

REACHING HIGHER NH

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Public Education in NH

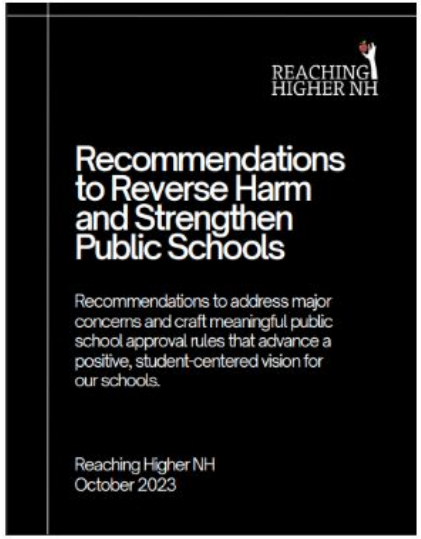
Alex Tilsley, Policy Director
September 2026

REACHING HIGHER NH

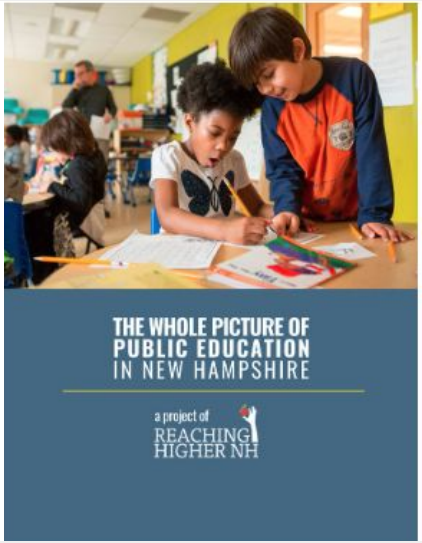
Granite Staters share a deeply-held conviction that public education is one of our state's most precious assets.

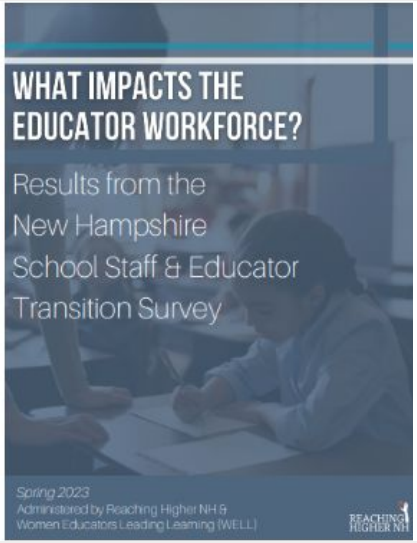
We believe:

- Strong public schools **benefit** students/families/communities/the state
- Public Schools bring **value** beyond education
- Public schools are **critical** to thriving communities and local economies
- Public schools provide the tools that help all students reach their full **potential**









UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION IN NH

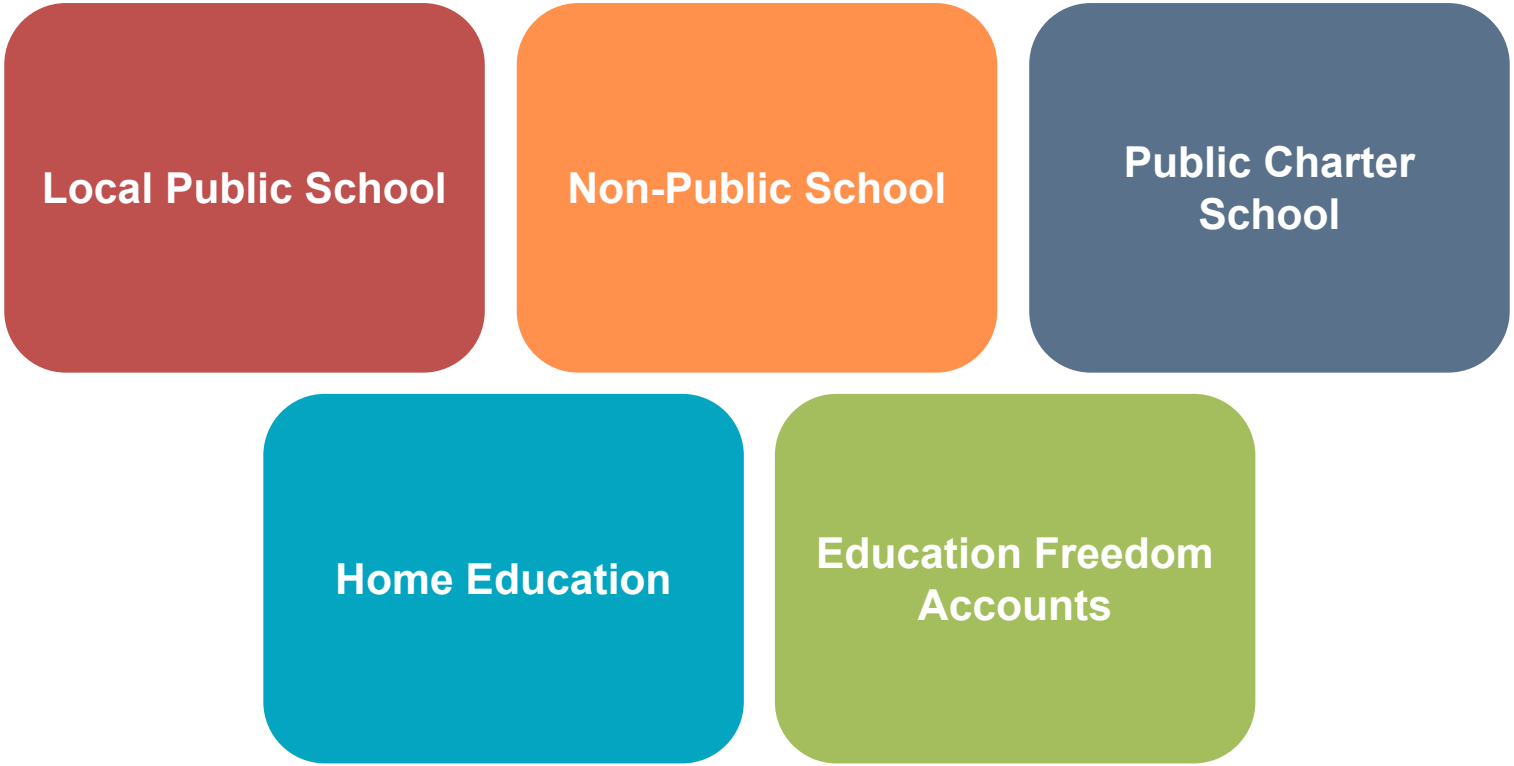


Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages

In NH, all children between the **ages of 6 to 18** , are required to participate in at least one educational pathway.

