

Inequitable education funding in New Hampshire impacts reach beyond the taxpayer. Students' educational experiences can be drastically different all over the state. This paper presents information about the students in Merrimack Valley and how they compare to the rest of the state.

Students and Student Characteristics

Merrimack Valley School District serves students from preschool through the 12th grade. Table 1 shows enrollment in October of the 2023-24 school year by grade, including postgraduate students, of which Merrimack Valley had none.

Table 1

| Merrimack Valley Schools | Pre | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | PG | Totals |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|--------|
| Boscawen Elementary School | 16 | 36 | 29 | 36 | 52 | 31 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 240 |
| Loudon Elementary School | 0 | 33 | 48 | 40 | 41 | 40 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 243 |
| Merrimack Valley High School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 187 | 165 | 190 | 200 | 0 | 742 |
| Merrimack Valley Middle School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 151 | 165 | 150 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 466 |
| Penacook Elementary School | 19 | 47 | 49 | 53 | 49 | 51 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 324 |
| Salisbury Elementary School | 0 | 7 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 64 |
| Webster Elementary School | 0 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 88 |

Table 2

| | American Indian or Alaskan | Asian or Pacific Islander | Hispanic | Black Non-Hispanic | White Non-Hispanic | Multi Race | Total |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Merrimack Valley | 3 | 33 | 85 | 45 | 1986 | 63 | 2215 |
| Percentage | 0.1% | 1.5% | 3.8% | 2.0% | 89.7% | 2.8% | 100.0% |
| State Total | 306 | 5,117 | 14,242 | 3,400 | 135,903 | 6,034 | 165,002 |
| Percentage | 0.2% | 3.1% | 8.6% | 2.1% | 82.4% | 3.7% | 100.0% |

Table 2 displays racial enrollments for students at Merrimack Valley as of October 2024. There is less racial diversity among Merrimack Valley students than there is statewide. Only 10.3% of Merrimack Valley students are not white compared to 18% statewide.

Of the 2,215 Merrimack Valley students in the 2023-24 school year, 633 were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch based on their family income. While 24.1% of students statewide were eligible, 28% of the students at Merrimack Valley were eligible.

Also in the 2023-24 school year, 522 students received special education services with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This was 23% of the 2,215 students, a bit more than the statewide average of 19.7%. Only 17 students were not native English speakers in 2023-24.

How Have Student Enrollments Changed Over Recent Years in Merrimack Valley?

Average Daily Membership in Residence (ADM/R) is one way enrollment is measured. It measures the number of public school students living in the district over the school year.

ADM/R has been in slow decline in New Hampshire in recent years, attributable to declining birth rates.

Between 2006-07 and 2023-24 students at Merrimack Valley declined from 2,650 in 2007 to 2,189¹ in 2024, a 9.77% decline.

What Has Been the High School Graduation Rate?

Merrimack Valley graduated 1,177 students in graduating classes from 2015 through 2021. The graduation rate over those seven years averaged 90%. This was higher than the state average of 88.9%.

Merrimack Valley ranked 39th among the 81 public high schools in New Hampshire, with the highest graduation rate being 1st and the lowest graduation rate 81st.

