

Dear Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Communities,

We are excited to announce that Phase II of our Sustainability Study is ready to launch! Fully funded by a Massachusetts Community Compact Grant, this work will build upon the data collected for Mohawk Trail in [Phase I](#) (completed in 2023), add data specific to Hawlemont, and address the challenges associated with adequately funding our rural schools that were outlined in 2015-16 by the BEST Committee – stagnant levels of state aid, increasing fixed costs and demographic changes that have resulted in steep declines in enrollment.

Our goals for Phase II are:

- To ensure that the communities that comprise our Districts are fully informed about the issues we face;
- To gather input from our constituents; and
- To create potential operating models that offer a more sustainable future for our schools and our member towns. These models will then be presented for community consideration and discussion.

We will partner with BERK12, a group with extensive experience in collaboratively developing short- and long-term solutions for rural schools and communities with the aim of ensuring the highest quality educational experiences for our children. With their expertise and assistance, Phase II will involve

- Collecting (and/or updating) and analyzing data on current conditions within the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts in the critical areas of enrollment, fiscal conditions, educational programming, and building infrastructure, and project future conditions in each area.
- Developing, studying and evaluating potential future operating alternatives – including maintaining the current operating structure (i.e., two districts educating students in four separate buildings) – and assess the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- Proposing a long-term plan for providing a high-quality education for the Districts' students in a way that is financially sustainable for the Districts' taxpayers.

In all aspects of the Phase II work, input from our communities – town officials, parents, teachers, students and interested citizens – will be critical, and there will be many opportunities for community members to become involved. In the coming weeks, be on the lookout for information on the ways you can participate!

The most immediate task will be building a Project Steering Committee, which will oversee the work of BERK12. We envision a Committee of about 15 members from across the member towns and constituencies of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Districts. If you might be interested in becoming a member of this Steering Committee and would like to learn more about the duties and obligations of Committee members, please fill out this brief survey [LINK] or contact one of your School Committee representatives **by January 17, 2024**. (A list of School Committee members and their email addresses can be found [here](#).)

To keep up to date on Phase II activities, as well as learn about other opportunities to participate as this effort gains steam, please visit 2Districts8Towns.org anytime after January 20 – and return often!

Thank you for all you do to make Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont great places to learn and grow!

Sheryl Stanton
Superintendent

Elizabeth Van Iderstine
Hawlemont
School Committee Chair

Martha Thurber
Mohawk Trail
School Committee Chair