

# Answers to Key Questions about School Funding in Pittsfield

September 2023

New Hampshire’s public school system – and the way in which money is raised to pay for it – touches the lives of all Granite Staters yet can often be challenging to understand. Listed below are a few questions you might have about how schools are funded in Pittsfield along with helpful facts and figures in response. After reading them, we hope you’ll better understand some of the inequities plaguing our school funding system.

## What Does Pittsfield Spend on Public Schools? How Does It Compare to Other Communities?

The 1998-99 school year was the last school year before the State of New Hampshire, in response to the Supreme Court’s *Claremont* rulings, increased the amount of aid it provides to pay for an “adequate” education. That year, Pittsfield spent \$5,398 per elementary school student or 91 percent of the typical (or median) town’s spending. In the school year 2021-22, Pittsfield spent \$22,633 per elementary pupil, which was 96 percent of the NH Median.

Figure 1

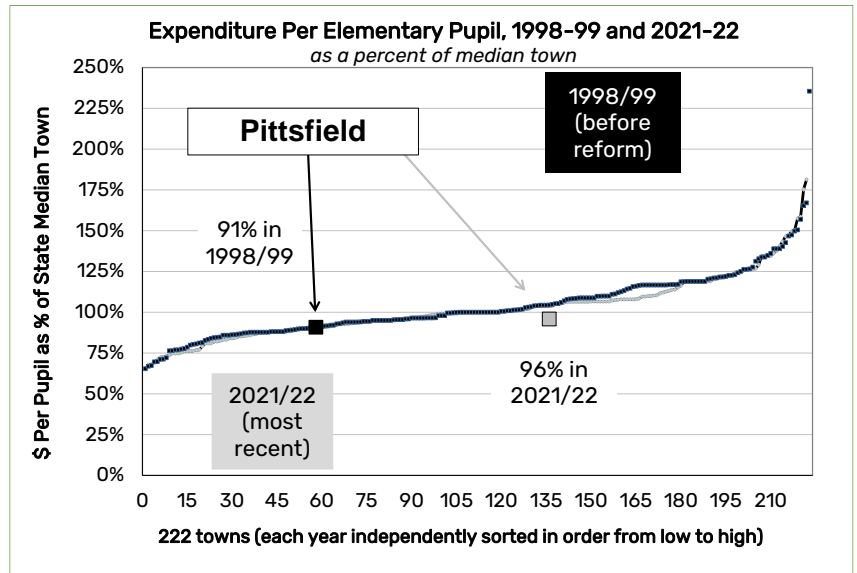
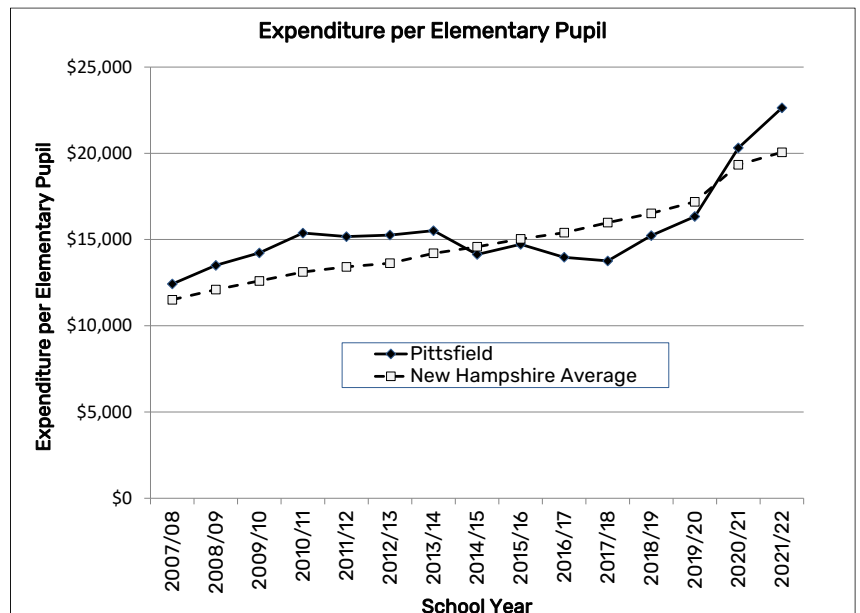


Figure 2 compares spending per elementary pupil in Pittsfield and the state average for the past fifteen years. It shows that spending in Pittsfield has fluctuated around the state average and was \$2,572 per pupil above the state average in 2022.

