



Reopening Safely

Pelham School District Plan for Reopening Schools

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Recommendations

The goal of this plan is to reopen the Pelham School District safely in the fall of 2020. Based on the work of our Task Force and working groups and the best information available, we are recommending starting with the Family Choice approach, which means a full reopening of school for most students and staff while providing a remote learning option for students unable to return to school or uncomfortable about returning to school.

Our Initial Plan for Reopening specified five options for reopening.

- Remote Learning - This is the approach used from March 13, 2020 to the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
- 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.
- Partial - This would allow for reopening on a rotating schedule to allow for physical distancing, through cleaning of the school, and screening of students and staff as they enter the school.
- Full Reopening - This will be a new normal with all students and staff following a full schedule with universal guidelines in place.
- Family Choice - Full reopening for most students and staff while providing a remote learning option for students unable to return to school or uncomfortable about returning to school.

All five options remain possible moving forward depending on circumstances. Given our current circumstances and the capacity of the Pelham School District, we are confident that the Family Choice option can be implemented safely.

Process

The plan is based on the work of the Pelham School District Task Force. The Task Force included teachers, other professional staff, parents, students, administrators and school board members. Additionally, the facilitators of the Task Force subcommittees formed working groups to address more detailed questions. We used the Back to School Guidance provided by the state of New Hampshire and information from the Center for Disease Control. Additional guidance we used are referenced at the end of this document.

The plan will continue to require adjustment over time as new information about public health conditions becomes available. This includes the possibility of implementing one of the other options, if needed.

Background

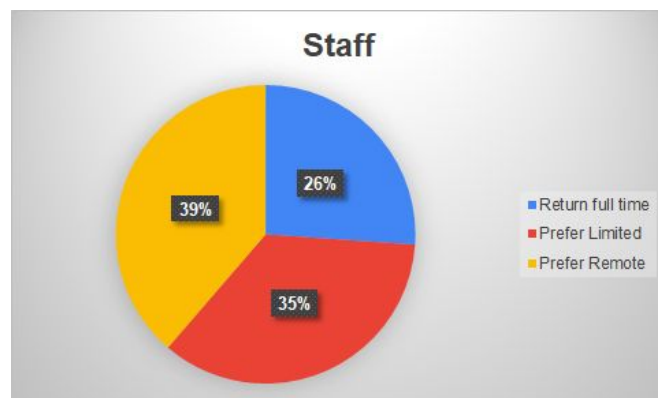
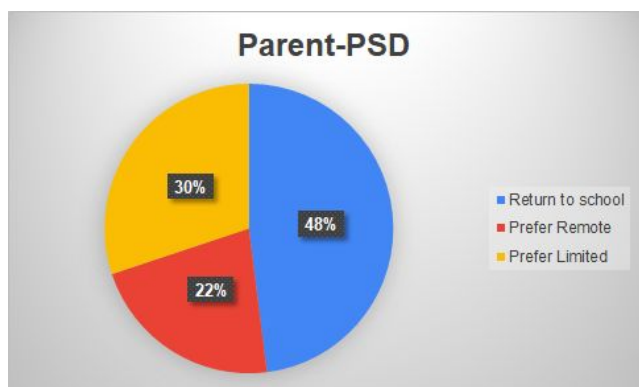
The [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#) reports routinely about the trends of the pandemic in our state. As of July 26, 2020, there are five current positive cases in Pelham and we have been at that level for several weeks.

Pelham School District faced a truly unprecedented disruption this spring, a change that also affected the rest of New Hampshire, our nation, and the world. As a result 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 quickly adapt course materials to an online environment; students had to learn in a whole new way and 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.

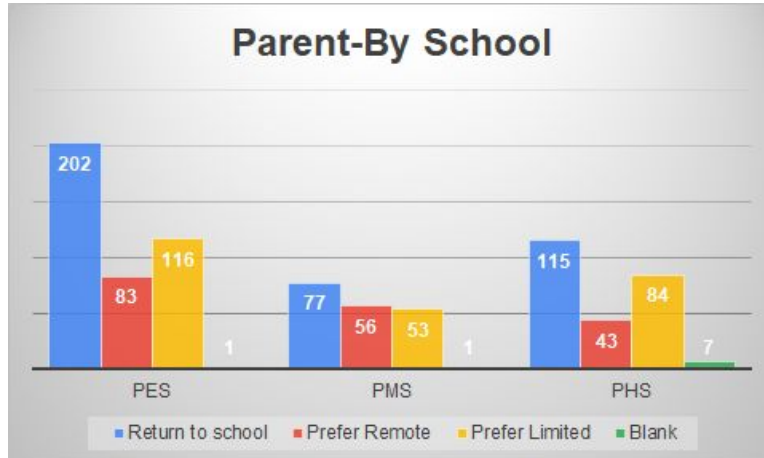
Reopening Surveys

During the week of July 13, the Pelham School District surveyed parents, staff and students regarding the possibilities of reopening. The results have helped inform our planning.

