

PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

MEETING AGENDA

5:30 p.m., Thursday, February 4, 2021
PMHS Lecture Hall
Pittsfield Middle High School

1. CALL THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL BOARD TO ORDER
 - All speakers are to conduct themselves in a civil manner. Obscene, libelous, defamatory, or violent statements will be considered out of order and will not be tolerated. The Board Chairperson may terminate the speaker's privilege or address if the speaker does not follow this rule of order. (Pittsfield School Board Policy BEDH)
2. AGENDA REVIEW
3. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA
4. APPROVE MINUTES: January 21, 2021
January 26, 2021, Non-public Work Session
5. PUBLIC INPUT & PUBLIC ACCESS– Comments from community members, guests, and faculty. The public may join the meeting remotely using the following information.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9624435282?pwd=ZncvcW1VcUo1KzZEejk5SkNGVnZpQT09>

Meeting ID: 962 443 5282

Passcode: Harvey

Dial by your location:

1(312)626-6799

1(929)205-6099

6. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE – Oral Report

7. PES REPORT

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

- Attendance
- COVID Tracking
- School Status

8. PMHS PRINCIPAL REPORT

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

- Pandemic Report
- School Calendar
- School Status

9. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL REPORT

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

- No Report

10. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

- No Report

11. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

- 2021-2022 Budget Update
- School Status Update

12. SCHOOL BOARD

Action

▪

Information & Discussion

▪

13. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- A) Budget Committee Representative: TM
- B) Drake Field & Facilities: AG
- C) Negotiating Team: BD & HA
- D) Foss Foundation: JD

14. PUBLIC INPUT

15. PLAN AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING: February 18, 2021

16. NON-PUBLIC SESSION – if required under RSA 91-A:3 II

17. ADJOURNMENT

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT #51
PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD**

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
January 21, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Bea Douglas, Chairperson
 Heidi Asdot, Vice Chairperson
 Jessica Drouin
 Adam Gauthier
 Ted Mitchell (via Zoom)

Others Present: John Graziano, Interim Superintendent of Schools
 Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
 Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal
 Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
 Danielle Harvey, PES Principal
 Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal (via Zoom)
 Members of the Public (some via Zoom)

Ms. Douglas called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following item was added to the agenda:

- Lakes Region Covid Status Survey (Ms. Bickford)

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Ms. Drouin , the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to approve the minutes of the public meeting on January 7, 2021. Amendments included: on page 1, add “via Zoom” beside Mr. Mitchell’s name; on page 1, under agenda review, change “was” to “were”; page 2, change Roman numerals to be in proper sequence, starting with VI; page 4, paragraph 4, change to “...the Board unanimously approved...”. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Girard LeDuc brought up the issue of the Deliberative Session. He stated that he would not be taking questions from the phones. Ms. Douglas stated that a separate room will be offered to people who do not wear masks. Dr. Graziano clarified that this is for people who cannot wear masks due to health reasons. Mr. Hamilton said the library will be used for people who cannot use masks due to medical reasons. Arrangements will be made so that these people, on the premises, will be able to ask questions or add comments. Amendments requiring five signatures will only be entertained by the people present at the meeting. The meeting will begin at 7:00.

Bob Schiferle asked about documentation supporting the stipulations being placed on the process for the Deliberative Session. Dr. Graziano will provide Mr. Schiferle with such documentation.

Heather Elliot stated that it is very important for students to go back to school full time in school. She said that there is no evidence that schools are hot spots for infection. Ms. Douglas stated that her comments will be considered by the administration and a decision will be at the next meeting to move from the red status.