Figure 2



New Hampshire’s public school districts spent \$3.47 billion during the 2021-22 school year. Of that amount, 39 percent was dedicated to regular classroom instruction, 19 percent to special education, 10 percent to administration, 8 percent to building operations, and the remainder was devoted to transportation, food services, and other purposes.

As shown in the table, the proportion of Pittsfield School District’s spending on regular instruction is less than the state average, and spending on special programs is higher. Pittsfield’s proportion of spending is higher than the state average for support services.

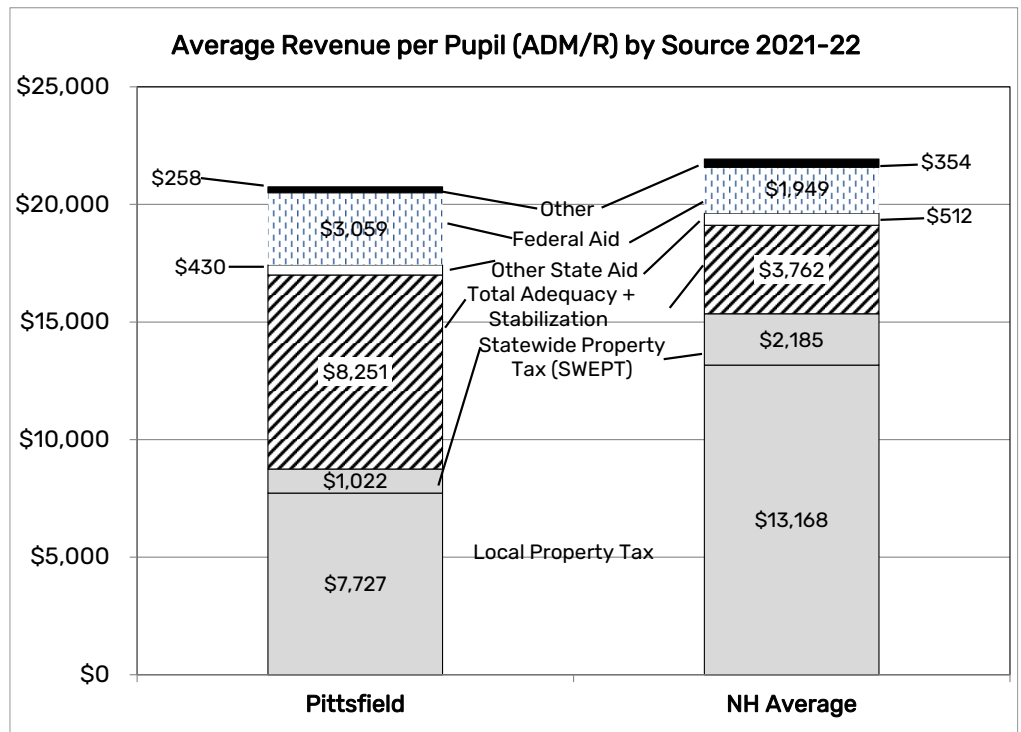
Spending by Type	Percentage	
	Pittsfield	NH Average
Regular Instruction	33%	39%
Special Programs	20%	19%
Vocational Programs	0%	1%
Other Instructional Programs	1%	2%
Student Support Services	10%	8%
Instructional Support Staff	8%	4%
Administration	11%	10%
Plant Operations	8%	8%
Pupil Transportation	5%	5%
Food Services	3%	2%
Bond & Note Interest	0%	1%
Other Expenses	0%	0%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### How Does Pittsfield Pay for Public Schools?

Figure 3 shows all the various revenue sources that Pittsfield uses to pay for its students’ education, measuring them on a per-pupil basis. It also compares Pittsfield’s revenue sources to the New Hampshire average. As this figure makes clear, local property taxes are the major source of revenue for public schools across the state.

During the 2021-22 school year, Pittsfield School District’s total school revenue was \$20,748 per pupil, a bit less than the state average of \$22,066. Property taxes (local plus statewide) provided \$8,770 per pupil or 42% percent of the overall amount, much less than the state average of 70%. Pittsfield received \$8,251 in total state “adequacy grant” per pupil. This includes Stabilization aid, in which Pittsfield received 2.1 million. The state average aid was only \$3,762.

