

Answers to Key Questions about School Funding in Wolfeboro

November 2023

New Hampshire’s public school system – and how money is raised to pay for it – touches the lives of all Granite Staters yet can often be difficult to understand. Below are a few questions you might have about how schools are funded in Wolfeboro, 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 Wolfeboro 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, Wolfeboro spent \$6,465 per elementary school student or 109% typical (or median) town’s spending. In the school year 2021-22, Wolfeboro spent \$24,268 per elementary pupil, which was 111 percent of the NH Median.

Figure 2 compares spending per elementary pupil in Wolfeboro (Governor Wentworth Regional School District) and the state average for the past fifteen years. It shows that spending in Wolfeboro has remained above the state average over the years.

Figure 1

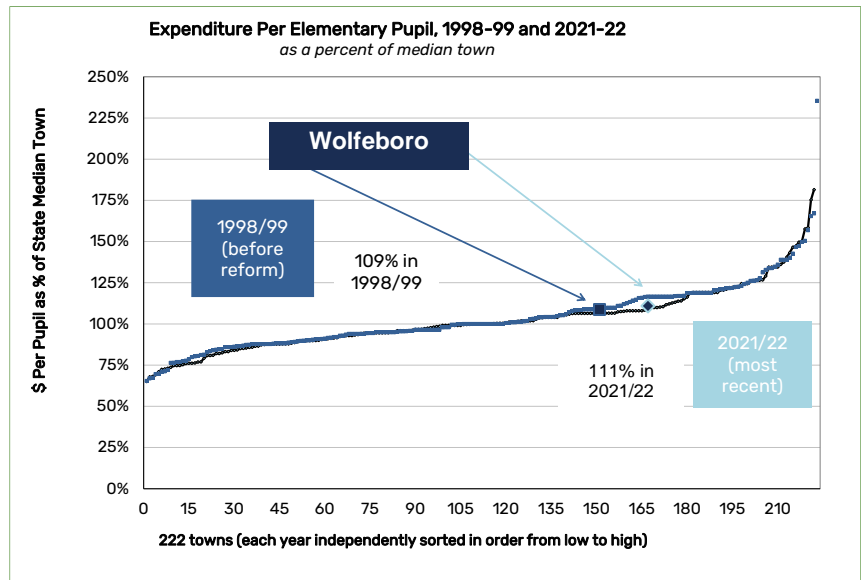
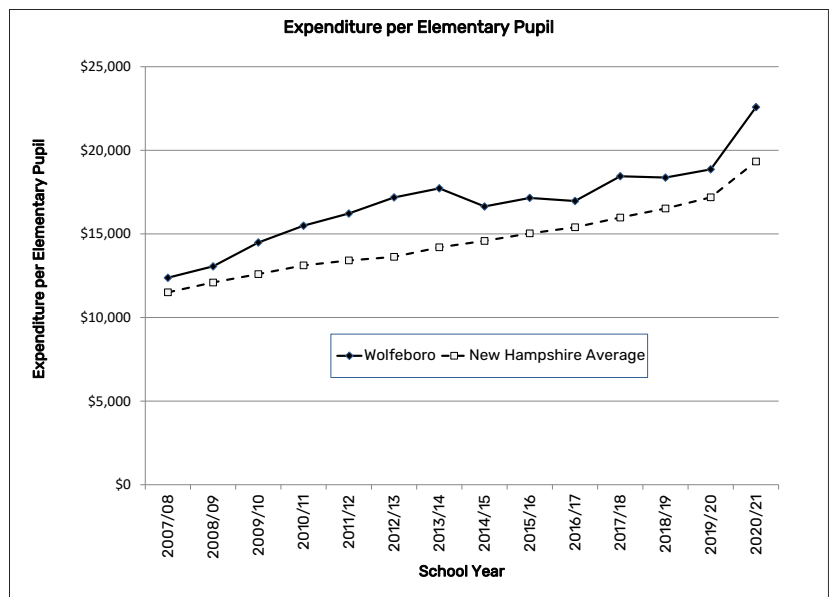


Figure 2



All told, New Hampshire’s public school districts spent \$3.64 billion during the 2021-22 school year. Of that amount, 40 percent was dedicated to regular classroom instruction, 19 percent to other educational programs (including special education and vocational instruction), 11 percent to administration, 9 percent to building operations, and the remainder was devoted to transportation, food services, and other purposes.