RSA 193:1

Educational Pathways



Local Public School

Traditional neighborhood school in the town or city you live in

- ✓ It is free.
- ✓ Any child in the attendance boundary has the right to attend.
- ✓ It is run by the local community.
- ✓ Teachers must meet state requirements.
- ✓ Special education services are available.
- ✓ Transportation provided.
- ✓ Funded by state, federal, and local sources.

Non-Public School

A private school (sometimes religious)

- ✓ It is NOT free.
- ✓ Families must apply to attend.
- ✓ School is privately run.
- ✓ It may have special rules or beliefs.
- ✓ Special education services may be limited or unavailable.
- ✓ Transportation may NOT be provided.
- ✓ Funded by tuition and private donations.

Public Charter School

A public school that may offer a different style of learning than the local public school

- ✓ It is free.
- ✓ Families must apply to attend but schools must have open admissions policies.
- ✓ School is run independently.
- ✓ It may have a special focus.
- ✓ Special education services are available.
- ✓ Transportation may NOT be provided.
- ✓ Funded by state and federal sources.

Home Education

When a child's education is designed and implemented by the family

- ✓ Families choose this option.
- ✓ Costs are covered by the family.
- ✓ Program built by families piece by piece.
- ✓ Families must follow state laws.
- ✓ Special education services may be limited.

Education Freedom Accounts

Money given to parents to pay for learning outside the public school

- ✓ Families choose this option.
- ✓ The state provides an average of **$5,200**.
- ✓ Additional costs are covered by the family.
- ✓ Expenses controlled by parents and program rules.
- ✓ Special education services and transportation are not guaranteed.
- ✓ Funded by the state.

GOING DEEPER ON VOUCHERS



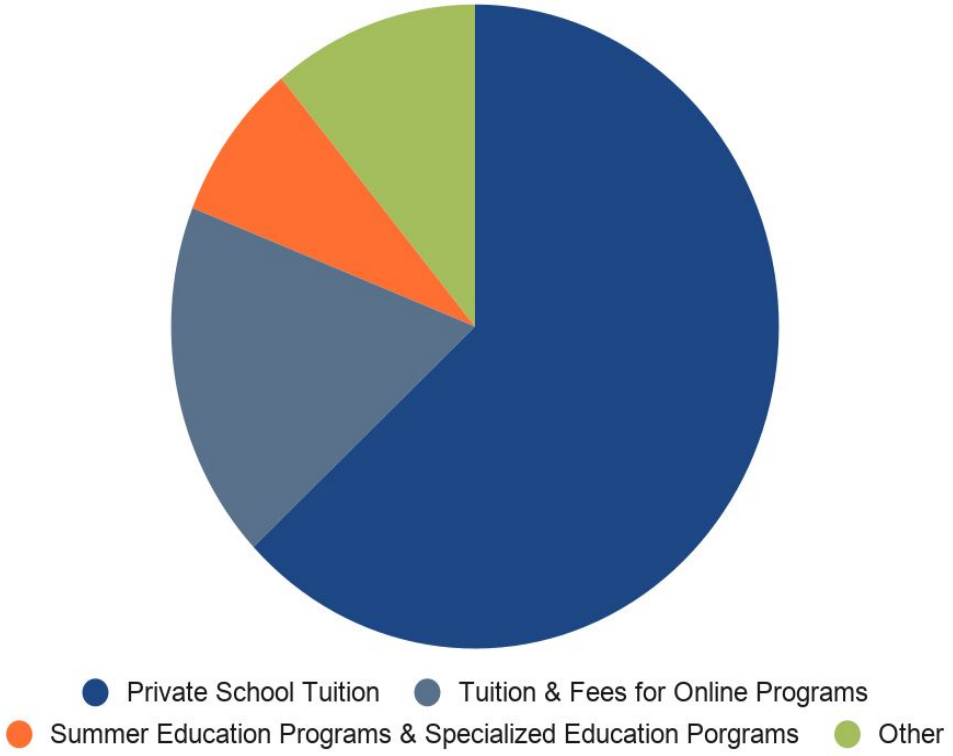
What are school vouchers?



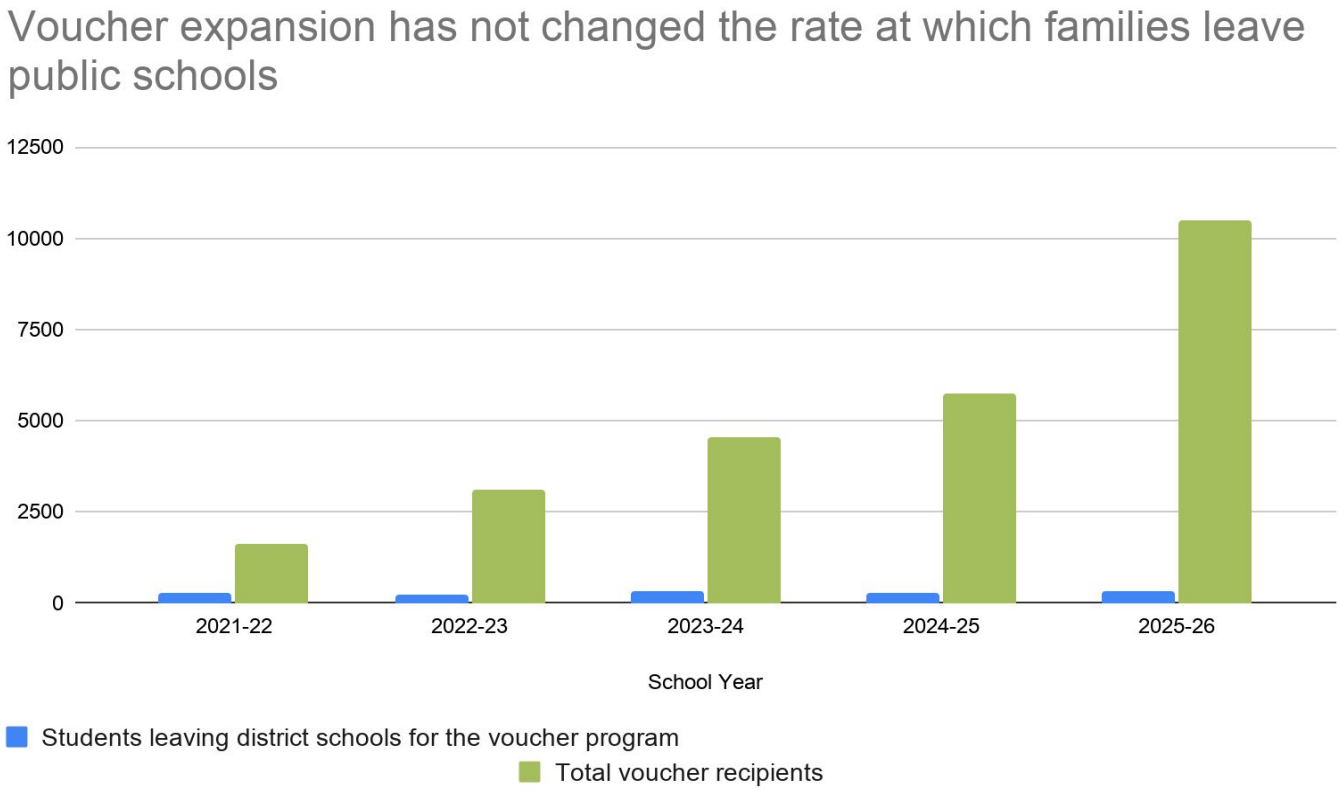
- Established in 2021
- Known as “Education Freedom Accounts” or EFAs
- Taxpayer-funded accounts that allow participating families to pay for:
  - private and religious school tuition
  - homeschooling expenses
  - other approved expenses
- Administered by Children’s Scholarship Fund

