

New Hampshire’s public school system, and the methods used to fund it, affect all Granite Staters but can often be difficult to grasp. Below are some common questions about Chester school funding, along with key facts and figures. We hope this information sheds light on the inequities that continue to challenge our school funding.

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

In the 1998-99 school year, the last year before New Hampshire increased education aid in response to the Claremont rulings, Chester spent \$5,402 per elementary student, or 91 percent of the median spending among towns. In 2023-24, Chester's per-pupil spending had increased to \$17,397, which was 72 percent of the state median.

Figure 2 highlights the spending trends over the past 15 years, comparing Chester’s expenditure per elementary student to the state average. The data reveals that Chester’s spending has remained below the state average, with spending in 2023 below the state average by \$4,709.

Figure 1

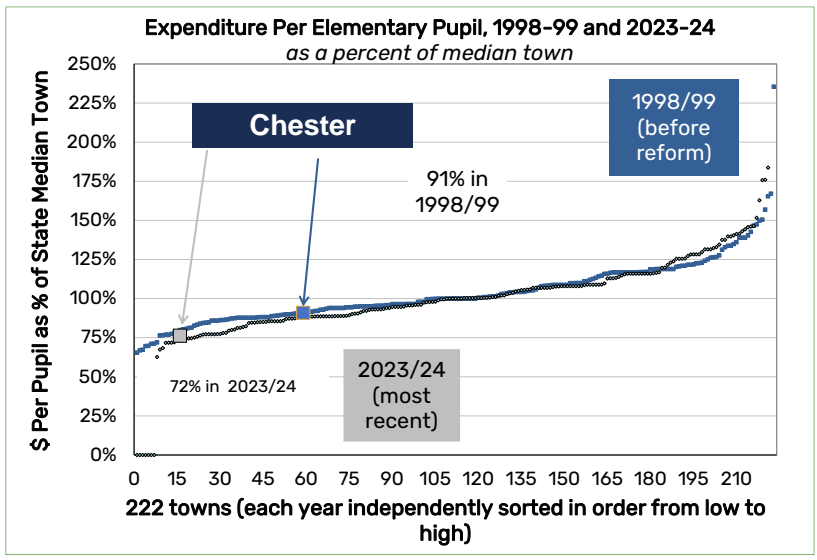
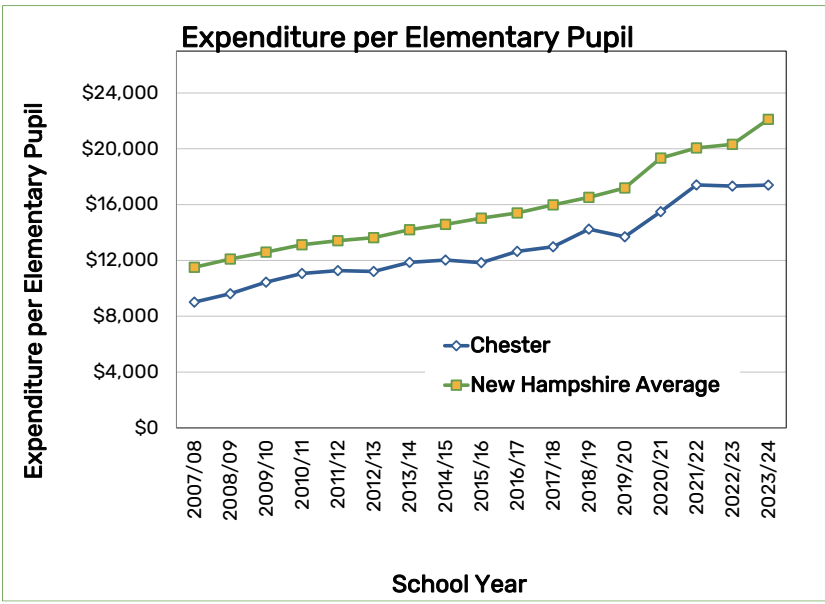


Figure 2



New Hampshire’s public school districts spent \$3.80 billion during the 2023-24 school year. Of that amount, 38 percent was dedicated to regular classroom instruction, 20 percent to special education, 11 percent to administration, 9 percent to building operations, and the remainder was devoted to transportation, food services, and other purposes.