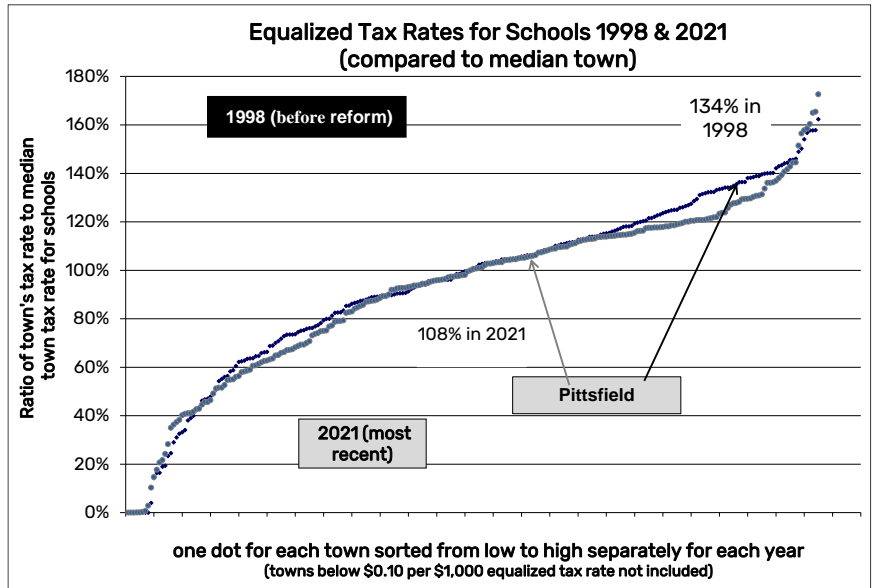
Figure 3



## How Do Pittsfield’s School Property Tax Rates Compare to Other Communities?

1998 was the last tax year before the state responded to the Supreme Court’s *Claremont* rulings and introduced new aid to pay for an “adequate” education. That year, Pittsfield’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$25.00 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 134% of the median town. In 2021, the equalized school property tax rate in Pittsfield was \$11.70 per \$1,000 of value (a \$10.28 local tax rate plus a \$1.42 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 108% of the median town.

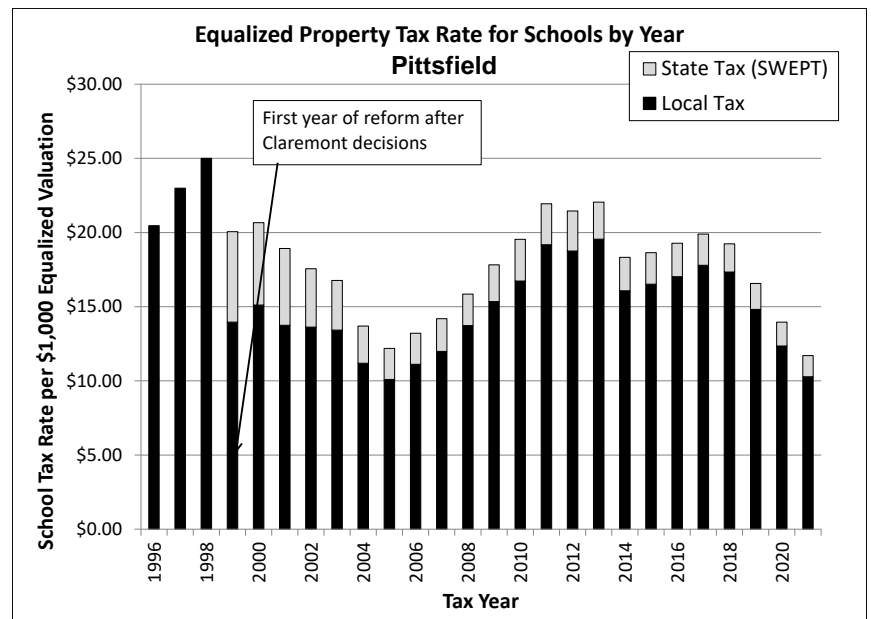
Figure 4



## How Has Pittsfield’s School Property Tax Rate Changed Over Time?

The reforms enacted in 1998 imposed the Statewide Education Property Tax (SWEPT). In 1999 its rate was \$6.10 per thousand equalized valuations in Pittsfield. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Pittsfield was a sudden reduction in its equalized tax rate from \$25.00 per thousand in 1998 to \$20.06 in 1999. The 2021 equalized rate was \$11.70.

Figure 5



## How Much Do Teachers Earn in Pittsfield?

In 2007-08 there were 60 teachers in Pittsfield. In 2021-22 there were 54 teachers.

In 2021-22 the average teacher salary in Pittsfield was \$46,403. This was 26% less than the state average of \$62,695. Since 2008, Pittsfield's average teacher salary has remained far below the state average, and surrounding communities.

