2Districts8Towns

Community Outreach Research Report for 2Districts8Towns Steering Committee

September 15, 2024

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Note: This report will be updated as additional information is requested, edits are required, and data is added. The date stamp (under the title) will signal the most current version

IN THIS DOCUMENT

OVERVIEW

Berkshire Educational Resources K12 (BERK12) is working with Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) and Hawlemont Regional School District (HRSD) to support the ongoing study and analysis of the districts' operating and organizational structures. The goals of this Sustainability Study are to 1) ensure that the districts' eight communities are fully informed about the issues they face; 2) gather input from a range of constituents; and 3) create potential operating models that offer a more sustainable future for the districts' schools and member towns.

BERK12's research approach was to conduct extensive community outreach at the outset of the project to help identify options for creating a sustainable future for the districts. This included gathering feedback and perspectives from students, teachers, school staff, families, select boards and town finance committees, and other community members through a mix of meetings (in person and virtual), community outreach sessions, and surveys.

The results of these initial community outreach efforts, which have been presented to the 2district8towns Steering Committee and its Community Outreach Advisory Team, have been used to help guide the process of identifying and narrowing down options for sustainable organizing and operating models. Additional community outreach will be conducted in fall/winter 2024 to get feedback on the "most promising" options that are under consideration.

METHODS

Opening site visits

The BERK12 research team made site visits to each of the five schools during the first month of the Sustainability Study (January 30-31, 2024). The visits included meeting with building leadership, speaking with a few teachers and staff, touring the buildings, and speaking with a small group of Student Council members. The purpose of the visits was to become familiar with each of the schools and get some introductory feedback into what excites staff and students about their school, what issues they feel the district must address, what they would like to continue doing, and what they would like to see change.

The feedback collected during the site visits provided a good introduction to the districts and served as groundwork to help the research team in formulating questions to ask during the community outreach process. This opening set of feedback ultimately proved to be consistent with more detailed feedback that was gathered through community meetings, outreach sessions, and surveys.

Meetings with local officials and school staff with short open-ended survey

At the outset of the Sustainability Study, BERK12 Project Manager Jake Eberwein made presentations at a variety of town-based meetings as well as a virtual presentation to all school staff from the districts. The following meetings were held (links are provided to each presentation; the presentations are mostly the same with slight variations):

- Town Managers meeting, January 22, 2024
- Town Select Board meetings in Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne, held through February and May 2024
- Joint Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont School Committee meeting, March 6, 2024
- Faculty/Staff meeting, April 24, 2024

At the end of each meeting, participants were provided with a link to a short open-ended survey posing these questions:

1. What are the strengths of the districts and/or schools? (what the districts and schools do well, what you highly value and appreciate?)
2. What are the challenges and/or weaknesses of the districts/schools (tension points, gaps, things you'd like to change/improve)?
3. What would you protect at all costs and could not do without (your non-negotiables)?
4. What options and potential solutions should be considered to build upon the district's/school's strengths while addressing challenges and gaps?
5. What is your vision for the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont districts in 10 years?
6. Is there anything the research team should know and take into consideration as the Sustainability Study is launched? Advice and suggestions are welcome.
7. Are there any particular questions you have for the research team and/or topics you'd like to see addressed in the future?
8. What is your connection to the school districts? (check all that apply)

There were 55 responses to this short survey. Results of this survey along with the feedback from the community engagement sessions are incorporated into the findings.

Community outreach sessions

Community outreach sessions were held at each of the five district schools in March and April 2024. Participants had the option to attend either in person or virtually. Word of mouth helped get people to attend the sessions, along with flyers that were circulated through emails, social media, at schools, and in local gathering places (**see Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Community engagement session flyers

The format of the community outreach sessions included a half-hour presentation made by Jake Eberwein about the Sustainability Study and the problems it is intended to address. This was followed by a facilitated discussion, led by Community Outreach Consultant Mary Nash, in which participants were asked to respond to the first five questions from the short survey that was administered to town administrators, school committees, select boards, and school staff (strengths and challenges, non-negotiables, options and potential solutions, and vision for the future).

After the facilitator posed each question, participants were given a few minutes to write down their responses. This was followed by 5-10 minutes of discussion for each question. The written responses were collected at the end of the session. This approach allowed all participants to contribute their feedback in writing and/or orally (whichever was most comfortable for them), and to hear and respond to feedback from other participants.

Surveys

In addition to the short open-ended survey that was initially administered, three more detailed surveys were administered via Survey Monkey (see **Attachments 1, 2, and 3**). The purpose of these surveys was to follow up on initial themes identified in the meetings and community engagement sessions and get more detailed feedback from key stakeholders.

- The **School Choice Survey** was designed to collect information from families of students who live in Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Rowe, or Shelburne and attend schools outside of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts or are homeschooled. Although Rowe is not one of the eight towns served MTRSD and HRSD, the town was included as a small K-6 district that sends students to MTRSD through a tuition agreement. With many students from these nine towns leaving MTRSD and HRSD or never attending, this survey was aimed at learning more about why they chose to leave and what might have encouraged them to stay.
- A **Student and Staff Survey** was administered to all MTRSD and HRSD staff, including PreK-12 teachers, administrators, and other staff, and students in grades 8-12. Some questions were for teachers or students only, while other questions were directed at all staff and students. This survey was aimed at getting staff and student perspectives about educational quality in the district and possible options for the future.
- A **Community Survey** was administered to town residents ages 18 and older who live in Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Rowe, or Shelburne, including families/caregivers with current students in the schools as well as all other community members. This survey was aimed at learning about what is important to community members regarding education and their perceptions regarding education in the districts.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT. The survey questions were developed by BERK12's Community Outreach Consultant in close coordination with the full research team and the Community Outreach Advisory Team, a subgroup of the 2Districts8Towns Steering Committee. Initial survey drafts were tested and refined to ensure that the questions were clear and understandable and that Survey Monkey parameters, such as whether questions were required and question skipping logic, were properly set. A full copy of each survey can be found in **Appendix A.**

DISTRIBUTION. Multiple methods were used to distribute the surveys:
- Links to all three surveys were posted on www.2districts8towns.org.

- For the School Choice survey, the districts' superintendent's office provided a list of addresses of families with students that have left the district schools. An informational postcard was sent to 208 residential addresses drawn from this list **(**see **Figure 2),** along with extensive word of mouth about the survey, and notice on the website and via social media.
- For the Community survey, a two-sided flyer was distributed to 5,203 residential addresses in the eight resident towns of MTRSD and HRSD, along with Rowe. The flyer provided a brief overview of the purpose of the survey and included the Survey Monkey Link, both as a QR code and as a URL **(see Figure 3**)**.
- All MTRSD principals sent emails with survey links to preK-12 staff (student/staff survey) and to families (community survey). The Mohawk Trail Regional School (MTRS) principal requested that staff advisors distribute the student/staff survey to students in their advisory/CREW classes.
- Descriptions and links to the School Choice survey and the Community survey were posted on the 2D8T Facebook and Instagram pages and shared on many other social media pages including the districts' school pages, community pages, and individual pages, and posted on the website.
- Word of mouth was crucial in publicizing the Community and School Choice surveys.

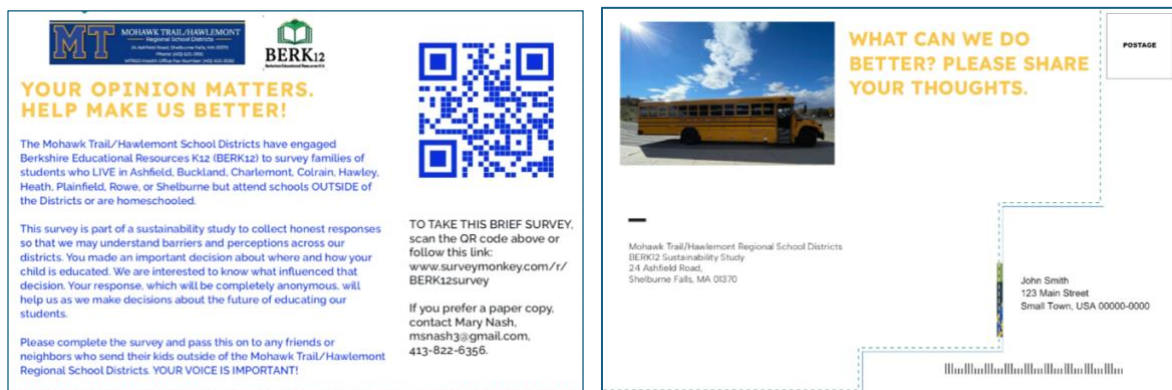**Figure 2. Informational postcard for School Choice survey**

Figure 3. Information flyer for Community and Family/Caregiver survey

Data analysis techniques

The community outreach methodology was designed to collect a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. This mixed method approach was chosen to triangulate the data. Triangulation is a research method that combines multiple data sources to gain a better understanding of the issues being studied. Qualitative data alone cannot be generalized to a larger population, but when combined with quantitative data it provides more accurate findings that represent the views of the target audience.

The qualitative data included discussion and written comments at meetings and open-ended responses to survey questions. The quantitative data included multiple choice survey questions, some of which allowed just one response while others allowed respondents to check all that apply. Some multiple-choice questions used 5-point Likert scales, which are rating systems for expressing opinions along a continuum, such as very important to not important or strong agreement to strong disagreement.

The quantitative data was analyzed by importing Survey Monkey data into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and creating customized graphs and charts. Prior to importing the data into Excel, disqualified responses were removed (i.e. under 18 or doesn't live in the 8 towns or Rowe for the Community Survey). To analyze responses from subgroups, data was filtered using tools provided by Survey Monkey. The qualitative data was analyzed through a combination of using the artificial intelligence tool Chat GpT to identify summary themes along with a careful review of all responses to verify and expand upon what was produced by Chat GpT. The analysis of qualitative data does not include exact numbers of responses but identifies recurring themes and responses to open-ended questions.

Limitations

Rather than use random sampling to select participants, the goal of this study was to reach as many people as possible in the targeted groups so that all would feel they had a chance to contribute. It was important to reach a mix of community members, families/caregivers with children in the districts, students, staff, and families that have chosen to send their children to other schools. The distribution and marketing efforts described in the previous section were aimed at letting all target audiences know about the opportunity to attend meetings and complete surveys through both targeted methods and also word of mouth. A limitation of this approach is that some people may have been missed who would have liked to participate and some demographic characteristics (for example age and where they live, age) may have been over or underrepresented. **Table 3** in the next section analyzes the geographic makeup of the sample, showing that while it is not a perfect representative sample, it is mostly consistent with the geographic breakdown of the area.

Another limitation of surveys is the possibility of response order bias in multiple choice survey questions. One type of response order bias, primacy bias, is a tendency to choose the responses that are higher on a list of options, while recency bias is a tendency to choose the last answer as it is the most recent and memorable. This was largely addressed by randomizing the order of response choices for questions where response order was not important, and also by limiting the number of response choices.

An additional limitation is that long surveys have lower completion rates than shorter surveys. Given the complexity of the issues being studied, the surveys were somewhat long, especially for those completing them on smart phone or tablet devices. The tradeoff was getting useful information with the understanding that not all respondents would get to the end of the survey. **Table 2** in the Results section below shows completion rates for each survey.

RESULTS

Participants and respondents

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION PARTICIPANTS. The Community Engagement sessions included a mix of family members of children who attend district schools, district staff, and community members. There were no students present. Attendance at the five community engagement sessions was approximately 116 people **(see Table 1).**

Table 1. Breakdown of attendance at Community Engagement Sessions

	In person	Virtual	TOTAL
Buckland-Shelburne	22	11	33
Colrain	17	7	24
Hawlemont	16	4	20
Mohawk Trail	13	9	22
Sanderson	12	5	17
TOTAL	80	36	116

SURVEY RESPONDENTS. For the short open-ended survey that was distributed at initial meetings, the 55 respondents were comprised of the following categories (some chose more than one category):

- school staff (32)
- family members of current or past students (26)
- community members (25)
- 2districts8town Steering Committee members (6)
- finance committee members (4)
- select board members and other elected officials (3)
- Rowe school committee member (1)

In total, there were 856 responses to the three longer surveys **(see Table 2).** The respondents include some overlap as some people fit into more than one category; for example, a staff member may also be a community member. Survey completion rates (76% to 81%) were typical of long surveys.

Table 2. Survey response numbers

	# responses	Breakdowns	Completion Rate*
Community survey	561	Includes 185 families/caregivers with students at MTRSD and/or HRSD (34%) (based on 546 responses to this question)	76%
Student/Staff survey	172	94 teacher and paraprofessional responses (55%) 22 other staff responses (13%) 56 student responses (33%)	83%
School Choice survey	123	Families/caregivers with students outside of MTRSD and HRSD (100%)	81%
Total responses	856		

*This is the percentage of respondents who answered all questions. Some stopped before the end – these incomplete responses were still in included in the report.

A breakdown of where respondents to the School Choice and Community surveys live is provided in **Table 3.** A comparison of the percentage of responses to the overall population in those towns shows the following:

- For the most part, response rates were in line with town populations.
- The four towns with the largest populations – Shelburne, Buckland, Ashfield, and Colrain – had the highest number of respondents for the School Choice survey, with Shelburne and Buckland at the top. Those same four towns were also among the largest respondents to the Community Survey, along with Heath.
- Heath was overrepresented in both surveys compared to the population.
- Shelburne and Buckland were overrepresented in the School Choice survey and Charlemont was underrepresented.
- Over and underrepresentation could be related to 1) some towns having more families with children than other towns; and 2) the extent to which people knew about the surveys through word of mouth and other outreach methods.

Table 3. Response rates to School Choice and Community surveys vs. town populations

Town, listed in order of overall population	Town population 2020 US Census	School Choice survey respondents, n=123	Community survey respondents, n=561
Shelburne	1,884 (18%)	29 (24%)	79 (14%)
Buckland	1,816 (18%)	29 (24%)	121 (22%)
Ashfield	1,695 (16%)	19 (15%)	80 (14%)
Colrain	1,606 (16%)	17 (14%)	76 (15%)
Charlemont	1,185 (12%)	5 (4%)	61 (11%)
Heath	723 (7%)	13 (11%)	87 (16%)
Plainfield	633 (6%)	4 (3%)	28 (5%)
Hawley	353 (3%)	3 (2%)	21 (4%)
Outside of district			
Rowe	424 (4%)	4 (3%)	8 (1%)
TOTAL	10,319	123	561

Characteristics of Community Survey respondents.

Among the 561 respondents to the Community Survey, 33% have children attending school in Mohawk Trail and/or Hawlemont school districts and 14% serve as elected or appointed officials.

More than 90% of community survey respondents have lived in the region longer than five years, and two-thirds have lived in the region more than 20 years **(see Figure 4).**

Figure 4. How long they have lived in the region (n=561 community respondents)

More than 20 years	65%
11-20 years	15%
6-10 years	11%
0-5 years	9%

All nine towns that were surveyed were represented in the responses, ranging from 22% who were from Buckland to 1% who were from Rowe **(see Figure 5).**

Figure 5. Where they live (n=561 community respondents)

Town	Percentage
Buckland	22%
Heath	16%
Ashfield	14%
Shelburne	14%
Colrain	14%
Charlemont	11%
Plainfield	5%
Hawley	4%
Rowe	1%
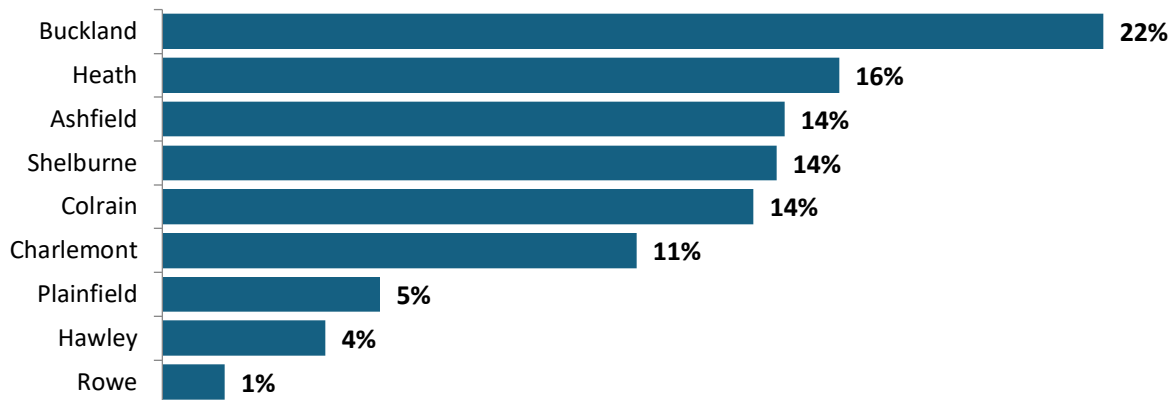
The community survey respondents represent a mix of people who are employed full or part time, retired, work for themselves, stay at home caregivers, or looking for work. Just a few are enrolled in post-high school education **(see Figure 6).**

Figure 6. What they do (n=561 community respondents)

Category	Percentage
Employed full-time	40%
Retired or semi-retired	36%
Self-employed	14%
Employed part-time	13%
Stay at home parent, guardian, or caregiver	9%
Looking for work	3%
Enrolled in post-high school education	1%
In the military	0%
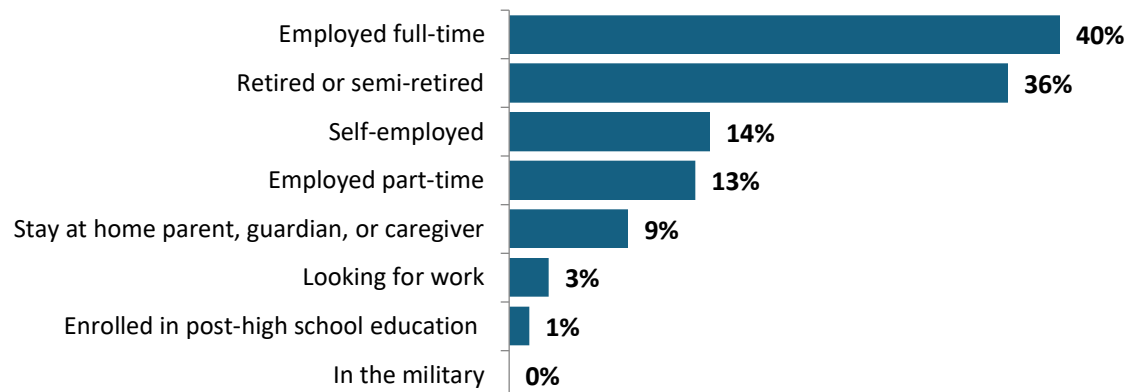
More than one third of community respondents are over age 65, while just 4% are under 30 (see **Figure 7**). Community members under age 18 were not eligible to take the survey**.** This representation of age groups is reflective of the community, which has an aging population.

Figure 7. Age (n=561 community respondents)

Age group	Percentage
Older than 65	38%
50-65	26%
30-49	32%
18-29	4%

Approximately one-third of community respondents have attended one or more schools in the districts, with the highest percentage attending Mohawk Trail Regional School, while two-thirds have not attended school in the district (see **Figure 8**).

Figure 8. Schools attended in the past (n=561 community respondents)

School	Percentage
Mohawk Trail Regional School	32%
Buckland-Shelburne Elementary	13%
Hawlemont Regional School	7%
Colrain Central School	5%
Sanderson Academy	4%
Rowe Elementary	3%
District schools that are no longer open*	3%
Heath Elementary School	2%
None of the above	64%
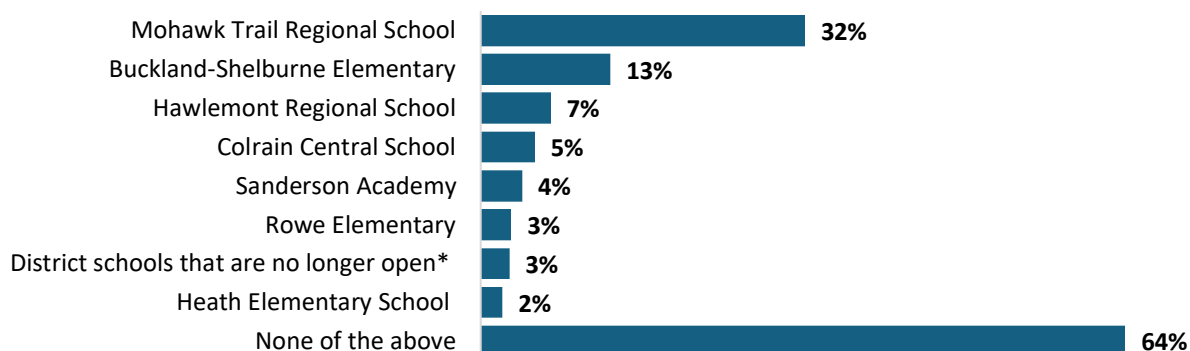
* Charlemont School (5); Arms Academy (3) ; Heath Branch School (2) ; Buckland-Colrain-Shelburne Elementary; Crittenden, Baker School, Fellowship Hall (Consolidated School)

Among the community respondents that have children in the districts, over half are not yet sure of their student's aspirations for after high school. Th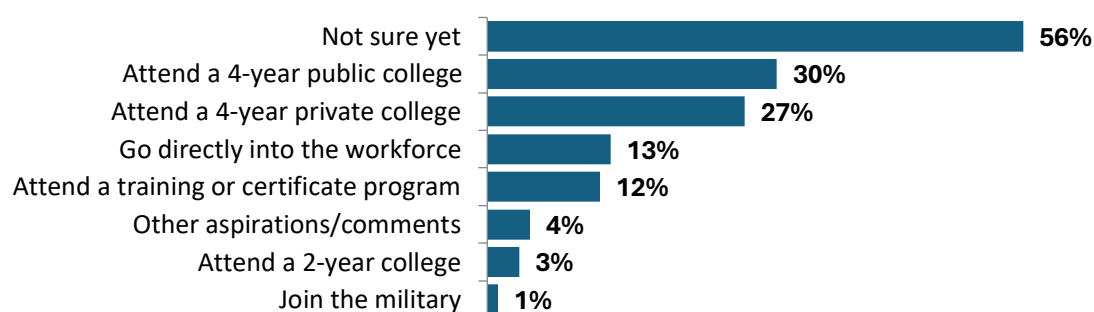is makes sense given that many of the respondents have students in the elementary grades. Among those that stated their students' aspirations, attending 4-year colleges were highest on the list (see **Figure 9**).

Figure 9. Students' aspirations for after high school (n=179 community respondents with children in the districts)

Aspiration	Percentage
Not sure yet	56%
Attend a 4-year public college	30%
Attend a 4-year private college	27%
Go directly into the workforce	13%
Attend a training or certificate program	12%
Other aspirations/comments	4%
Attend a 2-year college	3%
Join the military	1%

Characteristics of Student and Staff Survey respondents.

Among the student respondents to the Student and Staff survey, just over half were in Grades 9-12 while just under half were in Grade 8 **(see Figure 10).** The higher response numbers for Grade 8 is in part due to the fact that there are about twice as many Grade 8 students compared to Grades 9-12. Also, Grade 8 surveys were distributed during Advisory/Crew period, which is more structured for eight grade students than for high school students. Grade 9-12 students had more flexibility in when they completed the surveys. There are fewer Grade 12 responses because seniors had left for the year when the survey was administered. Given that the overall number of student respondents was lower than expected, other efforts to reach out to students will be incorporated into the next round of community engagement.

Figure 10. **Grade level (n=56 student respondents)**

eighth	46%
ninth	13%
tenth	14%
eleventh	16%
twelfth	11%
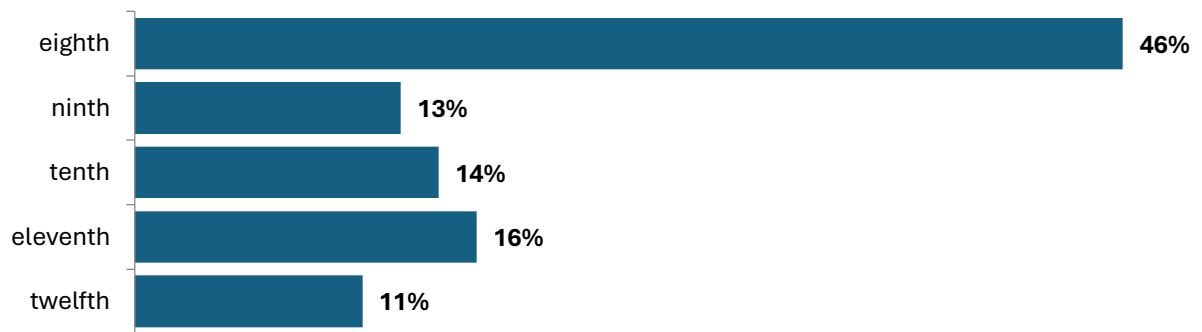
The student respondents included residents of all eight towns in MTRSD and HRSD but did not include any Rowe students. Students who attend MTRSD from Amherst, Deerfield, and Greenfield through school choice were also among the respondents **(see Figure 11).**

Figure 11. Where students live (n=56 student respondents)

Shelburne	18%
Ashfield	18%
Charlemont	15%
Buckland	13%
Heath	11%
Colrain	9%
Plainfield	4%
Hawley	4%
Rowe	0%
Another town *	9%
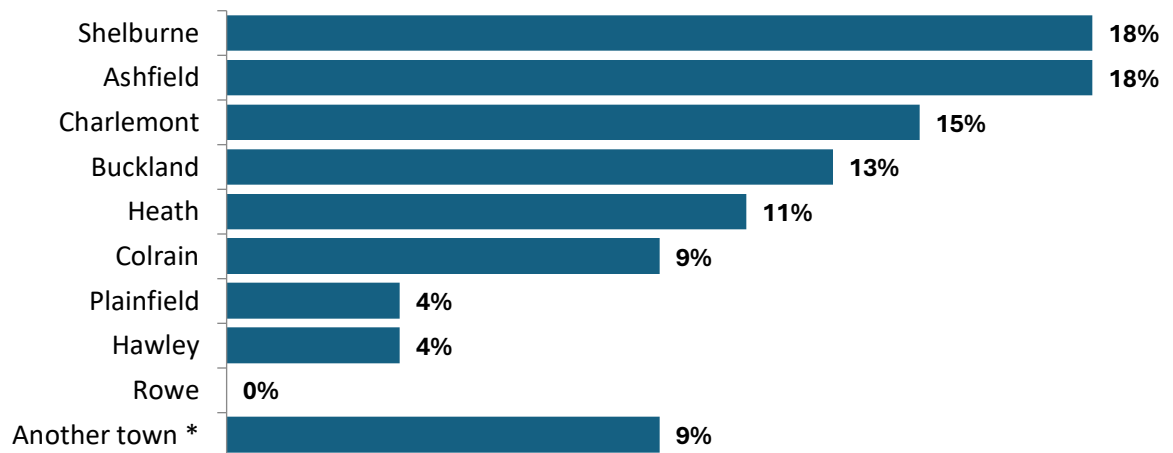
*Amherst, Deerfield, Greenfield (4)

Consistent with the aspirations reported above by families with students in the district, more than half of the student respondents want to attend either a 4-year or 2-year college (see **Figure 12**).

