



2Districts8Towns



2D8T Steering Committee

April 18, 2024
2Districts8Towns.org

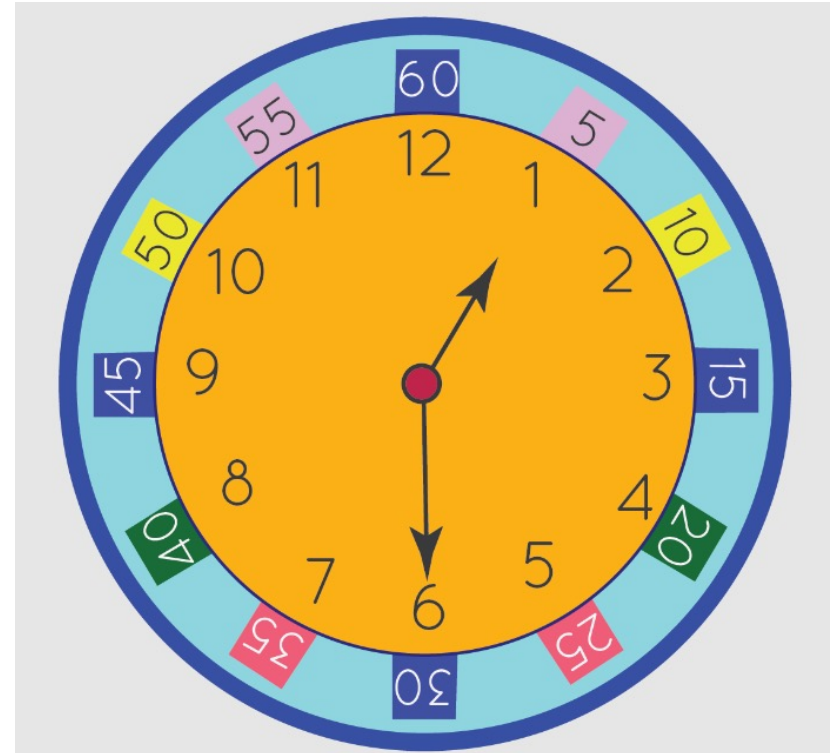
- Approval of Minutes from March 21, 2024
- Update on Work Plan (Jake Eberwein)
- Community Outreach Update (Mary Nash & Jake Eberwein)
- Initial review: Survey of Families Who Have Chosen Other Schools Districts for Their Children
- Update from Advisory Groups
 - Community Engagement (Mary Nash)
 - Educational Quality (Jenny Van Wyk)
 - Finance and Operations (Paula Consolo)
 - Facilities (Robin Pease)
- Near-Term Work Plan Priorities
- Budget and Finance Update
- Date and Time for Next Meeting
- Public Comment



MINUTES

Approval from 3.21.24

Thanks, Jenny!

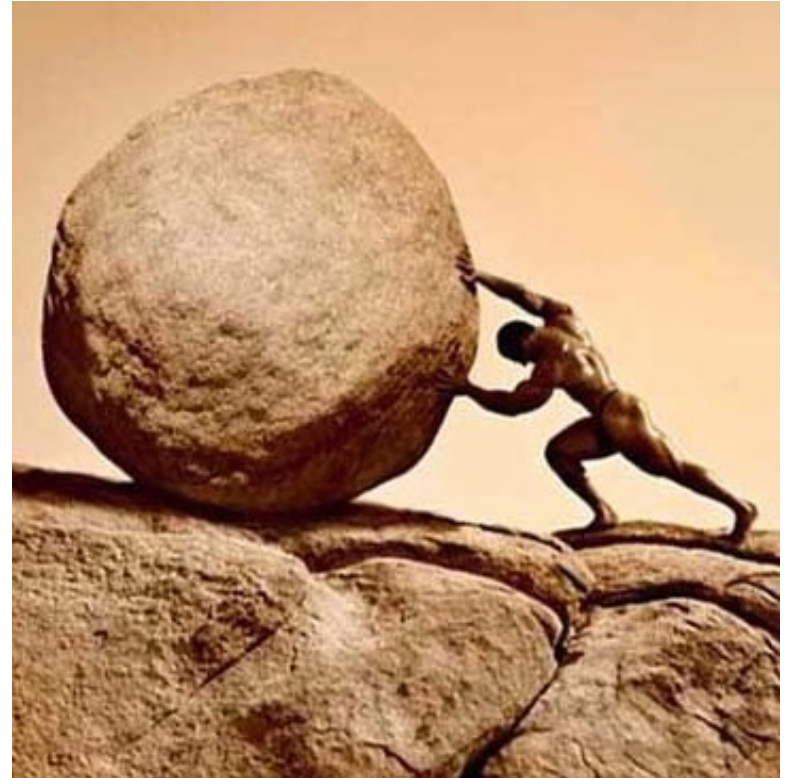




UPDATES FROM PROJECT MANAGER

Why, what, & how.

