

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 Merrimack Valley’s 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 Merrimack Valley Spend on Public Schools? How Does It Compare to Other Communities?

Boscawen, Loudon, Penacook, Salisbury, and Webster have the same per-pupil expenditure because they share a school district. In the 1998-99 school year, the last year before New Hampshire increased education aid in response to the Claremont rulings, Boscawen (Merrimack Valley RSD) spent \$5,951 per elementary student or 99 percent of the median spending among towns. In 2023-24, Boscawen's per-pupil spending had increased to \$20,665, which was 86 percent of the state median.

Figure 1

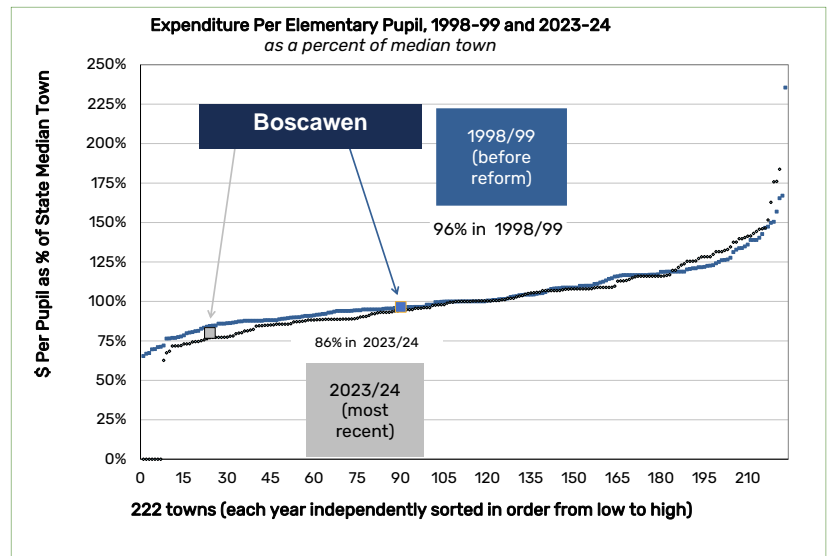
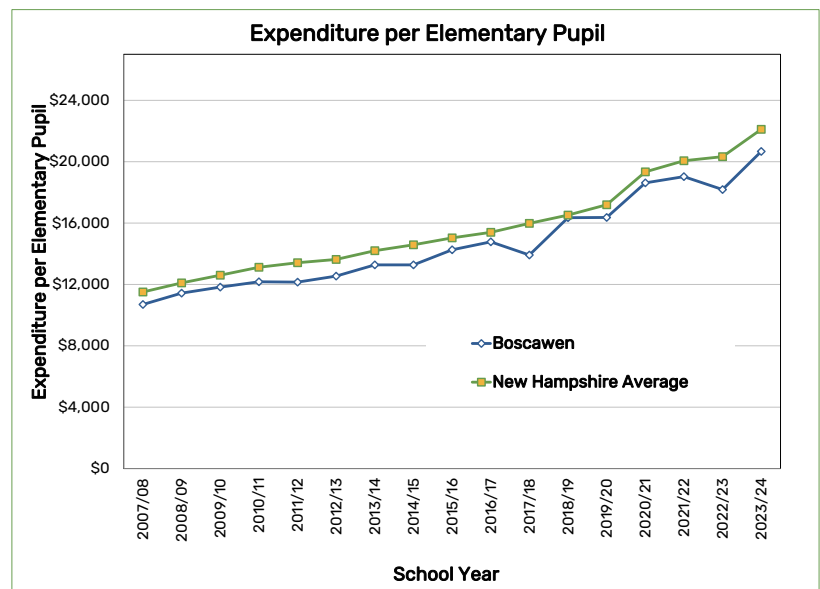


Figure 2 highlights the spending trends over the past 15 years, comparing Boscawen’s expenditure per elementary student to the state average. The data reveals that Merrimack Valley RSD has consistently been below the state average, with spending in 2023-24 below by \$1,441.

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, Merrimack Valley spent less on regular instruction and administration than the average. In contrast, spending on special programs and student support services was higher.