Figure 12. Students' aspirations for after high school (n=56 student survey respondents)

Attend a 4-year college	45%
Not sure yet	23%
Go directly to the workforce	9%
Attend a 2-year college	7%
Join the military	4%
Attend a training or certificate program	4%
Other aspirations/comments*	9%
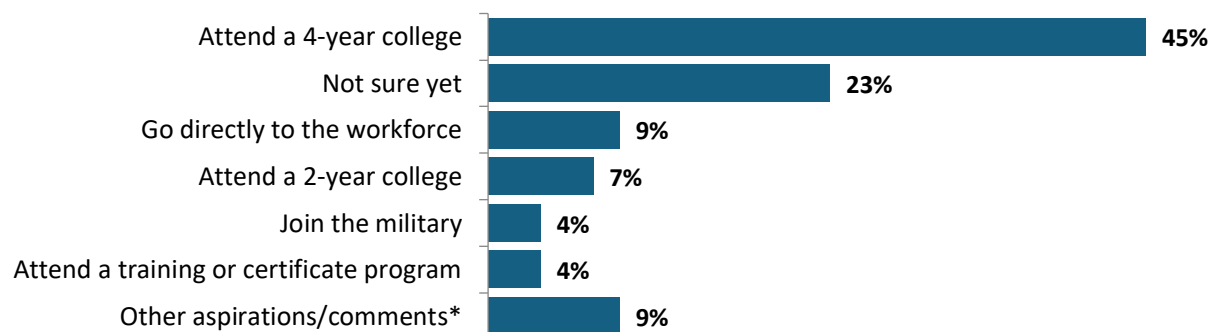
There were 116 staff responses, including 94 from teachers and paraprofessionals and 22 from other staff. Just over one third of the respondents (37%) work at Mohawk Trail Regional School while the rest are divided among the elementary schools and districtwide positions **(see Figure 13).**

Figure 13. Where they work (n=78 staff respondents*)
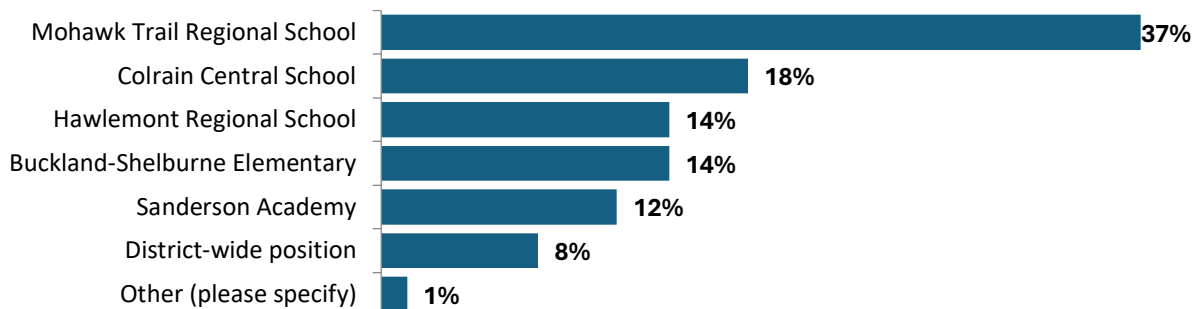
Mohawk Trail Regional School	37%
Colrain Central School	18%
Hawlemont Regional School	14%
Buckland-Shelburne Elementary	14%
Sanderson Academy	12%
District-wide position	8%
Other (please specify)	1%

*NOTE: There was an error in the survey that caused the first 54 respondents to skip this question, so this does not reflect all respondents. There were 116 staff responses in total. This error affected two questions.

Teachers comprised just under half of staff responses. Paraprofessionals and other staff were about equal in representation, while 9% of staff responses were from administrators **(see Figure 14).**

Figure 14. Positions of respondents (n=78 staff respondents*)
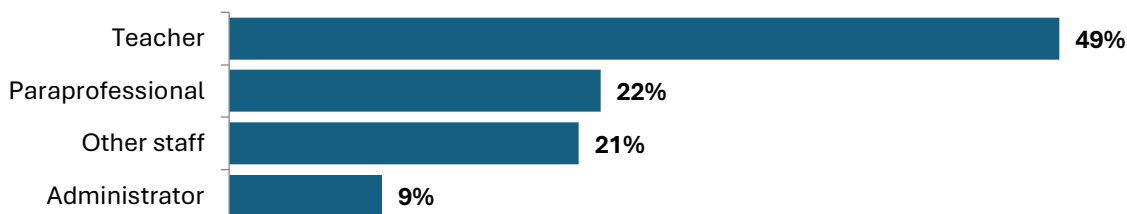
Teacher	49%
Paraprofessional	22%
Other staff	21%
Administrator	9%

*NOTE: There was an error in the survey that caused the first 54 respondents to skip this question, so this does not reflect all respondents. There were 116 staff responses in total. This error affected two questions.

Among the 94 responses from teachers and paraprofessionals, 65% live in the MTRSD or HRSD **(see Figure 15).** With so many living in the district, their interest in the Sustainability Study is two (or three) fold, as both staff members and community members, and in some cases also as parents of students in this district.

Figure 15. Where respondents live (n=94 teacher and paraprofessional respondents)

outside of the districts 35%

Live in the districts 65%
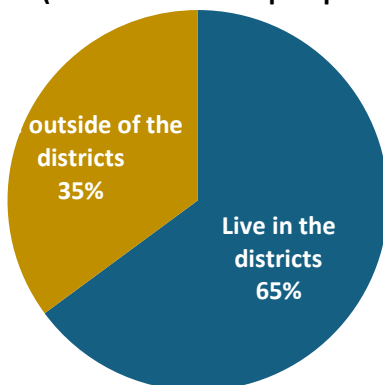
Nearly half of the teacher and paraprofessional respondents (45%) work at the elementary level while the remainder represent a variety of subjects **(see Figure 16).** Special education, mathematics, reading, and English Language Arts were the most highly represented.

Figure 16. Subjects they teach or assist with (n=94 teacher and paraprofessional respondents)

Subject	Percentage
Elementary classroom	45%
Special education or intervention	22%
Mathematics	22%
Reading	19%
English language arts (ELA)	18%
Science	14%
Arts (visual arts, music, drama)	14%
History/social studies	13%
Preschool classroom	10%
Physical education	10%
Technology	7%
Library science	7%
Health and wellness	7%
Other	9%
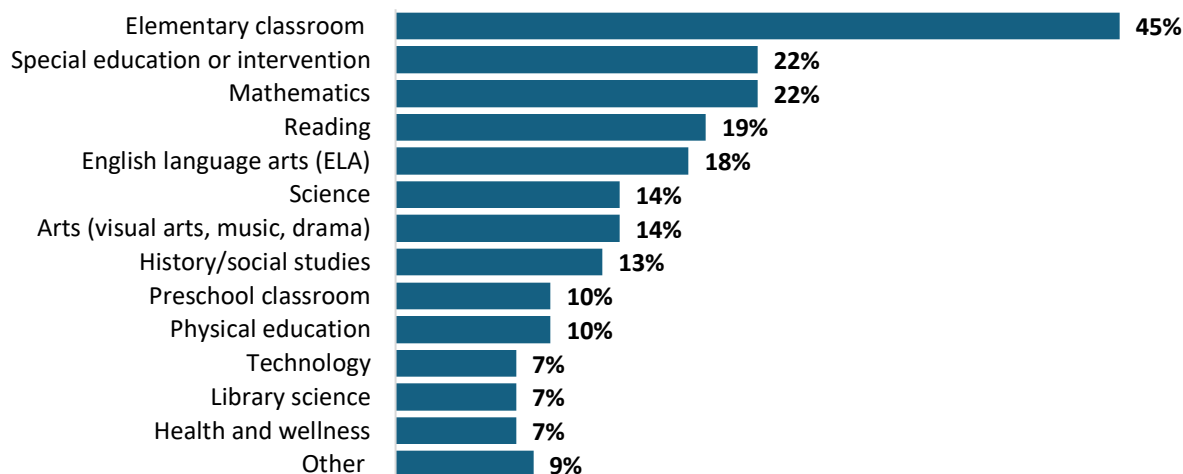
Characteristics of School Choice survey respondents.

Among the 123 respondents to the School Choice survey, 70% have lived in one of the district towns or Rowe for 10 or more years, and just 1% have lived there for less than one year (see **Figure 17).**
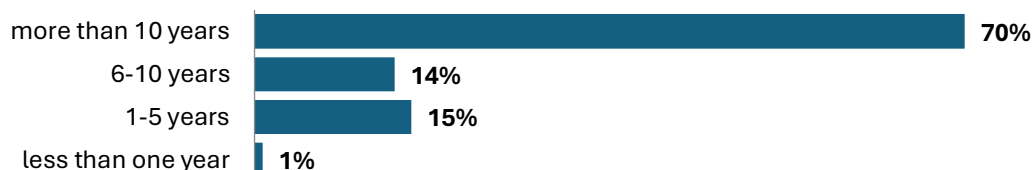
Figure 17. Years living in district towns or Rowe (**n=123 school choice respondents**)

Years	Percentage
more than 10 years	70%
6-10 years	14%
1-5 years	15%
less than one year	1%

The students of school choice survey respondents have similar aspirations to those of current student survey respondents (see **Figure 12** above). Most want to attend a 4-year or 2-year college and one third are not sure yet (see **Figure 18**).

Figure 18. Students' aspirations for after high school (n=123 school choice respondents)

Aspiration	Percentage
attend a 4-year public college	48%
attend a 4-year private college	39%
not sure yet	37%
go directly into the workforce	16%
attend a short term training or certificate program	5%
join the military	4%
attend a two-year college	3%
*other aspirations	10%
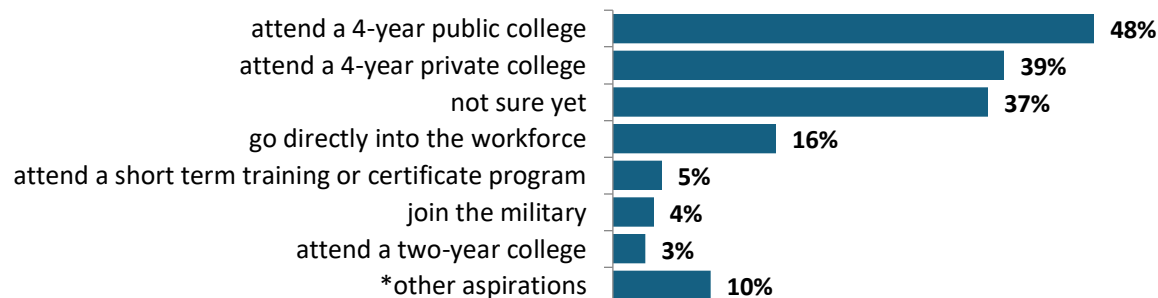
RESULTS

District strengths

Throughout the community outreach process, stakeholder groups were asked to provide feedback on the districts' strengths and the challenges they face. Initial feedback on this topic was gathered from the short open-ended survey and from written and verbal comments of participants in the community outreach sessions. Collectively, several key themes emerged from this initial feedback:

Small community and class sizes: The smalless of the schools and the community was mentioned repeatedly. People appreciate small classroom sizes, which enable teachers to really get to know students. They also feel there is a strong sense of community. The small size of the district and schools enables students to form tight connections. Students can move through the grades with groups of friends. Teachers really get to know the students and their families. Students are seen as individuals and get attention to their unique needs.

Beautiful setting and emphasis on environment.: Feedback indicated that the schools are set in beautiful rural locations with attractive buildings and access to outdoor green spaces. There is an emphasis on outdoor learning environments and local natural resources. The Hawlemont, Agriculture, and You (HAY) program is well regarded for its emphasis on nature, food, and farming. The outdoor summer program is appreciated.

Strong staff: People note that teachers and staff are dedicated, passionate, supportive, and approachable. Administration, principals, teachers, specialists, and paras were all mentioned as non-negotiables, meaning people did not want to lose any. They know their students well, are supportive of their growth, and are interested in seeing them succeed. There are strong connections between teachers and students. Administrators were also noted as dedicated to and caring for students and their learning.

Engagement with the community: The schools have strong community support. The sense of community ties together the schools and the towns. The schools incorporate local community groups and organizations and serve as hubs for community resources. Community events at the schools that bring people together are valued.

Varied program offerings: The schools are recognized for having a curriculum that includes art, music, theatre, physical education, and outdoor learning. Advanced Placement (AP) classes and capstone projects are viewed as being strong, along with emphasis on outdoor learning opportunities. The HAY Program (Hawlemont, Agriculture, and You) was repeatedly mentioned as a strong program. This program at Hawlemont Regional School provides hands-on experiential learning about agriculture. Students learn how to maintain a barn, greenhouse, and gardens and also feed and care for animals. Other programs mentioned were yoga and mindfulness, violin lessons at Sanderson, the Mexican Exchange Program, weaving, service learning, and Genius Hour at Buckland Shelburne.

A strong focus on inclusivity, diversity, and acceptance: The districts are recognized for creating a safe and welcoming environment for students and being inclusive. There is a commitment to individualized learning and an appreciation for students' differences. The schools honor and encourage diversity.
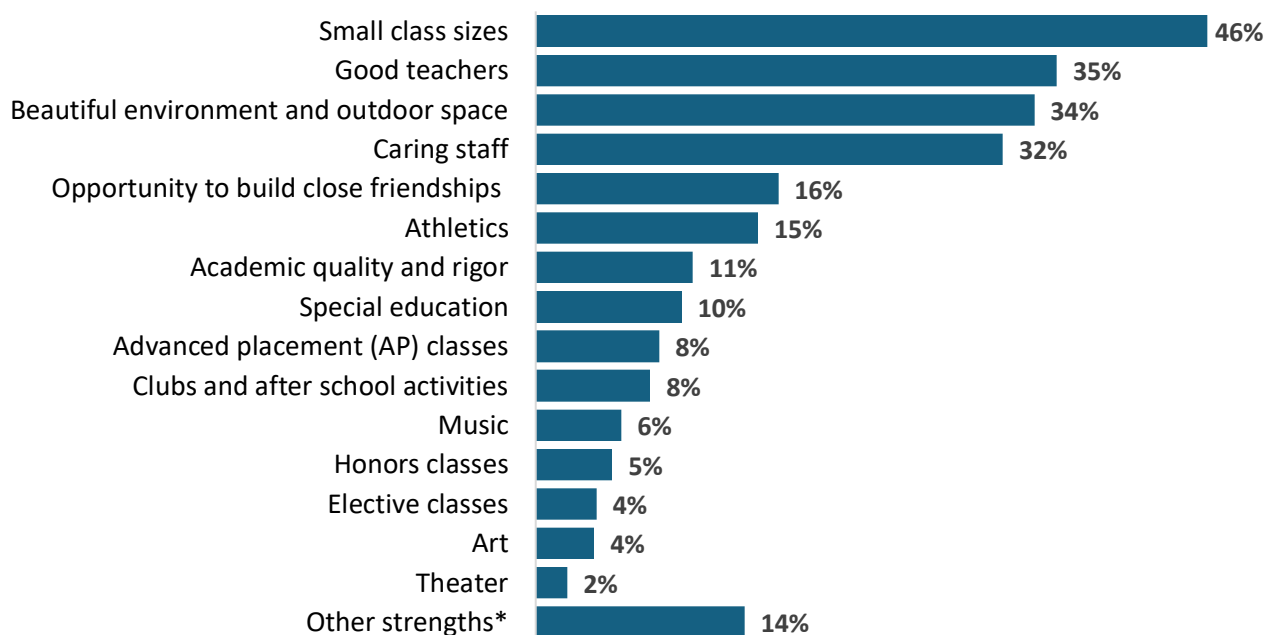
At the joint meeting of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school committees in March, members elaborated upon the approach to teaching and the willingness to consider change. Strengths that were mentioned included "student-centered approaches," "a child-centered focus," "cutting-edge pedagogy," "willingness to change and tackle big things on curriculum," "robust professional

development that addresses specific instructional goals," and "innovative programs that can individualize for student interests and needs and allow each school to have its own focus."
In the longer surveys (School Choice, Community, and Student/Staff surveys), further input was gathered about strengths and weaknesses of the districts.

The combined survey results from community members, staff, and students listed small class sizes, good teachers, beautiful environment and outdoor space, and caring staff as their top choices (see **Figure 19)**. Those who wrote in other strengths reinforced what was mentioned in the community outreach meetings, including strong programs (HAY, AP, STEM, capstone, and others), supportive teachers, a supportive community, student growth, and the willingness of administration to consider changes.

Figure 19: What do you consider to be the top three strengths of the district? (n=655 community, staff, and student respondents)

Strength	Percentage
Small class sizes	46%
Good teachers	35%
Beautiful environment and outdoor space	34%
Caring staff	32%
Opportunity to build close friendships	16%
Athletics	15%
Academic quality and rigor	11%
Special education	10%
Advanced placement (AP) classes	8%
Clubs and after school activities	8%
Music	6%
Honors classes	5%
Elective classes	4%
Art	4%
Theater	2%
Other strengths*	14%

Other strengths*:
PROGRAMS/COURSES: HAY program (10); space and opportunity to offer students more such as trades, online AP courses, STEM; special education; senior capstone; preschool programs; MTRS's Trailblazer redesign work; impressed with middle school curriculum; dual enrollment will be a strong option in 11th/12th grades
STAFF: supportive teachers who are willing to help; innovative elementary teachers; staff are somewhat caring
COMMUNITY: supportive community (2); community where everyone knows each other
STUDENT FOCUS: focus on individual student's growth, committed to each student developing their full potential
OPEN TO CHANGE: willingness of admin to consider changes, finally considering changes
ADDITIONAL TOPICS: good physical plant; free lunches; being educated in hometown elementary schools

A closer look at the responses from staff and students shows that they viewed some of the strengths listed in above in **Figure 16** more positively than all respondents overall. This is perhaps an indication that those who have firsthand knowledge of school programs and activities are more positive than those who base their feedback on community perceptions, indirect (second hand) information, or impressions of the schools from past experience.

Staff responses were notably higher than overall responses for these strengths:
- Small class sizes, 61% (vs. 43% overall)
- Caring staff, 60% (vs. 32% overall)
- Good teachers, 47% (vs. 35% overall)
- Beautiful environment and outdoor space, 41% (vs. 34% overall)
- Special education, 20% (vs. 10% overall)

Student responses were notably higher than overall responses for these strengths:
- Athletics, 47% (vs. 15% overall)
- Art, 19% (vs. 4% overall)
- Special education, 17% (vs. 10% overall)

Looking back to the feedback from the opening site visits, the input provided during those two days regarding school and district strengths is consistent with much of what was collected through the community outreach sessions and surveys. Strengths that were emphasized during the site visits were the strong sense of community, small schools and small class sizes, strong staff, great teachers, and the beautiful outdoor settings of the schools. Specific programs such as the HAY program, dual enrollment, and the high school capstone project were also mentioned. Having paraprofessionals in every classroom was viewed as a strength. It was also noted during these visits that the schools serve as social gathering points, are hubs of the towns, and are a source of employment for local residents.

District challenges

Similar to the process for district strengths, feedback on district challenges was gathered from the short open-ended survey, the written and verbal comments of participants in community outreach sessions, and the longer surveys. Collectively, several key themes emerged from the initial qualitative feedback received from comments on the open-ended survey and at the community engagement sessions:

Declining enrollment and student retention: Enrollment is low, especially at the middle and high school. Many students are leaving the districts for private, charter, or technical schools. There is a perception that there are better opportunities and programs in other districts. It's difficult to maintain strong programming with a declining student population.

Finances and costs: The long-term financial sustainability of the district is a challenge. There is not enough funding from the state. It's hard to fund an increased budget in towns that have low median household incomes. School budgets get pitted against other essential town needs such as ambulances and emergency services. Transportation costs are a challenge. Districts are paying for buses that are underutilized.

Curriculum and program limitations: Respondents noted that there are limited AP and honors courses, causing high-achieving students to leave the district. Block scheduling limits the number and frequency of courses that can be offered and scheduling conflicts. There is a lack of foreign language programs at the middle school level. There have been cuts to programs such as drama, arts, shops, home economics, and vocational training.

Negative perceptions: There are negative perceptions about the schools in the community. Some of those perceptions may be based on firsthand experience while others are based on limited information.

Student wellbeing and support services: There are inadequate mental health and behavioral support services, with long waiting lists for services and insufficient resources. There are challenges in addressing the social and emotional needs of students. There are a disproportionate number of high need students (both academically and social/emotional). Teachers need more support and training around social-emotional needs.

School culture and climate: There are issues with student behavior, bullying, and the overall school climate. This contributes to a negative atmosphere and reputation within the community.

Staffing: Comments about staffing included the following. Note that these are comments and are not necessarily accurate:
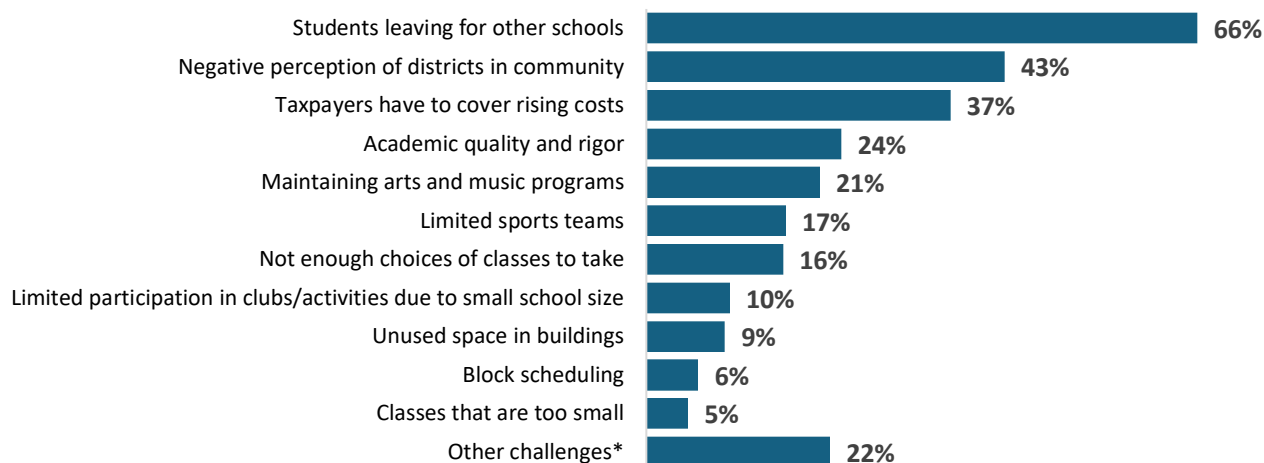- difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel
- paraprofessional salaries are low and teachers are paid substantially more at other districts (Frontier was cited as an example)
- there is not enough staff and the high school is short staffed.
- teachers have heavy workloads and suffer from burnout
- insufficient training for teachers, especially for handling students with social and emotional challenges

At the joint meeting of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school committees in March, challenges that were mentioned were consistent with those identified in the local meetings and community engagement sessions. Enrollment challenges and students leaving the district were brought up as major challenges. Finances and the lack of sufficient, consistent funding were of concern to this group including tension with towns over education costs versus other town needs. They also expressed concern about the financial burden on towns caused partly by inadequate state support and about rising transportation costs.

While small size was noted as a strength by the school committees, it also fell in the challenges category in that there can be difficulty for students in finding a peer group at a small school and being with the same small group of students year after year. These were brought up as challenges that lead some students to go to other schools. Other challenges identified by this group were maintaining high educational quality, misinformation in the community, the limitations of having block scheduling, and the inability to field competitive sports teams.