**KEEP PUSHING
THE RESOURCES**



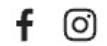
2districts8towns.org



2Districts8Towns

[HOME](#)[WHO WE ARE](#)[RESOURCES](#)[CONTACT](#)

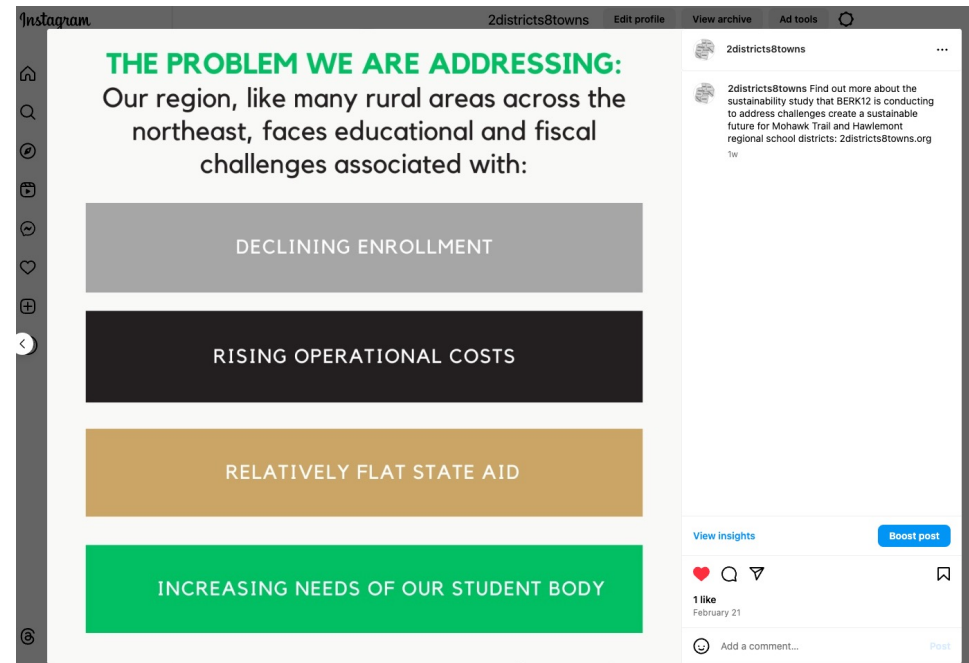
**2 DISTRICTS, 8 TOWNS
SUSTAINABILITY STUDY**



[News from Our Team](#)

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

2DISTRICTS8TOWNS





SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TOGETHER.

2 DISTRICTS 8 TOWNS STEERING COMMITTEE

Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Heath, Plainfield, Shelburne
Mohawk Trail Regional School District

Hawley, Charlemont
Hawlemont Regional School District

2districts8towns.org

OUR COMMITTEE REPRESENTS YOU IN THE WORK WE ARE DOING. Our goal is to ensure that all students in the 8 towns are provided with a broad array of high-quality educational opportunities that prepare them for success (college, career, and life) in whatever path they choose after high school – and to do so in a sustainable way that our rural towns can afford.

WHAT AND WHO IS THE 2 DISTRICTS 8 TOWNS (2D8T) STEERING COMMITTEE?

In 2023, the Hawlemont and Mohawk Trail Regional School Committees applied for and received a grant to support ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structures of the two regional school districts. In early 2024, the Steering Committee was formed to work with a research team to advance this study and explore potential options and opportunities.

→ **Fact:** Our Committee has volunteer representatives from each town. We are town officials, school staff, and community members who are committed to excellence in education in our community. We represent you: residents, parents, taxpayers, school employees, and students.

WHY IS THIS STUDY NEEDED?

To address these challenges:

- From 1997 to 2024 enrollment in our two districts has dropped 59%, from 1,880 to 780 students. While the drop in enrollment is slowing, further declines are expected.
- Meanwhile, both districts have faced rising costs in operations, transportation, technology, employee benefits, and special education. However, we have not received additional funding from state education aid, which is tied to enrollment. We have had no meaningful increase in 20 years. As a result, towns (taxpayers) bear an increasing share of school costs.
- As enrollment drops and the needs of our students increase, the imperative to offer a range of high-quality programs and supports becomes more challenging.

