Greenfield School Committee
Long-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2026

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1. Call to Order:
   The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair, Stacey Sexton (SS).

   SS read the Chair Statement relative to meeting recordings.

2. Roll Call of Members:
   Mckenzie Webb (MW)
   Mike Davis (MD)
   Derek Helie (DH)
   Liz Reno (LR)
   Amy Ehmann (AE)
   Doug Selwyn (DS)
   Rose Skriloff (RS)
   Stacey Sexton, Chair (SS)

   Absent: Elizabeth DeNeeve (ED), Isaac Mass (IM), Superintendent, Carol Kruser (CK)

3. Public Comment:
   There were no members of the public present (or via Zoom) for comment.

4. Approval of September 23, 2026 draft committee minutes:
   Due to audio and visual technical difficulties, minutes from the September 23, 2026 meeting are not available at this time. This agenda item will be postponed to a later date.

5. Presentation: Updated Enrollment Data:
   On a motion by DH, 2nd by DS, the sub-committee voted to suspend Robert's Rules of Order as to allow for an informal, decision-making discussion. The vote was unanimous.

6. Presentation: Long-term Enrollment Projections:
   A review of the enrollment data provided by Central Office ensued. CK noted NESDEC will prepare and provide our projected enrollments once our SIMS data is submitted at the end of the month, as scheduled.

7. Presentation: Building Conditions Update:
   The sub-committee reviewed documentation provided by member, DH relative to the status of our school buildings. (This is information he was able to compile after review of a prior meeting related to GPS Capital Projects, as presented by former Facilities Director, Mike Boudreau.)

   Topics provided for review:
   - School Name
   - Year Built
   - Trade/Project
   - Size (sf)
   - Unit Price
   - Age
   - Estimated Life
   - Estimated Cost

   Additional information to be obtained (included but not limited to):
   - Windows – Age, life span, estimated cost
   - Brick restoration
   - Floor replacement
   - Lighting
   - Restroom upgrades
   - GPS 5-Year Capital Plan, if available

   Member, Isaac Mass (IM) joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m.
   Superintendent, Carol Kruser (CK) joined the meeting at 6:12 p.m.
   Member, Elizabeth DeNeeve (ED) joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

DRAFT

8. Presentation: Long-term Fiscal outlook:
   Items discussed:
   - Configuration of our buildings
   - Building capacity
   - Options (space/financial) for bringing in programs to the high school to utilize the space, i.e. Pathways (examples):
     - Health Program (CNA and medical assistant licensures)
     - Education Program
     - Arts
     - Personal/Athletic Training
     - Computers/AI
     - Behavioral Health
     - Entrepreneurship
     - Industrial Arts
     - Culinary
     - STEM
     - CAD/3D Modeling
     - Critical Thinking
     - Elder Care
     - Sewing
     - Sustainable/Environmentally Friendly Agriculture, etc.
   - Enrollment/Acceptance rate at Franklin Tech
   - Early college grant awarded to GPS allowing our students to take classes at GCC for college credit
   - Future district reconfiguration/Future of our buildings

9. Discussion: What the Data Tells Us:
   A review of the following documents also ensued:
   - Current bus routes, specifically the number of elementary students riding the bus
   - Data tracking students who have left the district (due to a move out of City/Country, drop-out, etc.)

   Also discussed:
   - MSBA visit to walk us through our options, if any
   - Future discussion on regionalization
   - Future discussion on Community Schools model/cost
   - Future discussion on other model options

10. What is coming up from the prior meeting?:
    - Conversations with legislators relative to school building loan forgiveness, i.e. Green River School has been sitting for years because we are still paying down the debt on the loan and are not able to do anything with the building until paid – We would need someone to buy out the debt from us.)
    - Visit from MSBA to discuss options
    - Visit/Discussion on Community Schools
    - Current classroom structures/utilization of space
    - Day-to-day building maintenance costs
    - Annual building utility costs

11. Next Steps:
    This discussion was combined with the discussion that took place in agenda item #10.

12. Adjournment:
    On a motion by ED, 2nd by DH, the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Approved:

DRAFT

Greenfield School Committee
Long-Term Facilities Use Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2026

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1. Call to Order:
   The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by member, Mckenzie Webb (MW).

   MW read the Chair Statement relative to meeting recordings.

2. Roll Call of Members:
   Mckenzie Webb (MW)
   Mike Davis (MD)
   Derek Helie (DH)
   Liz Reno (LR)
   Amy Ehmann (AE)
   Doug Selwyn (DS)
   Rose Skriloff (RS), via Zoom

   Absent: Stacey Sexton, Chair (SS), Elizabeth DeNeeve (ED), Carol Kruser, Superintendent (CK)

3. Public Comment:
   There were no members of the public present (or via Zoom) for comment.

4. Approval of October 7, 2026 draft committee minutes:
   This agenda item was postponed to the next meeting date.

5. Review of most recent NESDEC (New England School Development Educational Council) Enrollment Projections, Five-Year Capital Plan, Facilities Data:
   - Enrollment Projections:
     - Enrollment is declining at an accelerated rate
     - Unchanged demographics over past 5 years throughout New England
     - Development/Impact on schools
   - Questions regarding the current NESDEC study:
     - Projections were pretty accurate (10%-20% margin) based on last study
     - Recommendation to include the chart of the number of students in each grade at each school (as included in the prior report) to assist in the discussion of how to utilize our space (DH offered to prepare a spreadsheet mirroring the information provided in the prior report.)
     - Correlation between the number of students per grade/capacity at each school/cost to maintain each school

6. Developing Questions for Guest Presenters:
   We have made future arrangements for speakers from MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) to provide us with policy, procedures, options, etc. relative to our buildings:
   - What are other districts doing state-wide relative to declining enrollment?
   - Do we commit to investing a large sum of money, then be given the recommendation to regionalize in the future?
   - Which cities/towns would regionalize with us?
   - How do we rectify the debt on Green River to open up funding for us in the future?

   It was the consensus of this sub-committee to conduct a preliminary discussion next month relative to which buildings may be targeted for possible reconfiguration. Early discussion is warranted as it relates to the budget process.

   It was also suggested by the members of this sub-committee to request tours of the elementary schools. Such tours could also be open to community members, parents, staff, etc., as many may not have had the opportunity to visit all our schools.

7. What is coming up from the prior meeting? :
   - Items discussed at this evening's meeting will need to be include on the December agenda
   - Do we have the most current 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan on file?
   - What projects have been completed, if any?

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8. Next Steps:
   Assign further research:
   - Request the most recent/complete 5-Year Capital Improvement/Maintenance Plan on file
   - Obtain floor plans for each elementary school
   - Conduct walkthroughs of the elementary schools

   December agenda:
   - Presentation – Grade configuration models
   - Discussion of best educational practices for Greenfield
   - Timeline and process check-in
   - Preliminary recommendation regarding future capital investments

9. Adjournment:
   On a motion by MW, 2nd by DH, the meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m. The roll call vote was unanimous.

Approved:

DRAFT

PRESENTATION TO THE GREENFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regionalization: A Primer

How school districts combine in Massachusetts, why they do it, and what we have learned from the Great River proposal.

Greg Snedeker
Vice Chair, Six Town Regionalization Planning Board
December 2, 2026

Fewer students, fewer opportunities, before the costs

How it happens

1. Fewer students in each grade
2. Courses fall below the minimum to run
3. Offered on paper, but not run
4. One section only, so courses collide in the schedule
5. Students must choose, and the losing course is cut next year

Courses
Advanced, AP and upper-level science, math and world languages are cut, combined or moved online

Electives
Fewer choices; mixed-level classes; less room for interest-driven learning

Teams
Too few players for varsity and JV; co-op teams with other schools; more travel

Clubs and activities
Fewer advisors and members; clubs and competitions fade out

Arts
Band, chorus, theater and studio art shrink or lose levels

Student support
Specialists, counselors and interventionists are shared or reduced

The result: fewer reasons for families to stay, more students choosing other schools, and enrollment falls further.