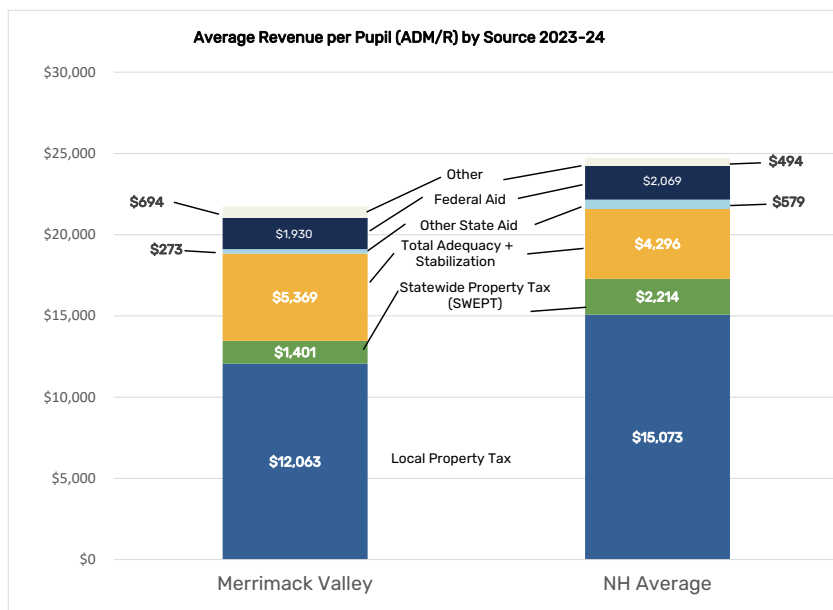
Spending by Type	Percentage	
	Merrimack Valley	NH Average
Regular Instruction	35%	38%
Special Programs	21%	20%
Vocational Programs	1%	1%
Other Instructional Programs	2%	2%
Student Support Services	14%	8%
Instructional Support Staff	4%	4%
Administration	7%	11%
Plant Operations	9%	9%
Pupil Transportation	6%	5%
Food Services	1%	1%
Bond & Note Interest	0%	1%
Other Expenses	0%	0%
Total Expenses	100%	100%

How Does Merrimack Valley Pay for Public Schools?

Figure 3 shows all the various revenue sources that Merrimack Valley uses to pay for its students’ education, measuring them on a per-pupil basis. It also compares Merrimack Valley’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, Merrimack Valley School District’s total school revenue was \$22,086 per pupil, less than the state average of \$23,198. Property taxes (local plus statewide) provided \$13,464 per pupil or 62 percent of the overall amount, much less than the state average of 71 percent. Merrimack Valley received \$5,369 in total state “adequacy grant” per pupil. The state average aid was \$4,296.

Figure 3

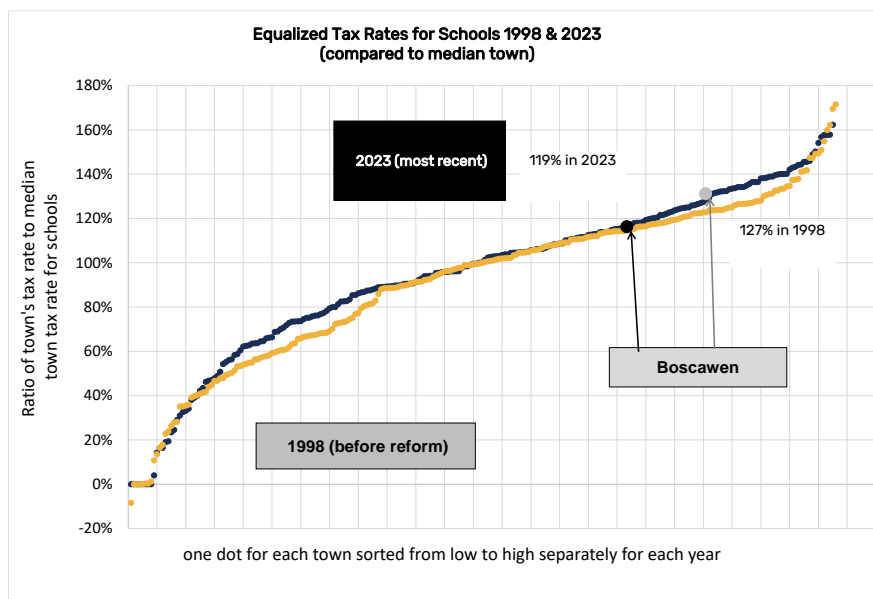




How Do Boscawen’s School Property Tax Rates Compare to Other Communities?