State Of The Program

- Enrollment open to anyone, but capped at 12,500 students for the 2026-27 school year
- Program is currently at capacity
- 1,000 students on the waitlist
- $50m in 2025-26 and is expected to exceed $60m next year



Who does the program serve?



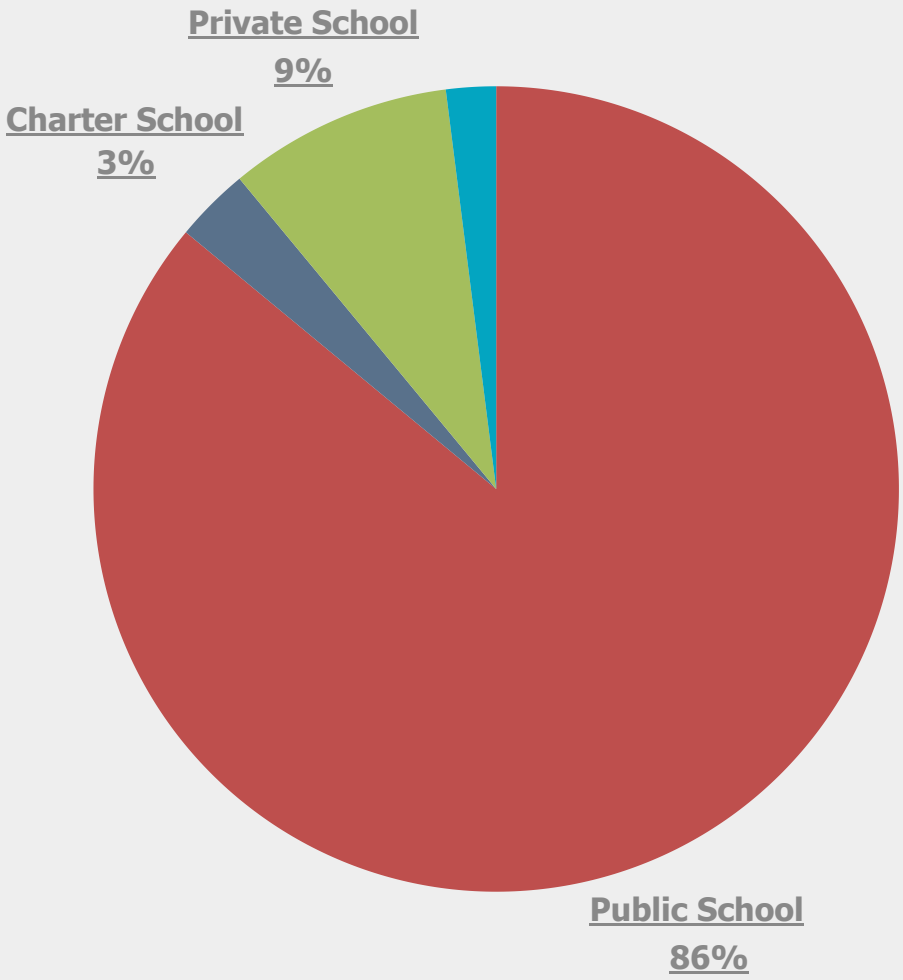
Granite State kids attend public school.

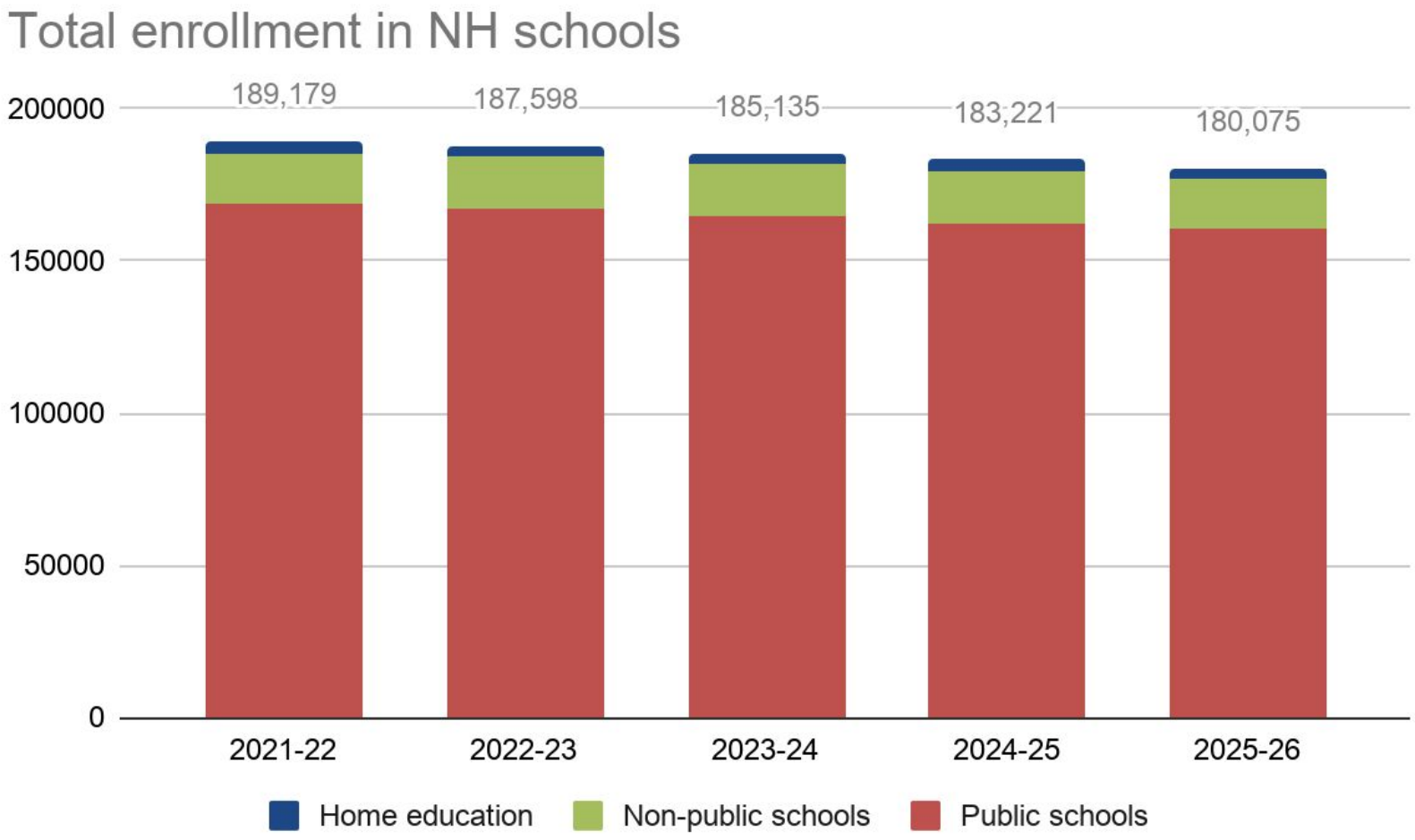
9 in 10 NH Students attend a District Operated or Public Charter School