TONIGHT

A shared starting point, not a proposal

1. **Why regionalization is on the table**
   Enrollment trends in Greenfield, Gill-Montague and Franklin County
2. **More students, more opportunities**
   What a larger secondary program can offer
3. **The cost problem**
   Why fixed costs push per-pupil spending up as enrollment falls
4. **What the research says**
   Where scale savings are real, and where they are not
5. **How regionalization works**
   The legal paths, the regional agreement, and cost sharing
6. **Lessons from Great River**
   What the Great River vote taught us
7. **Possible next steps**
   A measured path from conversation to decision

A. **Appendix**
   Glossary, enrollment detail and sources

What this is
A common vocabulary, the research, the legal process, and honest lessons from a real vote

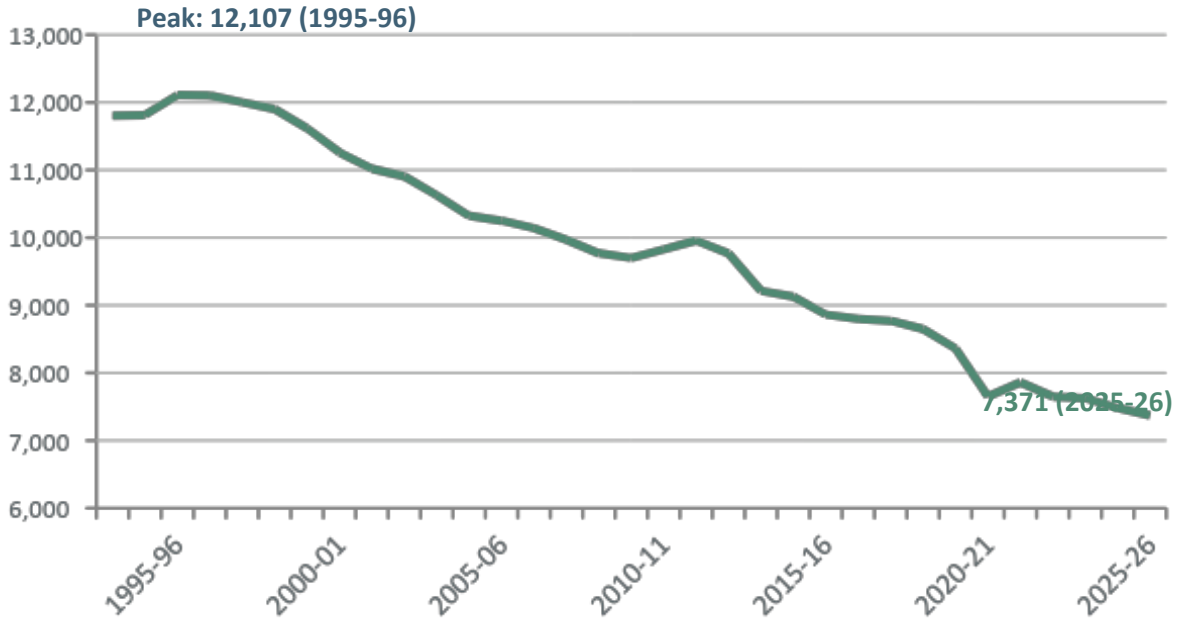
What this is not
A recommendation for Greenfield, or a financial model of a Greenfield and Gill-Montague merger

01

Why regionalization is on the table

Franklin County's public schools have about 40% fewer students than at their mid-1990s peak

County enrollment is down 39% from its peak



-39%

12,107 to 7,371 students, about 4,700 fewer

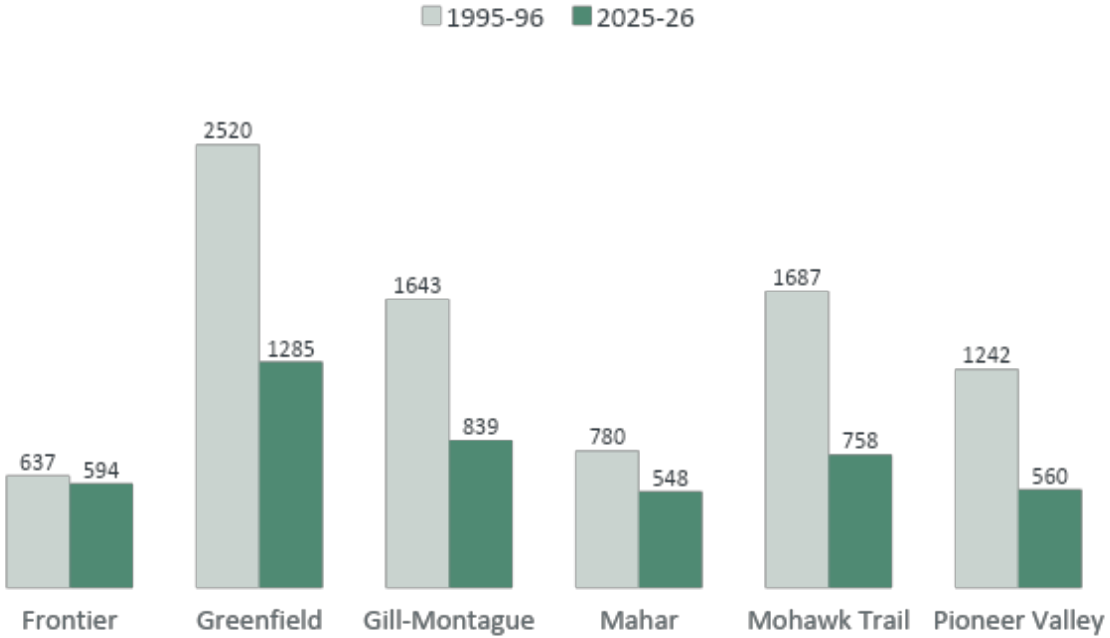
-41%

Grades K-12 only: 11,634 to 6,906 students

Source: DESE enrollment by grade, all public districts based in Franklin County plus Four Rivers Charter, 1993-94 to 2025-26.

ENROLLMENT, 1995-96 TO 2025-26

Six Franklin County districts lost 46% of their students



-46%

8,509 to 4,584 students across the six districts

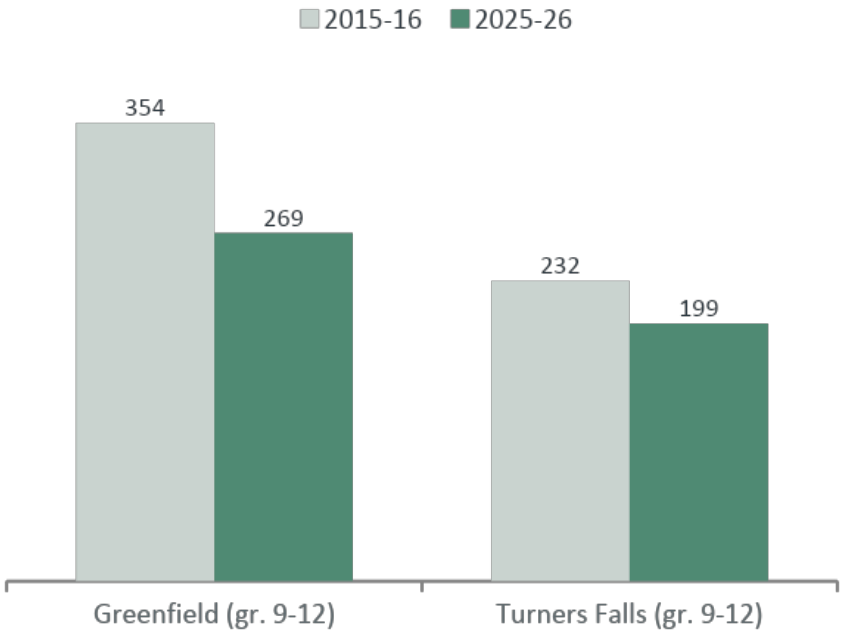
-49%

Greenfield and Gill-Montague each lost about half their students

Source: DESE School and District Profiles, district enrollment, 1995-96 and 2025-26.