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, Boscawen’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$23.75 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 127 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Boscawen was \$11.18 per \$1,000 of value (a \$10.12 local tax rate plus a \$1.06 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 119 percent of the median town.

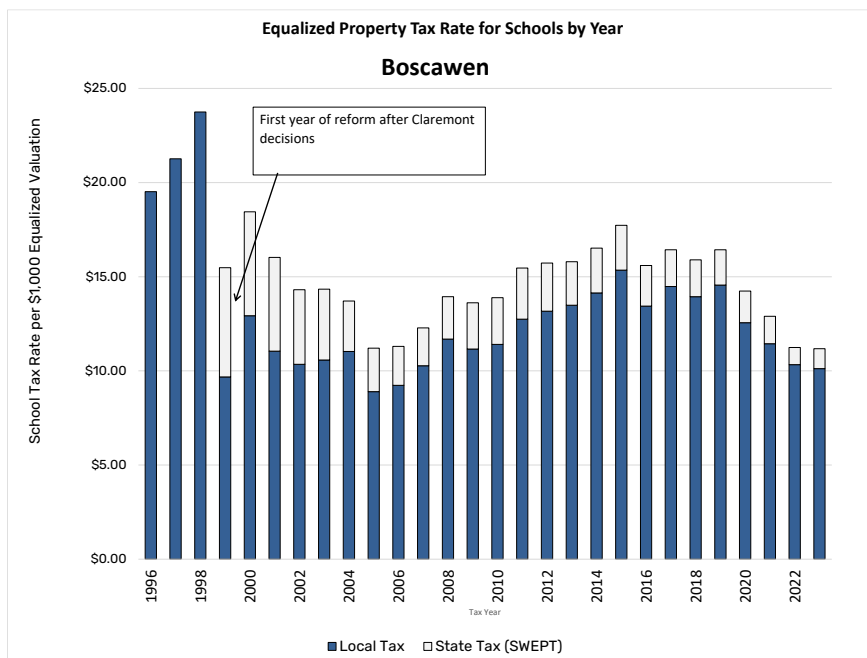
Figure 4



How Has Boscawen’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 \$5.80 per thousand equalized valuations in Boscawen. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Boscawen was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$23.75 per thousand in 1998 to \$15.48 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$11.18.

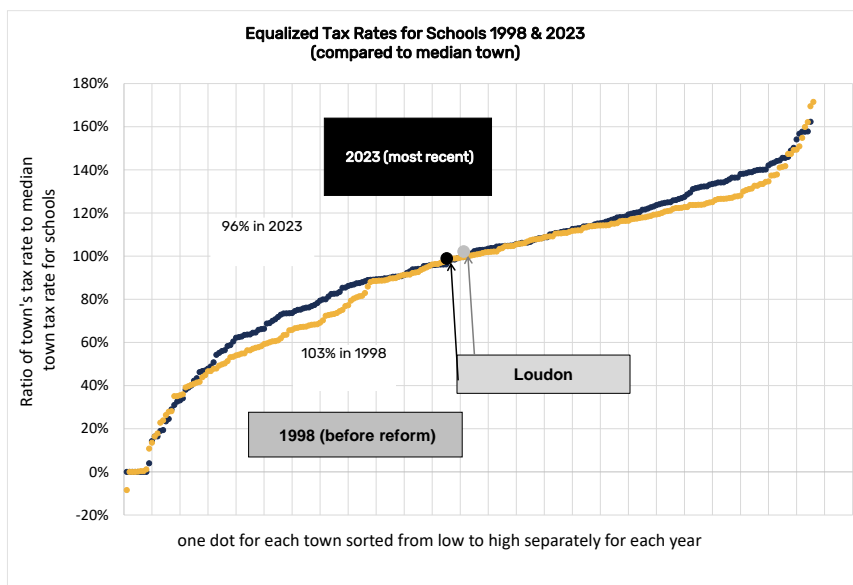
Figure 5



How Do Loudon’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, Loudon’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$19.18 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 103 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Loudon was \$9.03 per \$1,000 of value (a \$7.92 local tax rate plus a \$1.11 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 96 percent of the median town.