The combined survey results from community members, staff, and students also reinforced many of the same challenges (**see Figure 20)**. Two-thirds of respondents indicated that students leaving for other schools was among the top three challenges of the districts. Negative perception of the districts in the community (43%) and taxpayers having to cover rising education costs (37%) were the next highest responses. Among the other challenges that were written in by respondents, finances and budget, behavioral issues, and bullying were the most frequently mentioned.

Figure 20: What do you consider to be the top 3 challenges of the district? (n=655 community, staff, and student respondents)

Challenge	Percent
Students leaving for other schools	66%
Negative perception of districts in community	43%
Taxpayers have to cover rising costs	37%
Academic quality and rigor	24%
Maintaining arts and music programs	21%
Limited sports teams	17%
Not enough choices of classes to take	16%
Limited participation in clubs/activities due to small school size	10%
Unused space in buildings	9%
Block scheduling	6%
Classes that are too small	5%
Other challenges*	22%

Other challenges* -- summary of those most frequently mentioned
FINANCES/BUDGET (14): insufficient funding, tighter budgets, rising costs, burden to taxpayers
BEHAVIORAL ISSUES (13) – middle school behavior/culture, need to better manage behaviors
BULLYING (8); TECHNICAL EDUCATION (6): losing student to tech schools, need more trades
TRANSPORTATION COSTS (5); COMMUNICATION ISSUES (4); TOO MUCH FOCUS ON LGBTQ ISSUES/ TOO WOKE (3)
SPECIAL EDUCATION (3): Insufficient, takes energy, leaves little time for average and excelling students
NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS (3): MORE LIFE SKILLS (2)

A closer look at the responses in **Figure 20** above shows that some challenges are of more concern to subgroups. Fifty percent of community members that do not have children in MTRSD and/or HRSD listed *taxpayers having to cover rising costs* among their top three challenges. In comparison, just 33% of school staff, 24% of community members with children in the districts, and 6% of students listed this as a top three challenge. The frequency of responses for *limited sports teams* was 25% for community members with children in the districts, 21% for school staff, 13% for students, and 12% for community members that do not have children. Interestingly, while a higher percentage of families with children and school staff listed this among their top three challenges, fewer students viewed this as a top challenge.

Again, as with district strengths, the challenges raised during the opening site visits were mostly consistent with challenges identified in the community meetings, outreach sessions, and surveys. Declining enrollment was brought up as a major challenge as it means that some classes only have a few people, choices of classes are limited, and the variety of sports teams are limited. Students noted that there are a lot of activities offered at the Mohawk Trail Regional School, but not enough students to fill them. Other challenges that were raised were providing special education given the high level of need in the districts and scheduling constraints at the middle and high school. There was concern that bus rides are already long and could become longer with a new school configuration. The negative community perception of the schools was raised during the site visits and continued to be raised throughout the community outreach process.

Things people don't want to give up

One of the questions on the short open-ended survey and at the local meetings and community engagement sessions was *What would you protect at all costs and could not do without (your non-*

negotiables)? The responses to this question included components of the strengths and challenges that were identified. These themes were identified as non-negotiables:

Small class sizes: Respondents wrote that small class sizes are critical for providing students with individualized attention and addressing their needs effectively. This allows teachers to really get to know students. This approach results in better academic outcomes and stronger relationships between students and teachers.

Having quality staff: High quality, committed teachers and support staff, including paraprofessionals, are viewed as fundamental to the schools' success. Having paraprofessionals in every classroom was mentioned along with having a low student to teacher/para ratio. The staff enhance the learning environment and ensure that students get the best possible education. The Superintendent, Director of Pupil Services, admin, principals, and specialists were also mentioned. Providing learning opportunities for staff and faculty on new and improved methods for academics and social issues are valued.

Comprehensive educational experience: A well-rounded educational experience needs to include strong academics, foreign language, arts, music, sports, extracurricular activities, college and AP classes, and dual enrollment. These components were noted as important to ensuring that students' education nurtures their intellectual and personal growth. The HAY program was mentioned 20+ times, with two people suggesting extending it into middle and high school. Capstones were noted as providing a project-based learning experience that can improve student retention and engagement.

Local schools and sense of community: There is a desire to maintain local schools. It is also important to incorporate the local community into school activities. This approach strengths community bonds, fosters a sense of belonging, and keeps education accessible and community centered. Schools have a strong sense of community and multi-generational support. There were a few requests to not close schools (Colrain, Sanderson, Hawlemont).

Attention to students' mental health and safety: Students' mental health needs to be a priority. There should be adequate mental health staff/counselors and resources to support students who are struggling. The school also needs to provide a safe, secure environment where students feel supported and protected.
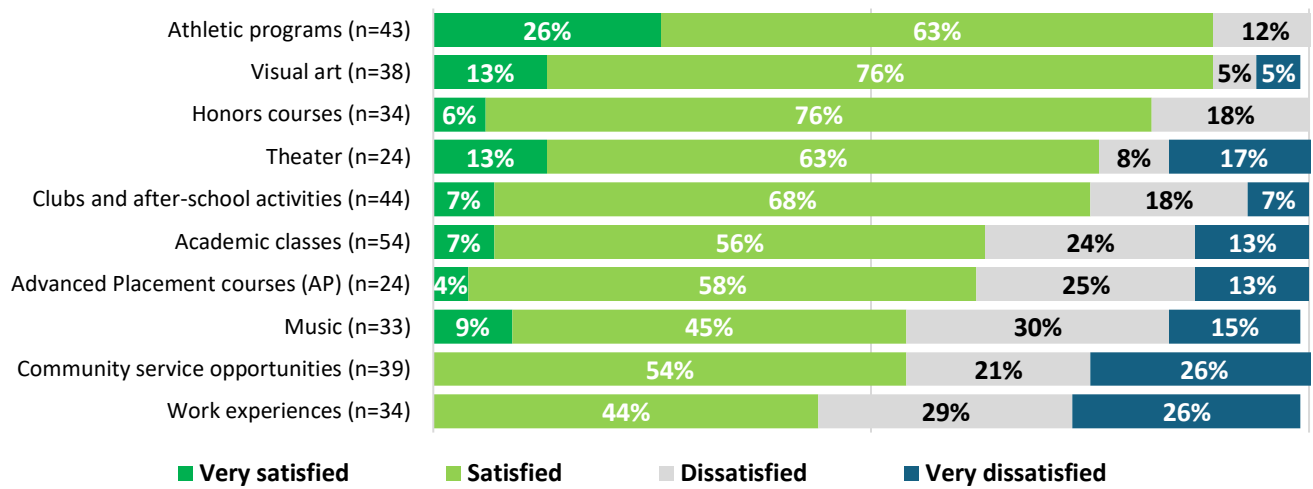
Inclusiveness and diversity: It is essential to promote inclusiveness and support a diverse student body so that students feel valued and respected. There needs to be a commitment to improving equity and educational opportunities for all students.

At the joint meeting of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school committees in March, many of the comments regarding things they don't want to give up centered around educational quality. They would like to maintain high quality educational opportunities for all students with a robust and challenging curriculum. They do not want to see cuts in educational options such as AP and honors classes, enrichment classes, sports, music, and art. Other non-negotiables brought up by school committee members are having community elementary schools, having libraries that support the educational and personal growth of students, and not having students spend excessive times on buses. One member noted that while closing a school might not be a dealbreaker for them, school closures are very painful and could be a dealbreaker for others.

Educational quality and content

Through the surveys, feedback was gathered about the most important components of educational quality and how education at MTRSD and HRSD is viewed. Students in Grades 8-12 were asked about satisfaction levels with various components of the academic and co-curricular offerings at Mohawk Trail Regional School (MTRS) (see **Figure 21**). Satisfaction levels were highest for athletic programs, visual arts, and honors courses and lowest for work experiences.

Figure 21. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following academic and co-curricular offerings at your school? (8th-12th grade students, those that selected "not relevant to me" were removed)

Offering	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Athletic programs (n=43)	26%	63%	12%	
Visual art (n=38)	13%	76%	5%	5%
Honors courses (n=34)	6%	76%	18%	
Theater (n=24)	13%	63%	8%	17%
Clubs and after-school activities (n=44)	7%	68%	18%	7%
Academic classes (n=54)	7%	56%	24%	13%
Advanced Placement courses (AP) (n=24)	4%	58%	25%	13%
Music (n=33)	9%	45%	30%	15%
Community service opportunities (n=39)		54%	21%	26%
Work experiences (n=34)		44%	29%	26%

When asked additional questions related to educational quality and the level of challenge in their courses, MTRS students responded differently by grade level **(see Table 4)**:

- 67% of students in grades 9-12 somewhat or strongly agree that they feel challenged by their courses compared to just 35% for students in Grade 8.
- Students in Grades 9-12 gave more positive responses than those in Grade 8 regarding getting a good education at MTRSD and feeling challenged by their courses.
- Eighth graders have a higher percentage of "neutral" answers for both statements, perhaps indicating uncertainty about these educational quality indicators.

With Grade 8 being one of the years that many students leave the school district, students' opinions about the quality of their education could be one factor that weighs into their decision.

Table 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n= 26 8th graders, 30 9th-12th graders)

	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th
I feel challenged by most of my courses	4%	27%	31%	40%	54%	30%	4%	3%	8%	0%
I am getting a good education at MTRS	8%	13%	35%	53%	27%	20%	15%	10%	15%	3%

Factors related to school culture and climate were also viewed mostly more positively among students in Grades 9-12 compared to Grade 8 (see **Table 5**). There is a higher percentage of strong agreement among 9-12th graders *regarding I have friends/a good peer group, there are staff who care about me,* and *I feel safe at Mohawk Trail* and a higher percentage of somewhat agreeing with *I like the school culture at Mohawk Trail.* Additionally, Grade 8 students responded more negatively than positively for *I feel safe at Mohawk Trail (*36% negative vs 28% positiv*e)* and *I like the school culture at Mohawk Trail* (50% negative vs 19% positive). This finding is notable in that Grade 8 is a time when many students decide to leave the district.

Table 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(n= 26 8th graders, 30 9th-12th graders)

	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th	8th	9-12th
I have friends/a good peer group	38%	50%	38%	27%	15%	10%	0%	7%	8%	7%
There are staff who care about me.	27%	40%	42%	23%	19%	20%	4%	3%	8%	3%
I feel safe at Mohawk Trail.	0%	17%	28%	27%	36%	33%	24%	7%	12%	17%
I like the school culture at Mohawk Trail.	0%	0%	19%	40%	31%	20%	31%	27%	19%	13%

Additional questions regarding educational quality and being challenged were posed to teachers and paraprofessionals (**see Table 6**). Positive responses outweighed negative ones for these questions. These results show the following:
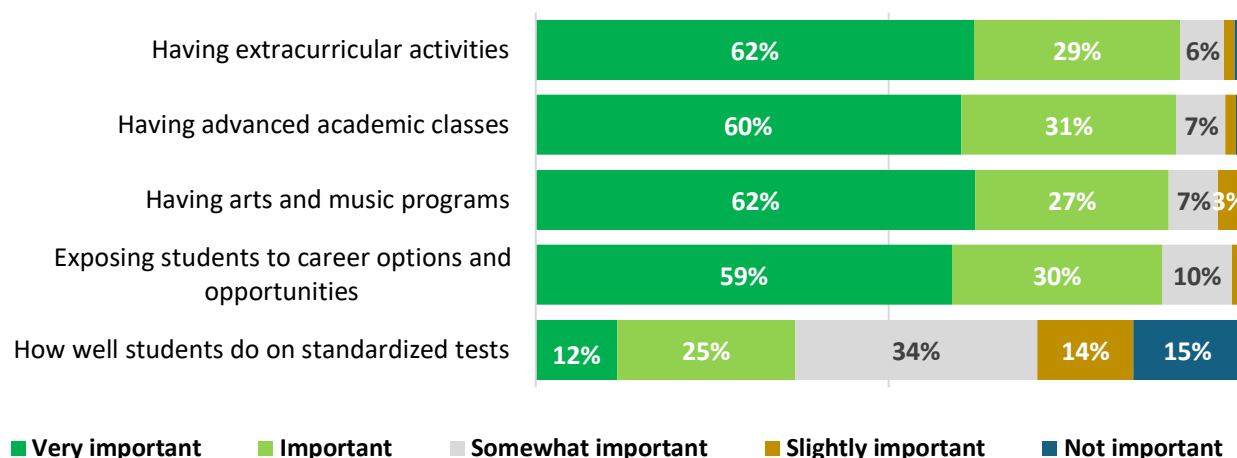
- The percentage of their positive responses was at similar levels to how students in Grades 9-12 responded to the previous questions shown above in **Table 4.**
- 63% of teachers/paraprofessionals somewhat or strongly agree that their school district challenges all students to excel academically.
- 62% somewhat or strongly agree that they curriculum in the building(s) where they work is well rounded and comprehensive.

Table 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(N=94 teacher and paraprofessionals)

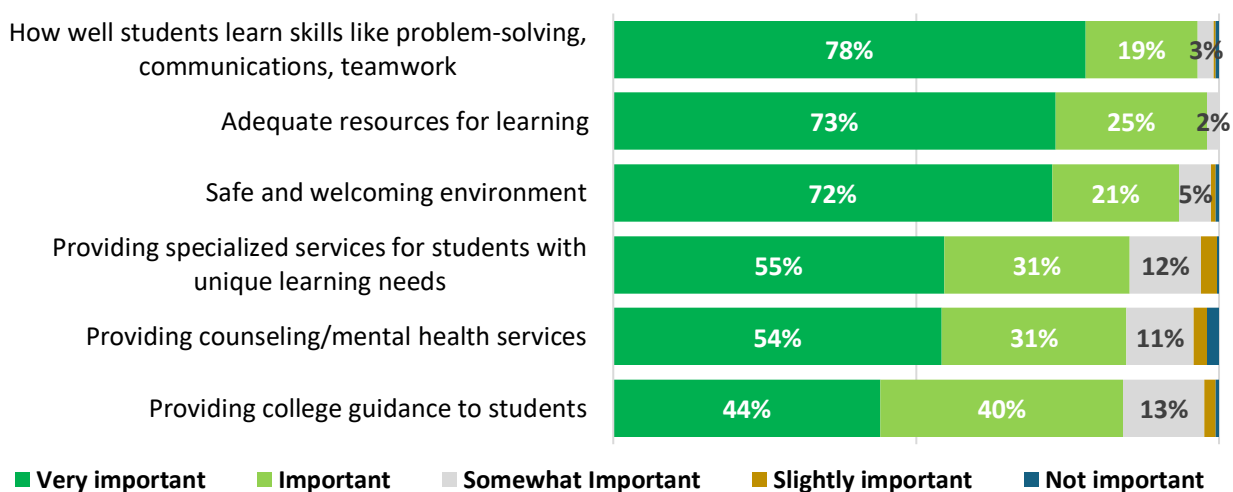|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My school district challenges all students to excel academically.	11%	52%	16%	21%	0%
The curriculum in the building(s) where I work is well rounded and comprehensive.	12%	50%	22%	14%	2%

Community members were asked for their opinions about the importance of factors related to school quality (see **Figure 22**). All the factors in the chart below -- ranging from extracurricular activities and advanced classes to arts and music programs and career opportunities -- were viewed as important or very important by 89-91% of respondents except for how well students do on standardized tests. Only 37% feel that students' performance on standardized texts is important or very important.

Figure 22. How important do you feel the following factors related to the educational experience are in determining school quality? (n=554 community members)

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important
Having extracurricular activities	62%	29%	6%		
Having advanced academic classes	60%	31%	7%		
Having arts and music programs	62%	27%	7%	3%	
Exposing students to career options and opportunities	59%	30%	10%		
How well students do on standardized tests	12%	25%	34%	14%	15%

Most community members also found additional factors related to the school environment and support services to be important in determining educational quality (see **Figure 23**). The items that were viewed as important or very important by the highest percentage of respondents were how well students learn skills like problem-solving, communications and teamwork, adequate resources for learning, and a safe and welcoming environment.

Figure 23. How important do you feel these additional factors related to the educational experience are in determining school quality? (n=554 community members)

	Very important	Important	Somewhat Important	Slightly important	Not important
How well students learn skills like problem-solving, communications, teamwork	78%	19%	3%		
Adequate resources for learning	73%	25%	2%		
Safe and welcoming environment	72%	21%	5%		
Providing specialized services for students with unique learning needs	55%	31%	12%		
Providing counseling/mental health services	54%	31%	11%		
Providing college guidance to students	44%	40%	13%		

Community members, students, and staff were asked for their opinions about how MTRSD and HRSD support students (see **Figure 24**). Comparisons of the different subgroups show that:

- Staff had the highest percent of *agreement or strong agreement* for each indicator.
- Other community members had the lowest percentages of agreement or strong agreement. This subgroup also had the highest percentages of *neither agree nor disagree* responses, likely because they don't have firsthand experience with the schools.
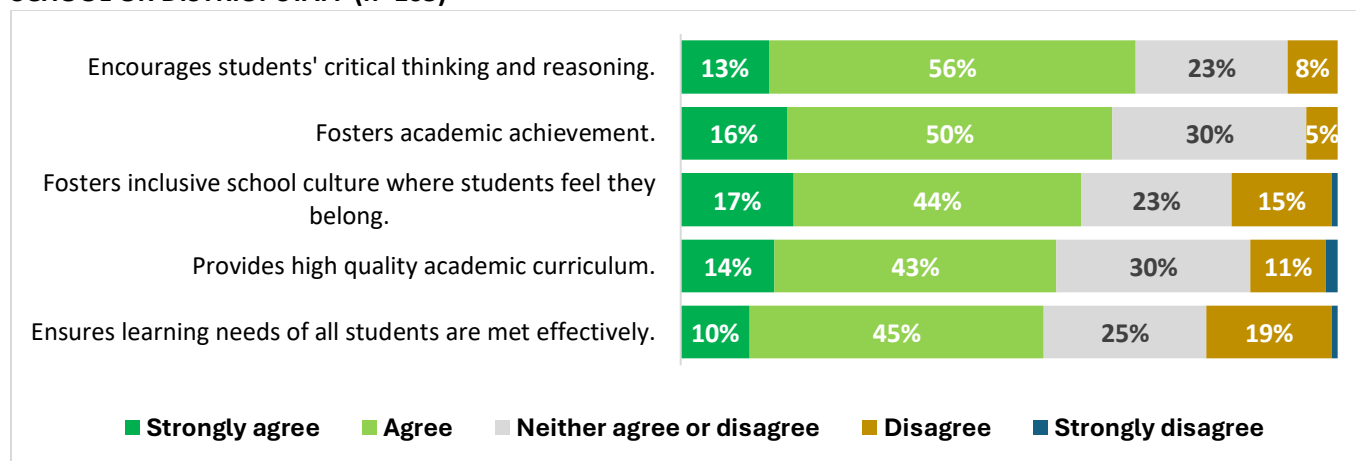
- *Fosters academic achievement* and *encourages students' critical thinking and reasoning* were the top two responses for students, staff, and community members with children in the district.

Figure 24. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how MTRSD and HRSD support students?
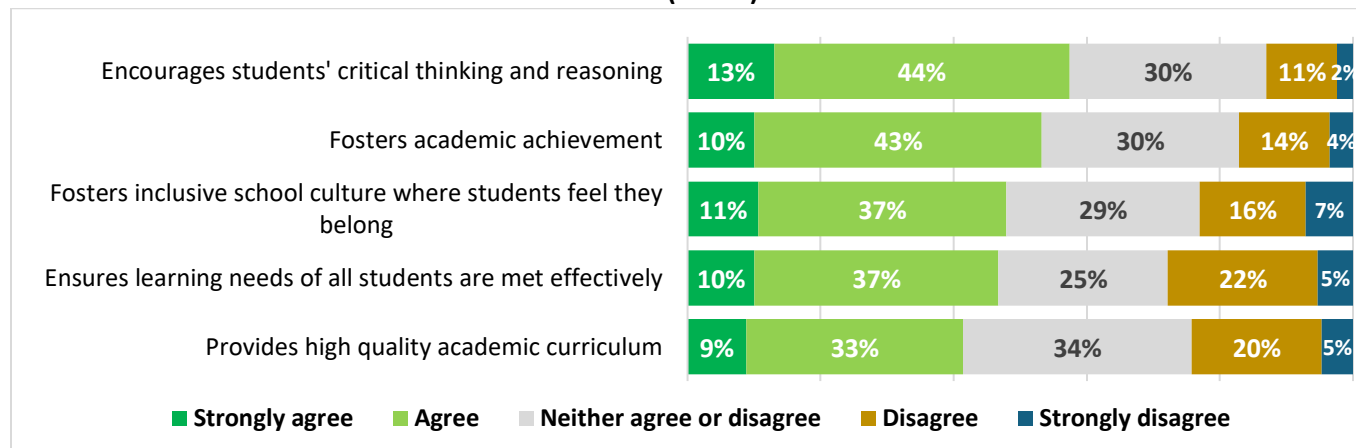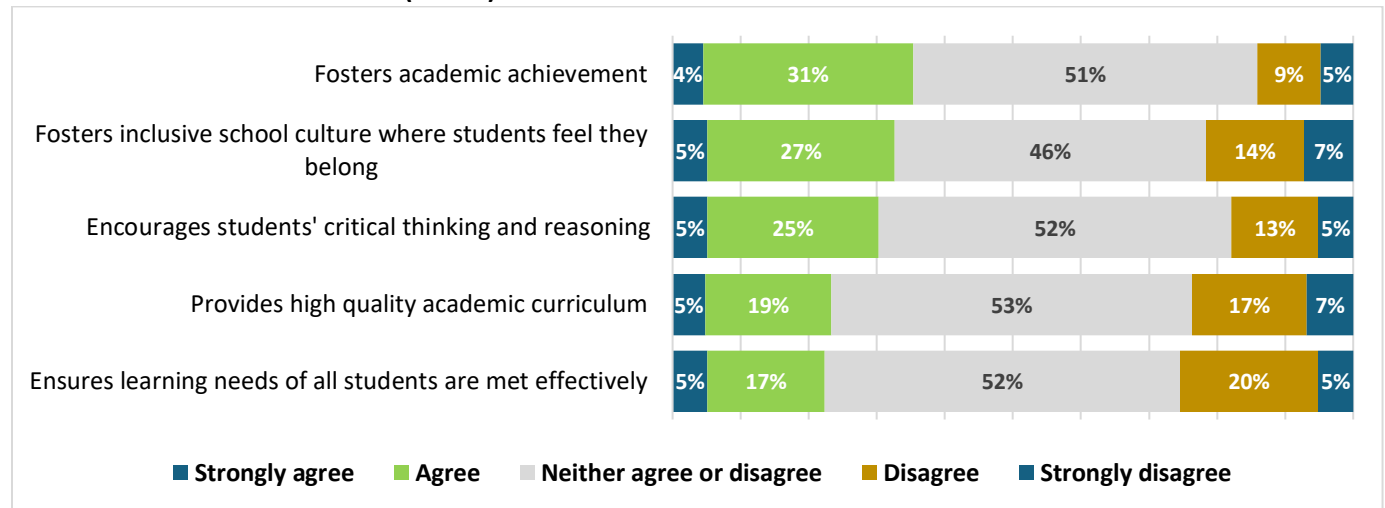
STUDENTS (n=48)
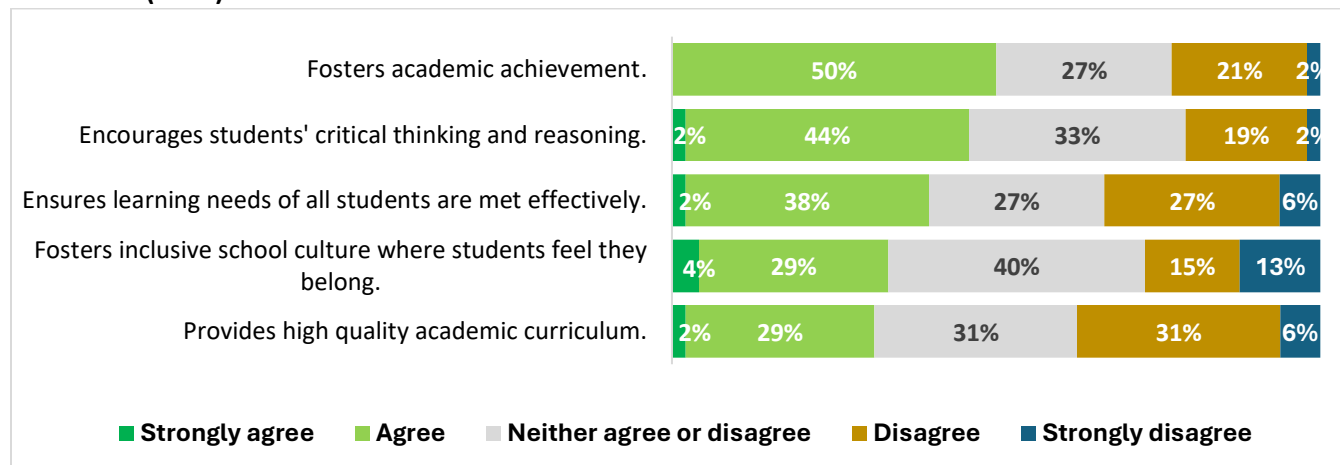
SCHOOL OR DISTRICT STAFF (n=105)