THE LAST TEN YEARS

High schools are smaller, and still shrinking



1,641 to 1,285
Greenfield district enrollment, -22%

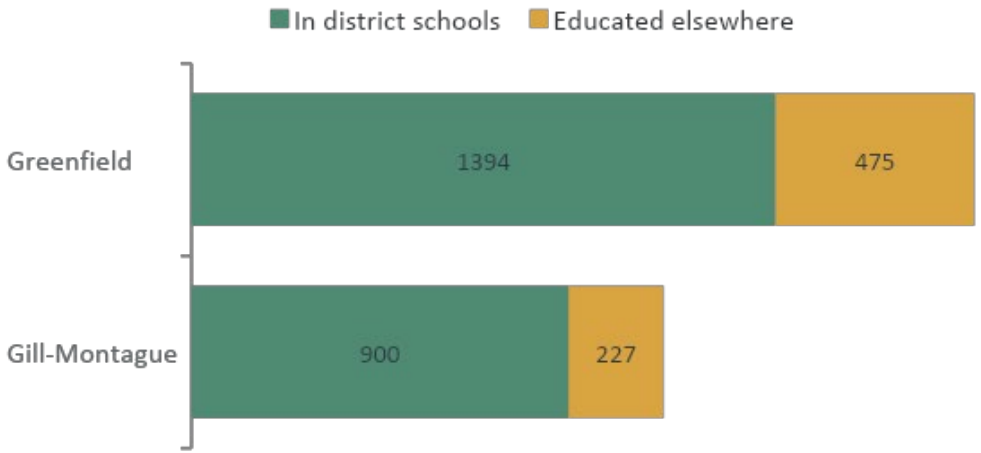
947 to 839
Gill-Montague district enrollment, -11%

468
Students in grades 9-12 across both districts today

Source: DESE enrollment by grade, 2015-16 and 2025-26. Greenfield High also enrolls grade 8 (94 students in 2025-26), not shown.

WHO THE DISTRICT PAYS FOR

A quarter of Greenfield's students learn elsewhere



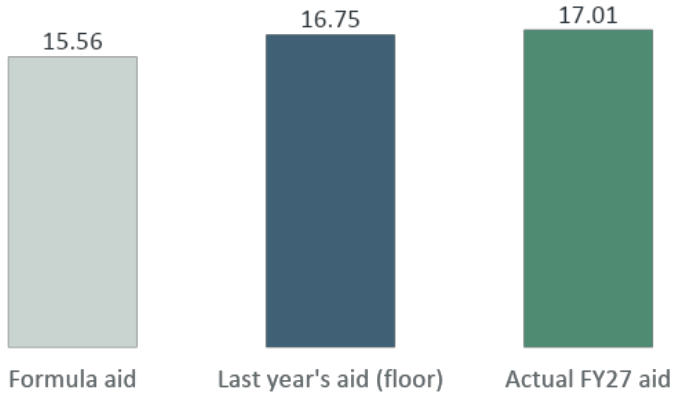
25%
of Greenfield's pupil FTEs

20%
of Gill-Montague's pupil FTEs

"Educated elsewhere" includes school choice, charter schools, special education placements and other tuitioned students. Every student who leaves takes revenue, but most of the building's costs stay behind.

Source: DESE per-pupil expenditure report, FY2024: in-district pupil FTEs vs. total pupil FTEs.

State aid is frozen, but choice costs are real



Greenfield is in hold-harmless: the formula gives $1.19M less than last year, so the state holds aid at last year's level plus $160 per pupil.

1 **Choice students still count in Greenfield's enrollment**
but the state deducts about $5,000 each (plus special education) from Greenfield's aid. FY26: 292 students out ($2.78M), 54 in ($0.49M).

2 **Students gained or lost barely move aid**
In hold-harmless, each student changes aid by only $160. Each choice student who leaves costs about $5,000 Greenfield actually has.

3 **Getting out of hold-harmless will take approximately 70 to 125 more students.**
Greenfield is losing about 55 a year, and births and an aging population keep pulling enrollment down.

The reality: enrollment will not bring more state aid. Relief has to come from the cost structure.

Source: DESE FY27 final Chapter 70 (Aid436, Greenfield); DESE FY26 school choice tuition; M.G.L. c.76 s.12B.

02

More students, more opportunities

The strongest reason to regionalize is what students can access

WHAT A LARGER PROGRAM CAN OFFER

Enrollment determines the range of opportunities

Courses

Required sequences, advanced courses and electives that a small class cannot sustain

Activities

Teams, clubs and performing groups with enough students to field them

Teachers

More colleagues per subject, more room to specialize, easier recruiting

Support

Fuller in-house special education, counseling and intervention programs

Below roughly 200 students, a high school's offerings fall faster than its enrollment. Money alone cannot create a full class.

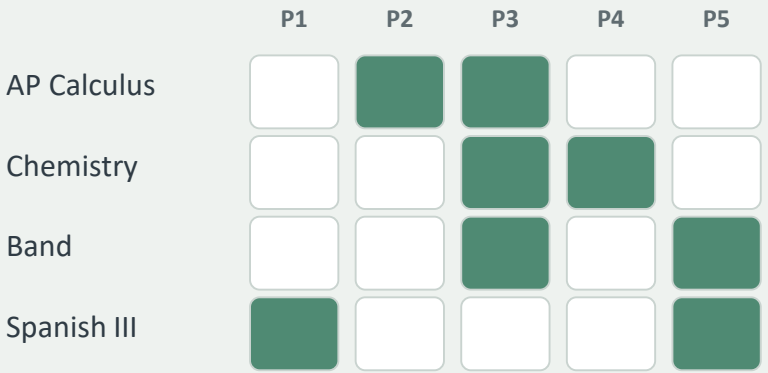
One section per course forces students to choose

Small school: one section each



Three singleton courses land in the same period. A student who wants all three can only take one.

Larger school: two sections each



With two sections of each course, the same student can fit every class into a schedule.