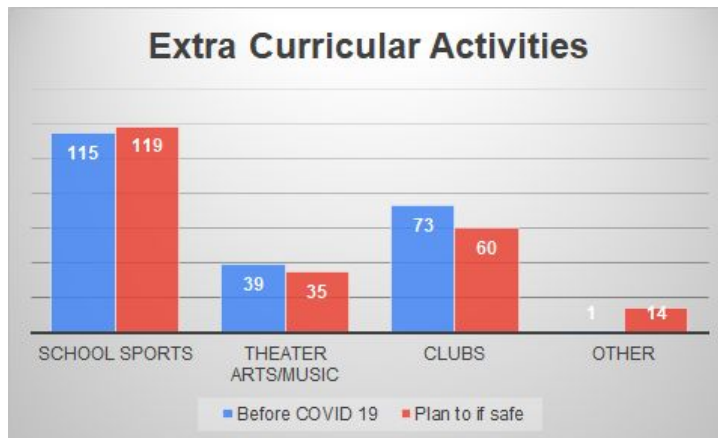
- The parent survey (n=846) showed that 48% of parents would choose to return to school full time assuming the most up to date health and safety guidelines are in place for the start of school (see chart below left). Of the three schools, elementary parents were more likely to prefer returning to full time (see chart on the following page).



- The staff survey showed that 26% of staff would choose to return to school full time assuming the most up to date health and safety guidelines are in place for the start of school. Another 35% would choose to return part time (see chart above right).



- Of parents, 62% reported having used the bus to get to school prior to the pandemic, while 45% reported that they would use the bus if school were reopened. These results were used in the report to calculate an anticipated reduction in bus ridership of 27% ((62% - 45%)/62%).
- Among students (n=228), no students reported wanting to return to remote learning assuming the most up to date health and safety guidelines are in place for the start of school.
- Students reported that they anticipate participation in extracurriculars to remain relatively stable. (see chart below)



Health and Safety Plan

First and foremost, the Pelham response will address the health and safety of our students and staff. We have used the New Hampshire Department of Education's [Grade K - 12 Back to School Guidance](#), 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 plan. 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 and the teachers, parents and students on the Task Force for providing much needed feedback. There are four foundations for health and safety that work together and cumulatively.

- Screening
 - Before entering the school, everyone will be required to complete a self screening.
 - Those not screened, who answer yes to any screening question, or have a fever at or above 100.0 will not be allowed to enter the school and sent home.
 - Students who are unable to return home on their own will be kept in a space separate from the nurse's main office until they can be brought home by a parent or guardian. This process will be directed by the school nurse.
 - Visitors are discouraged.
- Wearing a face covering
 - Anyone entering and moving through the school is required to wear a face covering. Exceptions will be rare based on specific required accommodations needed for students and staff.
 - Students in grades 2 through 12 are required to wear face coverings. We recognize that younger students will have a learning curve getting accustomed to face coverings so students in grades preK - 1 are encouraged to wear a face covering.
 - Teachers will build in breaks and outdoor time, as needed. This will include continued recess at the elementary and middle school.
 - The district will provide five cloth face coverings to all staff and students at the start of the school year. For situations where face coverings are not viable, the district will provide additional appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Handwashing
 - Staff and students will incorporate multiple daily hand washing routines whenever possible or use hand sanitizer.
- Physical Distancing (a term we are using instead of social distancing)
 - Whenever possible, students and staff will maintain six feet of separation.
 - Student transitions between classes will be limited. When transitions are necessary, students will maintain a single direction flow where possible.
 - When physical distancing is limited to three to six feet, face coverings are required.

We anticipate situations where some of these health and safety practices are difficult to implement. In those situations, the other practices become more important. For example, younger students will have more difficulty wearing face coverings for a long period of time. As a result, we will increase other safety measures including physical distancing, face shields for adults, breaks, and cleaning.