451 District-Operated Public Schools
10 preschool / 293 elementary / 70 middle / 79 high

36 Public Charter Schools

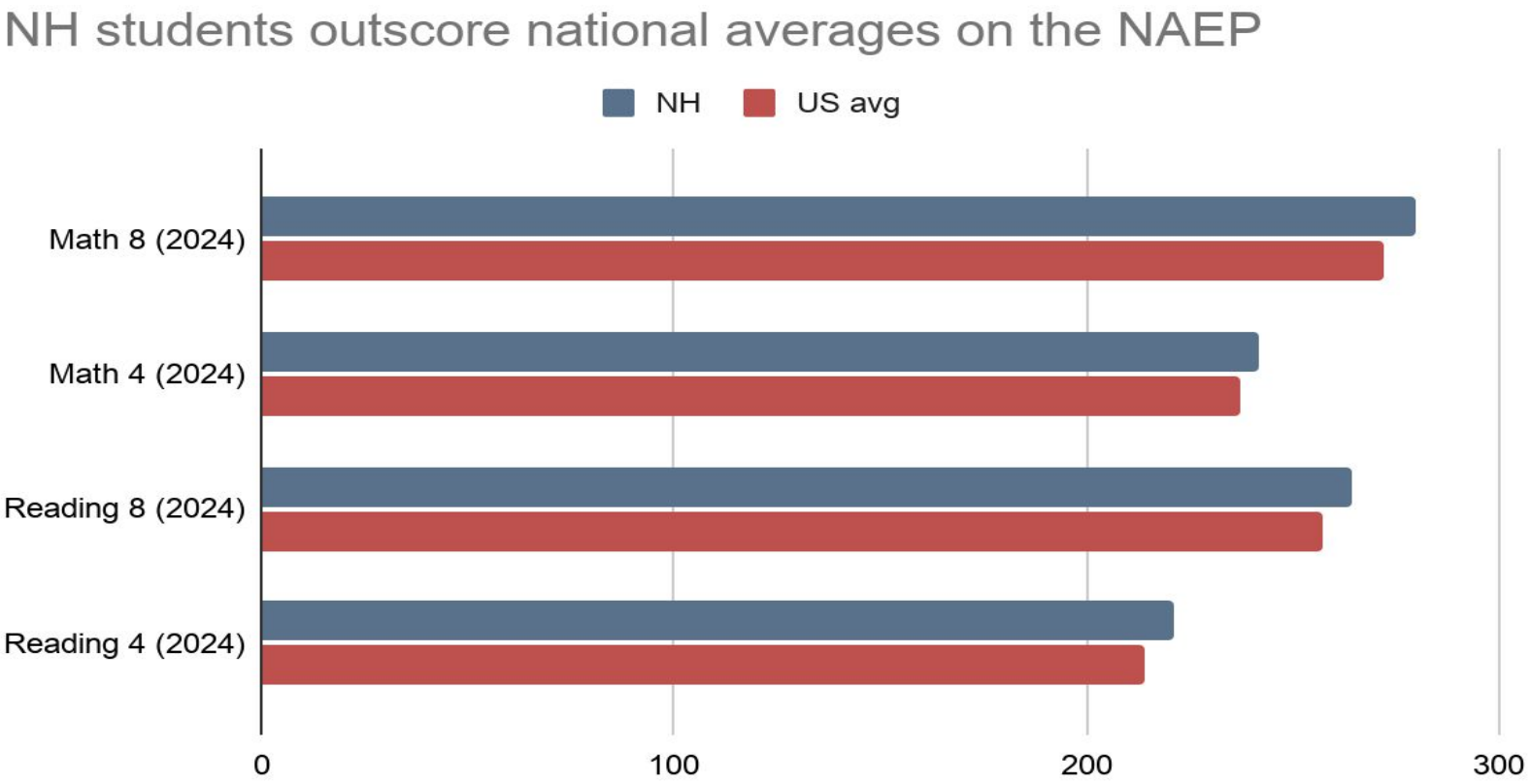
132 Private Schools




Total enrollment in NH schools
189,179
187,598
185,135
183,221
180,075
200000
150000
100000
50000
0
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
Home education
Non-public schools
Public schools

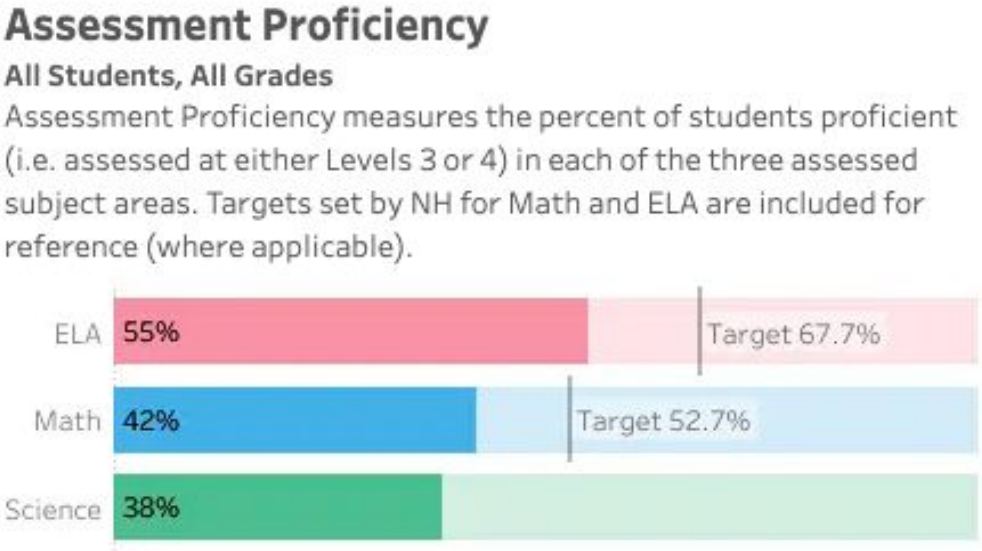

CHECKING IN ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Is it True?
25
LINCOLN STREET SCHOOL