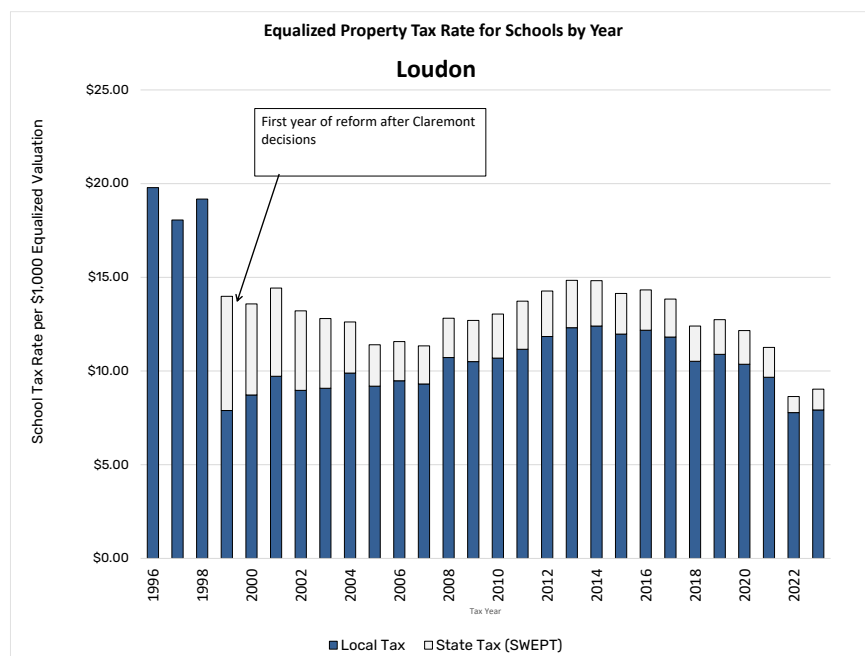
Figure 6



How Has Loudon’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 Loudon. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Loudon was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$19.18 per thousand in 1998 to \$13.99 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$9.03.

Figure 7

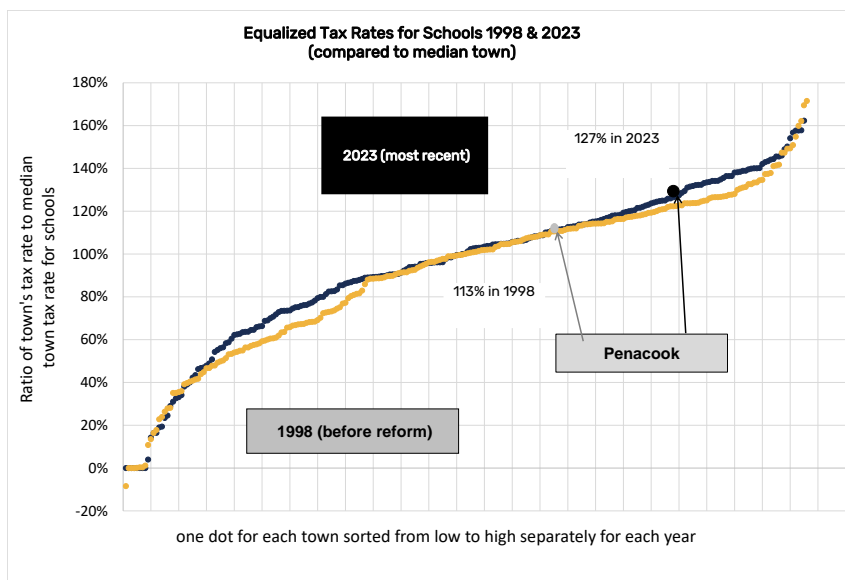




How Do Penacook’s School Property Tax Rates Compare to Other Communities?