Possible COVID Cases

We recognize there will be times when students or staff members show symptoms of a possible COVID case while at school. In such a case, we will follow these steps:

1. We will immediately refer them to the school nurse.
2. The school nurse will keep them in the separate COVID-related area until they can go home.
3. They will be directed to see their health care provider and to self-isolate at home.
4. Any person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be reported immediately to New Hampshire Public Health.
5. The nurse will consult with the Pelham public health official and the Superintendent to determine next steps. If the student or staff member is determined to have COVID-19, the classrooms and spaces will be closed for up to three days to allow for cleaning.
6. If public health investigation determines any students or staff to have been “close contacts” (as defined for purposes of public health investigation) with a person who was diagnosed with COVID-19, or otherwise identifies students or staff to be at risk for exposure, they will be required to quarantine for 14 days.
7. If any students and staff are isolated or quarantined, they will switch to remote learning for that time.
8. The student or staff member with possible COVID can return to school only after appropriate documentation from a health care provider that symptom-based criteria have been met to discontinue isolation.

We will need to work to find the necessary balance between privacy and safety in these efforts. We also recognize that circumstances can vary significantly and will strive to keep varied needs of staff and students in mind.

Staff Options

We recognize that some staff members may be unable to perform their assigned duties as a result of circumstances related to COVID-19. The district has a responsibility to those staff members. As a result, all employees will receive a notice about the process the district will follow to determine if an employee qualifies for a leave or other accommodations.

Appropriate staff will be assigned to work remotely by administration based on need, certification and experience. It would be a positive outcome for students, staff and the district for

students who request remote instruction to match up to staff who are unable to return to work in school but could work remotely. While we recognize that this may not be possible in all circumstances, we will consider that when planning.

The district will also offer a retirement severance option to PEA as an additional alternative for teachers who chose not to return for the 2020-21 school year.

Operations

Much of our response to this pandemic is operational including budgetary considerations and logistical concerns. We have identified the following operational issues to be addressed to reopen safely.

- Cleaning
 - Custodial staff will routinely clean the schools and work spaces including high touch surfaces during the day according to CDC guidelines.
 - We will reassign/hire additional custodial staff to be available during the day to complete this work.
- Food Service
 - Lunch will be provided in the classroom instead of the cafeteria to reduce student interactions. This will require us to limit student food choice options.
 - Breakfast will be a “grab-and-go” service.
 - We will restart our remote meals program for families who have chosen to learn remotely and who qualify for free and reduced price meals.
- Transportation
 - Families will be required to self-screen including taking temperature prior to getting on the school bus.
 - Students will be required to wear face coverings on buses.
 - Windows will be open as weather allows.
 - Buses will be limited to one student per seat, which translates to 24 to 26 students. Students in the same family will sit together.
 - Students load from back to front and unload from front to back to provide additional physical distancing.
 - The district will not allow for changes to student routes for play dates.
- For ventilation, we will double our outside airflow in our buildings, run the system for 25% more time daily, and improve our air filtration system. We will also monitor this system so as not to create unintended ventilation problems.
- Regarding storage, we are researching space to store furniture to be removed to enable greater physical distance in classrooms.
- We will turn off bubblers and will not use lockers because they are high touch areas that tend to have students congregate.
- We will purchase necessary PPE, signage and cleaning supplies for staff and student use.

Separately, the Business Administrator and Superintendent will present the budget impact of this plan.

Teaching and Learning

Families will have a choice of full time in-school instruction or full time remote instruction for their children. While most teachers will be full time in remote learning or full time in school, some teachers may teach in-school classes and separately teach a remote class at a different time during the day.

Parents will be required to decide if they are opting out of in-school instruction by Friday, August 7, 2020. All families will be given an electronic form to complete to indicate their choice. The commitment will extend through the first semester for Pelham High School students and the first trimester for elementary and middle school students.

Some changes are specific to the age level of the students affected.

- Pelham Elementary School
 - PreK - 2
 - In-School programming
 - Kindergarten and Preschool will follow a different schedule than in the past. For Kindergarten, instead of attending ½ day programming five days a week, they will attend full days for two days a week. For Preschool, 3 years olds will attend on Monday and Tuesday and 4 year olds will attend on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The instructional minutes will be consistent with last year's schedule.
 - For remote learning, our younger students will need more support and guidance regarding the use of technology and at home learning tools. These additional supports are being developed.
 - Grade 3-5
 - In-School
 - Programming will run as normal with universal guidelines in place.
 - Unified Arts will have teachers go into the classroom rather than have students travel.
 - Remote
 - Students will receive remote instruction using Google Classroom.
 - Teachers will establish classroom routines that mirror the schedule happening at school.
 - Students in the remote environment will receive both direct instruction and independent work.
 - At the elementary level, it is important that we include social studies and science instruction into the daily schedule.
 - Unified arts will have a different rotation schedule but will be available both live and remote.