03

The cost problem

Fewer students do not mean proportionally lower costs

Fixed costs do not shrink when enrollment does

Buildings
Heat, maintenance, custodians and insurance

School leadership
A principal, office staff and a guidance team per school

Required courses
Every graduation requirement needs a teacher, whatever the class size

Transportation
Routes cover the same roads with fewer riders

Central office
A superintendent, business office and director roles per district

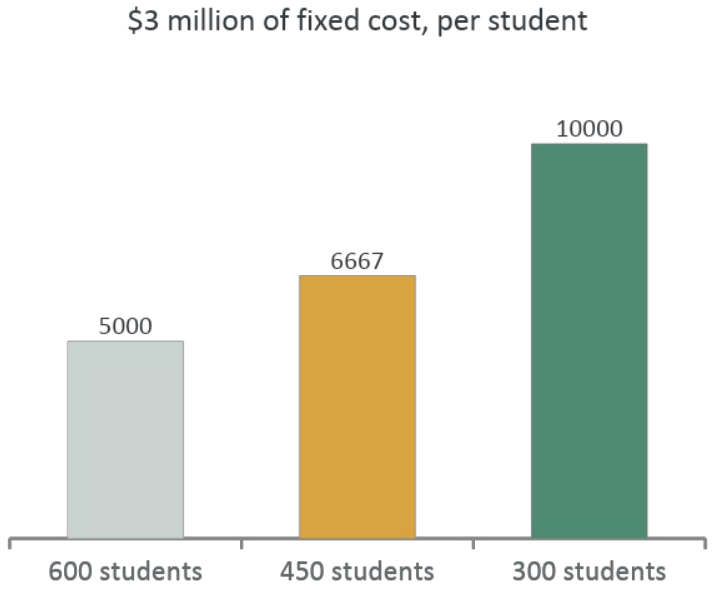
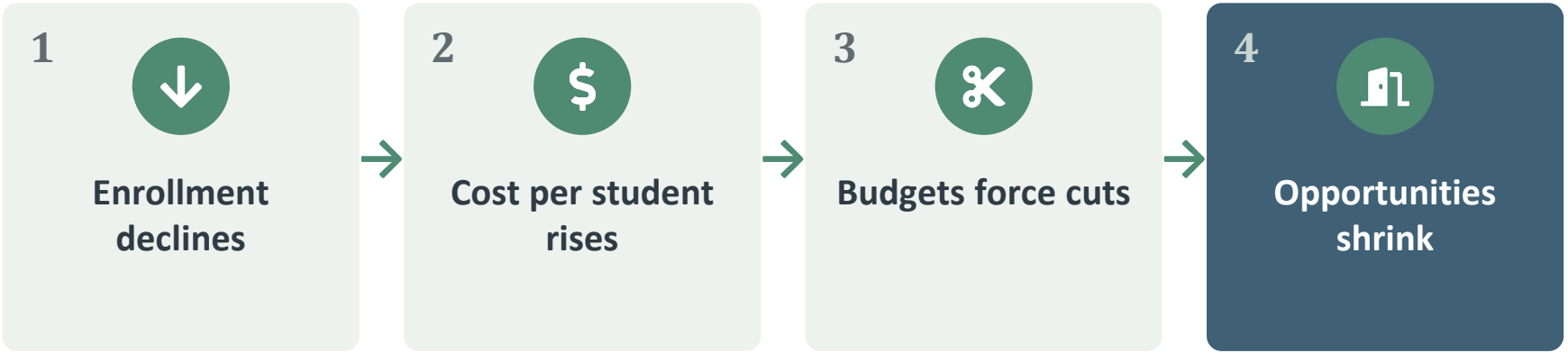


Illustration only: the same fixed cost spread over fewer students.

Enrollment Decline feeds on itself



...and families leave for programs elsewhere, which starts the cycle again. Each round makes the next one harder to escape. Additional funding can slow the cycle, but it cannot create students.

The pressure is greatest in middle and high school

Most flexible

Elementary

Costs can follow enrollment fairly closely: one classroom teacher per class, classes can be combined or split.

Less flexible

Middle school

Subject specialists begin. Each subject needs a qualified teacher even with small sections.

Least flexible

High school

Graduation requirements, specialists, electives, labs and athletics are needed no matter how few students enroll.

Local finding: over 19 years (inflation-adjusted), each 10% drop in enrollment raised high school per-pupil cost about 5% at Pioneer Valley and about 3% at Gill-Montague.

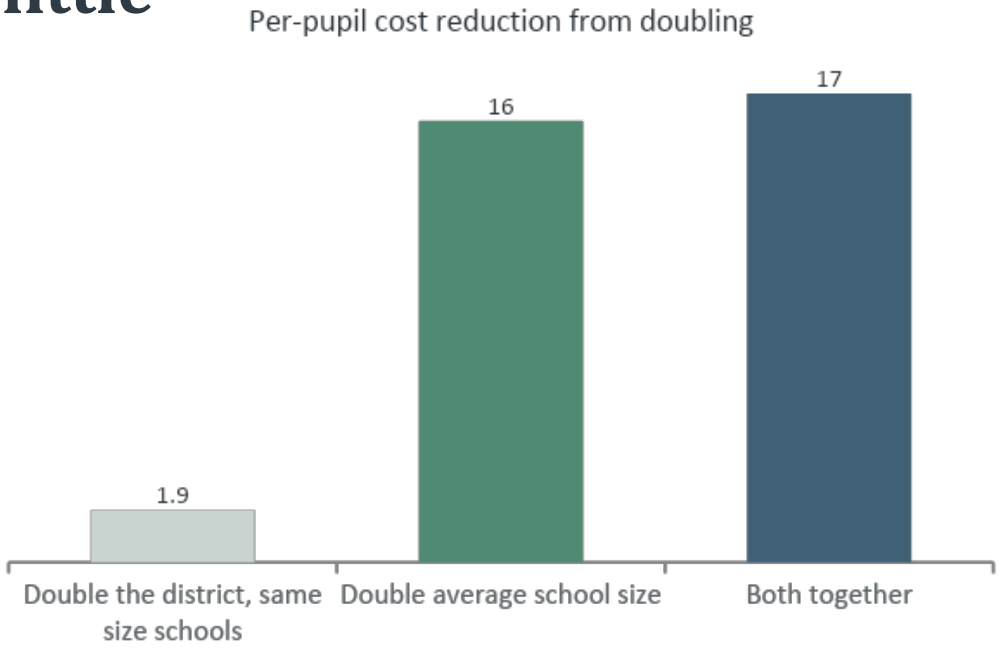
04

What the research says

Savings come from combining students (increased school enrollment), tax bases (per taxpayer cost), and less from consolidating district Central Office.

SCHOOL SIZE VS. DISTRICT SIZE

Bigger schools save money. Bigger org charts save little



Utah study, 40 districts

Chakraborty, Biswas and Lewis (1996)

A 10% larger average school lowered per-pupil cost about 2.5%. A 10% larger district, with the same size schools, lowered it only 0.2% to 0.3%.

The authors' conclusion: district mergers save little unless average school size increases at the same time.

Source: Chakraborty, Biswas and Lewis, Economic Research Institute Study Paper 96-45, Utah State University.

SMALL DISTRICTS GAIN THE MOST

Scale savings are largest for the smallest districts

-31.5%

per-pupil cost when a 300-pupil district doubles

-14.4%

when a 1,500-pupil district doubles

What this means for a Greenfield and Gill-Montague conversation

- The savings from doubling shrink as a district grows. Combined, Greenfield and Gill-Montague would have about 2,100 students, so district-wide scale savings would be smaller than for the six small towns in the Great River plan.
- The clearest opportunity is at the secondary level, where each high school is small on its own (269 and 199 students in grades 9-12).
- These are national estimates. A real study would use local budgets, buildings and staffing.

Source: Duncombe and Yinger (2007), as cited in the 2022 Massachusetts Special Commission on Rural Schools report.

Where the savings and the value come from

NEAR TERM

Central office

One superintendent, one business office, one set of directors. In the Great River plan, about $2.27 million of current central office salaries became a $1.37 million combined office: about $894,000 a year.

LONG TERM

Combining secondary students

Fuller classes free teacher time to add courses: more student opportunities for the same tax dollar. Great River valued this at about $1.7 million a year (range $1.5 to $2.2 million).

NOT SAVINGS

Shifting who pays

A new cost-sharing formula changes who pays, not the total. A larger tax base spreads each cost, so taxpayers get more for the same dollar. Transition costs offset part of the gains.

The heart of economies of scale: a merger doesn't just spread today's costs. It means future enrollment declines hurts less, both in dollars and in what students lose.

Great River figures are shown as worked examples, not estimates for Greenfield and Gill-Montague. Sources: GRRSD Long-Range Plan (2026); STRPB analysis.