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Dan Courtney, the advisor for Site Council, introduced Harrison Hill, member of the Site Council, to explain the proposal regarding community service. Kathleen Vassello, a teacher representative on the Site Council stated that many parents are very nervous about their senior students doing community service during the pandemic. The stipulations are that the service cannot be for individuals so parents are concerned about students being exposed to COVID-19 while trying to fulfill their community service requirement. Dalton Swenson explained that the proposal requests waiver in completing the number of hours of community service required for graduation. He opined that reducing the number of hours will not help. Matthew Swenson stated that he is the author of the proposal and is based on the concern that his classmates are having difficulty finding the opportunities to complete community service hours, which will threaten their graduation status. Charlene Vary, teacher, stated that her learning studio Quilting for Community Service is experiencing difficulties. She said that many of the places for whom they quilt will not accept their donations. There were approximately 400 hours of time that would have been available if not for COVID.

Mr. Gauthier stated that there was an issue with students not being allowed to receive credit for an activity that was sponsored by a community group. He opined that students can find outdoor activities, such as spring clean up, that can meet the requirements. Ms. Asdot stated that she would be open to decreasing the number of hours for juniors and seniors. Ms. Brown stated that there were quite a few students who were short on their community service hours. Ms. Drouin asked if students' health concerns were an issue, but Ms. Douglas suggested that it was more about lack of opportunity and parents' concern for their children being potentially exposed to COVID. Ms. Vassello stated that there were also some students who could not do outside work due to their own disabilities. Ms. Drouin stated that she would consider eliminating the requirement for juniors and seniors. Ms. Douglas stated that she would be in favor of a temporary reduction in the number of hours. Mr. Mitchell agreed and said that once things are back to normal, underclassmen would be expected to fulfill community service requirements.

A motion was made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Mitchell to reduce the community service requirement to 30 hours for the class of 2021 and 2022. The motion passed with Ms. Asdot, Ms. Douglas, Ms. Drouin, and Mr. Mitchell voting in the affirmative and Mr. Gauthier in opposition.

Ms. Brown asked the Board about a specific case involving a student who has moved in and has not done community service hours. Typically, the number of hours are pro-rated. Ms. Douglas stated she should pro-rate according to this change in the requirement.

Ms. Douglas thanked everyone for their input.

VII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

Ms. LeMay stated that she will be reaching out to families to offer support in having their students attend remote learning.

B. PES Clubs / Activities

Ms. LeMay stated that the pandemic is not only affecting our students academically, but social emotional, as well. She said that they would like to support students by offering two clubs remotely (Guitar Fun and Kindness Club) and one outside (Walking Club). The outdoor activities will require maintaining safe distances and wearing masks.

Mr. Gauthier questioned the staffing for the Walking Club. Ms. LeMay stated that there are four adults who will assure small groups and the full implementation of safety precautions. Mr. Gauthier asked if school grounds would be considered to be campus because the COVID plan stipulates that during the red status there should be no students on campus. Ms. LeMay suggested that

they can use a downtown space to gather, rather than the school grounds, if the Board thought that was better. Ms. Douglas stated she thought using the school as a meeting place was not a problem. Ms. Drouin suggested they meet at Drake Field, although it was pointed out that that is still school property. Ms. LeMay stated that they could also limit their choices to remote opportunities and cancel the Walking Club. Mr. Gauthier stated that he didn't have a problem with the club, just the issue of the starting place. Discussion ensued and it was ultimately agreed that starting at the school would be acceptable.

C. COVID Tracking

Ms. Harvey stated that because they are in red status, there are no statistics to share.

D. Playground Equipment

Ms. Harvey provided the Board with an update on the playground equipment status.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed expenditures. Ms. Asdot stated that the money has been budgeted, but Mr. Mitchell expressed his concern for being able to send money back to the town at the end of the year. Mr. Gauthier stated he thought the Board should hold back on spending the money.

Ms. Douglas stated that the Board should be making decisions that are in the best interest of the children and to monitor the tone of their comments. She suggested tabling this topic until a later time, to which the remaining members agreed. Ms. Harvey stated she would bring it forward later in the year.

E. Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Ms. Harvey explained that efforts are being made to increase the number of returned forms for free and reduced lunch. She has used Facebook to communicate the importance of these forms being completed, as it will impact the amount of State funding that is received by Pittsfield. She also suggested that contacting State legislators may help as they are entertaining legislation that would revise current regulations.

F. School Usage

Ms. Harvey notified the Board that she approved Revolution Basketball to hold the recreation basketball practices and games at PES. They were requested to follow the same guidelines as the PMHS basketball program. Ms. Asdot stated that she had issues with PMHS having basketball and now has issues with this, as well. Mr. Gauthier stated his concern about allowing a handful of students in the building when others are not allowed during the red status. Ms. Drouin stated that

she did not agree with basketball during red status and Mr. Mitchell agreed. Ms. Harvey agreed to notify Revolution Basketball.

Ms. Harvey explained that Concord YMCA Kystop is interested in looking at offering something in person at the local community center.

G. FLEX Room

Ms. Harvey asked the School Board for permission to do some refurbishing of a cool down space in the FLEX room. These changes are related to safety and hygiene. She presented two quotes, one from Dave Ayotte & Associates for \$5,207, one from Porter Equipment for \$6,448, and one from BSN for \$3,361. Ms. Harvey explained the differences in the quotes and recommended they approve the Dave Ayotte & Associates quote. On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Ayotte quote to complete the repairs.

H. Basketball Hoop

Ms. Harvey reviewed quotes to replace basketball hoops at PES. This item was tabled for a future meeting.

VIII. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. School Calendar

Mr. Hamilton raised issues relative to the official school calendar and the use of the building for voting on March 9, 2021. He suggested flipping Tuesday to a remote day, all depending on the school's status at that time.

B. School District Newsletter

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the School District Newsletter. He highlighted the Internet Assistance Program for families. If families can prove that they installed the internet in March due to COVID, they are able to apply for grants to cover costs; this was covered in the newsletter.

C. Site Council Proposal

Mr. Hamilton thanked the Board for their consideration of the Site Council's proposal. He explained that the process to bring a proposal to the Board represents approximately three months of work on the part of the Site Council.

IX. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Medicaid

Ms. Bickford provided the Board with information regarding the highly regulated Medicaid process. She explained the efforts that she and her team are making to ensure all rules are being followed.

B. Lakes Region COVID Status Survey

Ms. Bickford stated that she has, at the request of the Board, surveyed her Lakes Region colleagues regarding practices being followed during COVID-19. The results of the survey were shared with the Board.

X. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

A. Program of Studies

Ms. Brown distributed a copy of the Program of Studies to the Board for their review and approval at the next meeting. She highlighted the changes that have been made.

B. Concord Regional Technical Center (CRTC)

Ms. Brown provided an update on the CRTC program.

C. Senior Financial Aid Night

Ms. Brown reported that Angela Castonguay from the New Hampshire High Education Assistance Foundation made a presentation to students and their families regarding financial aid and completion of the FAFSA, the federal financial aid form.

D. *I Am College Bound / I Applied* Event

According to Ms. Brown, PMHS participated in the *I Am College Bound / I Applied* event again this year. This event allows students to apply to NH colleges and universities free of charge and provides students an opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship.

E. Homeschool Students

Ms. Brown stated there are seven families being homeschooled. This number is much lower than usual.

XI. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. 2021-2022 School District Calendar

On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the Board unanimously approved the 2021-2022 calendar.

B. 2021-2022 School District Budget

Dr. Graziano commended the administration and Ms. Sally Blanchette for their work on the budget. He stated how difficult the situation has been to reduce the budget by \$487,000 and still maintain the integrity of the educational program for students. He stated they have looked at moving items to grants and scrutinized areas such as technology.