Figure 1

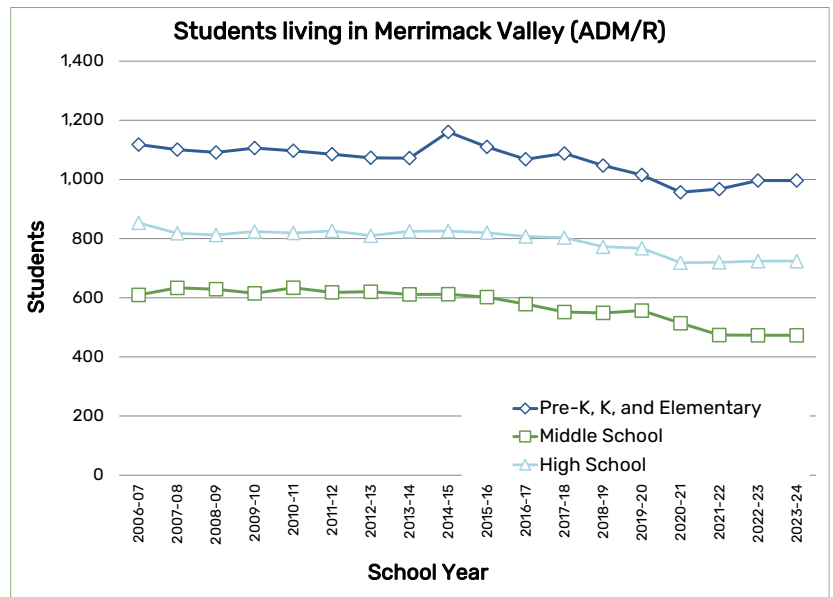
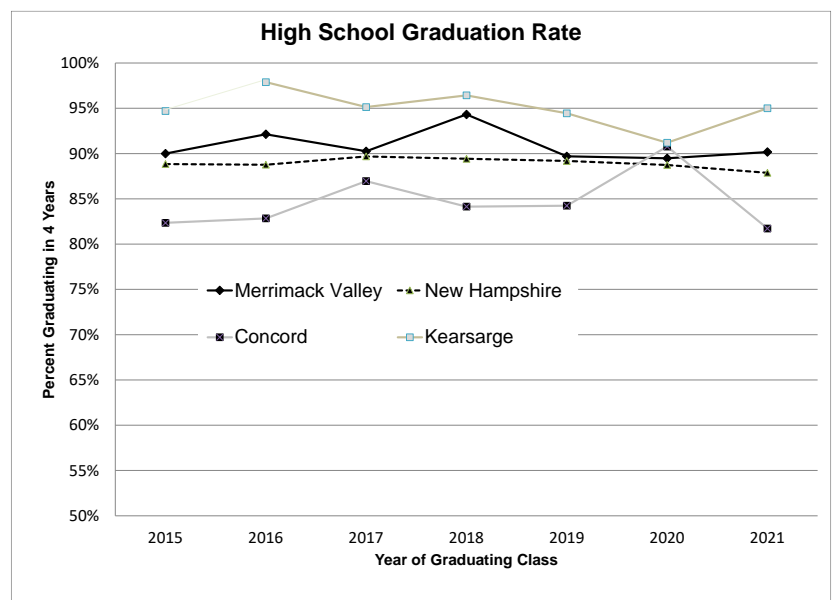


Figure 2



¹ This enrollment number is higher than the enrollment reported by the DOE. There are slight differences in Membership in Residence and Membership by Attendance.

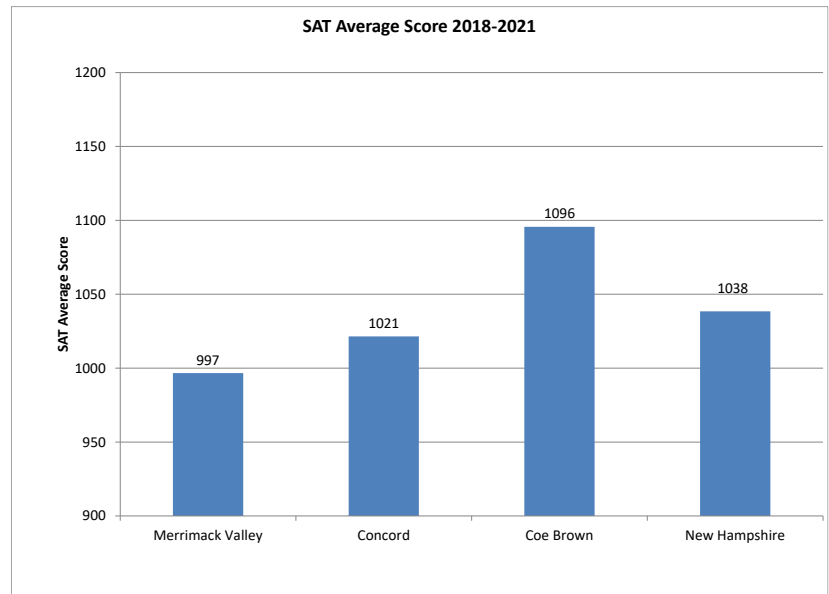


How Well Have Merrimack Valley Students Done on the Annual SAT Exam?