05

How regionalization works

In Massachusetts: the legal paths, the regional agreement, and how costs are shared

THE OPTIONS

Three ways districts can work together

A

Join an existing region

Greenfield could join a district (ex. Gill-Montague Regional School District) through an amendment to its regional agreement. The regional school committee drafts the amendment, members approve it, and the Commissioner gives final approval.

603 CMR 41.03

B

Form a new region

Each community forms a planning committee, the committees form a planning board, and the board writes a new regional agreement that each community votes to accept.

M.G.L. c.71, §§14-15

C

Partial or shared steps

A region for some grades only (Frontier and Mahar are grades 7-12 regions), or shared administration, services or tuition agreements while districts stay separate.

Lighter steps, smaller gains

From planning committee to a new district

1 Planning committees

Each community appoints a 3-member committee, including a school committee member

2 Planning board

The committees join to form a Regional School District Planning Board

3 Study and draft

The board studies options and drafts a regional agreement and long-range plan

4 DESE review

The Department reviews the draft before it goes to the communities

5 Local votes

Each community votes to accept; a majority is needed in each one

6 Commissioner approval

The Commissioner approves, a transition period begins, and the district opens July 1

Sources: M.G.L. c.71, §§14, 14B, 15; 603 CMR 41.00. Admitting a member to an existing region follows the amendment path instead (previous slide).

What every regional agreement must spell out

School committee

Size, makeup, how members are chosen, terms

School locations

Where schools will be located

Cost sharing

How operating and capital costs are divided, and when paid

Transportation

How students get to school and who pays

Joining and leaving

Terms for admitting or withdrawing a member

Amendments

How the agreement itself can be changed

Budget process

How the annual budget is prepared and adopted

Anything else

For example, rules on school closures

Source: M.G.L. c.71, §14B. Great River examples: 13-member committee, assessments on a 5-year rolling average of enrollment, explicit closure language.

TIMING

Deadlines are set by the fiscal year

The Great River timeline



July 1 start, December 31 deadline
A new or expanded district starts on July 1. Every approval, including the Commissioner's, must be in place by the December 31 before.

A transition period
The new regional committee can hire staff and sign contracts while the current committees keep running the schools.

Source: 603 CMR 41.03 (as amended September 30, 2025); GRRSD regional agreement.

COST SHARING

How a regional budget becomes each community's bill

Regional budget — **minus Chapter 70 state aid** — **minus other revenue** — **= Member assessments**

Other revenue includes state regional transportation reimbursement, grants and choice tuition.

1. Required local contribution

The state sets each member's minimum contribution from its own property and income wealth. Joining a region does not change that formula.

2. Everything above the minimum

Split by the method the regional agreement chooses, usually enrollment-based. Great River used a 5-year rolling average of enrollment.

What would be new with a city as a member

Representation

Greenfield's population (about 17,800) is larger than Montague (about 8,600) and Gill (about 1,550) combined. Seats or weighted votes must reflect population fairly.

Who votes to accept

The statute is written for towns, and state law reads "town" to include a city. The city's exact approval steps should be confirmed with DESE and the city solicitor.

Budget approval

Today the City Council appropriates Greenfield's school budget directly. In a region, the council would act on an assessment set by the regional school committee.

State aid effects

Each member keeps its own required contribution, but combined Chapter 70 aid, hold-harmless effects and choice and charter flows need to be modeled.

Sources: 2020 U.S. Census; M.G.L. c.4, §7 (clause 34); Greenfield mayor-council charter (2003).

06

Lessons from Great River

A vote decided by 13 ballots out of more than 3,700

OCTOBER 6, 2026

Gill and Montague voted yes; four towns voted no

Town	Yes	No	% Yes	Result
Montague	980	525	65.1%	Yes
Gill	279	107	72.3%	Yes
Leyden	106	114	48.2%	No
Bernardston	187	321	36.8%	No
Northfield	278	643	30.2%	No
Warwick	49	182	21.2%	No
Six towns	**1,879**	**1,892**	**49.8%**	

13 votes

separated yes and no across all six towns

A majority in every town

Under the law, the total does not decide. Each member community must vote yes on its own.

Unofficial results, October 6, 2026.

WHAT WE LEARNED

What Great River taught us

What voters asked about most

- Are the savings real, and for which town?
- Is enrollment decline permanent?
- Will our school close?
- Longer bus rides
- Athletics: eligibility and roster spots
- Local control and our town's voice

What we would do earlier

- Publish per-community cost figures early, with sources
- Keep a living FAQ that answers claims within days
- Put building and program commitments in plain language
- Lead with students' opportunities, then cost
- Engage families and staff from the first meeting

07

Possible next steps

A measured path from conversation to decision

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

A measured path from conversation to decision

Talk together

A joint meeting of the Greenfield and Gill-Montague school committees to agree on the question

Choose the scope

Full K-12 region, a secondary-only region, or shared services

Consult DESE early

Confirm the legal path, the city's approval steps and the timeline

Commission a study

Enrollment projections, building capacity, staffing, and costs for each community

Engage the public

Families, staff and taxpayers from the first meeting, not the last

Decide

Committee, council and town votes once the facts are in hand

FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for the Committee

- What problem would regionalization solve for Greenfield students?
- Which grades are worth studying: K-12, secondary only, or shared services?
- What would Greenfield need to see in the numbers to move forward?
- What must stay local, and what commitments would families need?
- What timeline makes sense for the city and for both districts?

Thank you

Questions and follow-up are welcome

Greg Snedeker
Vice Chair, Six Town Regionalization Planning Board

A

Appendix

Reference material for questions

APPENDIX

Glossary of school finance terms

Chapter 70	The state's main school aid program, based on a foundation budget for each district
Foundation budget	The state's estimate of what an adequate education costs for a district's students
Required local contribution	The minimum a community must pay toward schools, based on its property and income wealth
Net school spending	The legal minimum a district must spend: state aid plus required local contribution. A floor, not a ceiling.
Assessment	The amount each member community pays a regional district each year
Per-pupil expenditure (PPE)	Total spending divided by students. In-district PPE counts only students in the district's own schools.
Hold harmless	Chapter 70 rules that keep a district's aid from falling when enrollment drops
Regional agreement	The legal document that sets how a regional district is governed and funded

APPENDIX

Six-district enrollment detail

District	1995-96	2025-26	Change	% change
Frontier	637	594	-43	-7%
Greenfield	2,520	1,285	-1,235	-49%
Gill-Montague	1,643	839	-804	-49%
Mahar	780	548	-232	-30%
Mohawk Trail	1,687	758	-929	-55%
Pioneer Valley	1,242	560	-682	-55%
Total	**8,509**	**4,584**	**-3,925**	**-46%**

Source: DESE School and District Profiles, enrollment data. 1995-96 is DESE's fiscal year 1996.

APPENDIX

Sources

- DESE School and District Profiles: enrollment and enrollment by grade (1995-96, 2015-16, 2025-26); per-pupil expenditures (FY2024)
- Chakraborty, K., Biswas, B., and Lewis, W.C. (1996). Economies of Scale in Public Education: An Econometric Analysis. Utah State University, Study Paper 96-45
- Duncombe, W. and Yinger, J. (2007), as cited in the Massachusetts Special Commission on Rural Schools report (2022)
- M.G.L. c.71, §§14, 14B, 15 (regional school district planning, agreements and acceptance); M.G.L. c.4, §7 (definitions)
- 603 CMR 41.00, Regional School Districts (amended September 30, 2025)
- Office of the State Auditor (2017). Supporting Student and Community Success: Updating the Structure and Finance of Massachusetts Regional School Districts
- Great River Regional School District Long-Range Plan (April 2026) and regional agreement; Six Town Regionalization Planning Board analyses
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census population counts



FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

A Holistic Vision for Public Education in Massachusetts

Community schools are public schools that partner with community organizations to provide integrated student supports to meet not just the academic — but also the health, social and emotional –needs of the "whole child" and family. Students cannot focus on learning if they are hungry, homeless or have a toothache. Community schools connect families to physical and mental health services, dental and vision care, housing support, adult education classes, extended learning opportunities, and enrichment activities before, during and after school hours. Through these wraparound support services, community schools address poverty-related barriers to learning inside and outside the classroom.