Pittsfield's average teacher salary increased by 25% from 2007-08 to 2021-22. At the same time, the Consumer Price Index increased by 36%. During the same period, the average salary in Portsmouth increased by 58%.

Average teacher salary is affected by two things: the actual salary schedule of a district and the number of years of teaching experience among the teachers. Teacher salary schedules generally increase salaries as teachers gain experience through years on the job. It is therefore possible for two districts that have identical salary schedules to have different average salaries. The salary of a newly recruited teacher depends on the district's salary schedule, not on the average teacher's salary.

On the other hand, starting salaries show us what a recent college graduate (bachelor's degree) could earn as a first-time teacher in a district. This is important for hiring and retaining quality teachers over the long term. The starting salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree in New Hampshire ranged from \$31,712 to \$59,752 in the 2021-22 school year.

Pittsfield School District had a starting salary for its teachers of \$32,794 for the 2021-22 school year. Pittsfield's starting salary for teachers was 19% lower than the state average of \$40,479 in 2021. Figure 7

Figure 6

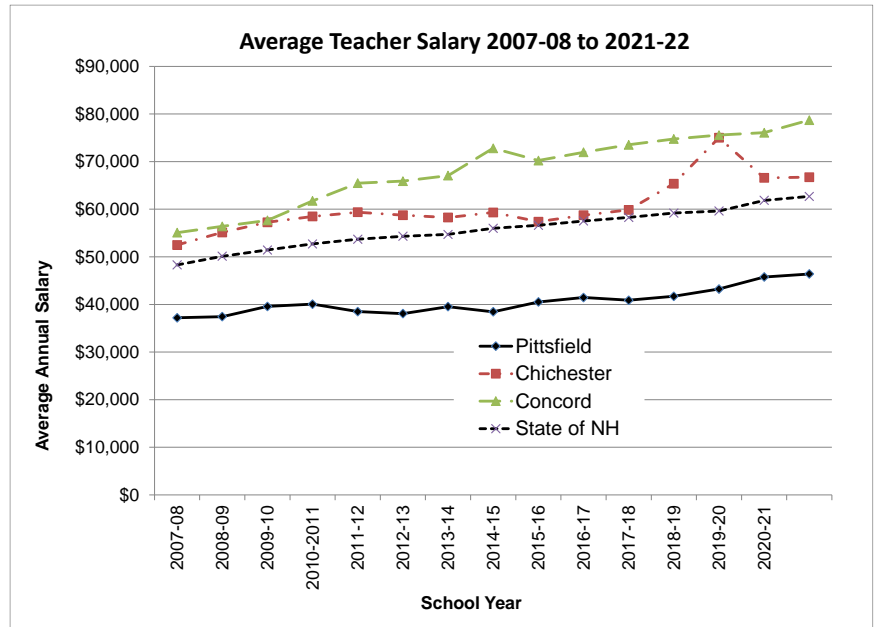
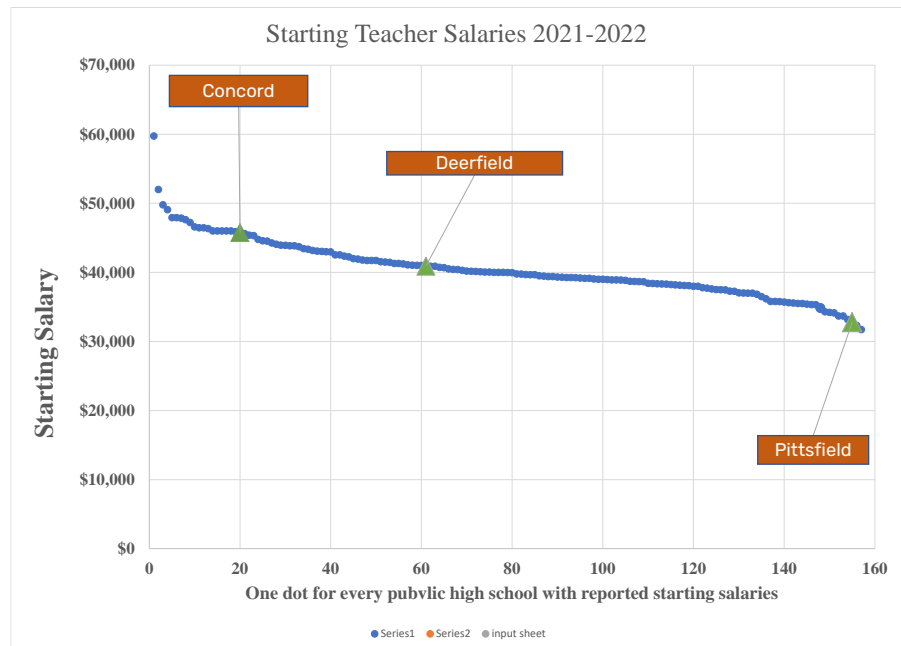


Figure 7



shows Pittsfield, Deerfield, and Concord starting salaries in comparison to all others in the state. As seen, Pittsfield falls behind Concord and Deerfield.