As shown in Table 1, the proportion of Chester’s spending on regular instruction was much higher than the average. In contrast, spending on administration, support services, and plant operations was lower.

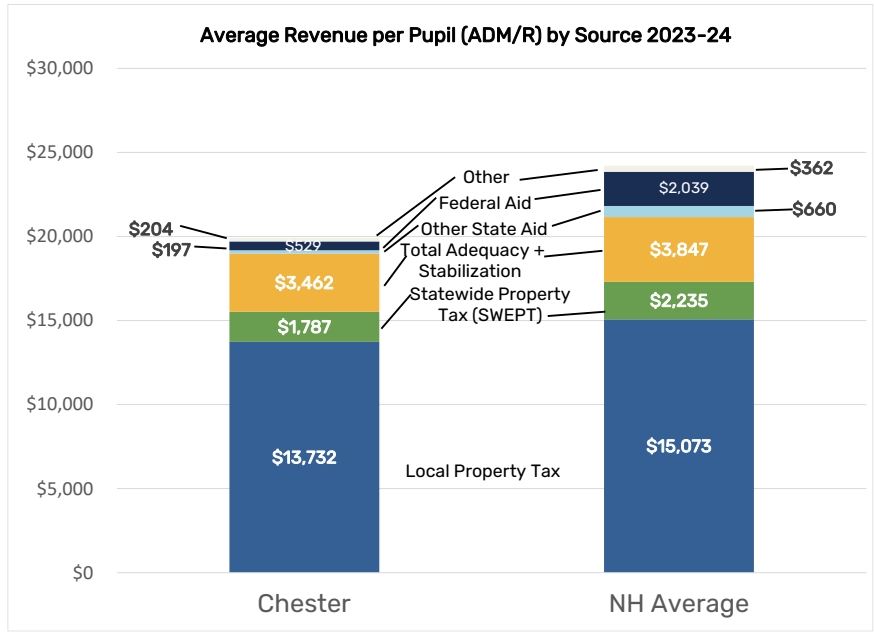
**How Does Chester Pay for Public Schools?**

Figure 3 shows all the various revenue sources that Chester uses to pay for its students’ education, measuring them on a per-pupil basis. It also compares Chester’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 2023-24 school year, Chester School District’s total school revenue was \$19,911 per pupil, much less than the state average of \$23,198. Property taxes (local plus statewide) provided \$15,519 per pupil or 78 percent of the overall amount, much more than the state average of 71 percent. Chester received \$3,462 in total state “adequacy grant” per pupil. The state average aid was \$3,792.

Spending by Type	Percentage	
	Chester	NH Average
Regular Instruction	53%	38%
Special Programs	15%	20%
Vocational Programs	0%	1%
Other Instructional Programs	1%	2%
Student Support Services	6%	8%
Instructional Support Staff	4%	4%
Administration	9%	11%
Plant Operations	7%	9%
Pupil Transportation	7%	5%
Food Services	1%	1%
Bond & Note Interest	0%	1%
Other Expenses	0%	0%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

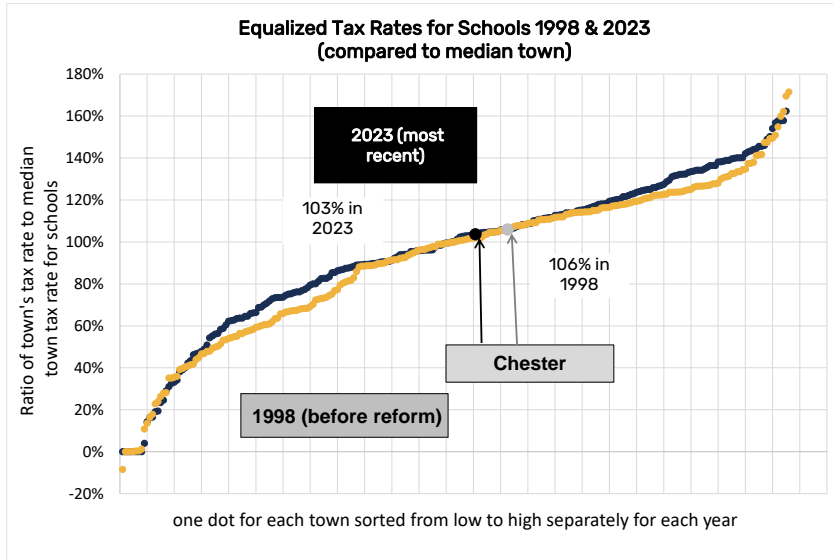
Figure 3



### How Do Chester’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, Chester’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$19.72 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 106 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Chester was \$9.68 per \$1,000 of value (a \$8.56 local tax rate plus a \$1.12 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 103 percent of the median town.