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH CHILDREN IN DISTRICT (n=169)
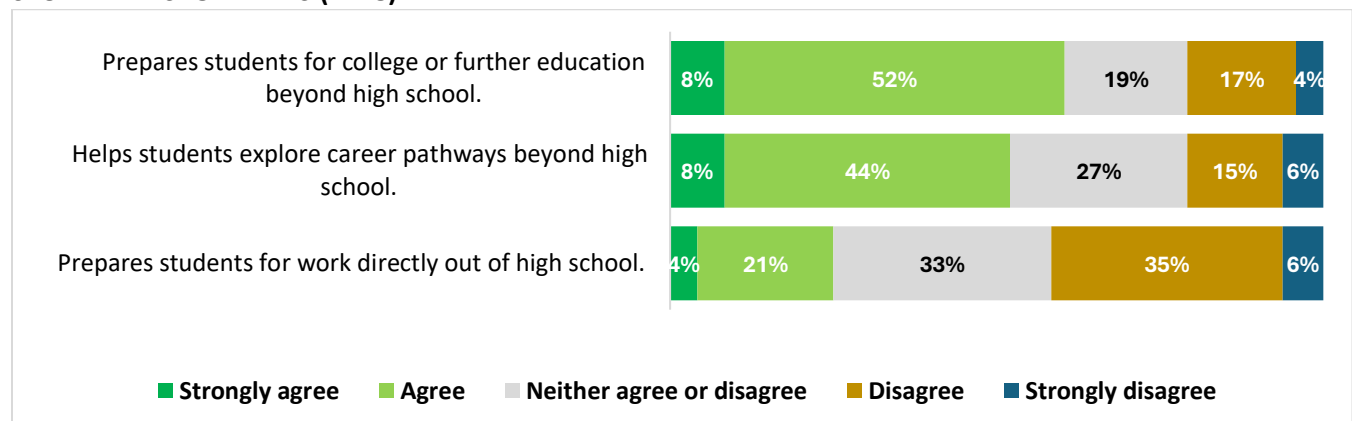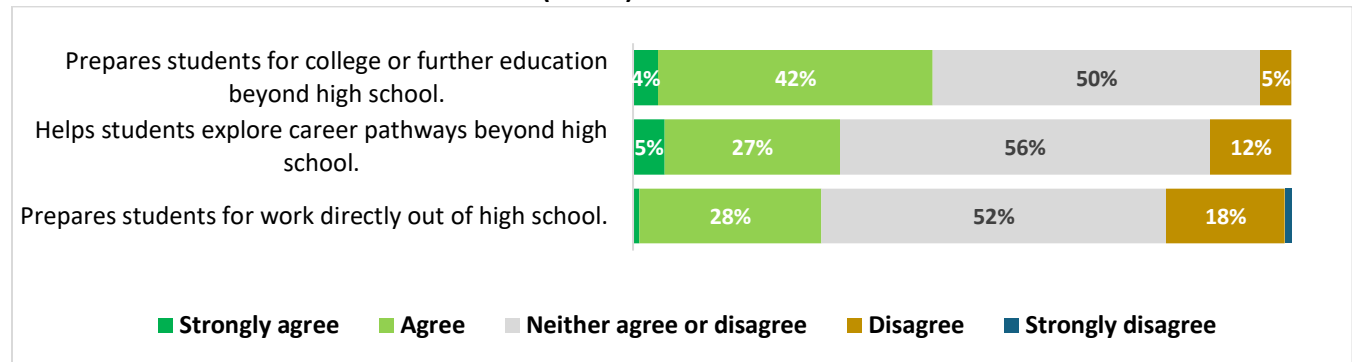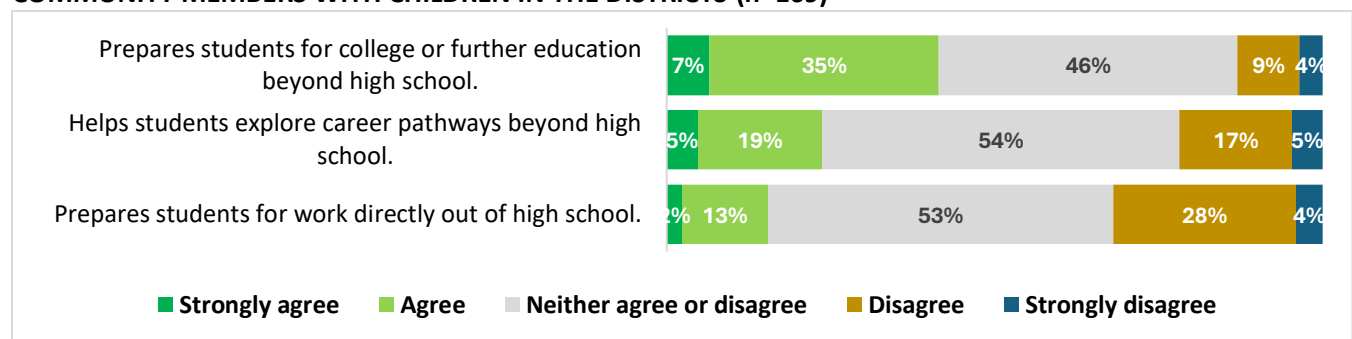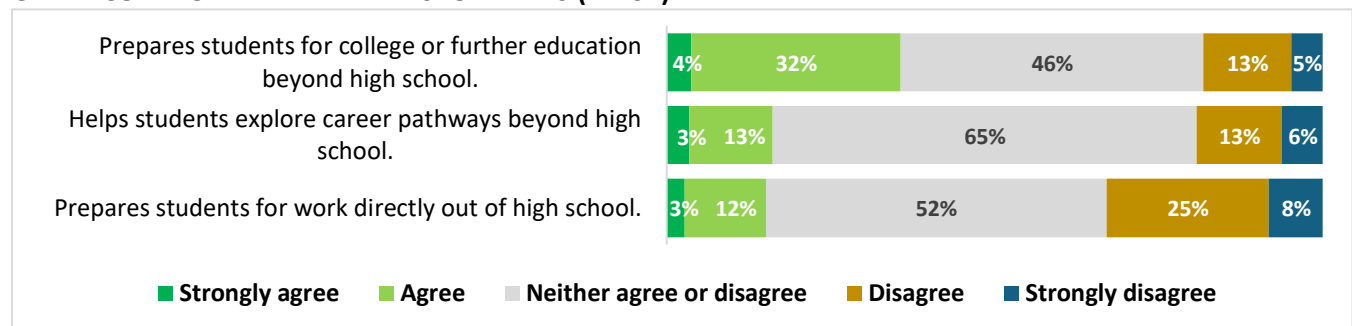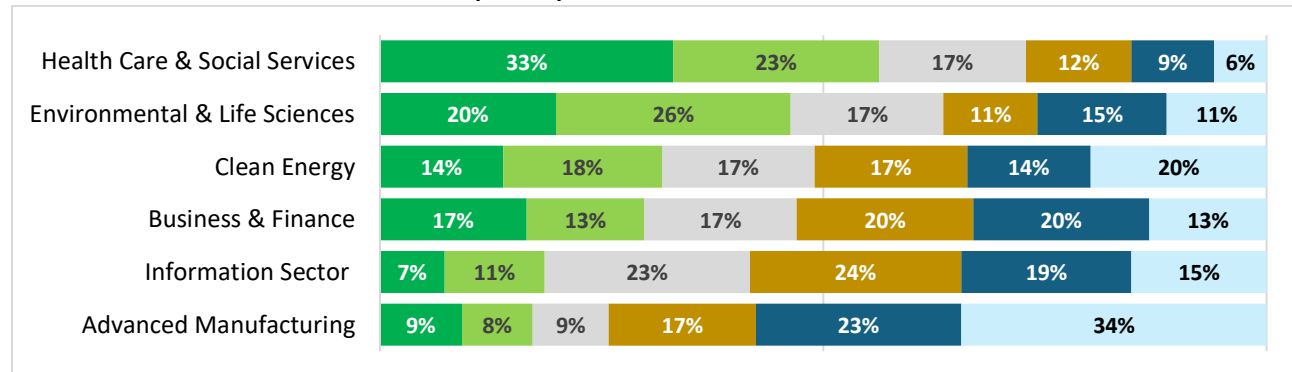
OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS (n=291)

|	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Fosters academic achievement	4%	31%	51%	9%	5%
Fosters inclusive school culture where students feel they belong	5%	27%	46%	14%	7%
Encourages students' critical thinking and reasoning	5%	25%	52%	13%	5%
Provides high quality academic curriculum	5%	19%	53%	17%	7%
Ensures learning needs of all students are met effectively	5%	17%	52%	20%	5%

Community members, students, and staff were asked for their opinions about how MTRSD and HRSD prepare students for their next steps (**see Figure 25).** Comparisons of the different subgroups show that:

- For all subgroups, the highest percentage that agreed/strongly agreed was for preparing students for college or further education while the lowest was for ***preparing students for work directly out of high school.***
- Students had the highest percentage of respondents who ***agreed/strongly agreed*** with each indicator, followed by teachers.
- Other community members had the largest percentage of ***neither agree nor disagree*** responses, again likely because they don't have firsthand experience with the schools.

Figure 25. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how MTRSD and HRSD support students?

STUDENT RESPONDENTS (n=48)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school.	8%	52%	19%	17%	4%
Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school.	8%	44%	27%	15%	6%
Prepares students for work directly out of high school.	4%	21%	33%	35%	6%

SCHOOL OR DISTRICT STAFF RESPONDENTS (n=105)

Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school.
- 4% Strongly agree
- 42% Agree
- 50% Neither agree or disagree
- 5% Disagree

Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school.
- 5% Strongly agree
- 27% Agree
- 56% Neither agree or disagree
- 12% Disagree

Prepares students for work directly out of high school.
- 28% Agree
- 52% Neither agree or disagree
- 18% Disagree

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH CHILDREN IN THE DISTRICTS (n=169)

Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school.
- 7% Strongly agree
- 35% Agree
- 46% Neither agree or disagree
- 9% Disagree
- 4% Strongly disagree

Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school.
- 5% Strongly agree
- 19% Agree
- 54% Neither agree or disagree
- 17% Disagree
- 5% Strongly disagree

Prepares students for work directly out of high school.
- 2% Strongly agree
- 13% Agree
- 53% Neither agree or disagree
- 28% Disagree
- 4% Strongly disagree

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBER RESPONDENTS (n=291)

Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school.
- 4% Strongly agree
- 32% Agree
- 46% Neither agree or disagree
- 13% Disagree
- 5% Strongly disagree

Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school.
- 3% Strongly agree
- 13% Agree
- 65% Neither agree or disagree
- 13% Disagree
- 6% Strongly disagree

Prepares students for work directly out of high school.
- 3% Strongly agree
- 12% Agree
- 52% Neither agree or disagree
- 25% Disagree
- 8% Strongly disagree

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Students, staff, and community members were asked to rank a list of potential Innovation Career Pathways that could be offered at Mohawk Trail Regional School (see **Figure 26).** For both sets of survey respondents, Health Care & Social Services and Environmental & Life Sciences received the highest percentage of first and second choice rankings. The information sector and advanced manufacturing were ranked lower among students/staff respondents compared to community respondents. Clean energy was ranked higher among student/staff respondents compared to community respondents. Interest in business & finance was about the same for both groups.

Figure 26. Please rank the following Innovation Career Pathways from 1 (top choice) to 6 (last choice) as possible additions to Mohawk Trail.

STUDENTS AND STAFF RESPONDENTS (n=151)

COMMUNITY MEMBER RESPONDENTS (n=444)
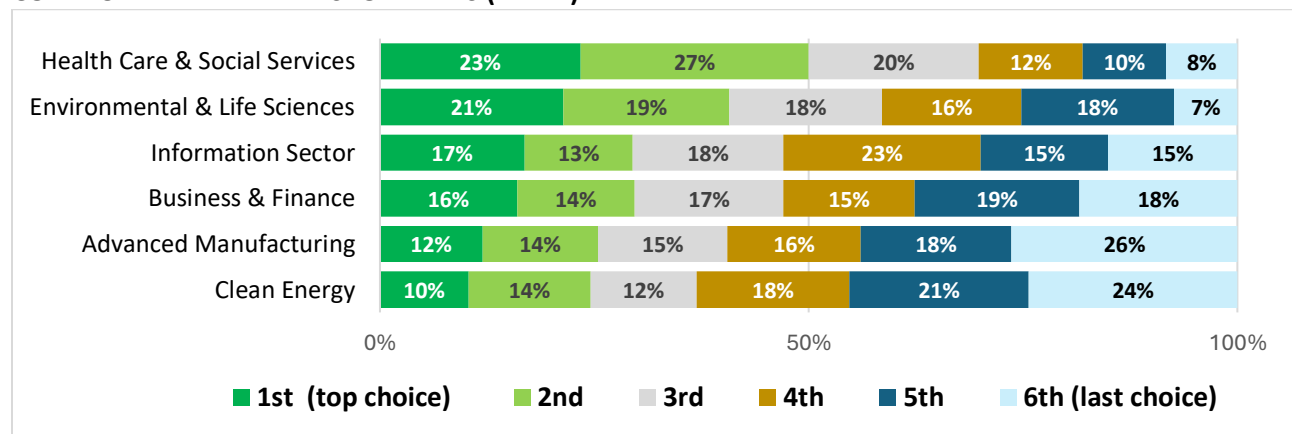
Students, staff, and community members were asked to grade MTRSD and HRSD in comparison to other Franklin/Hampshire County public school districts on average and public-school districts nationally. This question is modeled after a question in the annual PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, which has been administered since 1969. The PDK poll generally shows that people rate their own district higher than districts outside of their area. The results of the 2districts8towns surveys are somewhat different than what is seen nationally, as some subgroups rated the local schools the lowest.

Responses to this question are broken down below by subgroups **(see Figure 27),** showing that:
- Most of the grading for all types of districts were in the B and C range.
- For community members, both with and without children in the district, and for staff, the highest percentage of A grades went to MTRSD and HRSD, although only in the single digits.
- Looking at combined grades of A and B, all subgroups rated other Franklin/Hampshire County Public School Districts higher than MTRSD and HRSD.
- Again, looking at combined grades of A and B, other community members and staff rated MTRSD and HRSD higher than national districts, while community members with children and students rated national districts higher.

Figure 27. How would you grade each of the following?

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH CHILDREN IN THE DISTRICT (n=170)

	MTRSD and HRSD	Other Franklin/Hampshire County public school districts, on average	Public school districts nationally
A-excellent	6%	4%	1%
B	31%	54%	39%
C	36%	38%	46%
D	16%	4%	10%
F-Failing	11%	1%	4%

OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS (n=321)

	MTRSD and HRSD	Other Franklin/Hampshire County public school districts, on average	Public school districts nationally
A-excellent	4%	3%	1%
B	31%	53%	31%
C	40%	38%	49%
D	14%	4%	13%
F-Failing	10%	2%	6%

STAFF (n=111)

	MTRSD and HRSD	Other Franklin/Hampshire public school districts	Public school districts nationally
A-excellent	7%	5%	2%
B	49%	56%	36%
C	32%	33%	49%
D	10%	5%	12%
F-Failing	2%	1%	2%

STUDENTS (n=53)

	MTRSD and HRSD	Other Franklin/Hampshire public school districts	Public school districts nationally
A-excellent	2%	8%	2%
B	43%	49%	55%
C	32%	36%	32%
D	13%	6%	8%
F-Failing	9%	2%	4%

Training and support for teachers and paraprofessionals (n=94 teachers/paraprofessionals)

Teachers and paraprofessionals indicated their satisfaction levels with indicators related to the support, opportunities, and training they receive (**see Figure 28**). Their responses showed:

- two-thirds or more indicated being somewhat or very satisfied with *access to technology*, *quality and quantity of classroom supplies*, and *opportunities to work independently with autonomy*.
- the greatest dissatisfaction was with *opportunities for voices to be heard*, *communication among school staff*, and *communication with district staff*.
- there were a fairly high percentage of neutral responses, especially for *opportunities to serve in leadership roles* (35%) and *communication with district staff* (30%).

Figure 28. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your work in MTRSD and HRSD? (n=94 teacher and paraprofessional respondents)

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Access to and use of technology to support teaching and learning.	35%	41%	20%	3%	
Quality and quantity of classroom supplies (books, materials).	27%	45%	19%	9%	1%
Opportunities to work independently with a level of autonomy.	37%	27%	22%	10%	4%
Opportunities and support for professional growth.	23%	40%	24%	12%	
Opportunities to serve in leadership roles.	29%	32%	35%	4%	
Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.	20%	39%	22%	14%	4%
Communication among school staff.	18%	39%	19%	20%	3%
Opportunities for voices to be heard.	22%	32%	18%	24%	3%
Communication with district staff.	13%	38%	30%	17%	2%

Transportation

As a rural region, it's important to examine current transportation patterns in MTRSD and HRSD and to think about how they could be impacted if any changes are made to the school district. Just under half of student survey respondents travel to school on a bus while just over half get a ride or drive themselves (see **Figure 29).** This reflects a small sample (55 students) and includes only students in grades 8-12. For the districts overall, actual bus data indicates that 70% of students enrolled at MTRSD are bus riders while 45% of HRSD students are bus riders.

Figure 29. How do you MOST OFTEN get to school? (n=55 student respondents)

47%	29%	24%
Ride a school bus or van	Get a ride from someone else	Drive myself
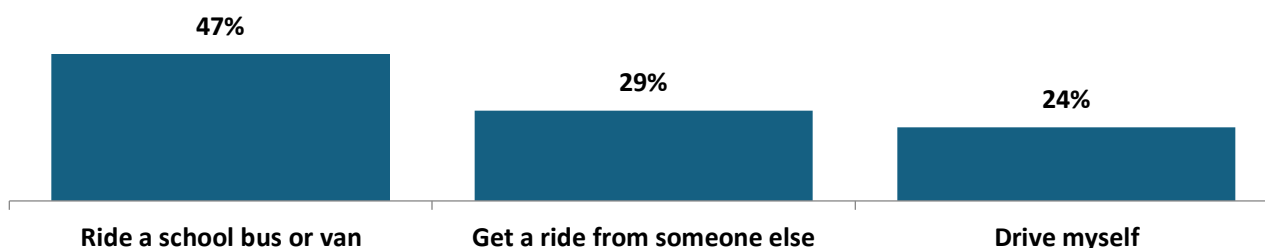
The student/staff survey also showed that 80% of student respondents get to school in half an hour or less (see **Figure 30).** This includes those using all types of transportation.

Figure 30. How long does it usually take you to get to school? (n= 55 student respondents)

35%	45%	13%	7%
Less than 15 minutes	15-30 minutes	31-45 minutes	Longer than 45 minutes
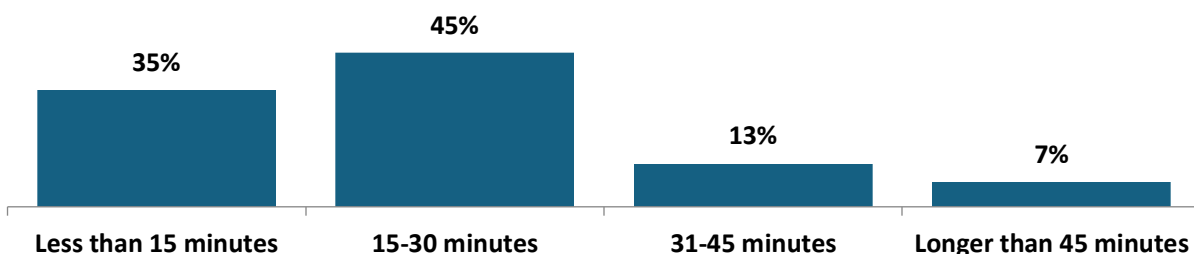
For School Choice survey respondents with students living in MTRSD or HRSD but attending schools outside of the district, the percentage who ride buses is lower (see **Figure 31).** Two thirds of those students get rides from a parent, relative or caretaker, while just 32% take school buses or vans. That would make sense given schools accepting choice students are not required to provide busing. Fourteen percent do not need to be transported as they are either home schooled or boarding at school. Others drive themselves, get rides from friends or siblings, or carpool with other families.

Figure 31. How are your children who attend school outside of MTRSD or HRSD transported to their current school? (n=114 School Choice respondents)

parent/relative/caretaker provides a ride	65%
school bus/van	32%
student drives	19%
friend or sibling provides a ride	8%
other form of transportation/comments:	4%
walks or rides bike	1%
doesn't need to be transported	14%
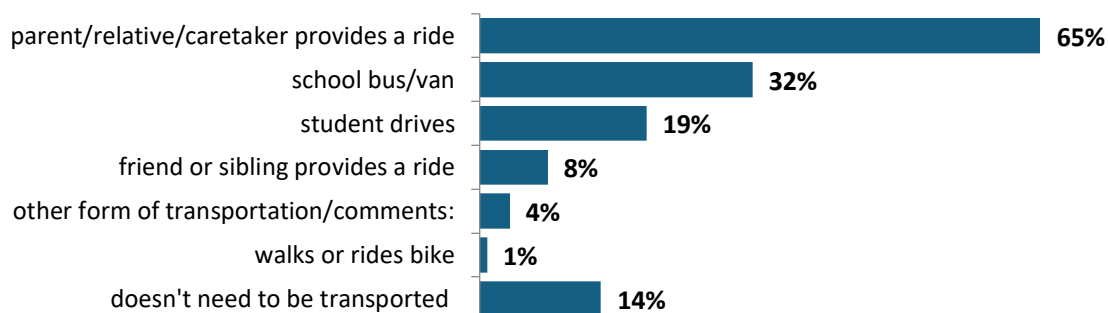
The students represented in the School Choice survey have somewhat longer travel times compared to the student survey respondents (**see Figure 32**). Eighty percent of student survey respondents and 64% of choice students have travel times of 30 minutes or less. It should be noted that the student survey respondents were in grades 8-12 while the choice students represent all grades. Those in grades 8-12 include high school students, who are more likely to be driving themselves and thus have shorter rides.

Figure 32. How long does it usually take them [your student] to get to school? (n=98 school choice survey respondents)

longer than 45 minutes	15%
31-45 minutes	31%
15-30 minutes	43%
less than 15 minutes	21%
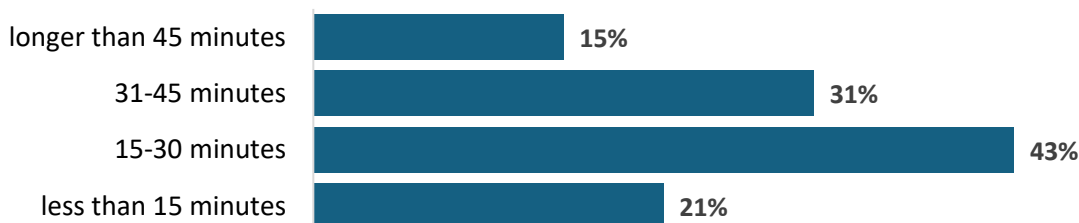
Some families of choice students (8%) commented that it is less convenient to send students outside of the district. However, only 2% indicated that the convenience of transportation options was a factor in their decision to send their children outside of the district or to homeschool them.

The following transportation issues and suggestions were raised in the comments from the community engagement sessions and the introductory short open-ended survey:

- Several people listed transportation costs as a challenge facing the district while others expressed concerns about the length of trips and underutilization of bus service.
- One person noted that as the largest geographical district in Massachusetts, transportation "costs a fortune" and the state does not pay what it should to help with that.
- Two people indicated that having reasonable bus rides, especially for younger students, was non-negotiable while another said cutting back on current bus routes was non-negotiable.
- The suggested options and potential solutions for building upon the districts' strengths while addressing challenges included having a smaller fleet, having smaller buses, having central pickup locations for bus stops, combining elementary and high school buses, supporting legislation that changes transportation requirements, and turning buses into mini libraries.

For some students, transportation issues limit their participation in after school and extra-curricular activities (see **Figure 33**). Not being able to get a ride is an issue for 27% of Student Survey respondents and lack of a late bus is an issue for 11%. From the parent/caregiver perspective, 21% of Community Survey respondents with students at MTRSD or HRSD indicated that lack of a late bus is an issue and 21% indicated that it's too far or inconvenient to provide rides.

Figure 33. Do either of the following transportation issues make it difficult for you (or your student) to participate in after school/extra-curricular activities?

STUDENT/STAFF SURVEY, n=55 student respondents   COMMUNITY SURVEY, N=179 w/students in districts
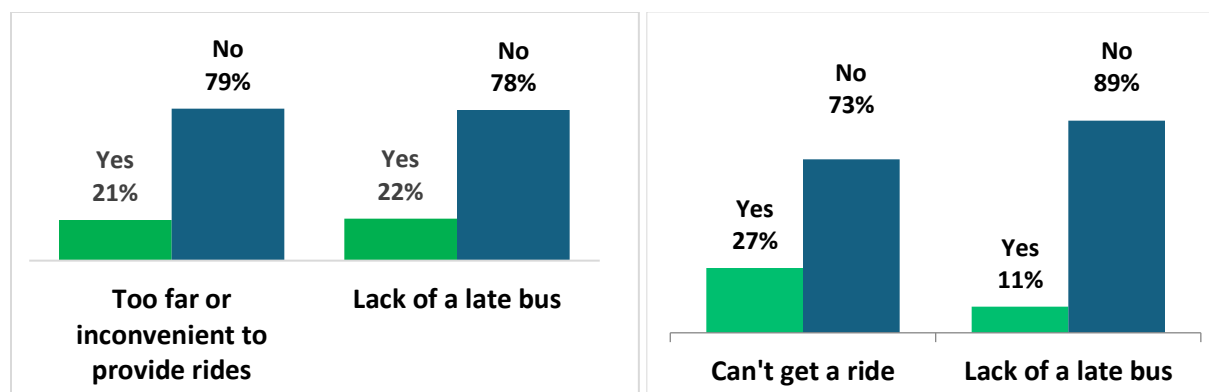
Why students leave (or consider leaving) and where they go

Each of the surveys included questions to gain insight into why students leave the district or are considering leaving the district and where they go when they leave. The School Choice survey offered perspectives from the viewpoint of families living in the MTRSD and HRSD and sending their students to schools outside the districts or homeschooling them. The survey focused on why students left the district and what might have made them stay.