Ms. Douglas reminded the Board that they cannot discuss the budget from the perspective of specific personnel positions unless entering a non-public session. She stated she was devastated to hear that members of the public on social media suggested the Board was being dishonest about the school budget. Ms. Douglas stated that the social media miscommunication should stop and people should come to meetings to face the Board. She said that the Board and the administration are working so hard to do what is best for the education of students. Any cuts that are made will devastate the educational programs in schools, according to Ms. Douglas.

Ms. Douglas stated that the Board should consider a non-public budget work session with the administration. Mr. Gauthier stated he had recommendations for a possible reduction. Mr. Mitchell stated that at the Deliberative Session, if the budget is voted down, it will go to a default budget.

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Mitchell, the Board voted unanimously to approve the administration's recommended budget of \$10,529,306, which is \$487,000 less than the original proposal.

Dr. Graziano suggested the remaining warrant articles could be considered by the Board. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board unanimously recommended Warrant Articles 1, 2, 4, and 5.

A motion was made to approve Warrant Article 3 by Ms. Douglas and seconded by Mr. Gauthier. The motion was defeated with Mr. Gauthier voting in the affirmative and Ms. Asdot, Ms. Douglas, Ms. Drouin, and Mr. Mitchell voting in opposition of recommending the passing of Article 3.

A non-public work session of the Board and administration was scheduled for Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

XII. SCHOOL BOARD

XIII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Budget Committee - Mr. Mitchell
- C. Drake Field & Facilities - Mr. Gauthier
- D. Negotiations – Ms. Asdot and Ms. Douglas
- E. Foss Family Scholarship Foundation – Ms. Drouin

XIV. PUBLIC INPUT

Robert Schiferle asked if there was a separate room for non-masked participants, how would votes be taken. Ms. Douglas responded that a ballot box will need to be made available to the people in a separate room.

Mr. Schiferle explained that someone at the Deliberative Session could move to change the bottom line of the budget. He said if this happened, the Budget Committee would meet to then vote on whether they recommended the new amount.

Girard LeDuc stated that the amount agreed upon at the Deliberative Session will need to be added to the ballot on which residents will vote.

Discussion ensued regarding the process for finalizing the budget and documents that need to be signed by the School Board.

Tracy Hyuck asked for clarification on the amount of money that was returned to the Town from the fund balance last spring. She stated that she did not see anyone on social media accusing the Board of anything dishonest but did think there was confusion in Town.

Ms. Hyuck opined that she did not think any technology should be decreased from the budget nor anything from the athletics budget. She stated, however, that people in town are very desperate and concerned about their taxes. Dr. Graziano invited Ms. Hyuck to go to the SAU to look more closely at the budget to have her questions answered.

Justin Clough stated that the administration is hired to do the right job for the students. He suggested that the Board needs to maintain their integrity by holding to their convictions relative to the budget. He suggested there may have been prior mismanagement and that “we” need to do better.

Mr. Clough asked the Board to consider socially distancing during the Board meeting. He opined that if the Board can meet face to face, they should seriously consider ways in which the students can return to school.

Kelly Page stated that she is very supportive of the school system. She stated her appreciation that people are beginning to look at social activities for the children. She asked if there are opportunities for social interaction why there aren't opportunities for students going back to school. Ms. Douglas stated that the decision to move from red status will be reconsidered at the next meeting. Ms. Page is refraining from pulling her students to be homeschooled hoping that things will get back to normal soon.

Ms. Page stated that although she wants children to have the opportunity to walk, she wonders why the hybrid plan of separate A and B groups is necessary if students are potentially able to walk together. Ms. Douglas repeated that the Board will be revisiting the decision to move from red status at the next meeting and thanked Ms. Page for voicing her opinion.

Jenn Codispoti stated her appreciation for all of the work the Board, administration, and teachers are doing. She stated her opinion that the students returning to school is of utmost importance for both the academic and social emotional reasons. She explained the challenges that parents are facing at home, especially those that are also working full time. She reiterated how important it is for students to be back in the classroom for their sake, as well as their family's sake. Ms. Asdot expressed her understanding of the challenges Ms. Codispoti is facing, given the situation in her own home with her daughter.