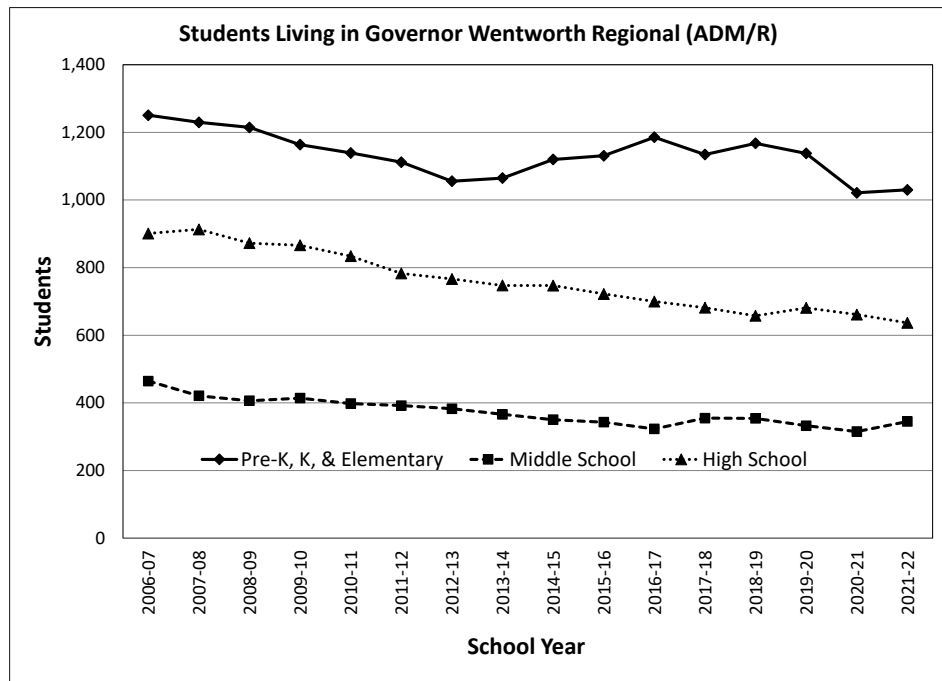
As shown in the table, the proportion of Governor Wentworth Regional School District’s spending on regular instruction is less than the state average, and spending on vocational programs is higher than average. Wolfeboro (Governor Wentworth) spends a higher amount on pupil transportation than the state average.

Spending by Type	Percentage	
	Governor Wentworth	NH Average
Regular Instruction	39%	40%
Special Programs	18%	19%
Vocational Programs	3%	1%
Other Instructional Programs	2%	1%
Student Support Services	4%	8%
Instructional Support Staff	6%	3%
Administration	9%	11%
Plant Operations	8%	9%
Pupil Transportation	5%	4%
Food Services	2%	2%
Bond & Note Interest	3%	1%
Other Expenses	0%	0%
Total Expenses	100%	100%

How Many Students Are Enrolled in Governor Wentworth Regional School District’s Schools?

Average Daily Membership in Residence (ADM/R) is one way in which enrollment is measured. It measures the number of public school students living in a district. Overall, ADM/R has been in slow decline in New Hampshire in recent years, attributable to declining birth rates. At Governor Wentworth Regional, there has been a decrease of 23.1 percent since 2006-07. Figure 3 displays ADM/R trends at Governor Wentworth’s elementary, middle, and high schools for the past fifteen years. During this period, the number of elementary students decreased by 17.6 percent, middle school students decreased by 25.7 percent, and high school students decreased by 23.1 percent.

Figure 3



How Does Wolfeboro Pay for Public Schools?

Figure 4 shows all the various revenue sources that Wolfeboro (a part of Governor Wentworth Regional) uses to pay for its students' education, measuring them on a per-pupil basis. It also compares Wolfeboro'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 in Wolfeboro and across the state.

During the 2021-22 school year, Governor Wentworth Regional School District's total school revenue was \$28,799 per pupil, a bit more than the state average of \$21,642. Property taxes (local plus statewide) provided \$34,303,003 or 59% percent of the \$57,937.636 overall amount. Governor Wentworth Regional received \$2,199 state "adequacy" aid per pupil. The state average aid was \$3,905.

How Do Wolfeboro'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, Wolfeboro's equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$10.29 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 55% of the median town. In 2022, the equalized school property tax rate in Wolfeboro was \$4.11 per \$1,000 of value (a \$3.31 local tax rate plus a \$0.80 state tax rate, which is retained locally).