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, Penacook’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$21.06 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 113 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Penacook was \$11.91 per \$1,000 of value (a \$10.86 local tax rate plus a \$1.05 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 127 percent of the median town.

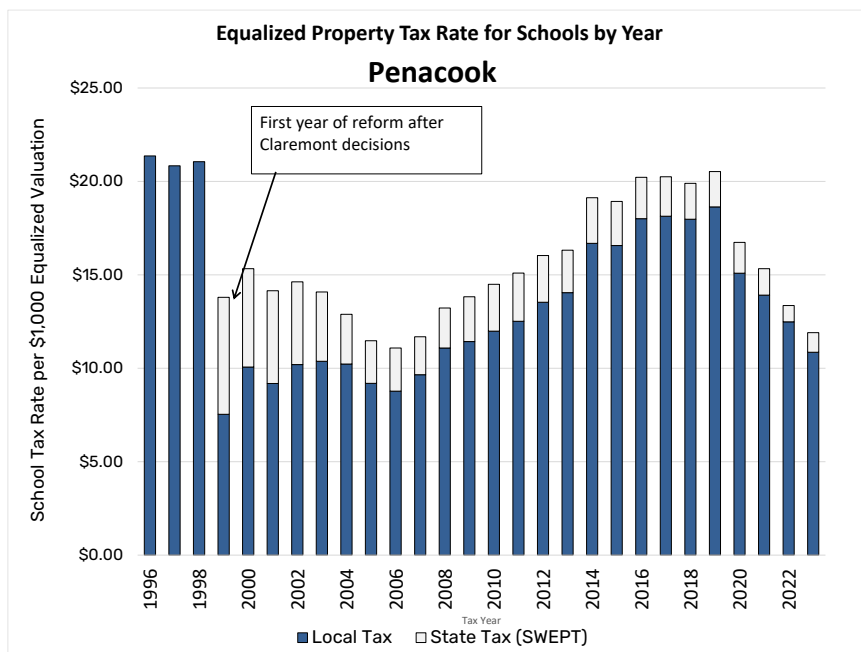
Figure 8



How Has Penacook’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 \$6.26 per thousand equalized valuations in Penacook. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Penacook was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$21.06 per thousand in 1998 to \$13.80 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$11.91.

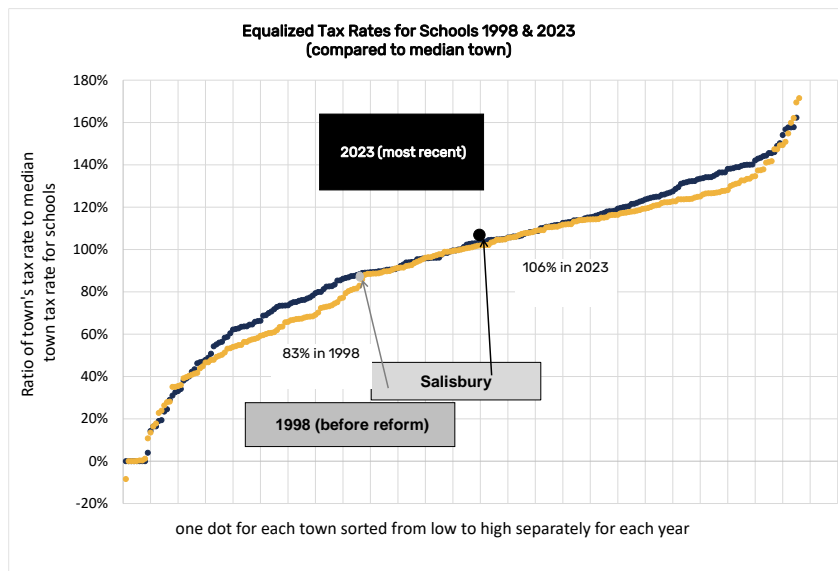
Figure 9



How Do Salisbury'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, Salisbury's equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$15.41 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 83 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Salisbury was \$9.92 per \$1,000 of value (a \$8.73 local tax rate plus a \$1.19 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 106 percent of the median town.