Ms. Codispoti explained that she has paid for the Revolution Basketball program and was looking forward to her children taking advantage of that program. Although she understands why the Board decided not to allow the use of the building for this purpose, she stated her concern for the program being cancelled.

Ms. Codispoti thanked the Board for their work on the budget in support of providing a quality education. She stated that taxpayers often see the bottom line and react to that. She wondered if there was a way in which the community can be better educated about the budget in order to muster the support of the voters.

Ms. Codispoti asked about the status of the High School Tuition Committee. Dr. Graziano explained that the sub-committees are working on gathering information for the Board's consideration. The committee will continue to meet and report out in June.

Jill Gauthier asked if walking to nursing homes was in the plan for activities. Ms. Douglas said it was not a plan to have any students visiting nursing homes, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Heather Elliot stated that her child's learning is being negatively impacted by having to stay at home. She is concerned about his social emotional development. Ms. Elliot is concerned that her son is in day care all day and then tries to do his school work at night. She stated that the hybrid model is not working for her family.

Mary Perry applauded teachers for their work during remote learning. She said that the deadlines imposed by teachers are difficult to meet. Upon being asked by Ms. Douglas, she said she has communicated with the teacher directly.

Ms. Perry stated she is concerned that the Revolution Basketball program is being cancelled when PMHS basketball is continuing. She suggested that it is allowed at PMHS based on making money. Ms. Douglas stated that money is not the motivator for allowing PMHS basketball.

Ms. Hyuck asked how many classes include teachers teaching in Zoom. She wonders if assignments are being given and completed offline. Mr. Hamilton explained that during a 60 minute class, there is direct instruction for a portion of the time and then teachers remain available to help students as they complete independent practice.

Ms. Hyuck asked if the High School Tuition Committee is reporting out in June, when is the earliest a decision would be implemented. Dr. Graziano said he did not have a date.

XV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 5:30 in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary (via Zoom)

PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

Non-Public Work Session Minutes

January 26, 2021

Members Present: Bea Douglas, Chair
Heidi Asdot - Remote
Jessica Drouin
Adam Gauthier
Ted Mitchell – Remote

Motion: Meeting was called to order by Ms. Douglas at 5:10 p.m. On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell, and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board voted unanimously to enter into non-public session.

Specific Statutory Reason for Nonpublic Session: RSA 91-A3:II (c)

Roll call: Vote to enter nonpublic session:

Ms. Asdot	yes
Ms. Drouin	yes
Ms. Douglas	yes
Mr. Gauthier	yes
Mr. Mitchell	yes

Time Non-Public Session Entered: 5:10 p.m.

Other Persons Present: John Graziano, Interim Superintendent
Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
Danielle Harvey, PES Principal – Remote
Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal
Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal
Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
Sally Blanchette, Financial Manager - Remote

Description of Matters Discussed: The Board discussed the following matters:

- Set up for deliberative session
- Governor Sununu’s order regarding remote meetings
- Potential budget reductions totaling \$487,000
- Moving forward with a unified message
- Reaching out to parents

Actions: No action was taken.

Motion Made to Seal Minutes: No motion to seal minutes.

Roll Call to Seal Minutes: No motion to seal minutes.

Minutes Recorded By: John Graziano, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Respectfully submitted,

John Graziano, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Pittsfield School District

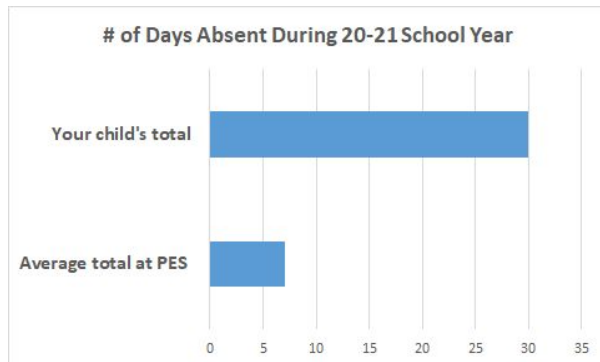
To: Pittsfield School Board
From: PES Administration, Danielle Harvey and Kathy LeMay
Subject: Board Meeting – February 4, 2021
Date: January 29, 2021

ACTION

None at this time.