Learning By The Numbers



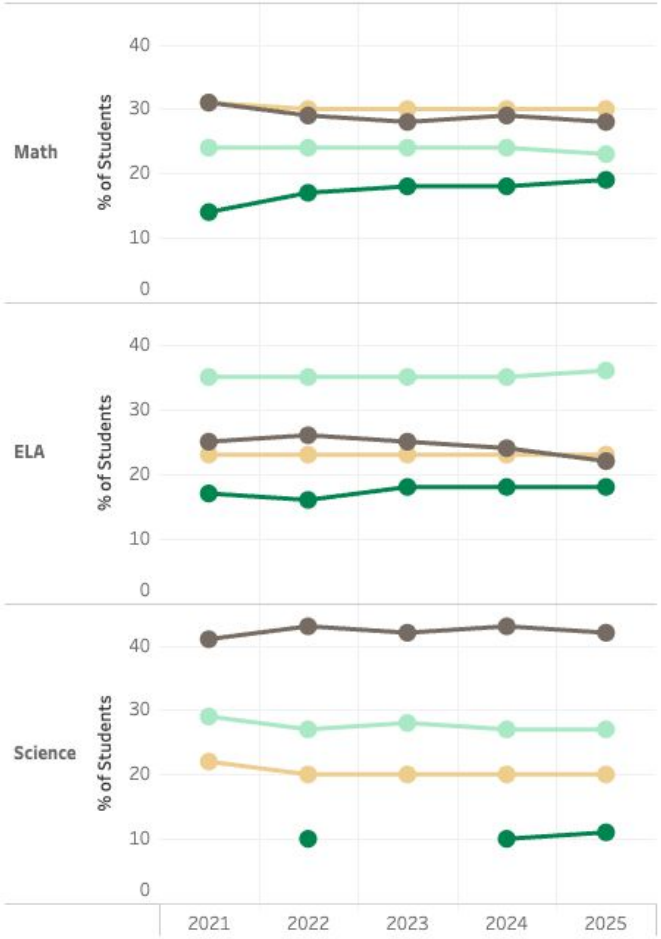
Statewide Assessment

GRADE	TEST
3	ELA, Math
4	ELA, Math
5	ELA, Math, & Science
6	ELA, Math
7	ELA, Math
8	ELA, Math, & Science
11	SAT: Math, Reading, & Writing Science



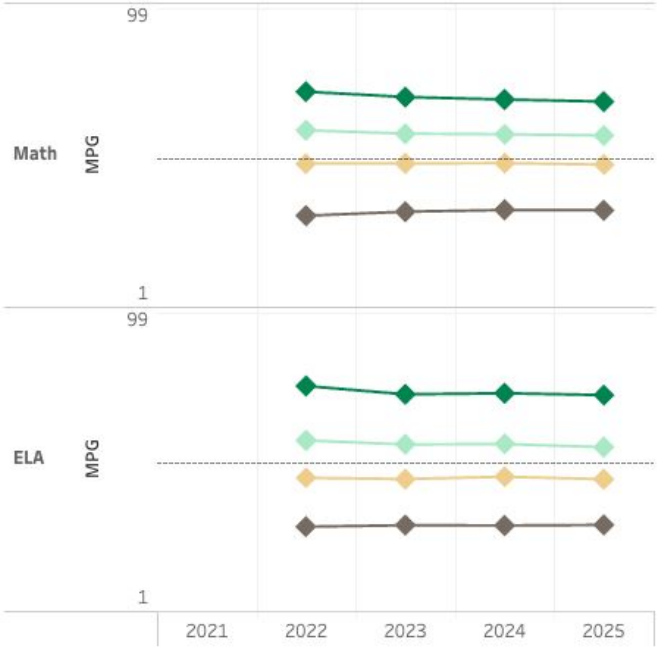
Achievement Levels Over Time

All Students, All Grades



Academic Growth (MPG) Over Time

All Students, All Grades





Understanding Students



Readiness to learn:
Research shows that students are better able to engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep learning when they feel safe, healthy, supported, and connected.

Inclusive opportunity:
Special education, language support, and accessible learning expand New Hampshire's talent pool.

Successful transitions:
Counseling, mentoring, and enrichment connect students to college, training, service, and careers.

High standards and strong instruction:
Every student has access to rigorous, engaging curriculum and high-quality learning materials

Needs Are Increasing

30%

50%

increase in the % of students

qualifying for school meals

between 2013 (20%) and 2024 (26%)

25%

increase in the % of students

receiving special education services

between 2013 (16%) and 2024 (20%)