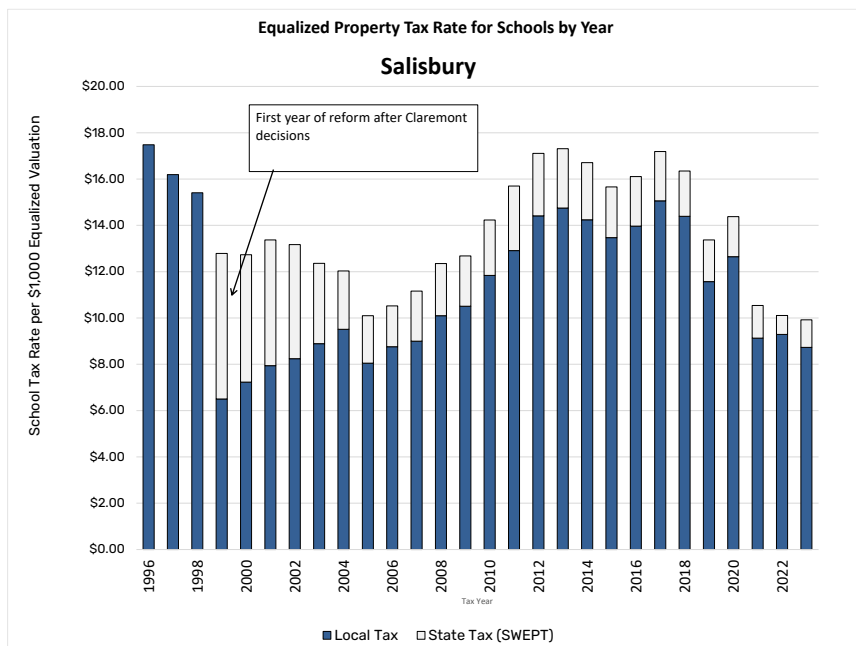
Figure 10



How Has Salisbury'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 \$6.29 per thousand equalized valuations in Salisbury. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new "adequacy aid" to each district. The result for Salisbury was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$15.41 per thousand in 1998 to \$12.79 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$9.92.

Figure 11

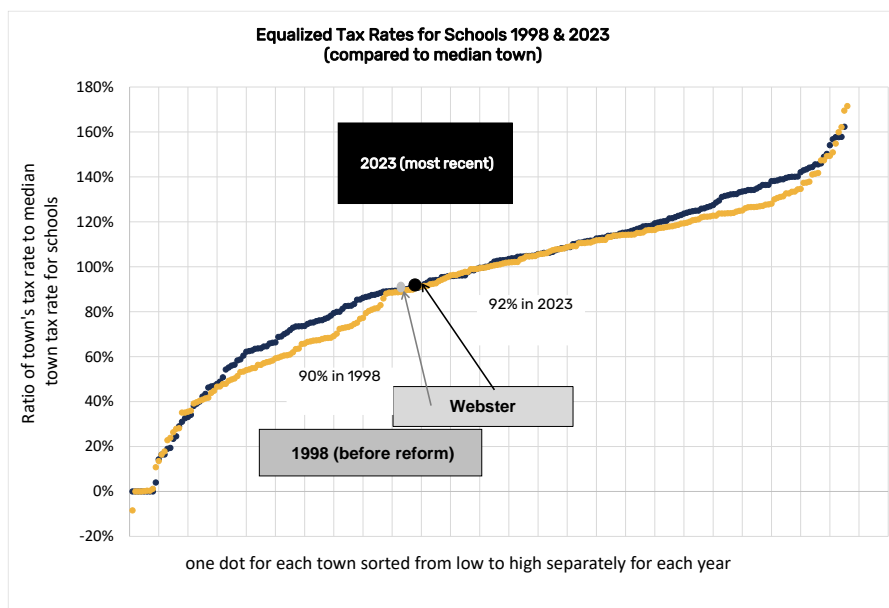




How Do Webster’s School Property Tax Rates Compare to Other Communities?