INFORMATION

1. Attendance: PES has seen slightly improved attendance in the last 2 weeks, averaging 31 absences per day. Attendance letters were sent out to all families of students who have missed more than 10% of school days, which is considered chronic absenteeism. The letter included a graph which showed a comparison between the number of average absences this year at PES and the specific number for their child. It also included the absences broken into quarter one and quarter two in order to see if things were improving or getting worse. See below:



Quarter 1: 5 (4 remote)

Quarter 2: 25 remote

2. COVID Tracking: Since we are in red status, there isn't much to share here. One PES teacher was COVID positive and is recovering. One custodian had symptoms and was out all week. Due to custodians' absences, (one COVID positive, two quarantining, some sick) we only had two custodians. One covered PMHS for this last week and one covered PES. Thankfully, since we were in red they were able to keep up with the daily cleaning and just tabled the projects for the week.
3. School Status: In preparation for a return to on-site learning, we worked with the team leaders this past week to get a sense of what worked well and what needed to be improved upon based on experiences so far this year. We wanted to keep what worked from each status and try to improve on areas that did not work. We plan on cleaning up the plan on Monday, to share with DLT on Wednesday and will update you on Thursday.

Pittsfield School District

To: Pittsfield School Board
From: Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
Subject: Board Meeting – February 4, 2021
Date: January 29, 2021

INFORMATION

1. Pandemic Report. With our school status on the agenda for discussion this week, I will get back to including the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) dashboard overview on my School Board reports. The following is a data summary as of January 28.

- New Hampshire announced 523 cases for January 28. There was an average of 549 cases per day over the most recent 7-day period (January 22-28). This is a 17% decrease in comparison to the previous 7-day period.
- There are 12 new cases (in last 14 days) in Pittsfield.
- The antigen and PCR positivity test rate over the last 7 days in Pittsfield is 4.6% (compared to 5.5% state wide).
- This past week we had two staff members at PMHS test positive. Contact tracing in one of the cases resulted in two additional staff members needing to quarantine.

Also, I've included a document from DHHS that outlines considerations for school instructional models. Using the determined community transmission and school impact levels, the decision matrix on page two identifies a recommended method of instruction. I'll provide an overview of the chart's applicability to Pittsfield.

2. School Calendar. As School Board members consider our school status beyond February 5, a reminder that we also may want to take the school calendar and status of March 9-10 into consideration as well. We recently approved the town's request to use the Pittsfield Middle High School gym for voting on Tuesday, March 9. We approved a similar request back in November and shifted Tuesday to a remote learning day and Wednesday to a hybrid learning day. If the school district is still in a remote status during that time period, no action may be necessary. However, if the school district shifts to a hybrid status, I would recommend that March 9 be a remote learning day for all students and March 10 be a hybrid learning day.
3. School Status. In preparation for a return to on-site learning this winter or spring, I met with all our Common Planning Time (CPT) teams this past week to get a sense of what worked well and what needed to be improved upon based on experiences in the yellow and orange status this past fall. Our CPT teams will use meeting time this coming week for instructional planning in a hybrid model. Additionally, our District Leadership Team (DLT) is continuing to evaluate a recommendation for our school status beyond February 5. The team met this past week and is gathering additional information and data for its next meeting on Wednesday, February 3. I anticipate the DLT having a recommendation prepared for your consideration on Thursday evening.