Among the families that responded to the School Choice survey, the top types of schools that their students are attending are public schools outside of MTRSD and HRSD, vocational/technical schools, and private day schools (**see Figure 34**). Other choices families have made are home school, public charter schools, and residential or boarding schools. None of the respondents have students in religious schools.

Figure 34. Do you have one or more children attending any of the following types of schools? (n=123 school choice respondents)

Type of school	Percentage
public school outside of MTRSD or HRSD	29%
vocational/technical school	26%
private day school	23%
home school	13%
charter school	11%
a residential or boarding school	4%
religious school	0%
none of the above (disqualified from survey)	1%
*other type of school	10%

*other types of schools: school within MTRSD or HRSD (4); teen learning center (2); preschool
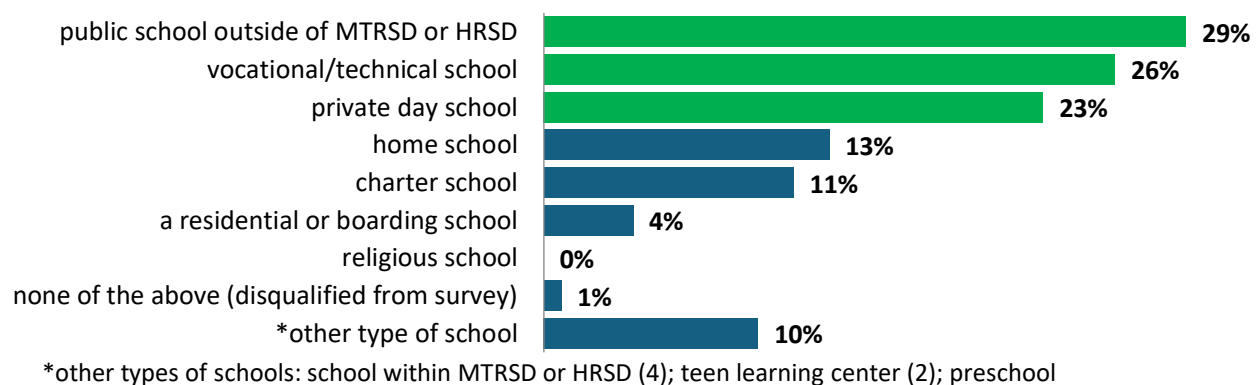
Most students that live in MTRSD or HRSD but attend school elsewhere previously attended one of the schools in the district (see **Figure 35**). The schools that were attended by most are Buckland-Shelburne and Mohawk Trail

Figure 35. Did any of your children previously attend any of the following schools before switching to a school outside of the district or homeschooling? (n=117)

School	Percentage
Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School	43%
Mohawk Trail Regional School	38%
Sanderson Academy	18%
Hawlemont Regional Elementary School	13%
Colrain Central School	12%
Heath Elementary School (now closed)	5%
they did not attend any of these schools in the past	17%
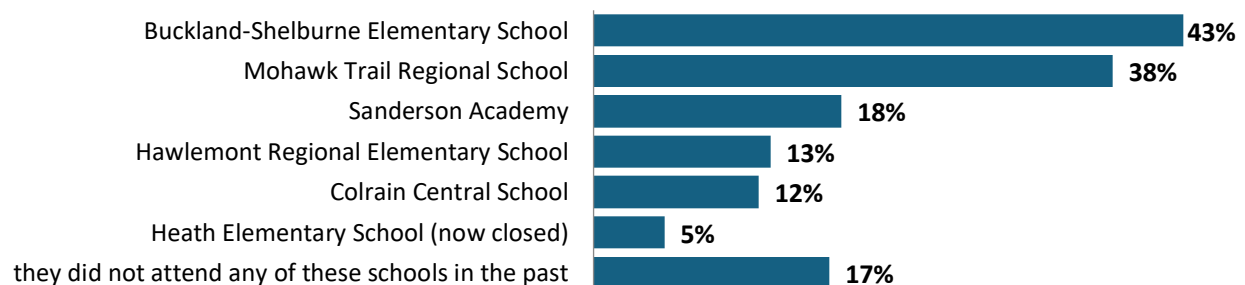
Among respondents to the School Choice survey, the grade levels where most of the movement out of the district occurs are sixth and eighth (**see Figure 36**). This is consistent with enrollment data collected by the research team. These are logical decision points as sixth grade is the end of elementary school, and eighth grade is the end of middle school. Behavioral issues, which are noted throughout the

findings, could also be related to these departure points. In meetings with faculty and staff during the initial school tours, there was feedback that middle school is when the most behavior problems occur.

Figure 36. What was the highest grade your child(ren) completed in the MTRSD/HRSD before enrolling in another school/district? (n=117 school choice respondents)

Grade	Percentage
12th	3%
11th	4%
10th	4%
9th	3%
8th	32%
7th	6%
6th	28%
5th	13%
4th	3%
3rd	3%
2nd	3%
1st	1%
kindergarten	9%
pre-K	7%
did not attend school in MTRSD/HRSD	15%
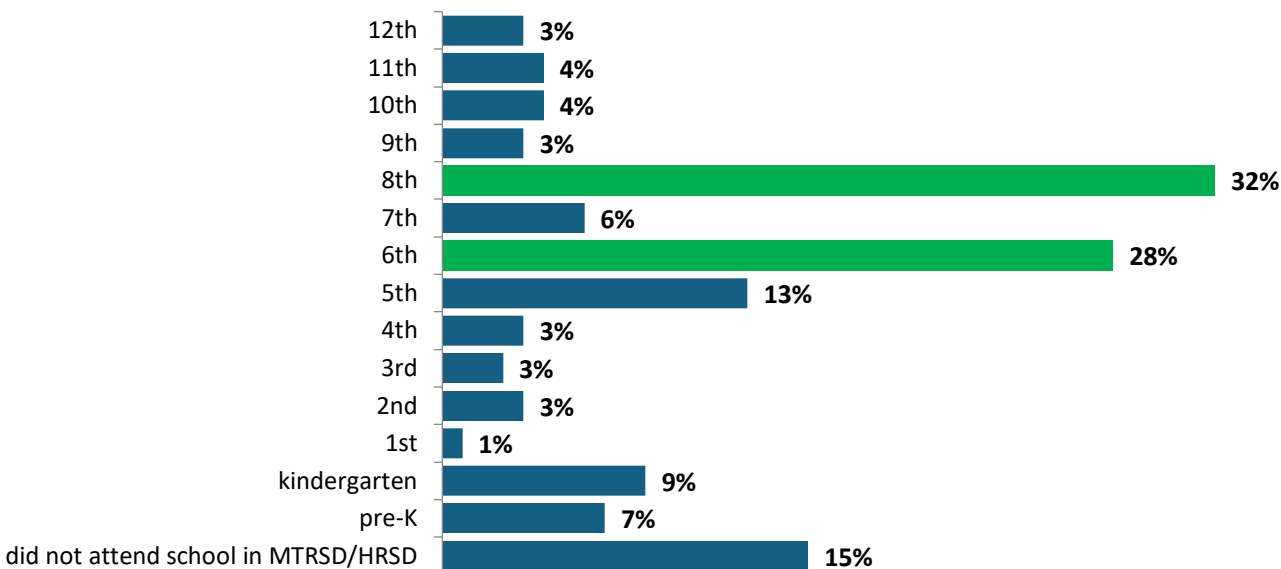
The schools outside of MTRSD and HRSD that school choice students chose to attend are listed in **Table 7.** One of the challenges for MTRSD and HRSD is that there are many options in the region, several of which are in the Greenfield and Deerfield area. The top destinations for those departing after sixth grade were Frontier Regional School, Four Rivers Charter Public School, and the Academy at Charlemont, with a few also going to the Bement School and Eaglebrook School. All but one of those schools begin in grades 6 or 7. For students departing after Grade 8, vocational/technical school is the top destination, with 20 going to Franklin County Technical School and three to Smith Professional and Agricultural School. Other choices after grade 8 are a mix of public and independent schools and homeschooling.

Table 7. Where do your students go when they leave after grades 6 and 8? (n=67 school choice respondents)

Schools attended by those who left district after grade 6	Schools attended by those who left district after grade 8
Frontier Regional School (11) (7-12 public school in Deerfield)	Franklin County Technical School (20) (9-12 vocational/technical public high school In Turners Falls)
Four Rivers Charter Public School (8) (7-12 public charter school in Greenfield)	Frontier Regional School (5)
Academy at Charlemont (7), (Independent school grade 6 – postgrad in Charlemont)	Northfield Mt. Hermon (4). (A boarding and day school grades 9-12 in Gill)
The Bement School (3), (K-9 independent school in Deerfield	Four Rivers Charter Public School (3), (7-12 school in Greenfield)
	Homeschool (3)

Eaglebrook School (3), (a boarding and day school for boys in grades 6-9, in Deerfield)	Smith Professional and Agricultural School (3), (9-12 vocational/technical and agricultural public high school in Northampton)
	Academy at Charlemont (2), (6-post-graduate private school in Charlemont)
	Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (1), (K-12 public charter school in Hadley)
	Another public high school (1)

For students who have left to attend either Franklin County Technical School or Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, nearly one-fourth are in an electrical program, 13% in welding and metal fabrication, 13% in advanced manufacturing, and others in a variety of programs (see **Figure 37**). A few families wrote that their students will attend those schools but are undecided about their program.

Figure 37. If any of your children attend Franklin County Technical School or Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, what program are they in? (n=30)

electrical	23%
welding & metal fabrication	13%
advanced manufacturing	13%
veterinary & animal science	10%
landscaping & horticulture	10%
health technology & medical assisting	10%
carpentry	10%
plumbing & heating	3%
horticulture/forestry	3%
culinary arts	3%
cosmetology	3%
collision repair and refinishing	3%
cabinet making	3%
agricultural mechanics	3%
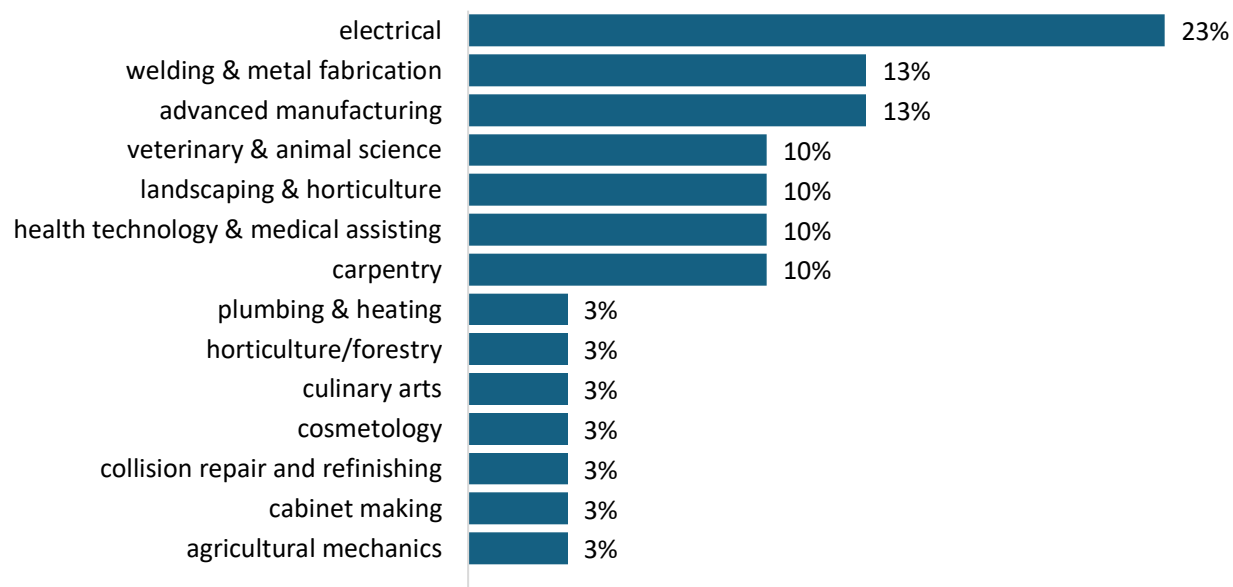
Families responding to the School Choice survey were asked about the factors that influenced their decision to send their students to schools outside of the district. The questions were posed in these five broad categories, which cover different aspects of the total school experience: 1) Academics; 2) Conveniences; 3) School characteristics; 4) School services and activities; and 5) Safety.

In the area of academics, the top four factors influencing decisions to send children out of the district were academic quality, teaching methods, academic rigor, and teaching quality (see **Figure 38**). One third were influenced by course offerings and vocational/technical programs while about one fourth were influenced by programs for advanced students and music and arts programs. Fewer families (under 20%) reported that decisions were influenced by world language instruction, achievement on standardized tests, availability of early college and dual enrollment programs, and special education services.

Figure 38. What factors related to ACADEMICS, if any, most influenced your decision to send your children outside of the district or home school them? (n=111 school choice respondents)

Factor	%
academic quality	65%
teaching methods	54%
academic rigor	51%
teaching quality	48%
course offerings	36%
vocational/technical programs	32%
programs for advanced students	26%
music/arts programs	22%
world language instruction	16%
student achievement on standardized tests	14%
early college/dual enrollment	10%
special education (SPED) services	6%
none of the above	6%
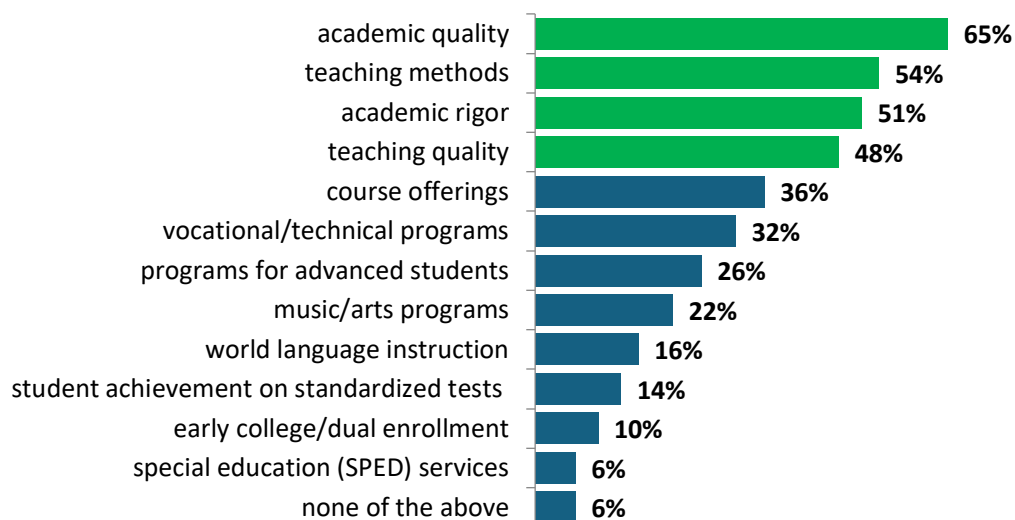
Just under 20% of respondents identified factors related to convenience that influenced their decisions about their children's schooling (**see Figure 39)**. Having their child's siblings and/or friends attend the same school was a factor for a few, as well being closer to the residence or workplace of parents. Preschool programs, transportation options, before and after-school care, and being close to a relative's residence were cited by the lowest percentages as factors related to convenience. Several write-in comments stated that it is less convenient to send students out of the district. Families choose to travel longer to other schools for factors related to academics and educational quality.

Figure 39. What factors related to CONVENIENCE, if any, most influenced your decision to send your children outside of the district or home school them? (n=111 school choice respondents)

Factor	%
child's sibling(s) attend school	9%
child's friend(s) attend school	5%
closer to parent/caregiver residence	5%
closer to parent/caregiver workplace	5%
preschool program provided at school	3%
transportation options	2%
before and/or after-school care onsite or nearby	2%
closer to relative's residence	1%
none of the above	81%
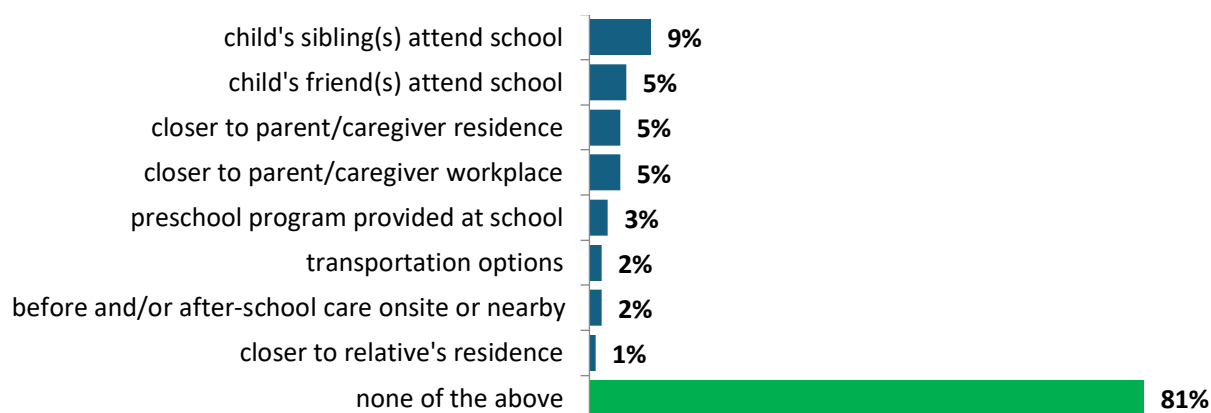
Regarding school characteristics, factors cited by roughly half or more respondents were reputation, school mission and philosophy, and quality and trust of the administrator/principal (**see Figure 40)**. Factors that influenced fewer families (15% or less) were average number of students in a classroom, racial/ethnic composition of the school, graduation rate, the community's fiscal commitment, and, lowest of all, the school's religious orientation.

Figure 40. What factors related to SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS, if any, most influenced your decision to send your children outside of the district or home school them? (n=111 school choice respondents)

Factor	Percentage
reputation	54%
school mission/philosophy	51%
administrator/principal quality and trust	49%
welcoming school community	40%
students in the school are more like my child	34%
size of peer cohort (number of students in grade)	32%
school facilities	27%
average number of students in a classroom	15%
racial/ethnic composition of school	14%
graduation rate	13%
community's fiscal commitment to schools	12%
religious orientation	6%
none of the above	10%
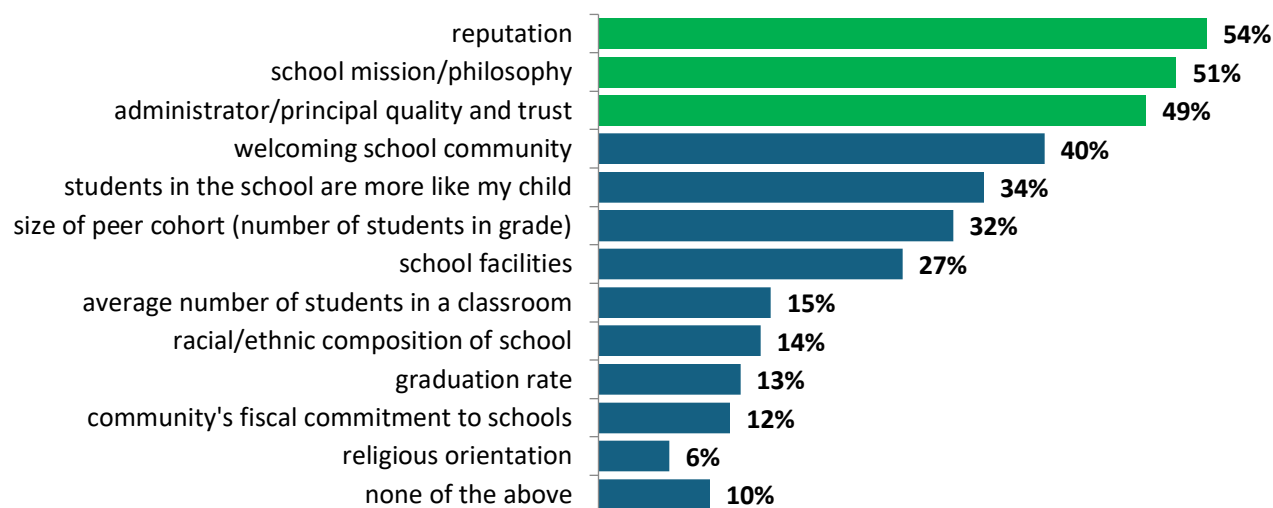
Just over half of the School Choice survey respondents indicated that none of the factors listed under school services and activities influenced their decision to send their child to school in another district (**see Figure 41**). For those who were influenced by these factors, athletics (31%) and students clubs and activities (21%) were the highest responses.

Figure 41. What factors related to SCHOOL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES, if any, most influenced your decision to send your children outside the district or home school them? (n=111 school choice respondents)

Factor	Percentage
athletics (more competitive and/or more choices)	31%
student clubs/activities	21%
college placement services	14%
health and wellness programs	13%
counseling/mental health services	11%
food services	10%
none of the above	55%
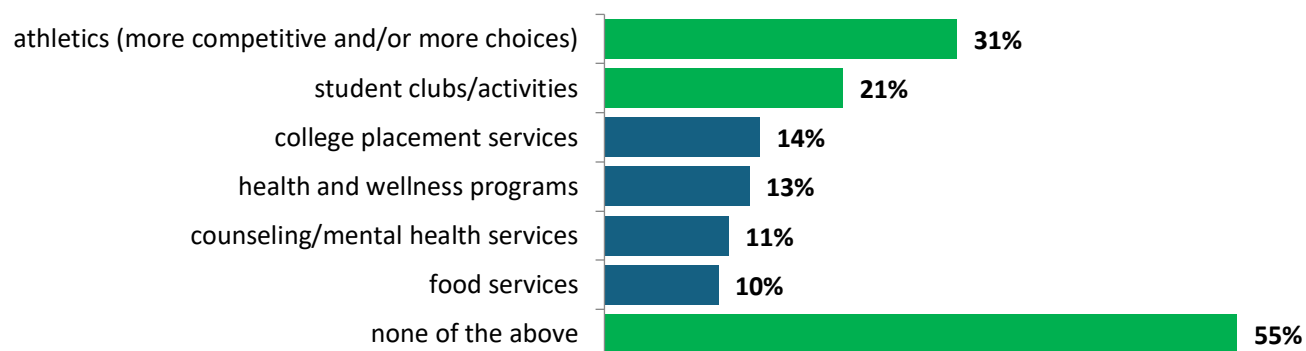
Safety factors influenced the decision to send children to school outside the district for two-thirds of School Choice survey respondents (**see Figure 42**). The top three factors cited, related to safety, were student behavior, bullying and harassment, and classroom management. Discipline and general school safety were also cited by just under one third of respondents. Drugs and alcohol were a factor for just 11% of respondents.

Figure 42. What factors related to SAFETY, if any, most influenced your decision to send your children outside of the district or home school them? (n=111 school choice respondents)

Factor	Percentage
student behavior	50%
bullying/harassment	41%
classroom management	41%
discipline	32%
general school safety	31%
drugs/alcohol	11%
none of the above	34%
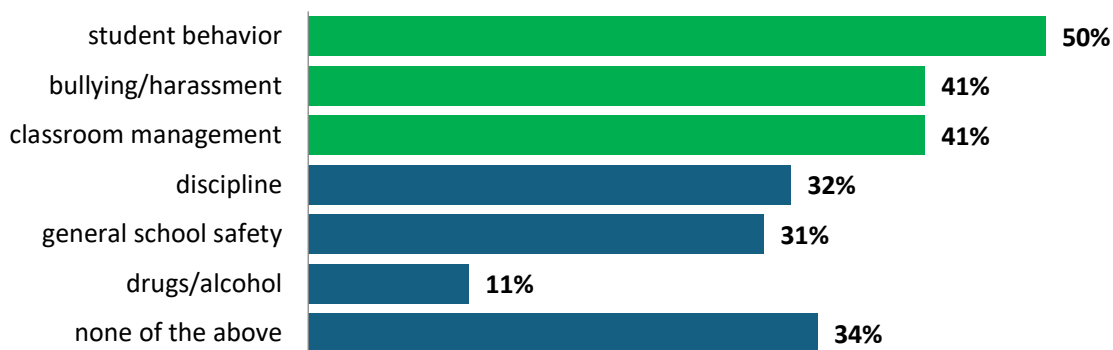
A summary of the five broad categories that influenced decisions of School Choice survey respondents to leave the district is provided below (see **Table 8**). Academics was the category for which the highest percentage of respondents (94%) were able to identify one or more factors influencing their decision to leave the district, while convenience was lowest (19%). Within each of the five categories, the top item that influenced decisions is in the far-right column. Academic quality influenced two-thirds of respondents while, on the low end, siblings attending the school influenced just 9%. Although athletics are sometimes mentioned in the community as a reason why students leave, just 31% indicated that this was a factor.