Figure 4

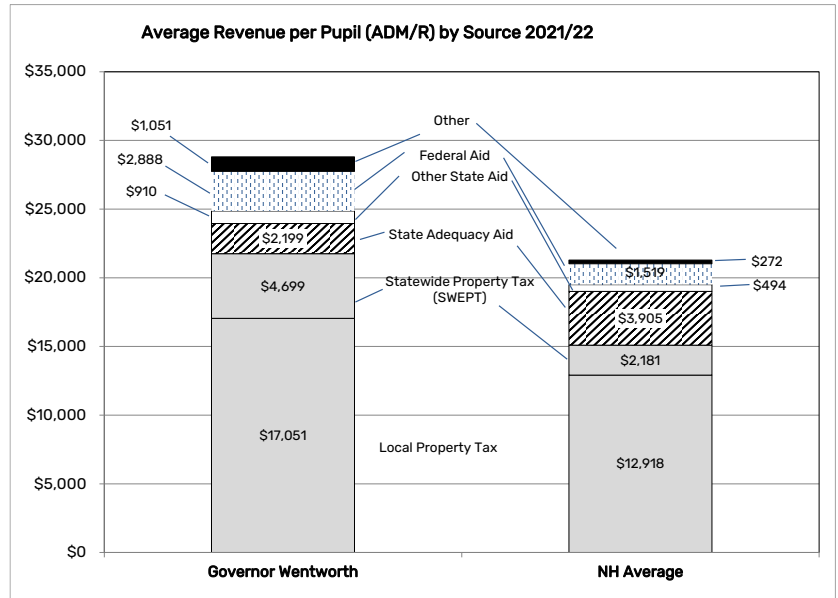
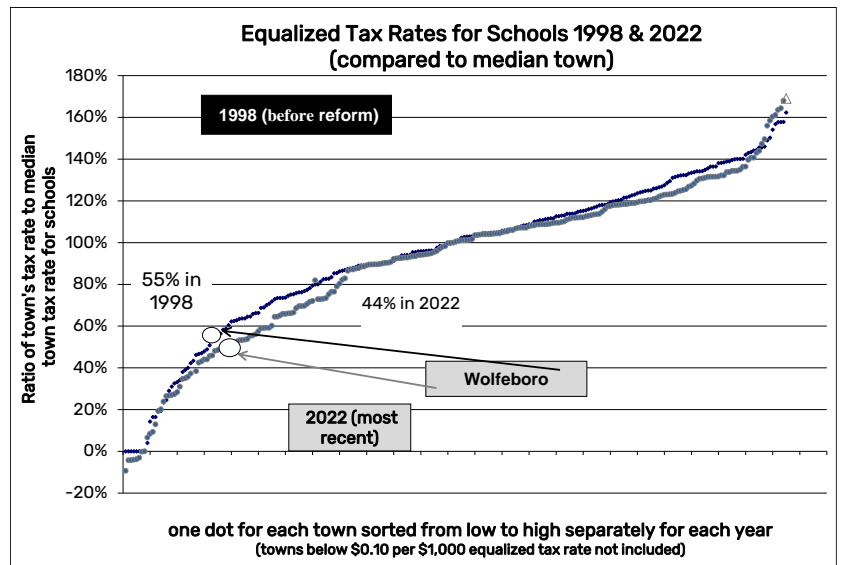


Figure 5



What Does Governor Wentworth 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 Program (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 Hampstead spent \$10,224,601.23 for these additional services.