Considerations for Transitioning Between School Instructional Models Based on Level of Community COVID-19 Transmission and Impact on Local Schools

Updated: January 26, 2021

Background:

The spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in New Hampshire in March 2020 resulted in schools transitioning to full-time remote learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. In July, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) released [Grades K-12 Back-to-School Guidance](#) for the return to school in fall 2020. Because of continued COVID-19 community transmission and the unpredictability of the pandemic, schools were asked to plan for different instructional scenarios (in-person, remote, and hybrid) and maintain flexibility to adapt school learning to the evolving pandemic.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide considerations for when schools transition between the different instructional models in response to the changing community and school-based COVID-19 epidemiology. This guidance suggests an instructional model based on the COVID-19 level of:

- 1.) Community transmission within the county in which the school resides (or within the cities of Manchester and Nashua for those school districts)
- 2.) Impact on individual school facilities

These two factors are incorporated into a decision matrix below that specifies a method of instruction suggested by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS). Data related to these metrics will be displayed on the "School" tab on the analytics data dashboard available at: <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/dashboard/overview.htm>. Each school and school district, however, operates in a unique context and with different facility and space capacity, so school districts can choose to take a more or less restrictive approach, according to the local context. NH DPHS will also work with schools and SAUs to implement public health protective measures based on specific situations.

Determine the Level of COVID-19 Community Transmission:

NH DPHS proposes two different criteria outlined in the table below for determining county COVID-19 transmission level; Manchester and Nashua will continue to have city-level data separated for local decision making. The overall community transmission level should be assigned based the highest level identified by any one of the following criteria. School districts should utilize data from the county/city in which their schools are primarily located.

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 population over prior 14 days	<50	50-100	>100

Determine the Level of COVID-19 School Impact:

To determine the school-specific COVID-19 impact level, NH DPHS suggests three criteria outlined in the table below. The overall level of school impact should be assigned based the highest level identified by any one of the following criteria.

Criteria	Level of School Impact		
	Low	Medium	High
Transmission within the school facility	Zero or sporadic cases with no evidence of transmission within the school setting	One cluster* in the school	Two or more unrelated clusters* in the school with onset (based on source case symptom onset dates) within 14 days of each other
Student absenteeism due to illness	<15%	15-30%	>30%
Staff capacity to conduct classes and school operations [†]	Normal	Strained	Critical

* A cluster is defined as 3 or more individuals confirmed with COVID-19 who are part of a related group of individuals (e.g., classroom) who had the potential to transmit infection to each other through close contact.

† This subjective assessment should factor in a school's ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.

Decision Matrix for Transitioning Between Methods of Instruction:

Using the determined community transmission and school impact levels, schools can use the table below to identify the recommended method of instruction.

		Level of Community Transmission		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person
	Medium	In-Person	Hybrid	Hybrid [†]
	High	Hybrid*	Remote	Remote

* Depending on the level of COVID-19 transmission within the school facility and outbreak status, public health may recommend temporary closure of school and remote learning for a short period of time to control transmission before re-opening in a hybrid instructional model.

† For limited COVID-19 transmission within the school facility (e.g., contained cluster in a classroom), the school can choose to move selected classrooms or sections of the school to temporary remote learning while maintaining other normal school operations.

This matrix should serve as a guide for schools to consider when planning and making decisions around when to move between methods of instruction. NH DPHS will work with schools and districts to implement public health prevention measures and conduct contact tracing in the school setting for any person identified with COVID-19, and the State will work with local schools and communities to ensure adequate testing capacity and contact tracing resources.

