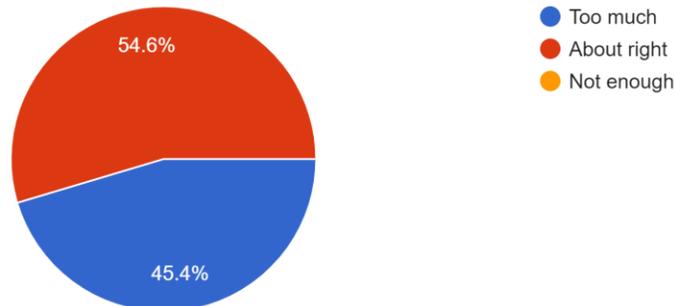
How clear has the communication from your school been regarding Remote Learning?



- Zero students reported that we were assigning “not enough” work.

How do you feel about the amount of school work assigned by your teacher (s) during remote learning?

249 responses



Pelham School District Reopening Task Force

In order to successfully implement our reopening plans, we need input from a range of perspectives within the community. For that reason, we have formed the Pelham School District Reopening Task Force. The purpose is “to provide regular feedback from a range of representative perspectives on the Pelham School District Reopening Plan.” The purpose is not to override the guidance of federal, state, or local public health officials or education officials, including the Pelham School Board.

The task force has 28 members, who will be divided into four subcommittees. Members include the Superintendent of Schools, two Board Members selected by the Chair of the School Board, five SAU Administration Members selected by the Superintendent, three School Administrators (one per school) selected by the Principal, six Parents (two per school) selected by the Principal, two high school students selected by the High School Principal, six professional educators representative of schools and roles selected by the Pelham Education Association, and three educational support professionals representative of schools and roles selected by the Pelham Education Support Personnel Association.

Membership on the task force is being finalized and the first meeting is on July 7 from 10:00 am to 12:00pm. It will be remote.

The task force will have four subcommittees to provide feedback on critical areas of planning for reopening. They are Health and Safety, Operations (Transportation and Food Service), Teaching and Learning, and Social Emotional Impacts.

Health and Safety

First and foremost, the Pelham response must address the health and safety of our students and staff. We will use the Center for Disease Control [Considerations for Schools](#) and the [Universal Guidelines](#) published by the state of New Hampshire as the authority to determine our health and safety protocol. Additionally, we are grateful to the Town of Pelham for providing access to the town's Public Health Officer to review and guide this work. The standards for health and safety protocols are in flux. For example, New Hampshire guidance currently suggests that social distancing be maintained at six feet. However, Massachusetts released a statewide initial reopening plan that would allow for social distancing of three feet provided students wear masks. As new information emerges, Pelham will continue to use the CDC, the NH Guidelines and our local expertise to determine whether to adjust our approach.

Our [Summer Screening Requirements](#) for visitors to our school and our summer employee [District Reopening Guidelines](#) will serve as the first draft of screening requirements for the school year. Additional preparations will include ensuring that facemasks and other equipment are available for students, staff and visitors. Further, the summer preparations are helping us address concerns regarding expectations of privacy.

Operations (including Transportation and Food Service)

Much of the response to this pandemic is based in operational questions ranging from budgetary considerations to logistical concerns. We will need to approach our spending in FY21 and budgeting for FY22 conservatively, given the potential for additional expenses related to reopening. For example, a Stage 3 Partial Reopening could result in significantly increased transportation costs. Food Services will also need to adjust to universal guidelines regarding social distancing by providing fewer food choices for students and more use of grab-and-go services.

Along with transportation and food services, all operations of the schools will have to adopt universal precautions. This includes screening as students and staff enter the schools. Screening protocols used for 12-month staff, for Extended School Year students, and for summer athletics will serve as templates for reopening. We will also need to reorganize classroom space to accommodate social distancing. This will vary by the type of space (science lab, classroom, gymnasium, etc.) and the needs of students and staff (specialized services, group work, etc.) It will also require that we have adequate storage for unused furniture.

Teaching and Learning

There is no doubt that the time students spent in remote learning will have had an impact on student learning. The potential changes related to reopening will have additional impacts. For example, social distancing will change hallway interactions and gym class. The key to a successful response is three fold.

- Flexibility - We will need to develop plans that can adjust to changes in circumstances and our stage of reopening.
- Professional Development - We will need to maximize professional development and support for staff at the start of the year. This must be done in coordination with our associations.
- Data - We will need to use baseline student performance data to understand where exactly our students are starting the year academically. Many of these assessments are already in place; the work will be in interpreting the results and implementing instruction based on the results.

Technology has been central to the effective implementation of remote learning and will remain central throughout reopening. Hardware and software needs have been largely addressed. The remaining questions are:

1. To what degree are our youngest students able to use technology effectively for remote learning?
2. What additional professional development must we provide for staff in this area?
3. What support do parents need to help their children with ongoing remote learning?

Social Emotional Impacts

The social emotional impacts of the pandemic and time away from school will be first and foremost as a concern when we re-engage students, no matter the stage of reopening. The pandemic has heightened educators' awareness of the disparities in our educational system based on economic status and race. As we develop programming to support social emotional wellness and growth, we will focus on programming that is evidence-based, readily available, and familiar. Given the intensity of the need and the short time frame, we will need to select programs that are ready to implement quickly and easily.

Although our teachers may feel pressured to move academically, we will need to reopen schools in a new normal. This means re-establishing routines, reviewing new safety precautions and rebuilding connections between students and staff. The concern about the social emotional impact of the pandemic extends also to our staff. Pelham School District educators of all types have worked very hard and have been asked to do things very differently on short notice. As we plan the reopening, we must keep in mind their needs both personal and professional. Parents as well have been through a great deal. The most important work we can do for parents is to work to safely and quickly return their children to school.

Stages of Reopening

Reopening will be determined in large measure by the guidance from the New Hampshire Department of Education. In order to best prepare for their guidance, Pelham will prepare for four stages of reopening. We will use this [Reopening Checklist](#) among other resources to determine when we can move from one stage to the next.

- Stage 1: Remote Learning - This is the approach used from March 13, 2020 to the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
- Stage 2: Limited - This would allow for reopening for the students most in need of returning to school and those most able to manage a limited school schedule.
- Stage 3: Partial - This would allow for reopening on a rotating schedule to allow for social distancing through the cleaning of the school and the screening of students and staff as they enter the school.
- Stage 4: Full Reopening - This will be a new normal with all students and staff following a full schedule with universal guidance in place.

Through all four stages, we will keep in mind to cross cutting priorities. First, that our youngest students are the least able to manage their own learning at home. Preschool, Kindergarten and First Grade students are impacted differently and more significantly than the older students are. Second, those students with special needs and those with identified educational disabilities are also affected more significantly. As a result, our approach to reopening schooling for these students will need to be adjusted to address their individualized educational needs.

Two top Pelham priorities in this work will be:

1. To strive to keep schedules aligned with our neighboring school districts.
2. To strive to keep families schedules aligned across our three levels.

Guiding Documents

- [CDC Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#)
- [Education Elements - Forging a Path Forward](#)
- [Massachusetts Initial Return to School Guidance - June 25, 2020](#)
- [New Hampshire Reopening Guidelines](#)
- [SAU19 Goffstown Plan](#)