WHAT ABOUT PAST STUDIES? HAVEN'T WE ALREADY DONE THIS?

This study will continue the analysis started in 2023, while building upon historical efforts conducted by former working groups over the last two decades. This previous work serves as a foundation towards addressing the rising urgency of challenges we face today. All former studies can be accessed [HERE](#).

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE?

The study has launched with early and ongoing community outreach and engagement. As data is analyzed, models created, and promising options generated – findings are expected to be shared in early 2025, in time for annual town meetings in the spring of 2025.



APRIL UPDATE ON MOHAWK TRAIL/HAWLEMONT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY STUDY

Contact: H. Jake Eberwein, Project Manager, jakeeberwein@gmail.com

April 10, 2024 – Berkshire Educational Resources K12 (BERK12), in partnership with the 2districts8towns Steering Committee, is gathering input from community members for an ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structure of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts. The 2districts8towns Sustainability Study encompasses the towns of Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne. Upcoming events in April will focus on learning more about the needs of the schools and gathering perspectives and feedback from families and community members.

During February and March, the BERK12 team met with local select boards, town administrators, and legislators to brief them on the project, answer questions, and solicit their thoughts. Community engagement sessions are being held at each of the district's schools to provide an opportunity for families and community members to engage with the research team. Initial sessions were held at Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School on March 11 and at Colrain Central School on April 9. Sessions coming up include:

- April 11, Sanderson Academy Cafeteria, 6:00 to 7:30 pm, childcare available
- April 24, Mohawk Trail Regional School, superintendents' conference room, 6:00 to 7:30 pm
- April 25, Hawlemont School Cafeteria, 5:30 – 7:00 pm, dinner served and childcare available

School families as well as any interested community members are invited to attend one of the community engagement sessions and are asked to register in advance [HERE](#). Participants will be asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts, identify things the districts can't live without, propose options and solutions for high quality cost-effective education, and state their ultimate vision for the districts in 10 years.

Members of the BERK12 research team are also visiting each of the schools to observe students and teachers in action. These visits include classroom observations and focus groups with teachers to learn more about their views on academics and instructional practices. A comprehensive study of both enrollment and fiscal patterns and trends is in progress, as well as a synthesis of past studies in order to learn and build from the past.

The 2districts8towns steering committee continues to meet monthly to provide ongoing guidance and oversight. The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on April 18, 5:30 – 7:00 pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend either in person at Mohawk Trail Regional School (superintendent's conference room) or virtually by accessing the meeting agenda posted on the website (2districts8towns.org). The steering committee has assembled advisory teams in the areas of community outreach, educational quality, finance, and facilities to help guide the BERK12 research team in its research and analysis. Community members interested in serving on these topic specific advisories can submit their names and interest through the CONTACT link on the website.

The website also provides past and current presentations and reports, a full schedule of upcoming community engagement meetings, a list of steering committee members, links to the project's Facebook and Instagram pages, and other relevant project information. A one page project overview is available [HERE](#).

The team is developing community surveys that will be issued later this spring. The surveys will gather input from students, teachers, community members, and families, including those that have chosen to send their students to schools outside of the district.

For more information, contact project manager H. Jake Eberwein, jakeeberwein@gmail.com.



RESOURCES

REPORTS

PHASE II RESEARCH TEAM REPORTS

[Regional Agreement Analysis \(Draft - April 11, 2024\)](#)

PRESENTATIONS

[Colrain and Sanderson Community Presentation \(April 9 & 11, 2024\)](#)

[2D8T Steering Committee \(March 21, 2024\)](#)

[BSE School Community Presentation \(March 11, 2024\)](#)

[Joint School Committee Meeting, Deck \(March 6, 2024\)](#)

[Town Select Board, Slide Deck \(February/March 2024\)](#)

CHARGE.