In some circumstances, schools may want to take a more or less restrictive approach than what is suggested in the table above. For schools that go to remote learning, for example, that decision can be a short-term

remote learning period (e.g., 2 weeks), or potentially longer; however, NH DPHS recommends schools minimize out-of-school learning to the extent possible and maximize in-person learning as resources and staffing allow. Most schools during the pandemic have been able to maintain full in-person or hybrid models of learning with limited transmission occurring in K-12 school settings. As of January 24, 2021, more than 1,700 students and staff associated with New Hampshire K-12 schools have been diagnosed with COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 school year affecting almost 400 different schools. There have been 47 clusters identified in non-residential K-12 schools in NH to date. With the exception of one larger cluster (N=49 cases), the remaining 46 clusters included 293 associated infections with an average of about 6 infections per cluster (range: 3-21 cases per cluster). Therefore, hundreds of potential exposures that have occurred in K-12 school settings have resulted in little or no identified transmission, and no K-12 schools have experienced larger outbreaks.

Similar to NH's experience, there are now multiple recent studies showing that K-12 schools are at low risk for spreading COVID-19.¹⁻⁴ A recent study of public K-12 schools in North Carolina found that implementation of mitigation measures (6-foot social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, daily symptom monitoring and temperature checks) resulted in a low number of infections acquired within schools.¹ In this study, there were 773 community-acquired cases of COVID-19 identified, but only 32 subsequent secondary infections and no instances of child-to-adult transmission.¹ Another study of primary schools in Norway identified 13 people with COVID-19 in the school setting resulting in 292 contacts.² Close contacts were followed and systematically tested, and only 3 additional infections were identified despite only 1 meter (about 3 feet) of recommended physical distancing without routine face mask use.² A third study of 17 schools in rural Wisconsin with high compliance with mask-wearing found a lower incidence of COVID-19 in schools conducting in-person instruction compared to the surrounding community (about 37% lower), and among 191 people identified with COVID-19 in schools, only seven (3.7%) were associated with in-school transmission with all episodes of in-school transmission occurring in students.³ Finally, a study published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) evaluated trends in COVID-19 among persons aged 0-24 years in the United States. National trends did not suggest that infections in K-12 aged children drove increases in community transmission.⁴ Nearly two-thirds of K-12 school districts across the U.S. offered either full or partial in-person learning, but there were limited reports to the CDC of outbreaks occurring within K-12 schools, and incidence of COVID-19 in counties where K-12 schools offered in-person learning was similar to that in counties offering remote learning.⁴

NH DPHS continues to recommend that:

- Schools maximize physical distancing between students with a goal of 6 feet of separation, but no less than 3 feet of separation (i.e., 3-6 feet of physical distancing allowed).
- Schools that have not implemented face mask use in classrooms should implement mask use wherever possible, especially given the high rates of community transmission and the State-wide mask mandate currently in effect (see [Emergency Order #74](#) and [Emergency Order #81](#)).
- Schools should continue to implement other recommended mitigation measures as outlined in the Department of Education's Back-to-School Guidance.

Because schools provide a structured environment that supports adherence to community mitigation measures, even in the midst of high levels of community transmission, schools have been able to operate safely with minimal risk to other students, staff, and surrounding communities. In fact, CDC recommends that "K-12 schools be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures have been employed and the first to reopen when they can do so safely."⁴

References:

1. Zimmerman KO, et al. Incidence of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 infections in schools. Pediatrics, Jan 2021. Prepublication available at: <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090>.
2. Brandal LT, et al. Minimal transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from paediatric COVID-19 cases in primary schools, Norway, August to November 2020. Euro Surveill, Jan 2021;26(1). Available online at: <https://www.eurosurveillance.org/content/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.26.1.2002011?emailalert=true>.
3. Falk A, et al. COVID-19 cases and transmission in 17 K-12 schools – Wood County, Wisconsin, August 31 – November 20, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, Jan 2021;70. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e3.htm?s_cid=mm7004e3_w.
4. Leidman E, et al. COVID-19 trends among persons aged 0-24 years – United States, March 1 – December 12, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, Jan 2021;70(3):88-94. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e1.htm?s_cid=mm7003e1_w.

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A.

The Interim Superintendent will provide a debrief of the 2021 2022 School District Budget

B.

The Interim Superintendent will provide an update on School Status