Table 8. Summary of the five categories that influenced decisions to leave the district

	% of respondents that identified one or more factors influencing decision to leave district	Top item in category
Academics	94%	Academic quality (65%)
School characteristics	90%	Reputation (54%)
Safety	66%	Student behavior (50%)
School services and activities	45%	Athletics (more competitive and/or more choices (31%)
Convenience	19%	Child's sibling(s) attend school (9%)

An open-ended question in the School Choice survey provided an opportunity for families to elaborate on the most important factors leading them to enroll their children in a school outside of MTRSD or HRSD. Academics and school culture/environment were the top themes mentioned in these responses (**see Table 9**). Comments about academics focused on having options that are more challenging along with vocational options, experiential learning, and programs that address special education and individual learning needs. School culture and environment revolved around infrastructure (better facilities, modern technology), people (staff, teachers, peers), and behavior (bullying, culture of acceptance). Other themes were related to extracurricular activities, alignment with values and beliefs, and COVID-19 response and safety. Although most respondents previously indicated that convenience was not a factor, some wrote in comments about convenience factors that contributed to their decisions.

Table 9. Most important factors leading to decisions to enroll children in current school outside of MTRSD and HRSD (n=100 school choice respondents)

Academics	Academic rigor, quality of education, better and more challenging academics, access to AP and other college track courses, separate honors and standard courses, specialized programs, vocational options, special education needs, experiential learning model, project-based learning, individualized instruction
School culture and environment	Better facilities, modern technology, supportive staff, committed/caring teachers, more disciplined atmosphere, supportive staff, more disciplined atmosphere, larger peer group, larger class sizes, more friendship options, welcoming community, culture of acceptance, less bullying, not liberal/woke, culture of acceptance
Extracurricular activities	Athletics (more competitive), elite basketball program, football, arts and music programs
Alignment with values and beliefs	Lack of inclusivity, religious reasons, values align more with school, social/political agendas more in line with our values
COVID-19 response and safety	Concerns about remote learning, safety protocols, handling of disruptions in education, behavioral outfall from so much time out of school
Convenience	Parent works at school child attends, school is where child wants to live in future, better school hours (no half-days), siblings go to school, it's close. Convenience was a factor for some, but many said the it was not convenient to send students to other schools.

Data was also gathered about the likelihood that students in the district will leave before 12th grade and reasons behind their decisions. The student/staff survey had 25 responses from teachers and paraprofessionals who have children attending school in MTRSD or HRSD. They have mostly children attending younger grades (**see Figure 43**).

Figure 43. What grade(s) are your children in who attend MTRSD or HRSD? (n= 25 teacher and paraprofessional respondents)
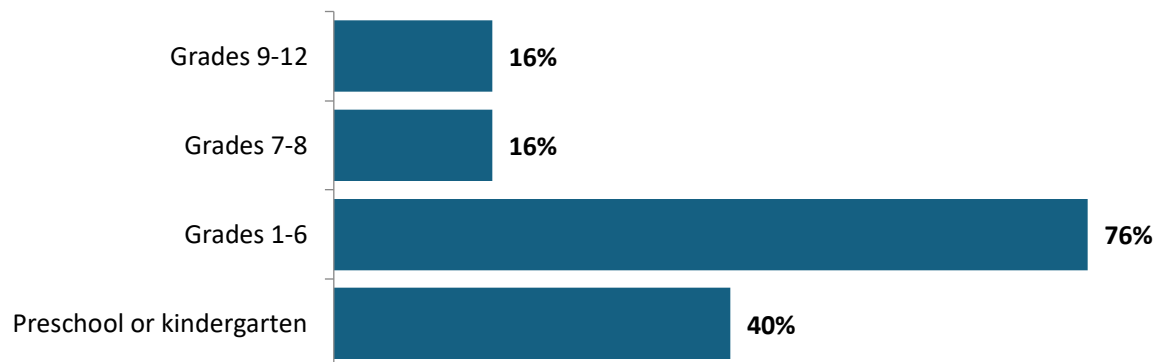
Among these 25 teachers and paraprofessionals with children in the district, nearly half indicated that it is somewhat or very likely that their children will remain in MTRSD or HRSD through grade 12, 28% indicated that it is somewhat or very unlikely and 24% are unsure (**see Figure 44).** The same question was posed to community survey respondents who have children attending school in MTRSD and/or HRSD (**see Figure 44**). Their responses were similar to those of the teachers/ paraprofessionals, although a higher percentage indicated that remaining at MTRSD or HRSD is very unlikely (20% vs. 12%).

Figure 44. How likely is it that your children will remain in MTRSD through 12ᵗʰ grade?

teachers and paraprofessionals (n=25)

Response	Percent
Very likely	28%
Somewhat likely	20%
Not sure	24%
Somewhat unlikely	16%
Very unlikely	12%

community members with children in the districts (n=179)

Response	Percent
Very likely	25%
Somewhat likely	21%
Not sure	20%
Somewhat unlikely	14%
Very unlikely	20%
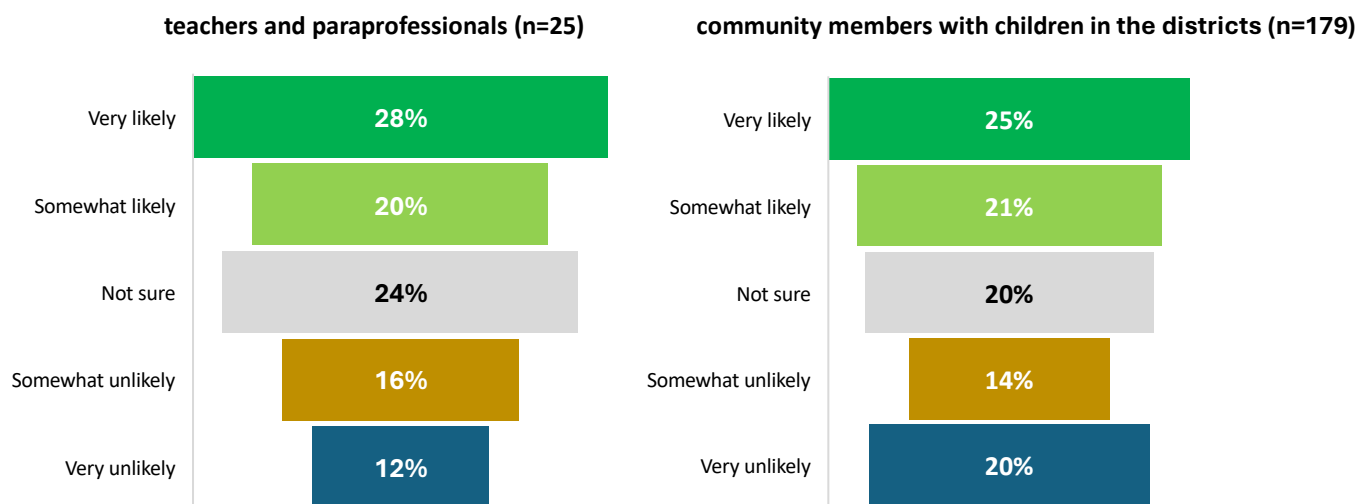
Among the students responding to the student/staff survey, 80% in grades 9-12 and 31% in grade 8 indicated that they anticipate remaining at Mohawk Trail Regional School through the end of grade 12 (**see Figure 45**). While just 7% of students in grades 9-12 are unsure, nearly one-third of eighth graders are unsure about this decision. This is likely a reflection of eighth graders being at a decision point between middle and high school.

Figure 45: Do you anticipate remaining at Mohawk Trail through the end of Grade 12?

	Yes	No	Not sure
8th grade, n=26	31%	38%	31%
9th-12th grade, n=30	80%	13%	7%
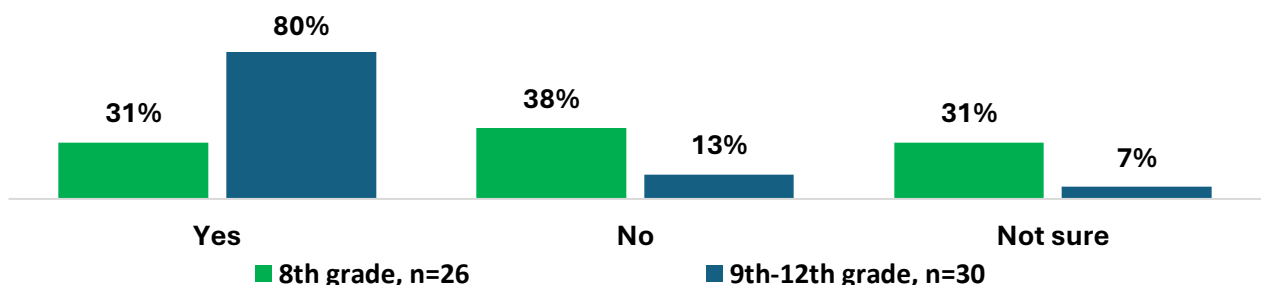
Student respondents who indicated that they were planning to leave or not sure provided these responses regarding where they might be attending school:

OTHER SCHOOLS
- Franklin County Tech (8)
- Homeschool
- Northampton High

STILL DECIDING OR LEAVING THEN RETURING
- Don't know (2)
- A Springfield school, tech, or stay here
- Franklin Tech, Smith, or Valley West
- Military (maybe); Wahconah (maybe)
- Want to go somewhere else

As noted above in **Figure 36**, 13% of respondents to the School Choice survey indicated that they have one or more children who are home schooled. Among the homeschool families, between one third and three quarters are interested in arrangements that would allow them to participate in sports, music/arts programs, clubs, part-time academics within MTRSD and HRSD (see **Figure 46**). One-third of the respondents are not interested in any programs. The other programs that some respondents are interested in are science, gardening, and forestry/hiking.

Figure 46. Programs that homeschool families might be interested in (n=22 school choice respondents)
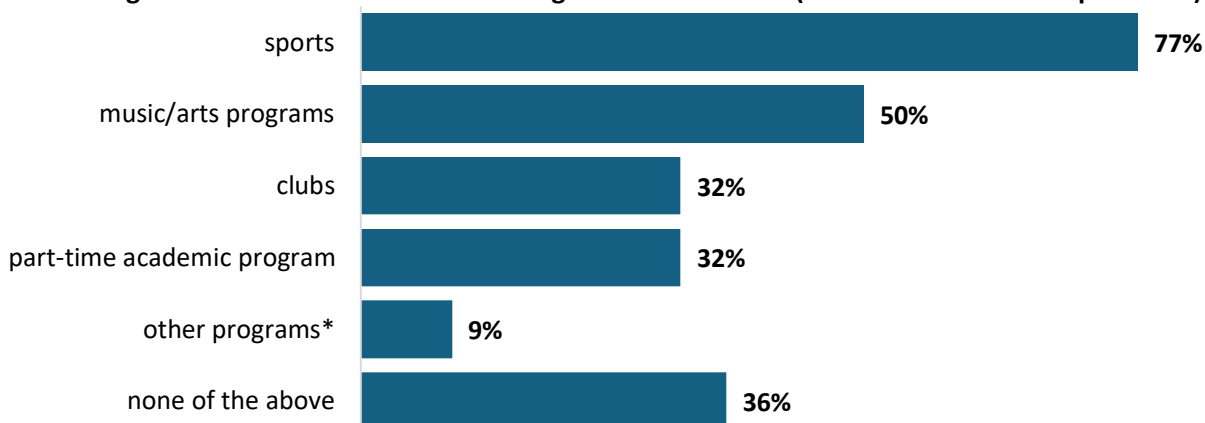
Feedback from the community outreach sessions and short open-ended survey included the following suggestions regarding homeschooling:
- Consider hybrid homeschooling (this is a mix of homeschool and in-school classes/programming)
- Conduct outreach to homeschool families for additional interaction with the schools in areas such as art, music, gym, and athletics

What might make students stay

In addressing the issue of declining enrollment and students leaving the district to attend other schools, it's important to consider what can be done or could have been done to make them stay. While some students and their families indicate they definitely plan to leave, others are more undecided.

Respondents to the School Choice survey were asked what the districts could have done to change their mind about sending their children out of the district or homeschooling them (**see Table 10**). The top two themes of their responses were related to academic quality and rigor and behavioral issues and discipline. These responses stressed points that have been made throughout the research about having higher academic standards and more challenging coursework along with vocational options. Behavioral issues were also a theme, including the need to address disruptive student behavior and have a safer, more respectful learning environment.

Other themes were transparency and communication, diverse offerings in areas such as arts, vocational classes, and sports co-ops, and issues related to school leadership and management. It's not clear that comments about school leadership refer to the current leadership, as the survey did not require respondents to indicate how long ago their students left the school and there have been changes in the past four to five years in the district's superintendent and some of the principals. Some mentioned that they would like the district to be more engaged with families and supportive of students' learning

struggles. Regarding diversity and inclusion, some respondents want to see a more inclusive culture while others feel there is too much emphasis on social and political activism over academics.

Table 10. Things the districts could have done to change families' minds about sending their students out of the district or homeschooling (n=100 school choice respondents) *

Academic quality and rigor	Higher academic standards, separate honors classes, more challenging coursework, advanced classes, focus on real-life skills, more shop classes, better preparation beyond 6th grade, more accountability on homework
Behavioral issues	Lack of discipline, inconsistent enforcement of rules, disruptive student behavior, bullying, the need for a safer and more respectful learning environment
Transparency and communication	Better communication from district, transparency about school policies and decisions, responsiveness to parent concerns, honest dialogue about school issues, have information sessions/open houses for MTRS early in school year
Diverse offerings	More arts programs, vocational and life skills classes, hands-on electives, special education services, co-op for sports,
Leadership	Changes in school leadership, administrative management, staff hiring practices that support students and address their needs. Parents would like their feedback taken seriously. Inconsistency in discipline and handling of bullying incidents.
Engagement and support	District should be more engaged with families, supportive of learning struggles, responsive to community concerns
Diversity and inclusion	Some noted too much focus on social and political activism over academics, others would like a more inclusive school culture that celebrates diversity and respects individual identities

***The School Choice survey did not require families to indicate the year that their students left the district. Issues listed in this Table may reflect the past rather than the present.**

In the community survey, respondents who have students attending school in MTRSD or HRSD provided feedback about what factors will most influence their decision to have their students remain in the district schools through 12th grade. The themes that emerged among this group overlapped with some of the themes from the School Choice survey and also included some additional ones (**see Table 11**).

Table 11. Factors that will most influence families' decision to have their student(s) remain in the districts through grade 12 (n=146 community respondents with children in district)

Academic quality and selection • Availability of advanced and AP courses • Quality of academics, challenging opportunities • Support for all types of learners • High academic expectations and standards • Access to variety of electives and courses, including shops/tech	**Behavioral issues** • Safe and supportive environment, free from bullying • Positive social dynamics • Effective behavioral management • Consequences for inappropriate student behavior • Students' happiness and comfort with environment
Preparation for the future • Preparation for college, vocational training, or workforce • Real-life skills and vocational training opportunities	**Extracurricular activities** • Availability and quality of sports programs • Arts, theater, and music programs • Support for students' specific interests
Specialized support • Adequate special education support • Mental health support and programs • Support for individual learning styles and aspirations **Leadership and community** • Leadership that is engaged, supportive, and welcoming • Effective communication between admin and families • Strong sense of community	**Other factors:** • Public perception and reputation of school district • Satisfaction with school facilities and resources • Opinions on current issues related to inclusivity and social agendas • Convenience, proximity to home • Consistent peer group • Family values, alignment with school culture

Having high quality academics along with challenging courses and support for all types of learners was a top theme along with having a safe and supportive school environment with student behavior managed effectively. Consistent with the School Choice survey, behavioral issues are a factor in determining whether to stay. Leadership is also a factor – families want to have leadership that is engaged and supportive and communicates well with families. Themes that were mentioned by community members but did not come up as consistent themes in the School Choice survey were proximity to home, family values, having a persistent peer group, and the public perception and reputation of the school district.

Options for a sustainable future

Through the community engagement sessions and surveys, feedback was gathered regarding what options should be considered to make MTRSD and HRSD more sustainable. This included both multiple choice survey questions where respondents selected options that they would like to see explored further and open-ended questions in surveys and at community engagement sessions where respondents could suggest options to consider.

Among students, staff, and community member survey respondents, the top four options on their list of what should be explored further to strengthen the school districts were the same, including: 1) having more vocational/technical classes; 2) strengthening community partnerships and programming; 3) using extra space for community services or programs; and 4) becoming a leader in innovative programming/teaching (see **Figure 47**). Expanding virtual class offerings had the lowest level of support at 20% in the student and staff survey and 24% in the community survey.

Figure 47. Interest level in seeing options for strengthening the school districts explored further. (n=151 student and staff members)

Have more vocational/technical classes	83%	7%	11%
Strengthen community partnerships and programming	79%	6%	15%
Use extra space for community services or programs	58%	15%	26%
Become a leader in innovative programming/teaching	53%	14%	33%
Reconfigure grade spans	40%	38%	22%
Merge or consolidate some of the schools	39%	30%	30%
Create one or more "themed" schools	36%	26%	38%
Expand virtual class offerings	20%	40%	40%

	Explore further	Should not be explored further	Not sure how I feel about this
Have more technical/vocational classes	82%	7%	11%
Strengthen community partnerships/programming	73%	5%	22%
Use extra space for community services or programs	70%	12%	18%
Become a leader in innovative programming/ teaching	57%	14%	29%
Merge or consolidate some of the schools	49%	22%	29%
Create one or more "themed" schools	40%	28%	32%
Reconfigure grade spans	35%	36%	30%
Expand virtual class offerings	24%	44%	32%

■ **Explore further**　　■ **Should not be explored further**　　■ **Not sure how I feel about this**

A closer look at the survey data shows that some options were supported more by individual subgroups. **Table 12** shows the percentage of respondents that indicated the option should be explored further. For the *merge or consolidate some of the schools* option, community members who don't have children in the district were the most supportive while students were the least supportive. For the *reconfigure grade spans* option, school staff were the most supportive and students, again, the least supportive. The *use extra space for community services or programs* option was supported by more than half of all subgroups, with other community members who don't have children in the schools the highest and students the lowest.

Table 12. Subgroup breakdowns of possible options for strengthening the school districts.
 The percentages indicated are those who want to explore the option further.

Breakdown *of merge or consolidate some of the schools:*
- Other community members, 55%
- School staff, 40%
- Community members with students in districts, 38%
- Students, 30%

Breakdown of *reconfigure grade spans:*
- School staff, 48%
- Other community members, 38%
- Community members with students in districts, 29%
- Students, 23%

Breakdown of *use extra space for community services or programs:*
- Other community members, 78%
- School staff, 61%
- Community members with students in district, 57%
- Students, 53%

These nine key themes emerged as sustainability options to consider from the qualitative data from the community engagement sessions and surveys:

Reconfiguring or consolidating schools: There were various suggestions about elementary school configurations. Unless otherwise noted, each suggestion was made by one person. Suggestions pertaining to the Hawlemont School were to have multi-grade classrooms or consolidate the school into the newer part of the building, using the old Charlemont High as a town building. There were two suggestions to move the sixth grade to the middle school and two suggestions to close Colrain. Other suggestions were to keep Buckland-Shelburne Elementary in place while combining the other elementary schools in a different building, combine all the elementary schools under the direction of one principal, or add on to Mohawk Trail Regional School to create a regional elementary school. At the joint MTRSD and HRSD school committee meeting, there was discussion about reconfiguring grades, with the sixth grade potentially moving to MTRS.

Expanding career and technical education: There were seven suggestions about expanding technical education, including bringing back shops. Two people suggested the districts provide better access to outdoor industry and careers. There were also suggestions about partnering with trade schools, having more options for tech-related electives and internships, and having additional career pathways.

Community partnerships and engagement: There is interest in increased collaboration with local organizations, community colleges, and other entities to enrich educational experiences and build ties with the community. Specific individual suggestions were to involve communities in the schools, work with existing entities on community-wide solutions, have more community events, focus on community service, and reach out to the community to bring in resources in the arts and other fields. There was also a suggestion to have schools serve as community hubs, for example putting a senior center at Mohawk Trail Regional School.

Transportation and operational efficiency: Six people expressed concern about the costs of transportation. Transportation suggestions included consolidating bus routes, using smaller buses, having safe and convenient transportation, and decentralizing transportation services. One person noted that a centralized campus could reduce transportation needs and costs while another noted that transportation is expensive, and travel times are long. There was a suggestion for each school to have a minibus for field trips.

Innovative educational models: Educational models that were suggested as potential options for sustainability include theme-based schools focused on strengths of the region (e.g. farming, outdoors), interdisciplinary learning opportunities, micro-schools (small learning environments offering personalized instruction), individualized learning pathways, hybrid homeschooling, and becoming a model for rural schools. Each model was suggested by one person.

Behavioral support and school culture: There was feedback about needing a more structured and consistent approach to addressing student behavior issues, with clear protocols and expectations of students. Three people suggested having staff to handle behavioral issues. There were also individual suggestions to implement social-emotional learning programs and address bullying and discipline, especially at the middle school level.

Budget analysis and costs: There is a desire to have a better understanding of the budget, cut unnecessary costs, and identify budget items that are underutilized, such as busing. Two people mentioned that more state funding is needed, including more funds for rural areas. One respondent

questioned how much could be saved in administrative costs by combining the two districts while keeping all the schools open, while another wanted to explore clean energy options as a way of saving operational costs.

Extended learning and enrichment opportunities: Having enrichment opportunities such as outdoor education and extracurricular activities were suggested as a way to increase student engagement and build upon the district's natural surroundings. An expanded school day was suggested by two people.

Improved communication and feedback mechanisms: There were many suggestions regarding having better communication among staff and families and with the community. Specific suggestions were to conduct exit surveys for families choosing to leave the district, involving students and staff in decision-making, and improving communications efforts regarding perceptions of the district.

The specific options identified through the surveys and community outreach sessions were included on an extensive list that was reviewed by 2district8towns steering committee members in a series of convenings over the summer (see **Attachment 4**). While some of the options are related to internal operating issues, others are more strategic. The Steering committee members reviewed the options, discussed which of them best address problems related to the districts' sustainability, and narrowed them down to those they felt should be explored further. An important part of this process was defining sustainability and making sure that any options that move forward have potential to create a more sustainable district.

Vision for the future

Community engagement session participants, respondents to the short open-ended survey, and school committee members were asked to state their vision for the MTRSD and HRSD in ten years. The following responses are a representative sample of the types of visions that people have.

STEADY/INCREASING ENROLLMENT
- A place where people want to stay, that's known for its creative ideas.
- I would like to see us keep more of our students so that we can continue to offer a wide variety of classes.
- Have steady enrollment growth that reflects the focus on learning and a satisfied staff that feels their expertise is valued and appreciated by the administration, parents and students.
- Higher enrollment overall but particularly in the higher grades.
- Improved enrollment, more distance learning opportunities, less school choice loss
- I would love to see 400+ students at MTRS in a range of interesting classes and have a few more sports teams than we have now.

READY FOR THE FUTURE
- Every student graduates with a plan for post-secondary success.
- Students leave and feel prepared for a variety of paths: 4-year college, community college, vocational careers.
- More clear paths and tracks toward college and career - internships, fellowships, connections.
- Better support for non-college bound.

HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION
- Let's be the community that screams "We Value Public Education."
- Joint programs for music, arts, PE, outdoor programming.
- I'd like to see the district leaner and more attractive to high-achieving students.
- A thriving, small central campus where all feel supported, challenged, and engaged.

	• Continued progress on educational quality geared to individual students.
COST-EFFECTIVE • Financially sustainable. • Providing a better educational experience for students at an affordable price. • A centralized campus to reduce costs and transportation. • Sustainable financial model that works with low enrollment. • Stabilize enrollment and reduce facilities costs.	**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS** • Authentic student-drive learning that empowers children to be strong, compassionate change-makers in their community. • A happy, community-oriented place that serves its small communities at the elementary level and makes connections with broader West County communities. • Integrating campus into the community. • Robust education, career-training, internship and fellowships, and connections with the business community.
BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT • Students social and emotional needs are being met and regulated, while not adding extra demands on the teacher. • Behavior expectations, consequences. • Stable, consistent curriculums and approaches to behavior.	**STRONG REPUTATION** • Reputation is based on reality and not perception. • Still here, improved perceptions of opportunity and success at high school. • Our district being the preferred place where people want to send their kids.

SUMMARY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the community outreach efforts offer an in-depth look at how the different stakeholder groups view MTRSD and HRSD in terms of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the future. The findings have guided efforts to identify the best options and opportunities to help the districts deliver the highest quality education for students while reflecting fiscal realities of the towns. These ten summary observations highlight key findings and their implications for the future of the districts:

1. **Many of the districts' strengths revolve around being a small, rural district.**
   - Small classroom sizes, the small size of the school/district, close attention to students, strong teachers who care about their students, and a beautiful outdoor setting are some of the strengths that survey respondents and community outreach session participants appreciate.
   - The smallness of the schools and the community was mentioned repeatedly in qualitative feedback provided in the community engagement sessions and surveys. Students can move through the grades with groups of friends and teachers really get to know students and families.
   - Small class sizes were one of the top themes in "non-negotiable" items that people do not want to give up.

2. **Academy quality and rigor are important components of a high-quality education and student retention.**
   - Among respondents to the Community Survey, 91% feel that having advanced academic classes is important in determining school quality.
   - Among respondents to the School Choice survey, two of the top factors related to academics that most influenced their decision to send their children outside the district or homeschool them were academic quality (highest on list at 65%) and academic rigor (third on the list at 54%).