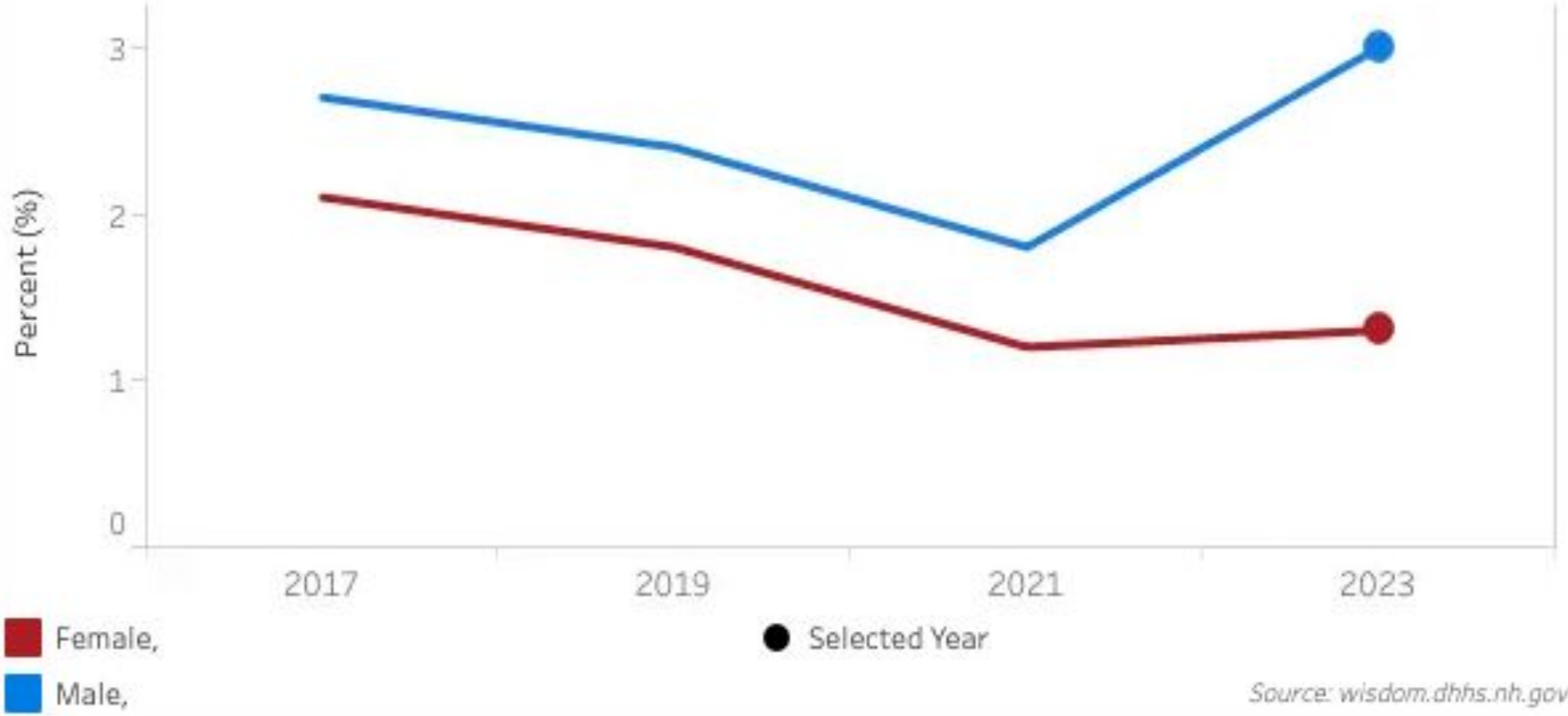
increase in the % of students

receiving ELL services

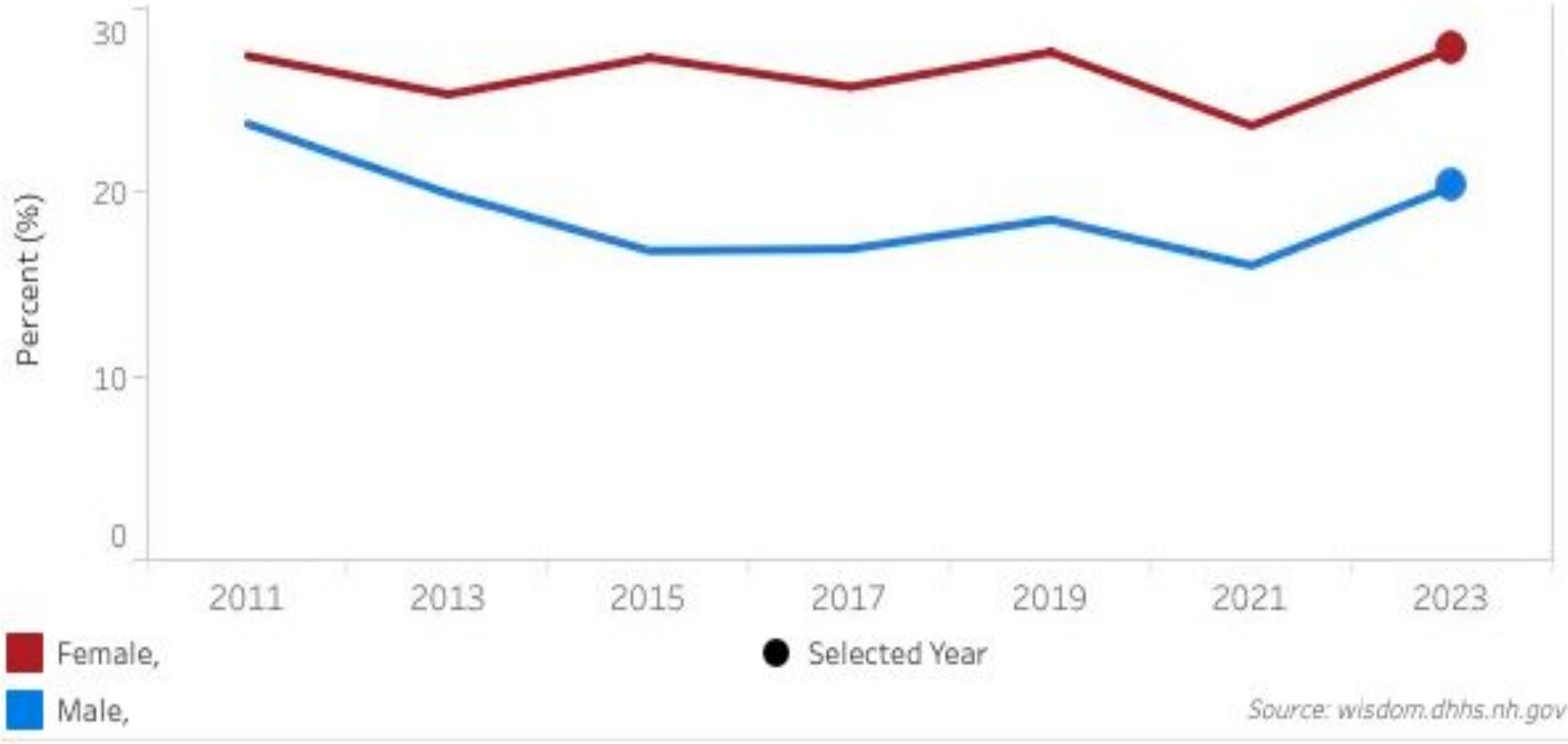
between 2013 (2%) and 2024 (3%)