Robust and meaningful family engagement is a core feature of community schools. Research shows that through their comprehensive services, and relational, asset-based approaches to parent engagement, community schools draw parents into the life of the school, treating them as equal partners in school governance. Leadership training and opportunities enable caregivers to increase their participation in school decision-making bodies and improve their capacity to support their children's education.

Collaborative decision-making and shared leadership structures increase family, educator and community voices in school decision-making and ensure a framework of shared ownership and accountability for student and school-level outcomes. Practices, policies and programs reflect the needs and vision of grassroots stakeholders. The result is improved learning and stronger school-family-community ties. Ultimately, community schools serve as neighborhood hubs of civic engagement and democratic life.

Community schools offer rigorous, community-based instruction and learning opportunities. Classroom teaching and curriculum are grounded in real-world learning opportunities that are connected to students' cultures, identities and experiences. Culturally relevant, project-based learning allows students to grapple in meaningful ways with issues facing their communities.

Extended learning time and expanded enrichment opportunities are provided through the opening of school facilities to the community during non-school hours. This allows for increased instructional time that is aligned with curricular learning goals, as well as an array of quality afterschool, athletic and recreational programs that provide youth with a safe place to learn and play after school.

MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

A DIVERSE UNION *of* EDUCATION WORKERS

Extensive research shows that community schools are effective in improving a variety of student outcomes including attendance, effort in school, grades, test scores, high school graduation rates, postsecondary outcomes and English language development. They also have been shown to reduce dropout rates, racial achievement gaps and discipline disparities.

Community schools directly benefit parents and families through improved housing, food and employment stability; better communication with school staff; increased capacity to support their child's education; strengthened skills and more leadership development opportunities, more active participation in school meetings; and higher rates of school advocacy and civic participation.

Across the country, educator unions play a key role in establishing community schools and shaping their implementation. Unions can leverage their collective bargaining power to advance community demands and codify crucial community school structures and staff positions into policy. Community schools are strongest where education unions are strongest.

CASE STUDY:
New York City Community Schools Initiative

In 2014, New York City launched the largest community school initiative (NYC-CS) in the country (which now includes over 400 schools.) Backed by a grassroots movement of families and educators, NYC-CS replaced the previous mayor's corporate school reform agenda with an education equity agenda to address the needs of the whole child and combat poverty-related barriers to learning. An initial cohort of 45 high-needs schools were converted into community schools. This was supported by a districtwide Office of Community Schools, which provided each participating school with a lead nonprofit partner organization, and a community school director to coordinate programs, health and wellness services, expanded family engagement support and extended learning time.

NYC-CS has used a "community organizing approach" to parent engagement. A Family and Community Outreach team (FACE) knocked on thousands of doors in neighborhoods surrounding community schools to build face-to-face relationships with parents and recruit them to attend school events, join school decision-making teams and participate in leadership trainings. Comprehensive services, skills training, and increased leadership opportunities have empowered thousands of marginalized parents to become more involved in school decision-making bodies and have increased their capacity to support their children's education.

In 2020, the RAND Corp. conducted a rigorous impact study of the first three years of the initiative and found that community school students had improved attendance, on-time grade progression, test scores and high school graduation rates, as well as a reduced number of disciplinary incidents.

CASE STUDY:
The Oyler Community Learning Center in Cincinnati

The Oyler Community Learning Center is a school in one of Cincinnati's poorest neighborhoods. In 2002, 85 percent of Oyler's eighth-grade graduates did not make it past the tenth grade. Through a three-year community engagement process, school and community leaders mobilized resources to transform Oyler from an underutilized K-8 school to a K-12, full-service community school. After neighborhood families identified barriers to learning, Oyler partnered with the Cincinnati Health Department to create a school-based health clinic and the nation's first school-based dental and vision center, as well as an early childhood education center and an on-site team of therapists. Partnerships with local organizations allow the school to provide families with a food pantry, free clothing, college counselors and afterschool programming.

The results have been transformative: By 2020, over 92 percent of Oyler's seniors graduated from high school, and three-fourths of the 2021 class matriculated to college. Oyler's "Community Learning Center" model was replicated across the city, which resulted in a 20-percentage point increase in third-grade literacy, and a 10-percentage point reduction in the Black-white achievement gap from 2006 to 2015.







MTA Community Schools

A whole-school transformation strategy

December 2, 2026

Why Community Schools?

In 2023, more than half of US public school students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Unmet basic needs **profoundly impact as ability to learn.**



POOR HEALTH & NUTRITION, LACK OF HEALTHCARE ACCESS



HOUSING INSTABILITY AND CHRONIC STRESS



TRAUMA, LACK OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS, UNEQUAL ACCESS

Structural Inequities Deepen Challenges: In 2019, 2/3 of students of color in MA attended "***intensely segregated, high poverty schoolsow***" with less funding.

(Ciurczak, Marinova, & Schuster, 2020; Embrace Boston, 2023; Dotson & Foley, 2016; Jensen 2013; Owens 2018)

Community schools *are public schools that partner with community organizations to provide* ***wraparound supports*** *to meet not just the academic—but also the health, social and emotional –needs of the* ***"whole child"*** *and family. Through their comprehensive services and collaborative practices, community schools foster* ***powerful forms of family engagement*** *and participation. They're* ***community driven*** *and collaboratively run by the the people who know our children best—families, educators, students and local community members as part of an* ***integrated, whole-school transformation strategy*** *which leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Ultimately community schools serve as* ***neighborhood hubs of civic engagement and democratic life****.*

(MTA, 2025)

Key Pillars - What is a Community School?

volunteer_activism

Wraparound Support Services

groups

Powerful Family & Community Engagement

auto_stories

Expanded & Enriched Learning Opportunities

diversity_3

Collaborative Leadership & Practices

school

Community-Based Classroom Instruction

shield

Culture of Belonging, Safety & Care

(Blank et al., 2023; Community Schools Forward, 2023)

Integrated Wraparound Supports

Form strong partnerships with community organizations to deliver integrated systems of support for students and their families

Physical & mental health services

Dental & vision care

Housing & immigration support

Adult education classes

Addresses families' non-academic needs outside the classroom

As social service hubs, community schools proved more resilient than other schools during the pandemic serving as a vital lifeline for families



(Anderson-Butcher et al.,2018; Blank et al. 2003; Castrechini & London, 2012; Johnston et al., 2017)

Powerful Family Engagement

Quality family engagement is a crucial component of successful schools—identified as one of “five essential supports” for school success.