- Improvements in academic quality and rigor (higher academic standards, separate honors classes, advanced classes) were noted by School Choice survey respondents as things the districts could have done to change their minds about sending their students out of the district.

3. **Declining enrollment is a major challenge and is particularly notable at the high school level.**
   - Two-thirds of respondents to the community and student/staff surveys indicated that students leaving for other schools was among the top three challenges of the districts.
   - Survey results also showed that fewer than half of the children of community respondents and the children of district staff are likely to remain in the district through 12th grade, while 20-25% are not sure if they will remain.
   - Among respondents to the School Choice survey, the most common times that their children left the school district was after completing sixth and eighth grade.

4. **Student behavior and disciplinary issues are challenges faced by the districts and are factors in student retention.**
   - 50% of respondents to the School Choice survey indicated that student behavior was among the factors that most influenced their decision to send their children to schools outside of the districts.
   - 41% of respondents to the School Choice survey indicated that bullying/harassment and classroom management were among the factors that most influenced their decision to send their children to schools outside of the districts.
   - Community Survey respondents with children in the districts indicated that behavioral issues are among the factors that will most influence their decision to have their students remaining in the districts through grade 12. Some of the issues mentioned were having effective behavioral management and consequences for inappropriate student behavior.
   - Feeling safe at the school and liking the school culture at Mohawk Trail were viewed mostly more positively among students in Grades 9-12 compared to Grade 8. Additionally, Grade 8 students responded much more negatively than positively for those two factors.

5. **The district's financial challenges are a concern.**
   - Qualitative feedback included suggestions about cutting unnecessary costs, having more efficient transportation services, and getting more state funding.
   - Visions for the future include having a district that is financially sustainable.
   - Residents without children in the districts show more concern about high taxes. Fifty percent of community members that do not have children in MTRSD and/or HRSD listed ***taxpayers having to cover rising costs*** among their top three challenges compared to just 33% of school staff, 24% of community members with children in the districts, and 6% of students.

6. **There is a desire to have more vocational and technical educational offerings.**
   - 83% of students and staff respondents and 82% of community respondents would like to see further exploration of having more technical/vocational classes.
   - Cuts to programs including shops and vocational training were cited as challenges in the qualitative feedback provided during community engagement sessions and surveys.
   - Expanding career and technical education was one of the recurring themes among suggested options for enhancing the sustainably of the districts.

- One-third of respondents to the School Choice survey indicated that vocational/technical programs were among the academic factors that most influenced their decision to send their student(s) outside of the district.

7. **There is potential for helping students explore career pathways beyond high school.**
    - Just over half (52%) of student survey respondents agree that MTRSD helps students explore career pathways beyond high school, while the remainder or either neutral (27%) or disagree/strongly disagree (21%).
    - Potential career pathways that were ranked the highest among student, staff, and community survey respondents are health care & social services and environmental & life science.

8. **Elementary schools are highly valued but there is recognition among some that consolidation or reconfiguring grade spans may be needed.**
    - 55% of community members without children in the districts, 40% of school staff, 38% of community members with children in the districts, and 30% of students indicated that merging or consolidating some of the schools should be explored further.
    - 48% of school staff, 38% of community members without children the districts, 29% of community members with students in the districts, and 23% of students indicated that reconfiguring grade spans should be explored further.
    - Qualitative feedback also showed interest in considering reconfigurations or consolidation.
    - Any closures or consolidations would be difficult for the community to withstand as half or more of each subgroup did NOT suggest exploring merging or consolidations further. Not closing the schools was a non-negotiable item for some.

9. **Co-curricular activities are valued by current students and community members.**
    - Satisfaction levels among Student Survey respondents were high for most co-curricular activities. The percentage indicating they are satisfied or very satisfied was 89% for athletics and visual art, 76% for theater, and 75% for clubs and after-school activities.
    - Satisfaction levels for music were lower – 54% are satisfied or very satisfied.
    - In the qualitative feedback, extra-curricular activities were cited as being part of a comprehensive educational experience that is "non-negotiable."
    - 91% of Community Survey respondents indicated that having extra-curricular activities is important or very important in determining school quality.
    - 31% of School Choice respondents indicated that athletics were among the activity-related factors that most influenced their decision to send their student(s) outside of the district.

10. **While there are negative perceptions about MTRSD and HRSD, staff and students have more positive perceptions.**
    - 43% of respondents to the community and student/staff surveys indicated that negative perceptions of the districts in the community are among the top three challenges for MTRSD and HRSD. Negative perceptions were also mentioned as a challenge by community engagement session participants and respondents to the initial open-ended survey.
    - This is reinforced by qualitative feedback from the community engagement sessions and surveys, which indicates that there are negative perceptions about the schools in the community. Some feel that perceptions are based on misinformation while others feel they are based on reality.
    - School staff and students generally view the schools more positively than community members. For example, 66% of staff agree that the schools foster academic achievement compared to 53%

for community members with students in the districts and 35% for other community members. Additionally, 60% of students agree that the districts prepare students for college or further education compared to 42% for community members with children in the districts and 36% for other community members.

CLOSING COMMENTS

BERK12 is grateful to all those who participated in the development and implementation of our community outreach efforts. We appreciate the strong participation and interest from the community in attending meetings, spreading the word about our efforts, and responding to somewhat lengthy surveys to voice their opinions and offer their hopes and vision for the future. The purpose of this report was to gather feedback representative of the various stakeholder groups and geographic areas that comprise the towns of the MTRSD and HRSD. The results of this work are essential as we identify the best options and opportunities for addressing the districts' challenges and building upon their strengths. We are hopeful that this information and the findings will equip the research team, 2D8T Steering Committee, and community with data necessary for planning a sustainable future for MTRSD and HRSD.

We encourage feedback on this report as we work to use this data to inform the 2D8T effort. Comments, questions and additional feedback can be directed to Community Outreach Coordinator Mary Nash, msnash3@gmail.com or 2D8T Project Manager Jake Eberwein, jakeeberwein@gmail.com.

ATTACHMENTS

1. School Choice survey – What Can We Do Better?
2. Student and Staff survey
3. Community and Family Caregiver survey
4. List of options that were considered by the Steering Committee

PURPOSE OF SURVEY

The Hawlemont and Mohawk Trail Regional School Committees have received a grant to support a study of the operating and organizational structures of the two regional school districts – a project known as 2Districts8Towns, or 2D8T. To complete the study, the School Committees retained Berkshire Educational Resources K-12 (BERK12), a research and consulting group focused on advocating and innovating for the future of K12 education in western Massachusetts.

BERK12 is conducting this survey to collect information from families of students who live in Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Rowe, or Shelburne and attend schools outside of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts or are homeschooled. Your honest opinion matters to us as we examine options for long term sustainability in the districts.

All information is anonymous and confidential and will be used to help the districts better understand current and future patterns of student movement in and out of the schools. We greatly appreciate your participation!

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN

* 1. **Where do you live?**

- ( ) Ashfield
- ( ) Buckland
- ( ) Charlemont
- ( ) Colrain
- ( ) Hawley
- ( ) Heath
- ( ) Plainfield
- ( ) Rowe
- ( ) Shelburne
- ( ) none of the above (no need to take the survey)

* 2. **Do you have one or more children attending any of the following types of schools? Check all that apply.**

☐ public school outside of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont school district

☐ private day school

☐ charter school

☐ religious school

☐ other type of school/comments:

[   ]

☐ vocational/technical school

☐ a residential or boarding school

☐ home school

☐ none of the above (no need to take the survey)

* 3. **How long have you lived in your current town?**

○ less than one year

○ 1-5 years

○ 6-10 years

○ more than 10 years

* 4. **Which prek-12 school(s) outside of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Districts do your child(ren) currently attend?**

[   ]

5. **If any of your children attend Franklin County Technical School or Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, what program are they in?**

☐ my children don't attend either Franklin County Tech or Smith

☐ advanced manufacturing

☐ agricultural mechanics

☐ cabinet making

☐ carpentry

☐ collision repair and refinishing

☐ cosmetology

☐ criminal justice

☐ culinary arts

☐ electrical

☐ graphics communication

☐ health technology & medical assisting

☐ horticulture/forestry

☐ landscaping & horticulture

☐ plumbing & heating

☐ programming & web

☐ veterinary & animal science

☐ welding & metal fabrication

other program/comments:

[   ]

* 6. **What are your child(ren)'s aspirations for after high school? (check all that apply)**

☐ attend a two-year college

☐ attend a 4-year public college

☐ attend a 4-year private college

☐ go directly into the workforce

☐ other aspirations/comments:

☐ join the military

☐ attend a short term training or certificate program

☐ not sure yet

[ ]

7. **If you homeschool any of your children, would you be interested in an arrangement with Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts that would allow them to participate in:**

☐ part-time academic program

☐ sports

☐ clubs

☐ music/arts programs

☐ none of the above

☐ not applicable - I don't homeschool my children

other types of programs/comments:

[ ]

2DISTRICTS 8TOWNS SURVEY -- WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER?

PREVIOUS ATTENDANCE WITHIN DISTRICT

* 8. **Did any of your children previously attend any of the following schools in the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont regional school districts before switching to a school outside of the district or to homeschooling? Check all that apply.**

☐ Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School

☐ Colrain Central School

☐ Hawlemont Regional Elementary School

☐ Heath Elementary School (now closed)

☐ Mohawk Trail Regional School

☐ Sanderson Academy

☐ no, they did not attend any of these schools in the past

* 9. **What was the highest grade your child(ren) completed in the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont School District before enrolling in another school/district? (check all that apply)**

☐ pre-K ☐ 4th ☐ 9th

☐ kindergarten ☐ 5th ☐ 10th

☐ 1st ☐ 6th ☐ 11th

☐ 2nd ☐ 7th ☐ 12th

☐ 3rd ☐ 8th ☐ did not attend school in Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont

TRANSPORTATION

10. **How are your children who attend school outside of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont districts transported to their current school? (check all that apply)**

☐ school bus/van ☐ friend or sibling provides a ride

☐ student drives ☐ walks or rides bike

☐ parent/relative/caretaker provides a ride ☐ doesn't need to be transported (ie. home schoolers. boarding students)

☐ takes public transportation

other form of transportation/comments:

[   ]

11. **How long does it usually take them to get to school? (check all that apply)**

☐ less than 15 minutes

☐ 15-30 minutes

☐ 31-45 minutes

☐ longer than 45 minutes

☐ not applicable

comments:

[   ]

PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

The next set of questions pertain to the factors that led you to selecting the school that your child/ren attend. All questions have both multiple choice options and open ended response options so that you can elaborate beyond the choices provided.

* 12. **What factors related to ACADEMICS, if any, most influenced your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the district or to homeschool them? (check all that apply)**

- [ ] academic quality
- [ ] teaching quality
- [ ] teaching methods
- [ ] academic rigor
- [ ] programs for advanced students
- [ ] vocational/technical programs
- [ ] special education (SPED) services

- [ ] music/arts programs
- [ ] early college/dual enrollment
- [ ] world language instruction
- [ ] student achievement on standards tests (MCAS, SAT, Advanced Placement)
- [ ] course offerings
- [ ] none of the above

other factors/comments:

[   ]

* 13. **What factors related to CONVENIENCE, if any, most influenced your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the district or to homeschool them?**

- [ ] closer to parent/caregiver workplace
- [ ] closer to parent/caregiver residence
- [ ] closer to relative's residence
- [ ] before and/or after-school care available onsite or nearby
- [ ] preschool program provided at school

- [ ] transportation options
- [ ] child's friend(s) attend school
- [ ] child's sibling(s) attend school
- [ ] none of the above

other factors/comments:

[   ]

* 14. **What factors related to SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS, if any, most influenced your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the district or to homeschool them?**

- [ ] reputation
- [ ] administrator/principal quality and trust
- [ ] size of peer cohort (number of students in grade)
- [ ] average number of students in a classroom
- [ ] welcoming school community
- [ ] school mission/philosophy
- [ ] students in the school are more like my child

- [ ] racial/ethnic composition of school
- [ ] school facilities
- [ ] graduation rate
- [ ] religious orientation
- [ ] community's fiscal commitment to schools
- [ ] none of the above

other factors/comments:

[   ]

* 15. **What factors related to SCHOOL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES, if any, most influenced your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the district or to homeschool them?**

☐ college placement services   ☐ athletics (more competitive and/or more choices)

☐ counseling/mental health services   ☐ food services

☐ health and wellness programs   ☐ none of the above

☐ student clubs/activities

other factors/comments:

[   ]

* 16. **What factors related to SAFETY, if any, most influenced your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the district or to homeschool them?**

☐ classroom management   ☐ bullying/harassment

☐ discipline   ☐ drugs/alcohol

☐ student behavior   ☐ none of the above

☐ general school safety

other factors/comments:

[   ]

* 17. **Was your decision to send your child(ren) to a school outside of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts or to homeschool them based on:**

○ positive perceptions about the school option you chose

○ negative perceptions about the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts

○ combination of both of the above

○ neither of the above

comments:

[   ]

SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

* 18. **What are the 1-3 most important factor(s) that led to your decision to enroll your child(ren) in their current school outside of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts?**

1) [   ]

2) [   ]

3) [   ]

* 19. **What are the 1-3 most important things that the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts could have done, if anything, to change your mind about sending your child(ren) to schools outside of the district or homeschooling them?**

1) [   ]

2) [   ]

3) [   ]

20. **Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

[   ]

Berkshire Educational Resources K-12 (BERK12) is conducting a survey of students in grades 8-12 as well as of teachers and staff who work in the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont school districts.

This is part of the grant-funded 2District8Towns (2D8T) study of the operating and organizational structures of the two regional school districts, sponsored by the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school committees. BERK12, a research and consulting group focused on advocating and innovating for the future of K12 education in western Massachusetts, is leading this study.

Your survey responses will be completely anonymous and will be used to help both districts better understand their strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in the future. Thank you for your participation!

1. **Which category best describes you?**

   ◯ Student

   ◯ School or district staff

ALL STAFF

2. **Where do you work within the Mohawk Trail and/or Hawlemont Regional School Districts? (check all that apply)**

   ☐ District-wide position

   ☐ Buckland-Shelburne Elementary

   ☐ Colrain Central School

   ☐ Hawlemont Regional School

   ☐ Mohawk Trail Regional School

   ☐ Sanderson Academy

   ☐ Other (please specify)

   _____

3. **What best describes your position?**

○ Teacher

○ Administrator

○ Paraprofessional

○ Other staff

TEACHERS/PARAPROFESSIONALS

4. **What grade level(s) do you teach or assist with? (check all that apply)**

☐ Preschool or kindergarten

☐ 1-6

☐ 7-8

☐ 9-12

☐ Other (please specify)

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5. **What subject(s) do you teach or assist with? (check all that apply)**

☐ Arts (ie. visual arts, music, drama)   ☐ Physical education

☐ Elementary classroom (all subjects)   ☐ Preschool classroom

☐ English as a second language   ☐ Reading

☐ English language arts (ELA)   ☐ Science

☐ Health and wellness   ☐ Special education or intervention

☐ History/social studies   ☐ Technology

☐ Library science   ☐ World language

☐ Mathematics

☐ Other (please specify only broad subject areas not included above; no need to list specific topics)

---

6. **Do you live in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont district or outside of the districts?**

○ In the districts

○ Outside of the districts

7. **Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school district challenges all students to excel academically.	○	○	○	○	○
The curriculum in the building(s) where I work is well rounded and comprehensive.	○	○	○	○	○
Students receive the social and emotional support at school that they need to be successful.	○	○	○	○	○
The building(s) where I work are well maintained.	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

8. **How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your work in the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont school districts?**

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Opportunities and support for professional growth.	○	○	○	○	○
Access to and use of technology to support teaching and learning.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○
Communication among school staff.	○	○	○	○	○
Communication with district staff.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for voices to be heard.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to serve in leadership roles.	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to work independently with a level of autonomy.	○	○	○	○	○
Quality and quantity of classroom supplies (books, materials).	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

9. **Do you have any children who attend school in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont districts?**

○ Yes

○ No

CHILDREN WHO ATTEND SCHOOL IN DISTRICT

10. **What grade(s) are your children in who attend school in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont districts? (check all that apply)**

☐ Preschool or kindergarten

☐ Grades 1-6

☐ Grades 7-8

☐ Grades 9-12

11. **How likely is it that your children will remain in the Mohawk Trail district through 12th grade?**

○ Very likely

○ Somewhat likely

○ Not sure

○ Somewhat unlikely

○ Very unlikely

STUDENT QUESTIONS

12. **What grade are you in?**

○ 8th

○ 9th

○ 10th

○ 11th

○ 12th

13. **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following academic and co-curricular offerings at your school?**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not relevant to me
Academic classes	○	○	○	○	○
Athletic programs	○	○	○	○	○
Clubs and after-school activities	○	○	○	○	○
Visual art	○	○	○	○	○
Music	○	○	○	○	○
Theater	○	○	○	○	○
Honors courses	○	○	○	○	○
Advanced Placement courses (AP)	○	○	○	○	○
Work experiences (internships, work based learning, job shadowing, capstone)	○	○	○	○	○
Community service opportunities	○	○	○	○	○

14. **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following additional offerings at your school?**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not relevant to me
Cafeteria food	○	○	○	○	○
Extra help when I need it	○	○	○	○	○
Time spent outdoors	○	○	○	○	○
Bus transportation	○	○	○	○	○
Help from school counselors	○	○	○	○	○

15. **What are your plans for after high school?**

○ Go directly to the workforce   ○ Attend a 4-year college

○ Attend a training or certificate program   ○ Join the military

○ Attend a 2-year college   ○ Not sure yet

○ Other aspirations/comments

[   ]

16. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am getting a good education at Mohawk Trail.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel challenged by most of my courses.	○	○	○	○	○
I like the school culture at Mohawk Trail.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel safe at Mohawk Trail.	○	○	○	○	○
There are staff who care about me.	○	○	○	○	○
I have friends/ a good peer group.	○	○	○	○	○

17. **Do you anticipate remaining at Mohawk Trail through the end of Grade 12?**

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Student and Staff Survey

REASONS FOR LEAVING

18. **If you are planning to or considering leaving, can you share where else you might be attending school?**

Student and Staff Survey

STUDENT QUESTIONS - TRANSPORTATION

19. **How do you MOST OFTEN get to school?**

○ Ride a school bus or van

○ Drive myself

○ Get a ride from someone else

○ Walk and/or ride my bike

○ Other form of transportation/comments:

20. **Do either of the following transportation issues make it difficult for you to participate in after school/extra-curricular activities?**

	Yes	No
Lack of a late bus	○	○
Can't get a ride	○	○

21. **How long does it usually take you to get to school?**

○ Less than 15 minutes

○ 15-30 minutes

○ 31-45 minutes

○ Longer than 45 minutes

22. **What town do you live in?**

○ Ashfield   ○ Hawley

○ Buckland   ○ Heath

○ Charlemont   ○ Plainfield

○ Colrain   ○ Shelburne

○ Another town (list name of town)

[   ]

Student and Staff Survey

STUDENTS WHO DON'T LIVE IN DISTRICT

23. **What are the top THREE reasons why you chose to attend Mohawk Trail instead of a school within your district? (check up to three)**

☐ Know more people there   ☐ Choice of academic classes

☐ Closer to my home   ☐ Choice of sports programs

☐ Reputation   ☐ Choice of arts programs (music, drama, visual arts)

☐ Opportunity to be challenged

☐ A parent/guardian works there   ☐ Special education resources

☐ Like the building/facilities   ☐ My parents wanted me to attend this school

☐ Other reason (please explain)

[   ]

24. **What other high schools, if any, did you consider attending? (check all that apply)**

☐ Academy at Charlemont

☐ Four Rivers Charter Public School

☐ Franklin County Technical School

☐ Frontier Regional School

☐ Greenfield High School

☐ Other school(s), please list:

☐ Homeschool

☐ Pioneer Valley Regional School

☐ Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School

☐ I didn't consider attending any other high schools

[ ]

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

25. **What do you consider to be the TOP 3 STRENGTHS of the district? (choose up to 3)**

☐ Small class sizes

☐ Caring staff

☐ Elective classes

☐ Academic quality and rigor

☐ Good teachers

☐ Athletics

☐ Art

☐ Music

☐ Other strength (please describe):

☐ Theater

☐ Honors classes

☐ Advanced placement (AP) classes

☐ Special education

☐ Clubs and after school activities

☐ The opportunity to build close friendships (peer group)

☐ Beautiful environment and outdoor space

[ ]

26. **What do you consider to be the TOP 3 CHALLENGES of the district? (choose up to 3)**

☐ Academic quality and rigor

☐ Block scheduling

☐ Negative perception of the districts in the community

☐ Classes that are too small

☐ Not enough choices of classes to take

☐ Taxpayers have to cover rising education costs

☐ Other challenge (please describe):

☐ Students leaving for other schools

☐ Limited sports teams

☐ Maintaining arts and music programs

☐ Unused space in buildings

☐ Limited participation in clubs/activities due to small school size

27. **How would you grade each of the following?**

	A-excellent	B	C	D	F-failing
Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts.	○	○	○	○	○
Other Franklin/Hampshire County public school districts, on average.	○	○	○	○	○
Public school districts nationally.	○	○	○	○	○

Student and Staff Survey

SUPPORTING AND PREPARING STUDENTS

28. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont districts support students?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Ensures learning needs of all students are met effectively.	○	○	○	○	○
Fosters academic achievement.	○	○	○	○	○
Encourages students' critical thinking and reasoning.	○	○	○	○	○
Provides high quality academic curriculum.	○	○	○	○	○
Fosters inclusive school culture where students feel that they belong.	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

29. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the districts prepare students for their next steps?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Prepares students for work directly out of high school.	○	○	○	○	○
Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school.	○	○	○	○	○
Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school.	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

Student and Staff Survey

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

BERK12 is exploring a variety of options as part of this sustainability study. Some of these options have been considered in the past. You also may have other options to suggest. Ultimately, it will be up to the school district and the community to determine which options are desirable and feasible. While your answers to these questions will help us determine which options the community might support, this is an ongoing process and there will be opportunities for further input.

30. **Please indicate if Mohawk Trail should further explore the following options for strengthening your school.**

	Should be explored further	Should not be explored further	Not sure how I feel about this
Have more vocational/technical classes.	○	○	○
Expand virtual class offerings.	○	○	○
Create one or more "themed" schools that focus on specific curriculum unique to the region.	○	○	○
Use extra space in school buildings for community services or programs.	○	○	○
Merge or consolidate some of the schools.	○	○	○
Reconfigure grade spans (ie. move 6th grade to middle school).	○	○	○
Become a leader in innovative programming and teaching approaches.	○	○	○
Strengthen community partnerships and programming.	○	○	○

Comments on above, other options to consider:

31. **Please rank the following Innovation Career Pathways from 1 (your top choice) to 6 (your last choice) as possible additions to Mohawk Trail. Innovation Career Pathways are designed to give students coursework and experience in a specific high-demand industry. (USE THE ARROWS TO THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THE RANKINGS)**

≡ [ ] Advanced Manufacturing

≡ [ ] Information Sector (telecommunications, data processing, publishing, media)

≡ [ ] Business & Finance

≡ [ ] Environmental & Life Sciences

≡ [ ] Health Care & Social Services

≡ [ ] Clean Energy

Student and Staff Survey

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

32. What are 1-3 things that you appreciate about your school?

1)

2)

3)

33. What are 1-3 things that your school district could do to prevent students from leaving?

1)

2)

3)

34. What are 1-3 important changes you hope the Sustainability Study will generate?

1)

2)

3)

35. Additional comments:

PURPOSE

The Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont School Districts have engaged Berkshire Educational Resources K12 (BERK12) to complete a sustainability study about the future of the districts. The results of this study will provide ideas about how to assure the districts' educational, financial, and operational future.

As part of the study, BERK12 has been collecting input from the community through a series of community meetings and surveys. While this survey is aimed at all community members (ages 18 and up) who live in the towns served by the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont districts, including families/caregivers of current students, additional surveys are also being conducted among high school students, teachers in the district, and families that have sent their children to other schools outside the district.

Your survey responses will be completely anonymous and will be used to help us better understand the Districts' strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in the future. Thank you for participating!

Community and Family/Caregiver Survey

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. **What town do you live in?**

   ◯ Ashfield   ◯ Heath

   ◯ Buckland   ◯ Plainfield

   ◯ Charlemont   ◯ Rowe

   ◯ Colrain   ◯ Shelburne

   ◯ Hawley   ◯ None of the above (not eligible to take survey)

2. **What is your age?**

   ◯ Under 18 (not eligible to take this survey but if you are in grades 8-12 in the Mohawk Trail & Hawlemont districts, you'll have a chance to take a student survey at your school)

   ◯ 18-29

   ◯ 30-49

   ◯ 50-65

   ◯ Older than 65

3. **How long have you lived in the region served by the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont districts?**

◯ 0-5 years

◯ 6-10 years

◯ 11-20 years

◯ More than 20 years

4. **Which of the following apply to you? (check all that apply)**

☐ Employed full-time　　　　　　　　　☐ In the military

☐ Employed part-time　　　　　　　　　☐ Looking for work

☐ Self-employed　　　　　　　　　　　☐ Retired or semi-retired

☐ Stay at home parent, guardian, or caregiver　　☐ Enrolled in post-high school education (college, trade school, training)

5. Do you serve in any of the following capacities: school committee member, select board member, appointed town council member, other elected official?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Did you attend any of the following schools in the past? (check all that apply)

☐ Buckland-Shelburne Elementary　　　　☐ Mohawk Trail Regional School

☐ Colrain Central School　　　　　　　　☐ Rowe Elementary

☐ Hawlemont Regional School　　　　　　☐ Sanderson Academy

☐ Heath Elementary School (now closed)　　☐ None of the above

☐ Other district schools that are no longer open (please list):

```
[                                        ]
```

7. How important do you feel the following factors related to academics and activities are in determining school quality?