Source: NH Department of Education

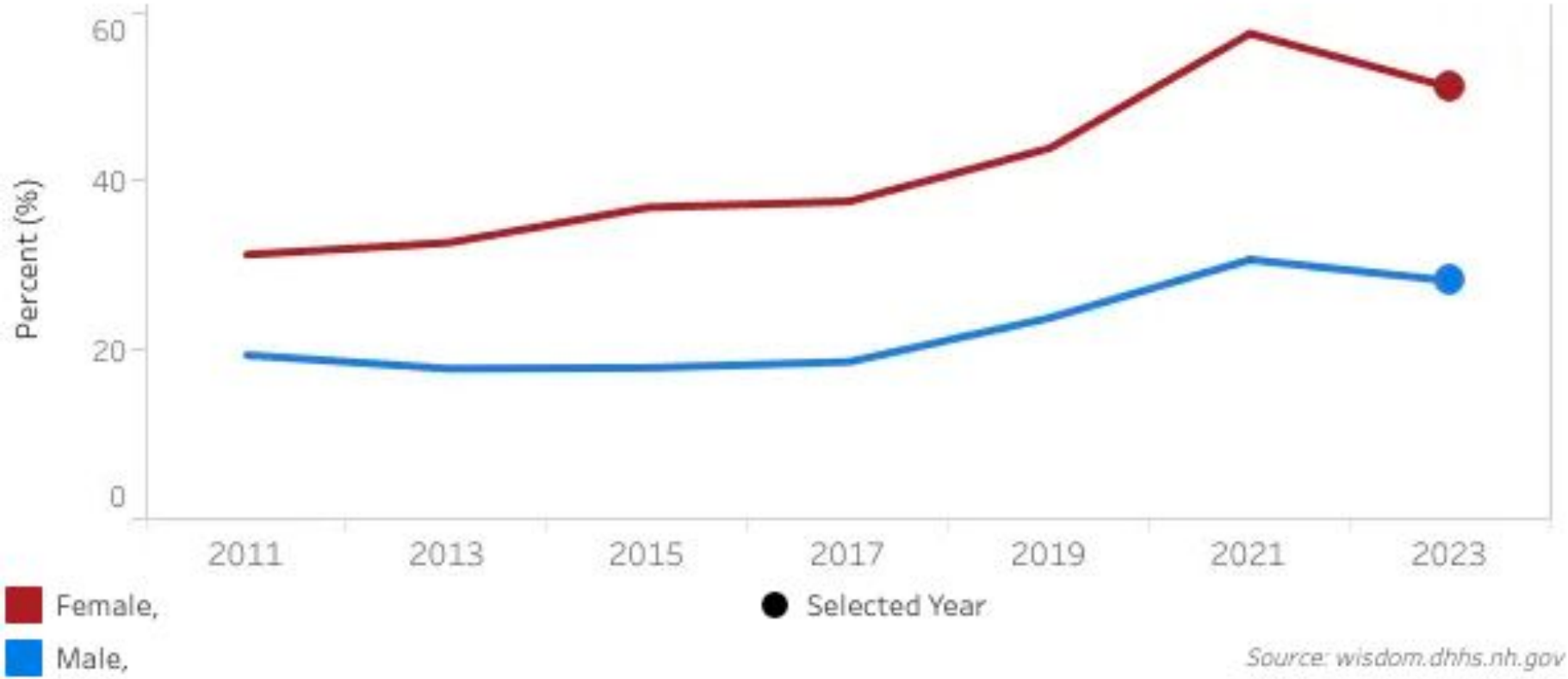
High school students: Experienced unstable housing (during the 30 days before the survey) by year; New Hampshire; Age group: All grades



High school students: Were bullied on school property during the past 12 months by year; New Hampshire; Age group: All grades

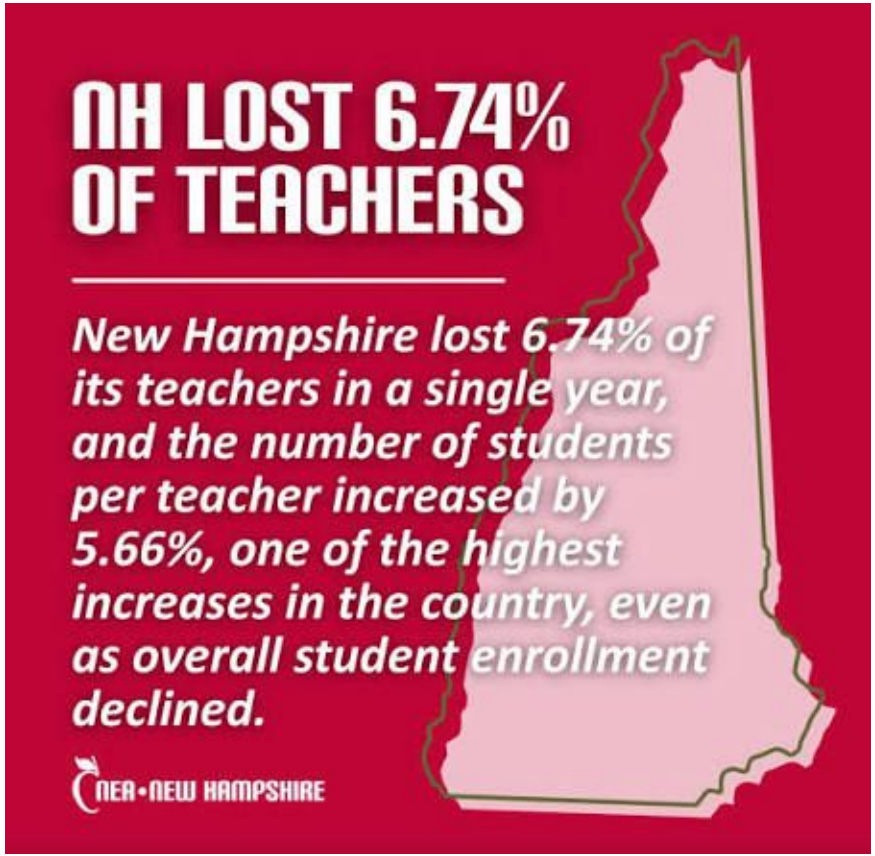


High school students: Felt sad or hopeless almost every day for >=2 weeks in a row and stopped doing usual activities by year; New Hampshire; Age group: All grades