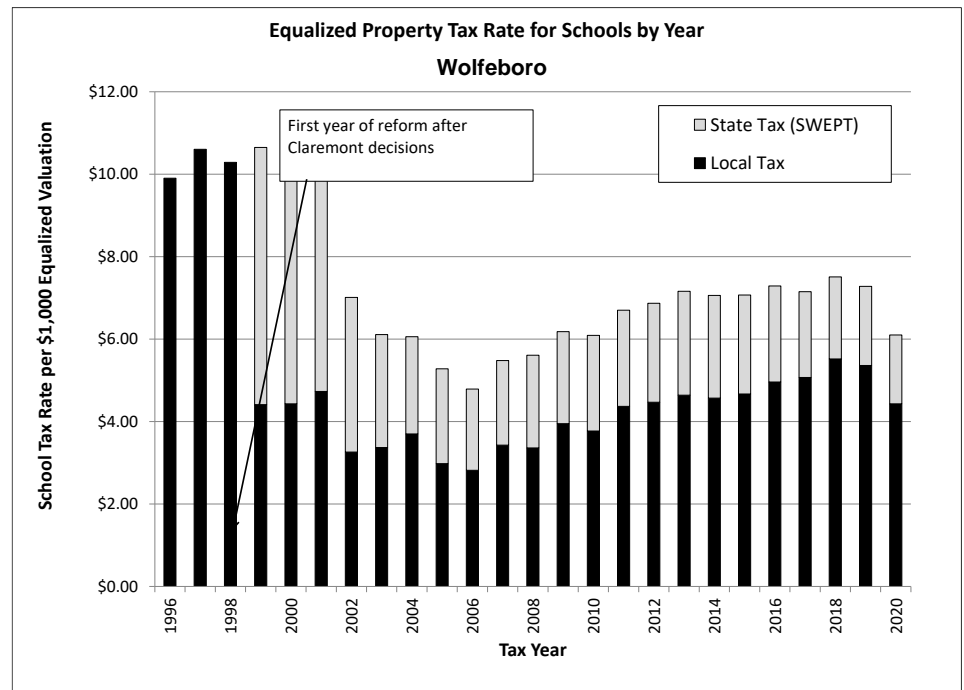
Function	Amount
Instruction	\$6,302,129.92
Instruction Related	\$2,954,123.40
Administration	\$590,824.68
Legal	\$11,298.01
Transportation	\$366,225.22
TOTAL	\$10,224,601.23

During that year, Governor Wentworth had 337 students with IEPs. On average, this was an additional \$30,340.06 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 at Governor Wentworth was a bit more than the average throughout the state.

How Has Wolfeboro's School Property Tax Rate Changed Over Time?

Figure 6

The reforms enacted in 1998 imposed the Statewide Education Property Tax (SWEPT). In 1999 its rate was \$6.24 per thousand equalized valuations in Wolfeboro. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new "adequacy aid" to each district. The result for Wolfeboro was a sudden increase in its equalized tax rate from \$10.29 per thousand in 1998 to \$10.65 in 1999. The 2022 equalized rate is \$4.11.

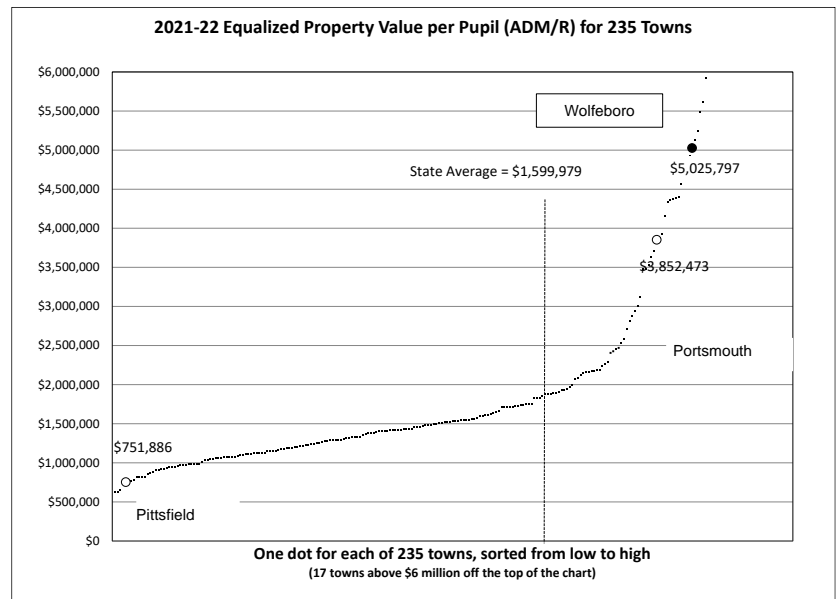


How Do Property Values in Wolfeboro Compare to Other Communities?

The most important statistic that relates to the ability of different towns to raise taxes for 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, Wolfeboro had \$3.131 billion of equalized property valuation and 623 students (as measured by average daily membership in residence or ADM-R). This means that Wolfeboro’s EQVP that year was \$5,025,797. The state average EQVP was \$1,599,979. Wolfeboro had 314.1 percent of the state average. Pittsfield is an example of one of many communities that had less property value per pupil than Wolfeboro.

Figure 7



Think about it - if Wolfeboro and Pittsfield had to raise the same amount of revenue per pupil for their schools, Wolfeboro’s school property tax rate would have to be nearly 3 times lower than what it is now.

Pittsfield’s 2021 equalized tax rate of \$11.70 raised \$8,750 per student while Wolfeboro’s rate of \$5.55 raised \$27,875, more than double per student.

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.