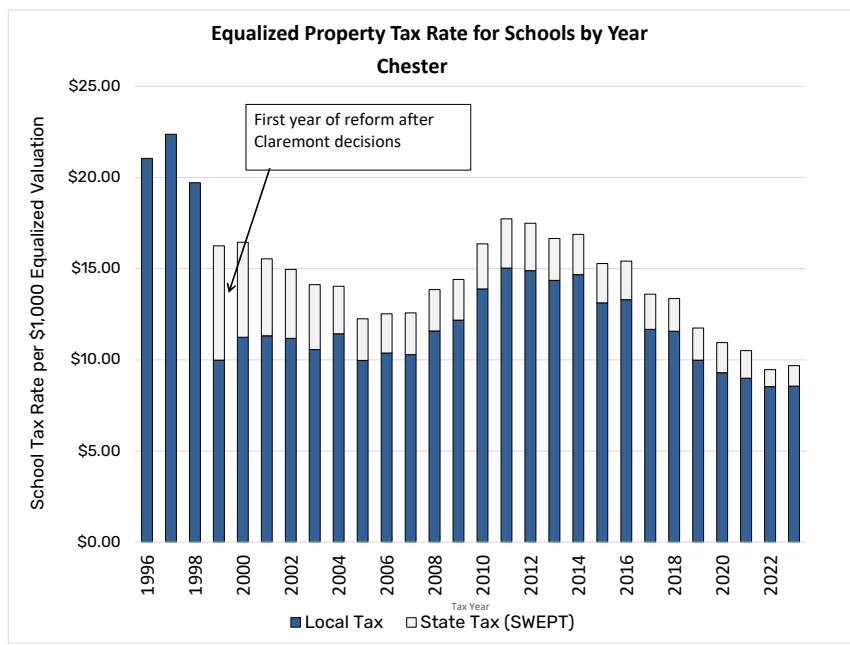
Figure 4



### How Has Chester’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 \$6.27 per thousand equalized valuations in Chester. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Chester was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$19.72 per thousand in 1998 to \$16.25 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$9.68.

Figure 5

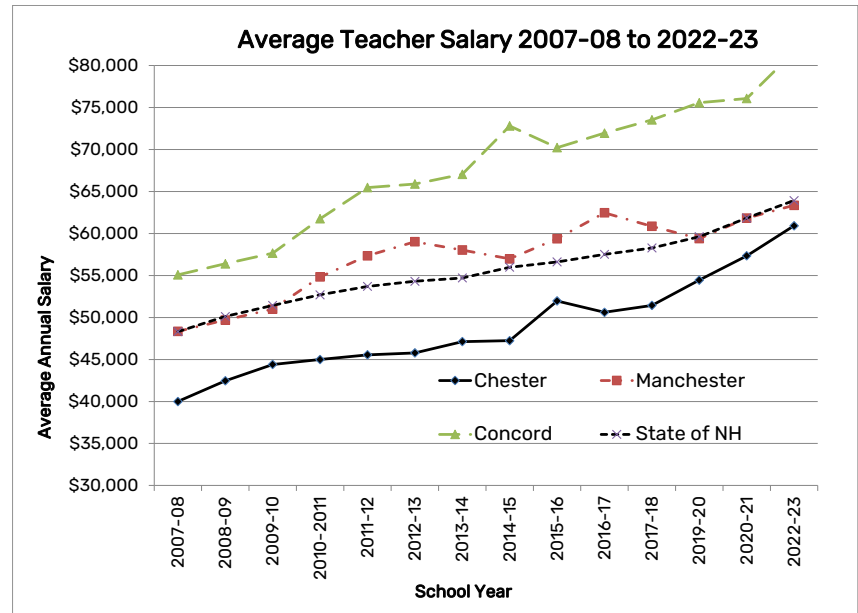




## How Much Do Teachers Earn in Chester?

Figure 6

In 2007-08, Chester had 46 teachers and in 2022-23, Chester had 46 teachers. During the 2022-23 school year, the average teacher salary in Chester was \$60,926, 5% lower than the state average of \$63,926. Chester consistently remains below both the state average and Concord and Manchester since 2008. Over the same period, Chester's average teacher salary increased by 43 percent. The Consumer Price Index increased 42 percent, while Concord saw a 45 percent rise.