Support ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structures of the two Regional School Districts

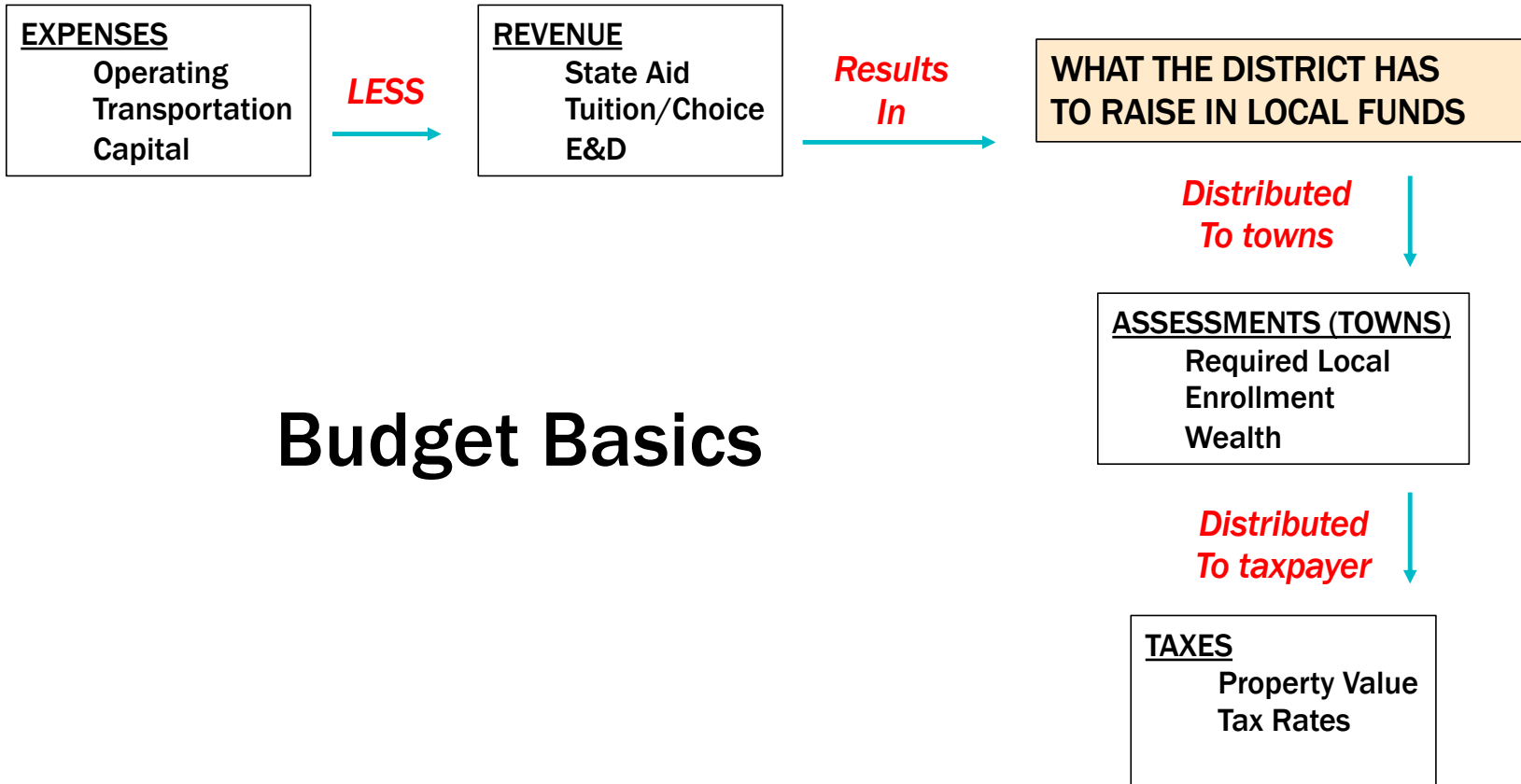


THE CHALLENGE.

Our region, like many rural areas across the northeast, faces educational and fiscal challenges associated with:

- declining enrollment,
- rising operational costs,
- relatively flat state aid, and
- increasing needs of our student body.

We must continue to explore options and opportunities - in light of these challenges - to ensure our students receive a **high-quality set of educational experiences** (academics, co-curricular, services and supports) they need to ensure success in college, career and life.



Budget Basics

OUR AIMS.

We believe the aim of the Phase II study, the deliverable, is to clarify the current state of the district, to project into the future, and to generate viable alternatives/solutions that result in a sustainability plan that is actionable and will be supported by community stakeholders.

1

Analyze data as provided in Phase I

ANALYSIS

2

Project enrollment, finance, educational factors, and buildings in developing alternative options/solutions (regionalization, consolidation, other possibilities)

PROJECTION

3

Assist a community group representing the 8 towns to determine the impact of doing nothing (*status quo*) as well as study, consider, and evaluate possible alternatives

OPTIONS

4

Refine options that ensure high-quality educational delivery that are fiscally sustainable

MODELING

5

Create and lead a communications/engagement plan that ensures a consistent stream of information and affords for broad public involvement

ENGAGEMENT

OUR PLAN.