### What Does Pittsfield Spend on Special Education?

Under federal and state law students with physical, mental, or learning disabilities require special additional services to support their learning. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created for each student. The cost of these services is tracked within the overall spending of each district.

As shown in this table, in 2021-22 Pittsfield spent \$3,224,483.52 for these additional services.

Function	Amount
Instruction	\$2,255,915.79
Instruction Related	\$546,514.62
Administration	\$133,829.11
Legal	\$0.00
Transportation	\$288,222.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,224,483.52</b>

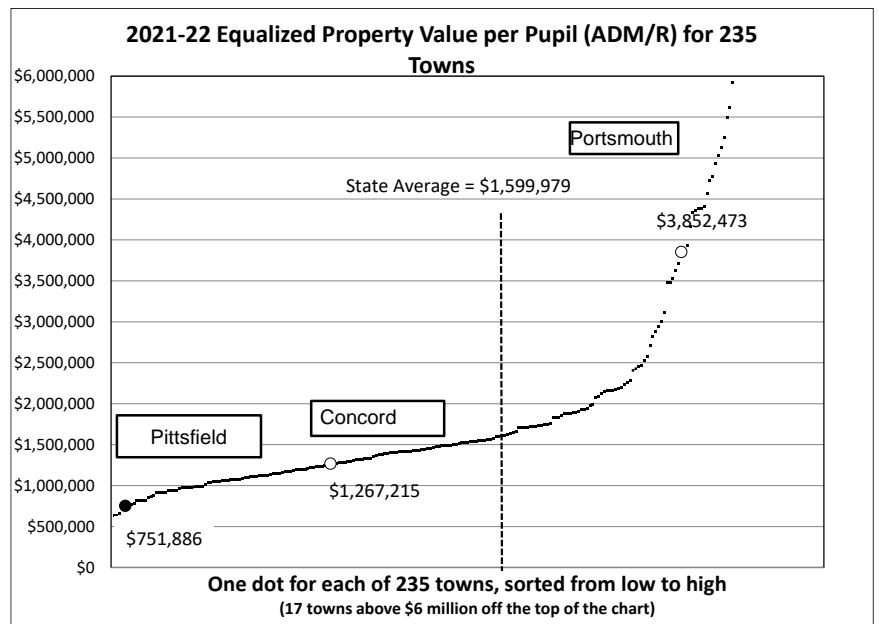
During that year, Pittsfield had 137 students with IEPs. On average, this was an additional \$23,536 for each student. In the state overall there were 30,393 such students; the total cost was \$842,738,008, and the average cost per student with an IEP was \$27,728. The average cost for extra services for each student with an IEP in Pittsfield was a bit less than the average throughout the state.

Figure 8

### How Do Property Values in Pittsfield Compare to Other Communities?

The most important statistic that relates to the ability of different towns to raise taxes for the purpose of their schools is Equalized Property Value per Pupil or EQVP. EQVP essentially provides an answer to the question, "What resources are available to be taxed in our town for each of the students whose education we pay for through our school budget?" The higher a town's EQVP, the lower the school property tax rate it needs to use to generate a set sum of money.

In 2021, Pittsfield had \$422,940,688 of equalized property valuation and 563 students (as measured by average daily membership in residence or ADM-R). This means that Pittsfield's EQVP that year was \$751,886. The state average EQVP was \$1,599,979. Pittsfield had 47 percent of the state average.



Clearly, there is not a level playing field when it comes to the ability of towns' property tax bases to support their schools.

***Note:** Data used in this report are taken from reports and spreadsheets of the NH Department of Education (Equalized Valuation per Pupil, Cost Per Pupil by District, Average Daily Membership Based Upon Attendance and Residence (ADM), Average Class Size by School, and DoE25 Extract for State Profile Data for various years). Such data are reported by New Hampshire school districts to the Department. Tax rates printed on town tax bills are not equalized and cannot be compared among towns. Using equalized data allows an apples-to-apples comparison among town tax rates and property values.*