- Pelham Memorial School
 - In-School
 - Programming will run as normal with universal guidelines in place.
 - Terms will be on a trimester schedule for both core classes and unified arts. This is a change from 2019-20 when core courses were on a quarterly schedule.
 - Unified Arts will have teachers go into the classroom rather than have students travel.
 - Remote
 - Students who opt-out of in-school instruction will receive remote instruction using Google Classroom.
 - Teachers will establish classroom routines that mirror the schedule happening at school.
 - Students in the remote environment will receive both direct instruction and independent work.
 - Students will be expected to attend all classes, attendance will be taken each period.
 - Unified arts will have a different rotation schedule and will be available both live and remote.
 - Terms will be on a trimester schedule for both core classes and unified arts.
- Pelham High School
 - In-School
 - For the 2020-2021 school year, we will use a 4 x 4 block schedule, with students taking the same four classes every day through the first semester and four different classes in the second semester. This will reduce contact among peers because there will be less switching, improve access to materials, and provide an easier pivot to remote, if necessary.
 - Remote
 - Students who opt-out of in-school instruction will receive remote instruction using Google Classroom.
 - Teachers will establish classroom routines that mirror the schedule happening at school.
 - Students in the remote environment will receive both direct instruction and independent work.
 - Students will be expected to attend all classes; attendance will be taken each period.
 - Some courses, particularly advanced courses, will not be available online. VLACS could be used as an alternative to this.
- Other Decisions

- All planning and preparation, whether for in-person or for remote learning, will be within Google Classroom. This would enable a quick switch to remote learning, if necessary.
- The schools will maintain student sets of instructional materials especially for high touch activities including art, physical education, and science.
- We will promote classes to be held outside as much as possible.
- We will follow these [Remote teacher expectations](#)
- The district has added an additional four days of professional development at the start of the school year to address health and safety protocols, operational procedures, social emotional impacts and teaching and learning with technology.
- The school district will offer both live and virtual training sessions on Google Classroom for parents.

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. This is true for those students who return to in-person school and for those that are remote. We have focussed on programming that is evidence-based, readily available, and familiar. Given the intensity of the need and the short time frame, we have selected programs that are ready to implement quickly and easily. For Pelham this work will be based on the [Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning's \(CASEL's\) Three Signature Practices](#).

Although our teachers may feel pressure to move academically, we will be reopening 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 reopening, we must keep in mind their needs, 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.

To alleviate student and staff anxiety, we will pay special attention to the transition back to school, including:

- Providing school-wide videos demonstrating expectations for PPE, physical distancing, proper handwashing, procedural changes to new norms.
- Teaching the new expectations for health and safety explicitly with opportunities for practice built into the school day at the start of the year.
- Dedicating time to community building activities within the school. This will include outdoor activities designed to establish authentic, healthy, and supportive relationships between teachers and students. Although each building will be given the latitude to develop these activities independently, they will be provided resources such as CASEL's 3 signatures practices playbook to support the systemic implementation of social emotional learning.
- Providing staff with professional development on self-care and anxiety management as well as frequent reminders of the Employee Assistance program resources that are available to them.
- Providing parents virtual training with an expert in anxiety management related to the return to the school setting.
- Offering social emotional learning opportunities to those students who decide to stay home through the remote environment.
- Creating clear pathways of communication to individuals who can answer parents' questions related to community based resources, mental health concerns, or educational needs (both academic and social emotional).

- Provide time for staff to collaborate with their colleagues in order to ensure that they have a social network to support them.
- Encourage the development of community building activities for staff as well as students.

We will approach social emotional learning on three levels, or “tiers.”

- Universal Interventions (Tier 1)
 - Identifying the time and space necessary to focus on social emotional learning instruction and activities.
 - Teaching classroom social emotional learning instruction at least 1 time per week for the first 6 weeks of school. These lessons will be driven by an evidenced based curriculum that aligns with the CASEL framework.
 - Offering the opportunity for students to participate in universal screening for social-emotional wellness and offer opportunities for interventions designed to meet their unique needs.
 - Providing resources to the larger school community regarding social emotional health and wellness that teachers, students, and families can utilize.
- Targeted Interventions (Tier 2) - Small group targeted interventions will be designed to meet the needs of these students. These interventions may include (but are not limited to):
 - Positive Behavior Support Plans
 - Small Group Counseling utilizing evidence based interventions such as Coping Cat or Second Step.
 - Check in Check Out
- Intensive Interventions (Tier 3) - These more intensive interventions are designed to meet the needs of students who require individualized interventions. These interventions may include (but are not limited to):
 - Individual Counseling
 - Referrals to Community Mental Health or other providers

Staff will need professional development and appropriate teaching resources to enable the successful implementation of social emotional learning in the upcoming year.