CONTEXT

Stage 1. Process Organization, Context Setting, Community Engagement (A)
Target dates: January 15, 2024 through close of school, 2024 (spring)

OPTIONS

Stage 2. Deep Data Dive & Analysis, Option Generation
Target dates: June 1, 2024 through Sept 1, 2024 (summer)

MODELING

Stage 3. Preferred Models, Community Engagement (B), Final Report/Next Steps
Target dates: Sept 1, 2024 through February 15, 2025 (fall/winter)

Final Report Delivery: SPRING, 2025

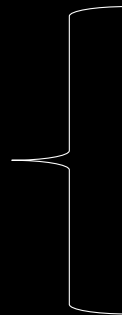


Future Town Actions

CONTEXT

Stage 1. Process Organization, Context Setting, Community Engagement (A)
Target dates: January 1, 2024 through close of school, 2024

STAGE 1



- **Setup**
- **Initial Community Outreach**
- **Historical/Literature Review**
- **Launch Data Collection**

STAGE 1. ORGANIZATION, CONTEXT, INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Deliverables



- Established Committee (and subcommittees if appropriate), meetings
- Evidence of meetings and interviews (question protocol)
- Approved work plan
- Published website
- Protocol for stakeholder meetings and evidence of meetings
- Draft and final stakeholder survey, distribution of survey, data collection
- Literature/Historical review
- Communications plan
- Press/Monthly updates



PROGRESS

PROGRESS	TASK
Done, ongoing adjustment	Project Planning: Work with the leadership team/committee to define the work plan, priorities, any remaining questions, consulting team, and schedule.
Done, ongoing processing	Administration. Establish budget, invoicing/accounting processes, contracts and processes for subcontractors.
Done, launching	Committee: Identify/Recruit/Establish membership and subcommittee structure, if any. Hold meetings to orient and launch.
Done, ongoing content	Website: Draft website framework for review. Website: By close of Stage 1, launch a website and establish social media (FB/IG) presence. Curate mailing lists and mechanisms for public submissions.
Done	Tours/Visits (2 days): Site visits to schools, district offices, facilities - initial meetings with administration & staff.
In progress (80%)	Key Stakeholders: Following site visits, schedule meetings with established groups such as staff, PAC/School Council, union leads, select boards/finance committees. Use question protocol to collect perspectives, early thoughts/ideas, aspirations/opportunities, challenges, and non-negotiables.
To be developed, May-June	Community Survey: Develop a choice and community survey to be distributed electronically through school/community listservs. Aggregate data.
Done, ongoing	Develop communications plan: In concert with PM and Committee, draft a communications plan for 12 months forward, by the close of Stage 1.
Done, ongoing	Press/Update: Jointly develop press release/updates to send to stakeholders as part of monthly outreach.
First meeting, more to be had	Delegates: Meet with the local delegation to review aims of the Study, seek input and support, and build a foundation for advocacy.
In progress, target for May/June	Historical review: Complete a review of collaboration/regionalization/sustainability studies in the district, include recent and relevant literature as relates to rural districts and parallel sustainability efforts (mergers, collaboration, regionalization).
Mostly done, still bumping into additional resources	Review completed reports: Carefully review and synthesize the most recent district studies including MARS Phase I, BEST, and Jetzon Data, etc. Present synthesis to Committee.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enrollment, draft 2. Finance baseline, draft 3. Ed Quality, visits launched 4. Personnel, lists organized 5. Buildings, in planning 6. RA analysis, about done 	<p>Using specialized consultants, organize and launch a process to begin a deep dive into a number of functional domains with the aim of establishing a deep understanding of the current state of the district. In doing so, options explored in Stage 2 & 3 can be evaluated for impact (the value proposition) within each domain. Note: a particular emphasis will be placed on finance, educational indicators, and buildings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enrollment. Review NESDEC, update enrollment projections independently, examine student flow (choice/tuition). 2. Educational Quality. Use school/district review protocol when meeting with key district leaders, reviewing plans, examining outcomes, cataloging programs, services and supports, student activities, specialized programming (special education, ELL, alternative education, career education), etc. 3. Finance & Operations. Build a model for budget projections (revenue and expenses for both operating and capital based on actuals) that can be manipulated based on varying options, examine select operational systems (facilities, food, technology) as time/funds allow. 4. Personnel. Establish clarity of organizational charting, roles/responsibilities, assignments (load), longevity, salary/benefits, etc. 5. Buildings. Advance MARS work in clarifying physical plant needs, capacity, appropriateness of educational spaces. 6. Contracts/Agreements. As is useful towards understanding the present and future state of the district, review contracts and regional agreement to establish key considerations.