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important
How well students do on standardized tests	○	○	○	○	○
Having advanced academic classes	○	○	○	○	○
Having arts and music programs	○	○	○	○	○
Having extracurricular activities	○	○	○	○	○
Exposing students to career options and opportunities	○	○	○	○	○

8. How important do you feel these additional factors related to the educational experience are in determining school quality?

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important
How well students learn skills like problem-solving, communications, and teamwork	○	○	○	○	○
Providing college guidance to students	○	○	○	○	○
Providing specialized services for students with unique learning needs	○	○	○	○	○
Providing counseling/mental health services	○	○	○	○	○
Safe and welcoming environment	○	○	○	○	○
Adequate resources for learning	○	○	○	○	○

Community and Family/Caregiver Survey

CHILDREN IN SCHOOL SYSTEM

9. **Do you have one or more students who attend school in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont districts?**

○ Yes

○ No

CHILDREN WHO ATTEND SCHOOL IN DISTRICT

10. What grade(s) are your student(s) in who attend school in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont Districts? (check all that apply)

☐ Preschool or kindergarten

☐ Grades 1-6

☐ Grades 7-8

☐ Grades 9-12

11. What are your student's aspirations for after high school? (check all that apply)

☐ Attend a 2-year college   ☐ Join the military

☐ Attend a 4-year public college   ☐ Attend a training or certificate program

☐ Attend a 4-year private college   ☐ Not sure yet

☐ Go directly into the workforce

☐ Other aspirations/comments

[   ]

12. Do either of the following transportation issues make it difficult for your student to participate in after school/extra-curricular activities?

	Yes	No
Lack of a late bus	○	○
Too far or inconvenient to provide rides	○	○

Comments

[   ]

13. How likely is it that your student(s) who attend school in the Mohawk Trail or Hawlemont Districts will remain in the district through 12th grade?

○ Very likely

○ Somewhat likely

○ Not sure

○ Somewhat unlikely

○ Very unlikely

14. What factors will most influence your decision to have your student(s) remain in the districts through grade 12?

[   ]

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

15. **What do you consider to be the TOP 3 STRENGTHS of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont districts (Choose up to 3).**

☐ Small class sizes

☐ Caring staff

☐ Elective classes

☐ Academic quality and rigor

☐ Good teachers

☐ Athletics

☐ Art

☐ Music

☐ Theater

☐ Honors classes

☐ Advanced placement (AP) classes

☐ Special education

☐ Clubs and after school activities

☐ The opportunity to build close friends (peer group)

☐ Beautiful environment and outdoor space

☐ Other strength (please describe):

_____

16. **What do you consider to be the TOP 3 CHALLENGES of the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont districts? (choose up to 3)**

☐ Block scheduling

☐ Academic quality and rigor

☐ Negative perception of the districts in the community

☐ Classes that are too small

☐ Not enough choices of classes to take

☐ Taxpayers have to cover rising education costs

☐ Students leaving for other schools

☐ Limited sports teams

☐ Maintaining arts and music programs

☐ Unused space in buildings

☐ Limited participation in clubs/activities due to small school size

☐ Other challenges (please describe):

_____

17. How would you grade each of the following?

	A-excellent	B	C	D	F-failing
Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts	○	○	○	○	○
Other Franklin/Hampshire County public school districts, on average	○	○	○	○	○
Public school districts nationally	○	○	○	○	○

SUPPORTING AND PREPARING STUDENTS

18. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont districts support students?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Ensures learning needs of all students are met effectively	○	○	○	○	○
Fosters academic achievement	○	○	○	○	○
Encourages students' critical thinking and reasoning	○	○	○	○	○
Provides high quality academic curriculum	○	○	○	○	○
Fosters inclusive school culture where students feel that they belong	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

19. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the districts prepare students for their next steps?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Prepares students for work directly out of high school	○	○	○	○	○
Prepares students for college or further education beyond high school	○	○	○	○	○
Helps students explore career pathways beyond high school	○	○	○	○	○

Comments:

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

BERK12 is exploring a variety of options as part of this sustainability study. Some of these options have been considered in the past. You also may have other options to suggest. Ultimately, it will be up to the school districts and the community to determine which options are desirable and feasible. While your answers to these questions will help us determine which options the community might support, this is an ongoing process and there will be opportunities for further input.

20. **Please indicate if you would like to see the following possible options for strengthening the school districts explored further.**

	Should be explored further	Should not be explored further	Not sure how I feel about this
Expand virtual class offerings	○	○	○
Have more technical/vocational classes	○	○	○
Create one or more "themed" schools that focus on specific curriculum unique to the region	○	○	○
Use extra space in school buildings for community services or programs	○	○	○
Merge or consolidate some of the schools	○	○	○
Reconfigure grade spans (ie. move 6th grade to middle school)	○	○	○
Become a leader in innovative programming and teaching approaches	○	○	○
Strengthen community partnerships and programming	○	○	○

Comments on above, other options to consider:

[   ]

21. Please rank the following Innovation Career Pathways from 1 (your top choice) to 6 (your last choice) as possible additions to Mohawk Trail. Innovation Career Pathways are designed to give students coursework and experience in a specific high-demand industry (use the arrows to the right to change the rankings).

☰ [ ]   Advanced Manufacturing

☰ [ ]   Information Sector (telecommunications, data processing, publishing, media)

☰ [ ]   Business & Finance

☰ [ ]   Environmental & Life Sciences

☰ [ ]   Health Care & Social Services

☰ [ ]   Clean Energy

Community and Family/Caregiver Survey

22. **What are 1-3 things that you appreciate about the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts?**

1) [   ]

2) [   ]

3) [   ]

23. **What are 1-3 things that the districts could do to prevent students from leaving?**

1) [   ]

2) [   ]

3) [   ]

24. **What are 1-3 important changes you hope the Sustainability Study will generate?**

1) [   ]

2) [   ]

3) [   ]

25. **Additional comments:**

[   ]

Adjust cellphone policy Examples: No cellphones, headphones, hats or hoods in school (ask Westfield School District about experience); in the middle school, phones should be turned in at the beginning of the day; adopt the program used in many schools (including Greenfield) to lock phones in a pouch at beginning of the day and release at end of the day.
Special Education: Therapeutic classrooms in home district.
Assessment/Data (student outcomes, perceptions, program and curriculum environment) regularly shared with community - trust building
Community Engagement: Rural schools often have strong ties to their communities. Engaging with local community members, parents, and organizations can provide additional support, resources, and opportunities for students.
Establish a new county-wide Franklin County Educational Collaborative (FCEC), potentially under the umbrella of FCROG
Repurpose parts of school buildings for Community services such as senior housing
Use of Mohawk Trail land to support economic development (housing, office, business development)
Consolidate all elementary schools in a new facility on the MTRS campus (potentially using parts of the existing facility)
Membership in rural networks - increase access to resources and knowledge base of best approaches
Move 6th grade to Mohawk Trail, allowing for consolidation of elementary schools

Create more intentional (robust) opportunties for the most advanced students (gifted and talented)
Strategically schedule courses (as currently exists) to alternate a broad set of courses on a rotating (2 year) cycle
Possibilility to create an accelerated academic track for students
Maintenance Planning: Implementing proactive maintenance plans for school buildings and facilities can help prevent costly repairs and prolong the lifespan of infrastructure.
Create a regional elementary school at BSE, 6th grade, and possibly 5th grade, to Mohawk
Advocate for reduced state reporting (better efficiency of existing/limited) staff
Cultural Relevance: Recognizing and celebrating the cultural diversity within rural communities is important for creating inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and represented.
Provide more AP classes, offer honors classes in middle/high school (having honors classes was also something that families who left the district said could have changed their mind in the choice survey)
Project-Based Learning: Rural schools often utilize project-based learning approaches, which can be especially effective in engaging students and fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills.

Marketing and Outreach: Actively marketing programs and services to attract students from neighboring communities. This may involve promoting unique academic offerings, extracurricular activities, and specialized programs, such as career and technical education (CTE) pathways or magnet programs.
Create a school within a school or a Horace Mann charter school in the regional elementary
Consolidation of one or more elementary schools (class size efficiencies, concentrated organization of resources, aligned PD and teaching and learning system, more than one class per grade level improving cohort dynamics)
Explore using extra space in school buildings for work programs (software/remote work certification, small business) and broad community services
Promote athletics (display athletic trophies)
Bulk Purchasing: Negotiating bulk purchasing agreements for supplies, equipment, and technology can help rural schools secure discounts and lower prices from vendors.
Pursue lobbying effort to increase state funding and thus more permanent solution
Telecommuting for Staff: Allowing staff members to telecommute for administrative tasks or professional development can reduce overhead costs associated with office space and utilities.
Have older students more regularly interact, act as teachers assistant and may act as teacher in delivering instruction to younger students (Spanish language at the lower grades for example)

Explore joint services with neighboring districts (tech, back office, grants, curriculum)
Advance Intergenerational learning as means to connect students and adults
Cooperation of the Mohawk, Pioneer, Frontier, Greenfield, and Turners Falls Districts Investigate ways that these districts can share resources. Example: Some high school classes taught online with one teacher for all four districts. Each high school would have classrooms dedicated for remote learning, with attendance at home only if necessary due to illness or by preference. Initially, these could be A.P. classes and language classes, with the goal of providing broader access and greater choices. Having remote classrooms at the high schools will encourage the value of socialization and perhaps provide enough population for sports programs and other after-school activities. Perhaps Greenfield Community College could become the hub for remote learning and provide the opportunity to take college-level courses online.
District promotion: Tell stories better (seems they are working on this)
Shared coursework with neighboring districts: Access to shared course work for students 6-12 in areas where enrollment is low, such as specials
Develop and consistently implement a classroom behavior program for middle school
Use current space to deliver adult and community education programs - in concert with community partners
Where student enrollment merits, build multigrade classrooms

Use technology tools on the buses (more productive transport time)
Control annual cost of living adjustments (COLA) and personnel costs to limit year-to-year need for more revenue from the towns
Add innovation pathways to provide for pathways that lead to college, trade school, and/or directly to work (Note: Advanced Manufacturing and the Information Sector were ranked highest as potential career pathways)
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not) be necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Project-based teacher at Colrain
Maintain class sizes at "reasonable" levels (The Education Task Force recommended grades K-1, 15 students per classroom maximum; grades 2-4, 20 maximum; grades 5-8, 24 maximum; grades 9-12, 25 maximum.)
Shared Services: Collaborating with other schools or districts to share resources and services, such as transportation, food services, and special education programs, can lead to cost savings through economies of scale.
Close high school and outsource to surrounding school districts
Try a bold redesign effort to create programming that will attract students (micro school movement?)
Engage with digital resources, such as Digital Health (https://www.cartwheel.org/) [provides mental health services]
Ensure before-school and after-school programs for all families

Flexible Staffing Models: Implementing flexible staffing models, such as hiring part-time or temporary staff when needed, can help manage payroll expenses while still meeting the needs of students.
Build an extended learning day for K-12
Advocate for regionalization/rural incentives such as debt relief, higher % reimbursement on construction costs
Move Grades 3-5 to BSE, leave PK-2 at their current elementary schools
Shared Staff Positions: Sharing staff positions, such as nurses, counselors, or technology specialists, with other schools or districts can help distribute personnel costs and maximize resources.
Consider One County with Three School Districts, Each with a School Committee. Two of the districts would have 4,200 - 4,700 K-12 pupils and a third would be the Franklin County Technical School.
Increase connections to community colleges (for a variety of purposes of access to coursework, faculty development, etc.)
District promotion: Smallness as inspiring creativity
Align middle school and high school schedules so that younger students can take more advanced courses
Compost during all school lunches, in every building

Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate:
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: ELA interventionist
Restore Chapter 70 state aid foundation to 2002 levels (the highest) and adjust for inflation each year
Allow homeschoolers to attend elementary school 2 or 3 days a week (hybrid homeschooling)
Analyze tuition to determine revenue versus true costs
Consider a single bus tier, versus current two tier
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Number of administrators
5th and 6th, Move both to MTRS to create a true middle school, remaining elementary schools could be consolidated
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Math coach
Partner with trade schools (partial day: academics in home schools, trades training at vocational school)
Partner with trade schools for trades skills development or delivery of CVTE programming on the MTRS campus

Advocate for inclusion of Rural Aid in state formula
Online and Blended Learning: Expanding their online and blended learning options to attract students who may prefer alternative educational formats or who live too far from the school to attend in person. Virtual academies, online courses, and hybrid learning models provide flexibility for students and families while expanding enrollment opportunities for rural schools.
Close another elementary school (maybe 2 elementary schools)
Focus on few and high impact/success sports and activities to increase enrollment and draw
Tuition high schoolers to another school district (Greenfield/Frontier/Wahconah)
Expand online Learning and distance education: Offer online courses or partner with virtual learning platforms can expand course offerings without the need for additional physical classrooms or teachers.
Make changes to bus service such as centralized bus stops and having smaller buses
Have the resources (fiscal and otherwise) to carry out carefully developed research-basedlearning activities that are consistent with State Curriculum Frameworks. The majority report included some strengths and opportunities such as: consistent education for all children entering middle school
Universal EC programs with home visitation program to build early (and positive) relationships with families

Pursue grants opportunities (hard to tell how much entrepreneurial activity is going into the search for grants outside the state system)
Expanded CVTE programming to counter Franklin Tech and offer pathways for non-college bound students
District promotion: Offset perception issues (develeing is working out, lack of rigor, we have as much as a big district, we prepare students)
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Number of paraprofessionals
Create a Franklin County Unified School District which would replace the nine superintendents and 20 school committees with a single Franklin County School Committee, one superintendent, one deputy for teaching and learning, and one business and finance manager.
Ensure time in schedule is allotted for outdoor exercise and lunch with staff
Increase small business skills programming, to reflect regional small business economy
Consolidate schools to advance core social diversity, greater pool of friends for all kids
District promotion: Highlight key programs and features (like Mexican exchange)
Alternative finance methodologies (apportionment) that reduce year-to-year assessments for any single town (smoothing and stabilizing mechanism)
Remove block scheduling so that there are more class options
Send 7th & 8th graders to elementary schools

Create Technology pathways for remote workers to reflect remote work options in region
Provide Algebra in 8th grade (It was noted that the goal is to allow any child to take any math course that matches their ability)
Outdoor Education: Take advantage of their natural surroundings by incorporating outdoor education into the curriculum. This can include field trips, environmental education, and outdoor recreational activities.
Expand dual enrollment and college credit programs in partnership with local colleges and universities. By offering students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school, rural schools can attract motivated students and demonstrate the value of their educational programs.
Move 6th graders to the Middle School to gain access to content-specialist teachers, foreign language classes, sports teams, drama
Eliminate the block system of scheduling and go to 5- or 6-period school day for HS, matching with MS schedule (providing access to high school courses)
District promotion: Ambassador program, MS/H parents talk to ES parents
Shared coursework with neighboring districts: Access to shared course work for students 6-12 in areas where enrollment is low, such as gifted and talented education
Reorganize teaching and learning based on learning-level educational groups, not based on age
Align curriculum and academic (skills and knowledge) in grades 3-12, across all schools

Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Combine Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent for Business into a single position
Add more music (opportunities) daily. Take advantage of the plethora of local musicians; develop a bi-weekly invitation for a skilled musician/group to come to each school, play and talk to students about the music, their own journeys. Research schools with strong music programs and ask about qualifications/experience of their music teachers and how music program is implemented
MTRSD and HRSD combine to become a single 8 town PK-12 district (eliminates choice)
Create Universal after school programming/enrichment and bus transport to support
Change classrooms so that students can move into leveled academic groups regardless of age (see Full Circle School)
Restore multi-year incentives for regional districts, continue allocation of state funds for regionalization studies, allow the transfer of state financed school buildings for other town purposes or the forgiveness of debt on close
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Math interventionist
Offer unique languages (online or in person - for example, Chinese)
Cut unnecessary costs. Have fewer teachers, less support staff. Find ways to decrease administrative costs through mergers or restructuring. One suggestion to close Colrain, another to close Hawlemont, a few general suggestions to consolidate elementary schools

Rowe - added as member K-12, 7-12, or restructure tuition. Result, new district is 9 town PK-12 or 7-12.
Partnerships with Community Organizations: Forming partnerships with local community organizations, such as childcare providers, preschools, and youth organizations, to create seamless educational pathways for students from early childhood through high school. These partnerships can help increase enrollment by attracting families with young children and retaining students as they progress through the educational system.
Scale Grant Writing and Fundraising: Investing in grant writing efforts and fundraising activities can help secure additional funding sources to supplement the school budget and support specific programs or initiatives.
Explore strengthening community partnerships and programming
Ensure our schools reflect best practices, promote that
Master Plan Towards Target Enrollment (Sustainable 600)
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Learning specialist in MS
Technology Integration: Recognizing potential limitations, Integrate technology into the classroom to enhance learning opportunities. This could include online resources, virtual field trips, and distance learning options.

High school should focus on Global, Arts & Agriculture. The school will focus on foreign languages and learning about GLOBAL cultures and history, it will have a rigorous ARTS program with visual art, theatre, music, dance, and computer arts (animation/video), and AGRICULTURE (organic farming, cooking & food ways, 4H). The students could take a path to focus, while still studying traditional math, science, etc. There will be a more hands on outdoor approach- bio taught with the farm animals or out in the woods, life drawing outside or sculpture garden, school trips around the world learning about food and culture - example learn french study vietnam and then have a trip to new orleans to experience food and culture and work with chef and help build homes, then to vietnam (french food and culture mixed with vietnamese) and then finally to Paris to see the art and experience the food there. (This same trip was done at Leland and Gray High School in Newfane, VT.) Students will intern with local farms, local artists, and chefs.
Advocate to cap school choice (legislative change)
Advance Instructional technology and integration plan (support for teachers and best practices) - could be achieved through grants
Review a number of staffing positions that may (or may not be) necessary and potentially reduce/eliminate: Secretary for guidance
Special Education: Centralization of SPED services
Avoid disruptive levels of staff turnover
Create a Waldorf-style school

Shift our district to foster recreational, outdoor careers. We have a host of local businesses that could be a part of this. For example Zoar Outdoor, Crabapple, Berkshire East, Double Edge Theater the DAR and the Mohawk State Forest. Students could co-op with these businesses and we can be supporting our local economy at the same time.
Combine the Mohawk/Frontier or Mohawk/Greenfield school district administrations (schools remain open)
Personalized Learning: With smaller class sizes, provide more personalized attention to students. Teachers can tailor instruction to meet individual needs and learning styles.
Build a Blended learning structure (home school and in person) some number of days of the week

Create themed high school that could (for example) focus on Global, Arts & Agriculture. The school will focus on foreign languages and learning about GLOBAL cultures and history, it will have a rigorous ARTS program with visual art, theatre, music, dance, and computer arts (animation/video), and AGRICULTURE (organic farming, cooking & food ways, 4H). The students could take a path to focus, while still studying traditional math, science, etc. There will be a more hands on outdoor approach- bio taught with the farm animals or out in the woods, life drawing outside or sculpture garden, school trips around the world learning about food and culture - example learn french study vietnam and then have a trip to New Orleans to experience food and culture and work with chef and help build homes, then to vietnam (french food and culture mixed with Vietnamese) and then finally to Paris to see the art and experience the food there. (This same trip was done at Leland and Gray High School in Newfane, VT.) Students will intern with local farms, local artists, and chefs.
Provide access to more online courses, inventory, for high school students
Advance full service schools/community schools model with integrated services in the schools (medical, dental, psychiatric, family counseling, employment, etc.)
Reorganization of special education that reflects high incidence of IEP, programs across the district, overuse of paras, better compliance with processes
Become a SUSTAINABILITY district (focus on sustainable: numbers, programs, communities, finances, environmental practices, citizenship, food)
Restore state funding of MCAS summer and after school remediation programs for schools with unsatisfactory passage rates and less than adequate yearly progress status.

Consider innovation schools: in-district and autonomous schools that can implement creative and inventive strategies, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps while keeping school funding within districts
Mobile Learning Labs: Mobile learning labs equipped with laptops, tablets, and educational software are being used in some rural schools to bring technology and digital resources directly to students. These labs can travel to different communities within the district, providing access to educational opportunities for students who may not have reliable internet access at home.
Consider choice non-participation to right size the district and associated resources
Comment received: Mohawk has job posted a Math Coach (MC) and a High School Guidance Counselor (GC). I feel if these positions were not refilled, rather occupied with current Mohawk employees, there could be a guesstimated savings of $125K savings to the FY'25 budget. The MC has been there 7 years so I think has provided a great deal of ""coaching"" to the Elementary teachers. Since there are numerous ""professional development"" days for these teachers, the Mohawk math department members could provide adequate coaching should questions arise. For the GC, have Mrs. Ruggeri, current 7-9 grade GC move to a 9-12 grade GC position and have the current class advisors or some other teacher be paid a stipend and available to advise their respective grades. The 7th graders have the biggest problems during the first 4-6 weeks of school. The 8th graders have to chose their 9th grade classes, wherein Mrs. Ruggeri could help, and the class advisor could organize the Tech Schools visits.

Reduce staff over time, strategically trim over the next 5 years to control annual assessment increase to towns
Reduce the number, overall, of paraprofessionals
Have staff eat with students, K-12. Assign seats, rotate in order to introduce children to others, avoid cliques. No more than 8 students with 1 staff at a table. Staff responsible for initiating conversations that engage and involve students.
Appropriate 100% of Chapter 71 state transportation funds.
Scale of unique programs (such as HAY) across district as innovative learning approach
Increase options for non-college bound students (programs, certifications, sequences of electives, field work)
Better study and understand Special education programming and number of IEPs (identification, programming, organization of programs/services)
Consolidation onto a single campus (K-12) - benefits such as alignment, utility of staff, less staff travel/shared, relationship building for student/family retention, center programs/resources for ELL, SEL, Sped, alternative ed, counseling
Move Grades PK-5 to BSE, expanded and upgraded
Consider Six Regional School Districts (Five K-12 Academic Districts Plus Franklin County Voc-Tech); Each with a superintendent and business manager.

Move to two grade level classrooms in some schools - one teacher, two sets of students with aide (reduces a teacher and an aide where applied)
Advance Two grade level classrooms - one teacher, two sets of students with aid (reduces a teacher and an aid where applied)
Integration of home school students into various aspects of the district culture (sports, co-curriculars, selected academics)
Create a regional elementary school by combining four elementaries into one at BSE over three years, focus on shaping the new regional elementary into a highly desirable school
Increase connections to community colleges for a variety of purposes from earl college coursework, to staff development
Expand world languages (Spanish and/or French) beginning in the elementary schools (add). Include arts, history, geography of various countries that speak the language; speak these languages during lunch.
Bring entities together (housing, jobs, education, health services)
Create an early childhood center in a school for entire district, include all 3's and 4's
Have seniors complete their final year at GCC, Umass, or in the field (internships/apprenticeships)
Advance improved and/or dedicated HR resources (recruiting, orientation, monitoring, compliance, employee programs, employee assistance)

Eliminate block schedule, HS teachers teach more classes - increase availability and access to courses
Flexible Scheduling: (Like some rural schools do) implement flexible scheduling options to accommodate the needs of students, families, and the community. This could include alternative school calendars or blended learning models.
Consider developing theme schools related to topics such as farming, outdoors
Review preK programming to understand how many, how often, who is from resident towns, who is outside, what is financial implications, outcomes?
Provide all children with regular and meaningful programs in the related arts" (art, physical\education, music)
Market as a district where everyone knows your name, culture of kindness
Implement a Learning management system that allows for one remote day/week of student instruction (4 day week)
Reestablish a Readiness Center in Franklin County, engage higher education partners
Pilot (and move toward) alternative assessments as a means to differentiate and more reasonably monitor student progress and readiness
Professional Development: Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff is essential in rural schools to ensure they have the necessary skills and resources to meet the diverse needs of their students.
Shared coursework with neighboring districts

Conduct exit surveys to better understand why people leave the district, reach out to them with ambassadors
Energy Efficiency: Implementing energy-saving measures such as installing energy-efficient lighting, HVAC systems, and appliances can significantly reduce utility costs over time.
Shared coursework with neighboring districts: Access to shared course work for students 6-12 in areas where enrollment is low, such as AP/dual enrollment
Formal partnerships with community groups for instructional/programmatic support, field experiences for students, advisory to programs (equipment and contemporary needs), feedback to students (porfolio/resume)
Explore having more technical/vocational classes (example, bring back woodworking class)
Think like a region in all aspects of town/regional life from emergency services to schools
Volunteer Programs: Leverage volunteers from the local community or partnering with service organizations can provide additional support for various school activities, reducing the need for paid staff or contractors.
PK-2 (all) to BSE, 3-5 (all) to Sanderson, 6th to MTRS
Generate revenue through reuse of school spaces off hours and as available (in underutilized buildings) across the district
Place-Based Education: Place-based education focuses on connecting students to their local environment, culture, and community through hands-on learning experiences. Incorporate place-based education into their curriculum to make learning more relevant and meaningful for students while fostering a sense of place and belonging.