The average teacher salary is influenced by both the district's salary schedule and the experience levels of its teachers,

which can result in salary differences between districts with similar pay scales. Starting salaries, a key factor in attracting and retaining quality teachers, ranged from \$31,712 to \$64,007 in New Hampshire for the 2022-23 school year. Chester offered a starting salary of \$40,623, with Chester's starting pay 4.5 percent lower than the unweighted state average of \$42,560.

## What Does Chester 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 such student. The cost of these services is tracked within the overall spending of each district.

As shown in the table below, in 2023-24 Chester reported spending \$2,926,056.66 for these additional services.

Function	Amount
Instruction	\$2,078,403.53
Instruction Related	\$280,437.24
Administration	\$191,911.92
Legal	\$546.64
Transportation	\$374,757.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,926,056.66</b>

During that year, Chester had 135 students with IEPs. On average, this was \$21,674 for each such student. In the state overall there were 30,965 such students and the total cost was \$978,485,932. The statewide average was \$31,093. The average cost for extra services for each student with an IEP at Chester was lower than the average throughout the state.

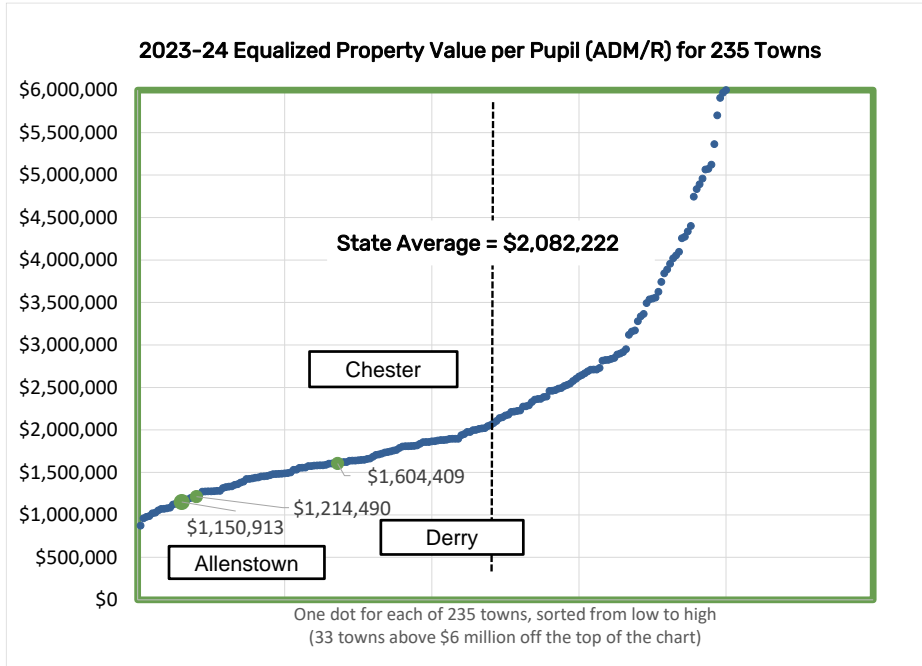
These costs *are in addition to* the non-special education costs that are shared among all students. While \$31,093 was the average extra cost, for some students with considerable disability, the cost can be much higher than the average while for others it may be only a few hundred dollars.

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

Figure 7

The most important metric reflecting a town’s capacity to raise taxes for its schools is the Equalized Property Value per Pupil (EQVP). This figure answers the question: “What financial resources are available in our town to be taxed for each student funded by the school budget?” A higher EQVP allows a town to generate the same revenue with a lower school property tax rate.

In 2023, Chester had \$1,192,099,639 of equalized property valuation and 743 students (as measured by average daily membership in residence or ADM-R). This means that Chester’s EQVP that year was \$1,604,409. The state average EQVP was \$2,082,222. Chester had 77.1% percent of the state average.



*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.*