A long-exposure photograph of a city street at night, showing horizontal light trails from cars and buildings in various colors like purple, yellow, blue, and red. The word "HIGHLIGHTS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center-left area.

HIGHLIGHTS

Historical Review:
Historical Efforts
Regional/Rural State Literature
Rural Best Practices

In
Progress

Draft, early May

Enrollment Report:
Historical Review
Student Flow (in/out)
Town trends
Projections

Closing
In

Draft, third week April

Financial Baseline Historical:
Expenditure
Revenue
Assessments
Aid (Chapter 70)

Draft Deck
Completed

Draft, narration, early May



Education Focused – School Visits

Completed
April 26th

Additional Follow-up
Baseline
Data and Themes

Facilities Focused – School Tours

Completed
April 18th

Review of Documentation
Baseline
Data and Themes

Community Outreach (Part A)

Completed
Early May

Lots of Feedback
Themes & Findings
...Committee work?



GO SLOW

TO GO FAST



Some quick thoughts:

- We will share a lot...and it will still be barely anything
- This will never be done...it will continue to and through
- There is always something that you've missed, errors you've made, questions you've left unanswered, assumptions you've gotten wrong
- We are building the context and tools (the foundation) as we approach and understand incredibly complex systems – this offers us flexibility for future decisions making
- You know a lot of this already
- Ship...it doesn't count if you don't share (requires courage)...DRAFT

People are are right most of the time, are those who often change their mind

Regional Agreement Analysis



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2Districts8Towns

Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Heath, Plainfield, Shelburne
Mohawk Trail Regional School District

Hawley, Charlemont
Hawlemont Regional School District

Regional Agreement Analysis

DRAFT- DRAFT - DRAFT

Version (April 10, 2024)

J. Eberwein

Purpose.

The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview and simple analysis of the two existing regional agreements for the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts, as well as the Two-District Shared Expense Agreement. This will provide a foundation that identifies similarities, differences, and gaps that exist and may be of consideration as part of the Phase II Sustainability study. As potential models, options and opportunities are explored, implications (changes) to the regional agreements may surface and be required. This exercise also advances the research team's understanding of particulars (such as apportionment methodologies) that are necessary to inform the modeling process.

What is a regional district?

A school district is an administrative unit responsible for managing primary and secondary school services within a defined geographical boundary, defined by one city or town or by multiple municipalities.

As stated in the [Introduction to Regionalization](#), regionalization is a "political, economic and educational marriage that fulfills a constitutional responsibility to educate children in public schools...It is a process that demands goodwill, compromise and dedication. Most importantly, the process demands the trust of everyone involved albeit a citizen, a parent, or a political leader."

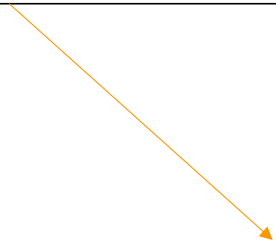
A public school district consists of one or more public schools operated under the supervision of an elected or appointed school committee and a superintendent. The majority of school districts serve a single city or town, and are considered a department of the municipal government. **Two or more municipalities can also join together to form a regional school district, which is considered a separate and independent unit of local government.** A regional school district can offer all grades (PreK-12), just certain grades (for example, just elementary grades or just

Regional Agreement Analysis

Purpose: Informs team understanding, modeling, future implications

RA: Governance, Apportionment, Facilities/Capital, Amendments, Expansions/Closures, Leases,

Included in the Analysis:



- Definitions
- Laws & Regulations
- Contemporary Architecture
- Side-by-Side Analysis (HRSD/MTRSD)
- Shared Expense Agreement
- Considerations
- Looking Forward

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Meetings with town managers, legislative delegation

Meetings with school committees, school staff

Meetings with all eight select boards/finance comm.

2nd update send out earlier this month

Community Outreach Advisory Team met

Table at Celebration of Learning

2 more school community engagement sessions

Website and social media

Choice Survey in draft form; community survey to come



APRIL UPDATE ON MOHAWK TRAIL/HAWLEMONT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY STUDY



April update

Contact: H. Jake [Eberwein](mailto:jakeeberwein@gmail.com), Project Manager, jakeeberwein@gmail.com

April 10, 2024 -- Berkshire Educational Resources K12 (BERK12), in partnership with the 2districts8towns Steering Committee, is gathering input from community members for an ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structure of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts. The 2districts8towns Sustainability Study encompasses the towns of Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne. Upcoming events in April will focus on learning more about the needs of the schools and gathering perspectives and feedback from families and community members.