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, Webster’s equalized property tax rate for its schools was \$16.72 per \$1,000 of property value. This rate was 90 percent of the median town. In 2023, the equalized school property tax rate in Webster was \$8.66 per \$1,000 of value (a \$7.42 local tax rate plus a \$1.24 state tax rate, which is retained locally). This was 92 percent of the median town.

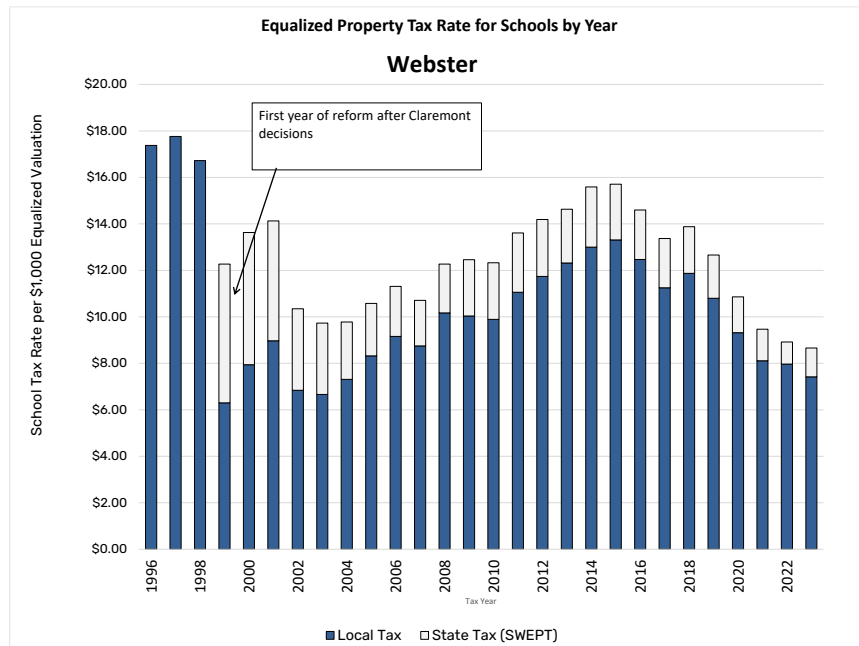
Figure 12



How Has Webster’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 \$5.97 per thousand equalized valuations in Webster. Also, in 1999 the state began the distribution of its new “adequacy aid” to each district. The result for Webster was a decrease in its equalized tax rate from \$16.72 per thousand in 1998 to \$12.27 in 1999. The 2023 equalized rate was \$8.66.

Figure 13





How Much Do Teachers Earn in Merrimack Valley?

In 2007-08, Merrimack Valley had 188 teachers, and in 2022-23, that number was still 188. During the 2022-23 school year, the average teacher salary in Merrimack Valley was \$53,899, 15% lower than the state average of \$63,926. Merrimack Valley has consistently remained below the state and far below Concord's averages since 2008. Over the same period, Merrimack Valley's average teacher salary increased by 13 percent, while the Consumer Price Index increased by 42 percent. Concord saw a 45 percent rise in their teacher salaries in the same time.

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. Merrimack Valley offered a starting salary of \$43,200, with Merrimack Valley's starting pay 1.5 percent higher than the state average of \$42,560.

What Does Merrimack Valley Spend on Special Education?