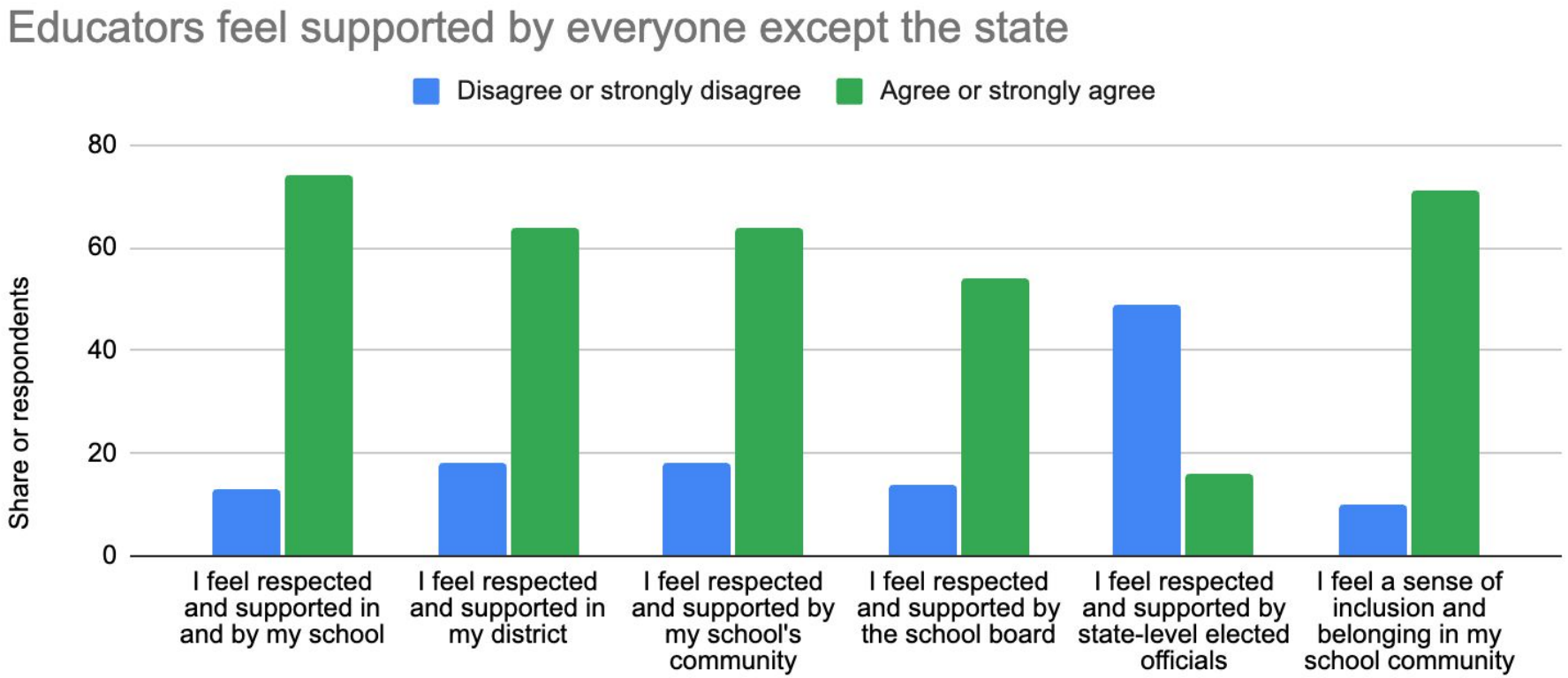


The Teaching Profession

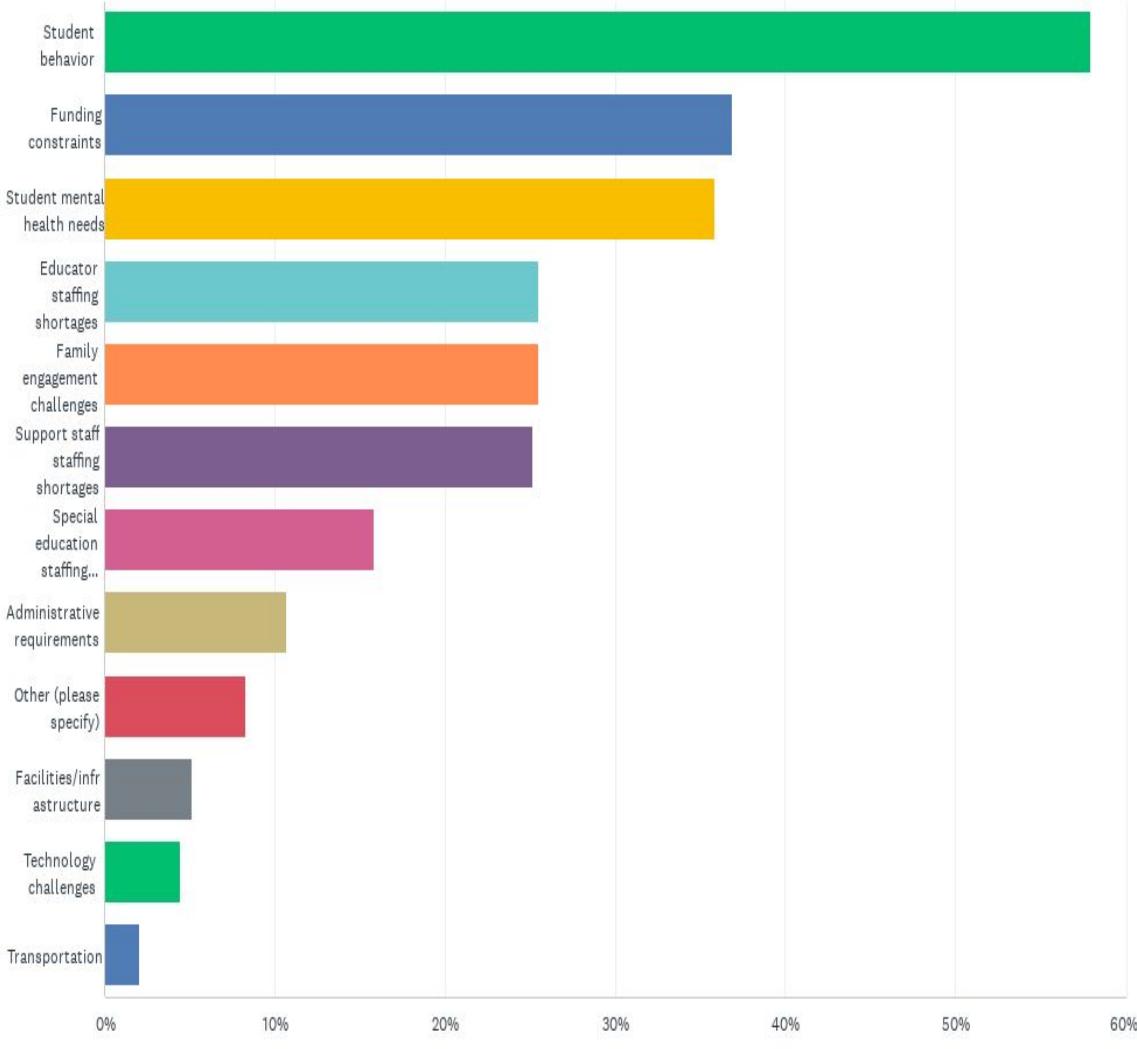
- Teacher **quality** is one of the strongest predictors of student success.
- Stability and **low teacher turnover** is one of the most consistent predictors of achievement growth.
- **Effective principals and superintendents** improve teacher retention, school culture, and academic performance.



How are teachers doing?



What limits their ability to provide a high-quality educational experience?



In Their Own Words

"Our students have many needs beyond the classroom and teachers are not trained to support them well and teach them well. **We can not be the one stop shop for students.** There needs to be more support systems for all students."

– Middle school teacher, Greater Concord

"State funding is the crux of all of this. Towns wouldn't be (as) pitted against schools and educators as we are seeing today if the State would hold up its constitutional duty to provide for an adequate education.... The entire system, as it stands, in **NH is so inequitable to the students, teachers, schools, AND community members.**"

– High school teacher, Greater Concord

"We are asked to teach a wider variety of classes and a wider variety of student needs than ever before. **There simply isn't enough time or energy** to meet the needs of every student, every administrator, and every parent."

— High school classroom teacher, Greater Concord

What do policy makers need to know?

1. One-size-fits-all policy creates unintended consequences.
2. Today's families are different.
3. Our schools are doing great things.


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QUESTIONS
& ANSWERS

REACHING HIGHER NH



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