Social & Educational Services

Draw families directly into the active life and community of the school

Relational & Asset-Based Approaches

Engage parents meaningfully in school decision-making; remove barriers to participation

Leadership Trainings & Opportunities

Build parent self-efficacy and agency across the school community



(Bryk et al. 2010; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hester & Capers, 2019; Johnston et al. 2020; Sheldon 2003; Warren & Mapp, 2011)

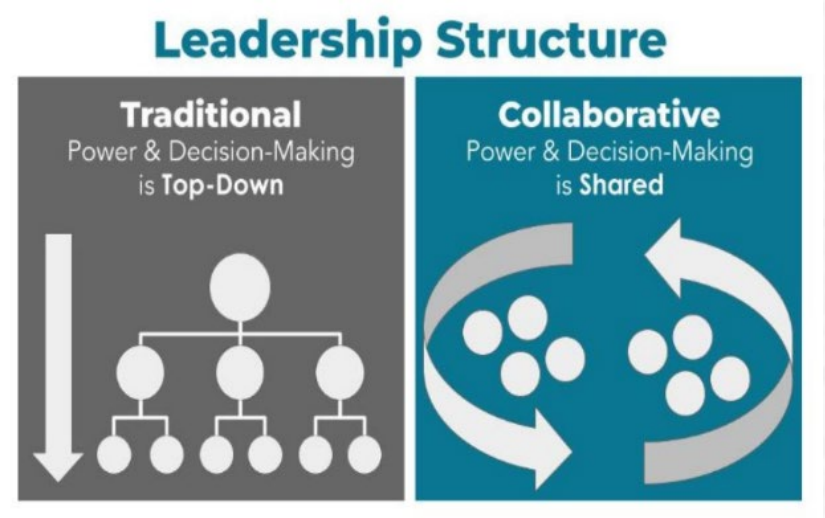
Meeting Families "where they're at"

- Through Framingham's **Parent-Teacher Home Visit program (PTHV)** educators go into communities and visit families in their homes
- Build face-to-face relationships with parents; ask about child's and caregivers' hopes and dreams
- Listen respectfully to parents; establish a culture of trust and connection
- District provides guidance and training for staff



Collaborative Decision -making and Ownership

- Trusting relationships are an essential foundation to collaborative leadership and healthy and successful community schools
- Shared ownership ensures that all stakeholders voices are heard and valued in the decision making process
- Collaborative leadership structures allow for continuous reflection and alignment to ensure successful outcomes for students.



Extended Learning Time & Enrichment Opportunities

Afterschool & Recreational Programs

School opens facilities to the community during non-school hours, offering quality athletic and recreational programs that provide youth a safe place to play and learn.

Physical & Mental Health

Safe recreational spaces & programs provide needed exercise and structured activities for youth, improving both physical and mental health.

Adult Education & Skill Development

Classes offered to adults such as English Language learning, GED preparation, parenting workshops, and career skill development.





Rigorous, Culturally -connected Instruction

Real-World Community Connections

Connects classroom teaching and learning to the real-world issues students face in their communities.

Culturally Relevant & Project-Based Learning

Culturally-relevant curriculum combined with active project-based learning experiences.



The Community School Coordinator

Strategic Leadership: Serves as central coordinator of community school strategy, integrating support systems & shared leadership.

Team Guidance Leads the Community School team and manages the shared leadership structure.

Needs & Assets Assessment: Conducts collaborative community assessments and leverages data for continuous improvement.

Partnerships & Alignment: Coordinates partnerships, services, and resources to align directly with school priorities.

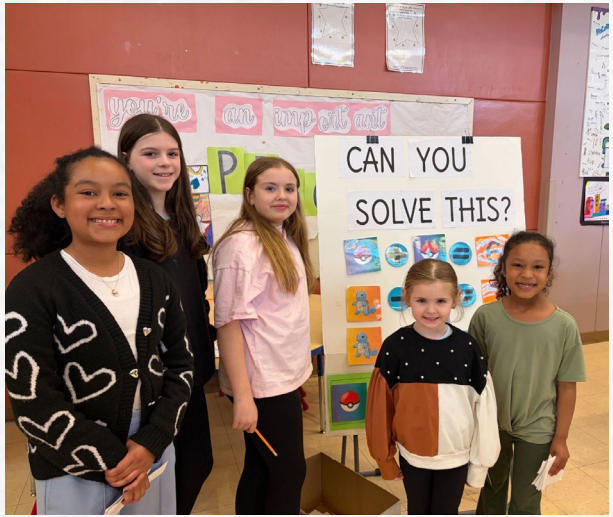
Family Engagement: Collaborates with support staff to expand meaningful parent leadership and participation opportunities.



Key Role Summary

Bridge building between academics, families, and community assets for sustainable student success.

Positive Impacts on Student Outcomes



- **Improved attendance & effort in school** (Blank, Melaville & Shah, 2003; Castrechini & London, 2012; Maier et al. 2017; Serrette, Blank & McGuire, 2016)
- **Improved grades and test scores** (Blank et al. 2003; Maier et al. 2017; Moore et al. 2017; Sheldon 2003
- **Improved high school graduation rates and postsecondary outcomes** (Axelroth 2009; Blank et al. 2003; Maier et al. 2017; Moore et al. 2017)
- **Improved English language development** (Castrechini & London, 2012; Maier et al. 2017)
- **Reduced dropout rates** (Blank et al. 2003; Somers & Heider, 2017)
- **Reduced racial achievement gaps** (Blank et al. 2003; Maier et al. 2017; Weiss & Reville, 2019)
- **Positive impacts on school climate and discipline practices** (Serrette, Blank & McGuire, 2016)

Positive Impacts on Families



groups

Greater participation in school meetings
(Blank et al. 2003; King, 2022)

psycholo

Skills and leadership development for parents
(King, 2022; Maier et al. 2017; Warren 2005)

school

Increased capacity to support children academically
(Maier et al. 2017; Stefanski et al. 2016; Warren 2005)

forum

Improved communication with school staff
(Chen, Anderson, & Watkins, 2016; Maier et al. 2017)

home

Improved housing, food, and employment stability
(Blank et al. 2003; Maier et al. 2017)

MTA's State-Level Work So Far





- Organized a statewide Community Schools Summit
- Hired a Community Schools Strategist
- Delivered workshops at MTA conferences (e.g., EMAC, Winter Union Skills, ESP, local FTA PD Day)
- Conducted Community Schools 101 trainings for target locals (e.g., Brockton, Framingham, Worcester, Everett)
- Brought member leaders to National Conferences + NEA trainings (NCSC & NEA Anaheim Lab)
- Providing strategic support for local Community School implementation
- Organized site visits to established community schools

Framingham Pilot: foundations in place to build community schools

verified

District-Level Initiatives Already in Place

Aligned with community school strategy to address whole child & family needs:

- Wraparound services available to each school
- Parent Teacher Home Visit program
- Health & wellness center
- ParentSquare and Caregiver Academy
- Expanded Learning Time (ELT) program

These programs represented a patchwork of support, not a coordinated, school-level strategy for improvement.

trending_down

Challenges Persist

- District is serving a growing number of high-needs families
- **Ex (2022-24):** Rate of 9th graders passing all courses declined by **25%**, while statewide average increased slightly





Framingham Pilot Initiative at McCarthy Elementary School

- **MTA Providing strategic implementation support** to improve family engagement, shared leadership, and student attendance
- **Convened site-based leadership team** to elevate educator and family voice, and guide pilot design
- **Secured NEA Great Public Schools Grant** ($273,000) to launch a 2-year pilot + fund a full-time Community Schools Coordinator
- **Participated in NEA's virtual Implementation Institute** + local site visits
- **Conducting schoolwide Needs & Assets Assessment** including surveys and listening sessions with families, staff & students to develop a shared vision for the community school.