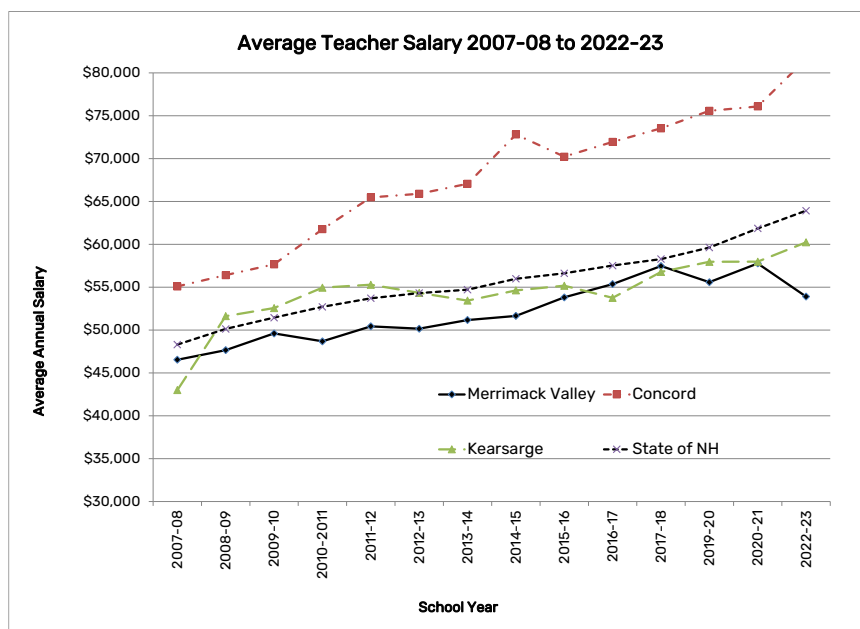
Under federal and state law, students with physical, mental, or learning disabilities require special additional services to support their learning. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is created for each such student. The cost of these services is tracked within the overall spending of each district.

As shown in the table below, in 2023-24 Merrimack Valley reported spending \$15,146,963 for these additional services.

Function	Amount
Instruction	\$10,071,382
Instruction Related	\$2,764,956
Administration	\$1,118,668
Legal	\$34,619
Transportation	\$1,157,338
TOTAL	\$15,146,963

During that year, Merrimack Valley had 522 students with IEPs. On average, this was \$29,017 for each such student. In the state overall there were 30,965 such students and the total cost was \$915,220,911. The statewide average was \$29,557. The average cost for extra services for each student with an IEP at Merrimack Valley was less than the average throughout the state.

Figure 14



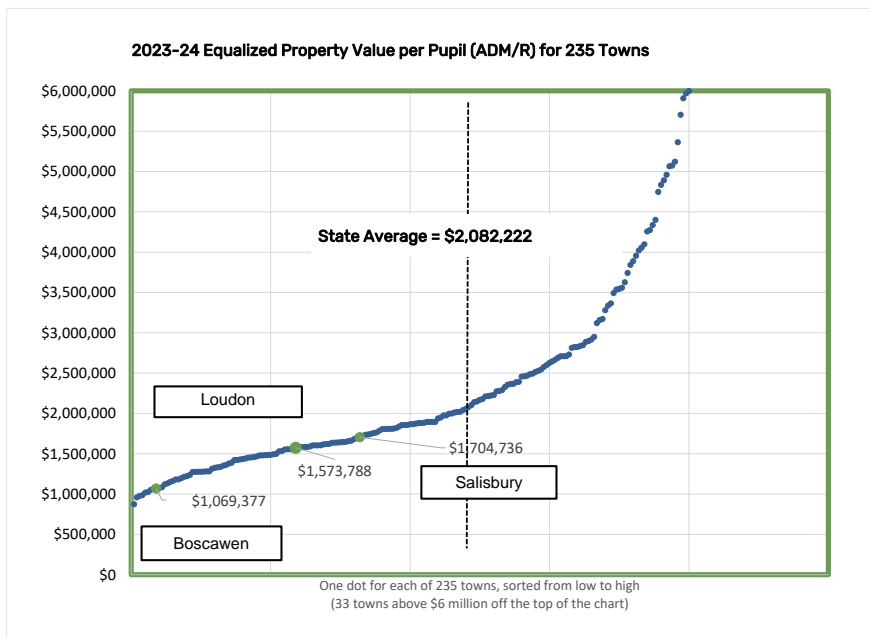
These costs *are in addition to* the non-special education costs shared among all students. While \$29,557 was the average extra cost, for some students with considerable disability, the cost can be much higher, while for others it may be only a few hundred dollars.

What are Property Values in Merrimack Valley?

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, Merrimack Valley communities had these EQVPs: Boscawen: \$1,069,377, Loudon: \$1,573,788, Salisbury: \$1,704,736, Penacook: \$1,052,695, and Webster: \$1,704,736. All MV’s towns are below the state average.

Figure 15



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.