Other Considerations

There are several other considerations for the Pelham School District to reopen safely that did not fit neatly into the four subcommittees' work.

Special Education

Regardless of the pandemic, our students with disabilities continue to require specialized instruction and/or accommodations to allow them to access a free and appropriate public education. This interacts with all four areas of the plan. Additionally, there are specific implications for service delivery.

- The Special Education processes in Pelham remain the way for parents, teachers and students to determine what instructional programming is appropriate for each child.
- Changes to our overall instructional program (such as the move to block scheduling) will have impacts on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that were written prior to this plan's completion. As a result, some teams may need to discuss potential amendments to IEP's in order to ensure access to a free and appropriate public education.
- Families who determine remote learning is best for them at this time, may, through the IEP process, discuss special education services or related services to be delivered in school.

Additional information regarding the impact the reopening plan will have on special education will be provided directly to those students staff and parents affected.

Communication

Accurate and timely information delivered to students, families and educators will allow the district to manage expectations, prepare students and families with return-to-school procedures and prevent the spread of inaccurate information. These principles will guide our approach to communication.

- The Reopening Task Force will continue to provide feedback from various perspectives.
- The Superintendent will serve as the primary point of contact for communications related to reopening.
- Communication about any person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 while at the school will be coordinated with NH DHHS, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS)
- We will select and/or develop specific materials for orienting families and staff to health and safety guidelines.

As a next step, we have planned two additional public forums via Zoom. For staff, there will be a forum on Thursday, July 30 from 3 - 4. For families, there will be a forum on Monday August 3 from 6 - 7.

Future Decision Making

The plan will continue to require adjustment over time as new information about public health conditions becomes available. We are tracking the number of positive cases in Pelham, southern New Hampshire and the greater Merrimack Valley as well as monitoring updates from NH DHHS, NH DOE and the CDC. This includes the possibility of selecting a different option if necessary. The Task Force will continue its essential function to provide feedback on plans until staff returns to school on August 27.

Appendix: Task Force Purpose and Membership

Purpose: To provide regular feedback from a range of representative perspectives on the Pelham School District Reopening Plans. The Task Force cannot override the guidance of federal, state, or local public health officials or education officials including the Pelham School Board.

Subcommittees (7 members per subcommittee)

- Health and Safety
 - **Joan Cote, Director of Human Resources, Facilitator**
 - Stefenie Cote, Instructional Assistant, PES
 - Angela Hildreth, PHS, School Nurse
 - Darlene Greenwood, Pelham School Board
 - Jessica Van Vranken, Principal, PES
 - Jennifer Maslanek, Parent, PMS
 - Melissa Marvin, Instructional Assistant, PMS
- Operations (Transportation and Food Service)
 - **Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator, Facilitator**
 - Chris Mazzone, Interim Principal, PMS
 - Erin Weigler, Music Teacher, PES
 - John Cahoon, Instructional Assistant, PHS
 - Ralph Cantacesso, Parent, PHS
 - Stephanie Bernard, Parent, PES
- Teaching and Learning
 - **Sarah Marandos, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction, Facilitator**
 - Brenda Colameta, Director of Technology
 - Jillian Lee, Grade 1 Teacher, PES
 - Jeanna Wagner, Instructional Coach, PHS
 - Jenn Grover, Special Education Case Manager, PMS
 - Madison Gillis, Class of 2023
 - Michelle Markey, Parent, PHS
- Social Emotional Impacts
 - **Kimberly Lessard, Director of Special Services, Facilitator**
 - Debbie Ryan, Pelham School Board
 - Dawn Mead, Principal, PHS
 - Jamie Bryant, Grade 7 Social Studies Teacher, PMS
 - Mike Carter, Parent, PES
 - Kim Hunt, Parent, PMS
 - Shaelyn Bonaparte, Class of 2022

Appendix: Guiding Principles

Using the efforts of other school districts in New Hampshire and around the country, the Pelham School District Initial Plan for Reopening included 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 students' 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 - Reopening decisions will be based on epidemiological data and 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.

Appendix: Guiding Documents

- [American Academy of Pediatrics: Guidance for School Reentry](#)
- [CDC Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020 - July 23, 2020](#)
- [Massachusetts Initial Return to School Guidance - June 25, 2020](#)
- [New Hampshire Grade K - 12 Back to School Guidance](#)
- [New Hampshire Reopening Guidance \(General\)](#)
- [NEA-NH Principles for Reopening](#)