One-pager to
distribute at ATMs



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TOGETHER.

2 DISTRICTS 8 TOWNS STEERING COMMITTEE

Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Shelburne
Mohawk Trail Regional School District

Hawley, Charlemont
Hawlemont Regional School District

2Districts8Towns.org

WHAT IS 2 DISTRICTS 8 TOWNS?

In 2023, the Hawlemont and Mohawk Trail Regional School Committees applied for and received a grant to support ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structures of the two regional school districts – a project we are calling 2 Districts 8 Towns, 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.

TWO MORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS COMING UP

APRIL

24

**MOHAWK TRAIL
REGIONAL SCHOOL**

**Superintendent's Conference
Room, 6-7:30 PM
snacks provided**

APRIL

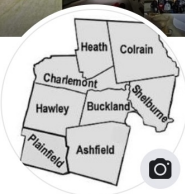
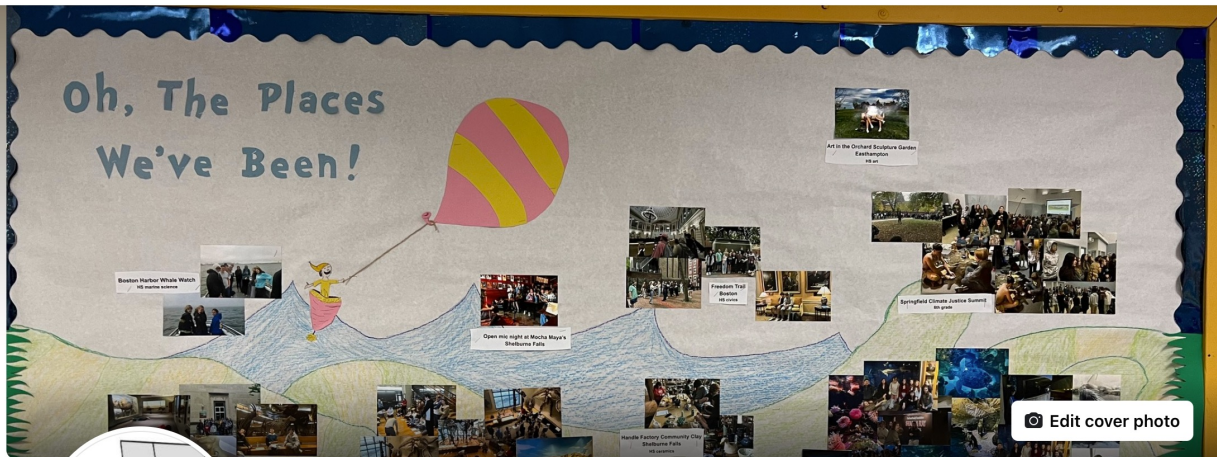
25

HAWLEMONT SCHOOL

**Cafeteria, 5:30-7:00 PM
dinner & childcare provided**

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

2DISTRICTS8TOWNS



2Districts8towns

13 likes · 21 followers



Advertise

Manage

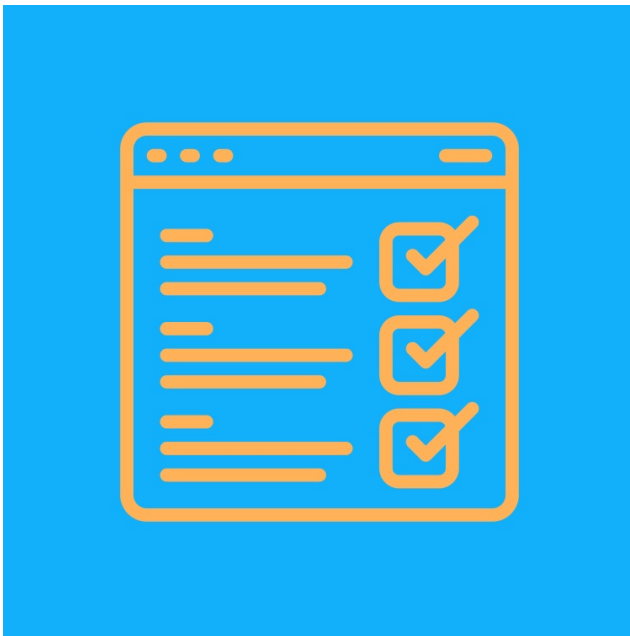
Edit

Information shared on these pages
(and others):