McCarthy Shared Leadership Structure

Steering Committee

- Community School Coordinator
- Educators
- School leaders
- Parents
- EAF President / MTA Support
- Superintendent / district staff
- After-school Coordinator
- Community Partners

Site Based Team

- Principal/ Vice Principal
- Community School Coordinator
- Educators
- District Staff
- EAF President / MTA Support

Sub-committees

(Family + Staff Engagement)

- Educators
- MTA Support
- School leaders
- CS Coordinator

Powerful Parent Survey Participation



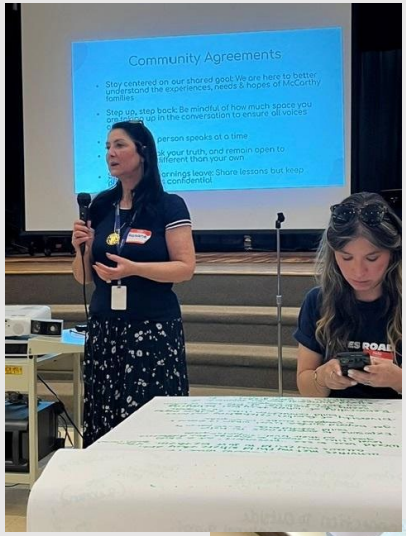
287 parent responses (71% of families)

- 147 English
- 81 Portuguese
- 53 Spanish
- 6 Haitian Creole



Family Listening Forums



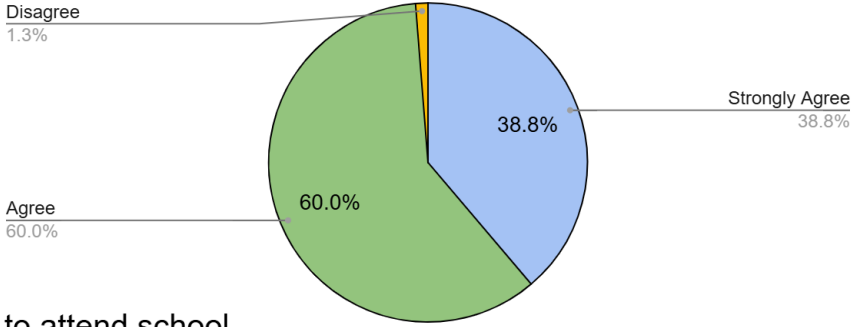




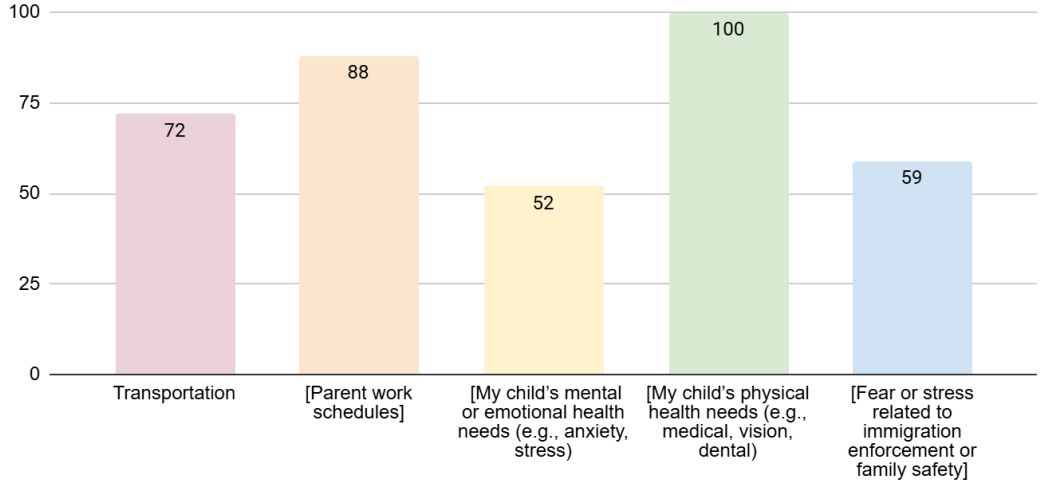


"It would be great if we had events for families to get together more, play with their children at affordable times and affordable days"

6. I feel welcome and connected at McCarthy Elementary School.



4a. Do any of the following make it harder for your child to attend school regularly? (Somewhat of a challenge or Major challenge)

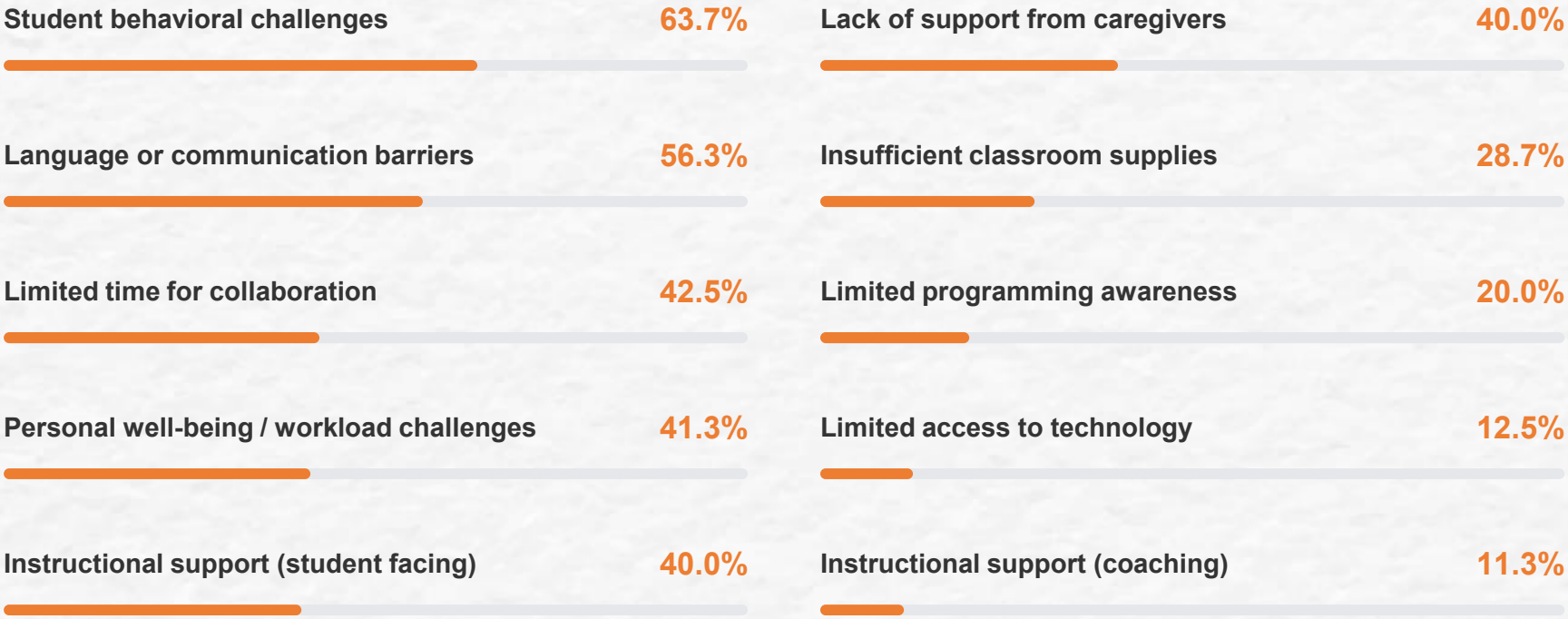


"The affection and appreciation for my children even though they are immigrants."

I love how caring and understanding all staff at McCarthy are. They make you feel supported and welcomed. It feels like a family.

Which factors make it harder to support student success?

Educator Voices (Based on 80 staff survey responses)



Discussion + exploring possiblities

forum

Questions & Initial Reactions

- What resonates with you about the Community Schools approach?
- How might this approach build on Greenfield's existing strengths and help address district and school community priorities?
- What questions or considerations would be important to explore further?

explore

Exploring Potential Next Steps

- Is there interest in further exploring the Community Schools approach in Greenfield?
- Whose knowledge, expertise, and lived experience could help inform that conversation? *(Educators, school and district leaders, families, students, community partners, school committee members, etc.)*
- What might be meaningful next steps?