Figure 3

New Hampshire measures high school student achievement through the SAT, administered by the College Board. The exam consists of two sections: Mathematics and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, with combined scores ranging from 400 to 1600.

Between 2018 and 2021, 648 Merrimack Valley students took the SAT in their junior year, with an average score of 997, compared to the state average of 1038. Out of 79 public high schools, Merrimack Valley ranked 52nd. Over the same period, 806 juniors were enrolled at Merrimack Valley, with 19.6% of students untested. The average number of untested juniors is 12.2% statewide.



What Have Advanced Placement Results Been at Merrimack Valley?

The College Board administers Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 38 subjects every May, following standardized courses offered in high schools. While New Hampshire high schools are not required to provide AP courses or mandate that students take the corresponding exams, those who do take AP courses may opt to sit for the exam at the end of the year. AP courses and exams offer students the opportunity to earn college credit before entering college, potentially allowing them to bypass certain introductory courses.

AP exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Most colleges grant credit for scores of 3, 4, or 5, though some highly selective institutions may only accept scores of 4 or 5. Table 4 details AP exam results from 2018 to 2021

Table 4

| | 3 Year Exam Takers | 3 Year Exams | 3 Year Scores of 3, 4, or 5 | Takers as % of Enrollment | Exams per Taker | Scored 3+ as % of Exams | Scored 3+ per 100 enrollment |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Merrimack Valley | 115 | 168 | 117 | 4.7% | 1.5 | 69.64% | 4.8 |
| State | 22,966 | 36,355 | 25,108 | 10.62% | 1.58 | 69.06% | 11.61 |

Merrimack Valley students were less likely to take AP tests, but succeeded in the exams at the rate of the statewide average.



How Likely Are Students from Merrimack Valley to Apply, Earn Admittance, and Enroll at The University of New Hampshire?

The University of New Hampshire (UNH), the state's flagship public institution, is a common choice for college-bound seniors. The UNH Admissions Office provided data on applications, admissions, and enrollments from New Hampshire public high schools for freshman years 2017 through 2024. By aggregating years of data, small sample sizes and year-to-year fluctuations were minimized, providing a clearer picture, especially for smaller schools. To allow for comparisons across schools of varying sizes, senior-year enrollments were used as the basis for calculating the percentages of students who applied, were admitted, and ultimately enrolled at UNH.

Students often apply to multiple colleges, and even if accepted to UNH, many choose to attend other institutions. As a result, UNH offers admission to more students than will ultimately enroll. Between 2017 and 2024, 27.64% of New Hampshire public high school seniors applied to UNH. Of Merrimack Valley High School's seniors, 18.75% applied, and 82.81% of those were admitted. In total, 3.22% of Merrimack Valley seniors enrolled at UNH, lower than the statewide enrollment rate.

Table 5

| | 2017-2024 UNH Applications | 2017-2024 UNH Admissions | 2017-2024 UNH Enrollment | Application s as % of Enrollment | Admissions as % of Applications | Enrollment as % of 8 Year Senior Enrollment |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Merrimack Valley | 285 | 236 | 49 | 18.75% | 82.81% | 3.22% |
| State | 27,263 | 23,302 | 7,235 | 27.64% | 85.47% | 7.13% |

Note: Data used in this report are taken from reports, spreadsheets, and websites of the NH Department of Education, the University of New Hampshire, the College Board, and the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association. Graduation requirements and number of courses offered were collected from Programs of Study from 79 of the 81 New Hampshire public high schools.