- Ashfield, MA Families & Friends
- B.S.E. Parents & Community
- Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School
- Colrain Central School
- Everything Plainfield MA
- Hawlemont Elementary
- Mohawk Trail Regional School
- Sanderson Academy
- Shelburne Falls MA Area

CHOICE SURVEY

STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOLS OUTSIDE DISTRICTS



Targeting families of students who live in one of the eight towns and have left Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Districts or who never attended

ADVISORY TEAMS

Sign up if interested

Community
Outreach

Publicity
Engaging the community
Social media, website
Surveys

Finance

School costs
Financial models
Town contributions

Educational
Quality

Academics
Vocational education
School activities

Facilities

Buildings and grounds
Maintenance
Operations

ADVISORY TEAM



2Districts8Towns

HOME WHO WE ARE RESOURCES CONTACT

SEARCH



Interested?



2 DISTRICTS, 8 TOWNS SUSTAINABILITY STUDY

OUR CHARGE.

To support ongoing study and analysis of the operating and organizational structures of the two Regional School Districts: Mahawk Trail & Haverment



News from Our Team

- **ADVISORY TEAMS.** The **2D8T Steering Committee** will be assembling advisory teams in the areas of Community Outreach, Educational Quality, and Finance. If you are interested in learning more and providing feedback on these topics... drop us a note [HERE](#).

BUDGET UPDATE

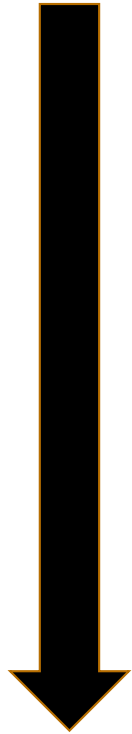
<u>REVENUES</u>	
CHARLEMONT (COMMUNITY COMPACT)	\$250,000
TO BE RAISED	\$33,000
<i>BERK12</i>	<i>PM HOURS, ADDITIONAL IN-KIND (THROUGH 7.24)</i>
OVERALL REVENUES	\$283,000

<u>EXPENSES</u>	
PROJECT MANAGER	ON TARGET, <i>BERK12 CONTRIBUTION</i>
PROJECT FACILITATOR	ON TARGET, <i>BERK12 CONTRIBUTION</i>
COMMUNITY OUTREACH	OVER TARGET
EDUCATION QUALITY	ON TARGET
FINANCE/FACILITIES	ON TARGET
LITERATURE	ON TARGET
ENROLLMENT	ON TARGET
WEBSITE	UNDER TARGET
LEGAL	UNDER TARGET
SUPPLIES/MATERIALS	ON TARGET
OVERALL EXPENSES	\$283,000

NOTES

- MONTHLY TRANSFERS VIA CHARLEMONT.
- FUNDS HAVE TO BE MANAGED THROUGH MARCH-ISH 2025

....THE NEXT MONTH.



Finish up Engagement Meetings (Towns, Schools, Faculty/Staff/Union) (Mary & Jake)

- Synthesize feedback
- School Choice Survey (released), Community Survey (Drafted and repared for release)

Drafts and Peer Editing of Reports

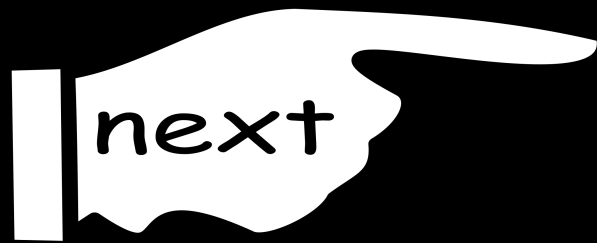
- Historical/Literature Review (Rob)
- Regional Agreements (Jake)
- Enrollment (version #1) (Jake & BRPC)
- Baseline Financial (Abrahams)

Complete School Visits

- Educational Indicators (Judy/Brendan)
- Facilities visits (Dave)

Draft documents as foundation for Modeling

- Educational Indicators Judy/Brendan)
- Financial Projections (Abrahams)
- Baseline Facilities
- Data Collection (including inventory of Options/Ideas/Solutions)



**MEETING
SCHEDULE,
NEXT?**

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION/CONTACT.



2Districts8Towns



2D8T Steering Committee

March 21, 2024

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