



# 2020



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



## Voting Day



Tuesday, March 3, 2020  
7:00 am to 7:00 pm  
Colchester High School



There is no deadline to register to vote. You can register ahead of time or at the polls on the day of the vote.



Out of town? Busy schedule? Vote early at the Town Clerk's Office Monday through Friday during business hours or go online to the My Voter Page and request a ballot be mailed to you: [www.mvp.sec.state.vt.us](http://www.mvp.sec.state.vt.us)



**Vision** • We strive to prepare each student for success in life by providing an enriching, welcoming and safe environment.

**Mission** • Colchester Schools offer diverse educational experiences filled with rigorous and responsive teaching practices. In our collaborative learning community, students are inspired to think critically, act responsibly, communicate effectively and learn continuously to achieve their fullest potential.

**D**uring the 2018-2019 school year, the district embarked on a journey to develop a new strategic plan. This has been exciting work that has energized the leaders in our district. Through numerous collaborative sessions with administrators, teachers, students, parents, and board members, we engaged in inspiring discussions; contemplating how we can continue to evolve as a district and where we want to be in the next three, five, and ten years.



When I visit schools and community organizations, I make it a point to speak with just about everyone in attendance. I've learned a great deal about the areas in which our schools excel and I'm also grateful when I receive candid feedback about improvements we could make. These conversations proved invaluable to the development of our strategic plan. They have allowed me the opportunity to connect with many people throughout our community to hear stories of Colchester's schooling, going back decades ago. When compared with education in 2020, the stories have highlighted some stark differences but they also revealed consistency in our community approach.

Our town has a lot to be proud of when it comes to our school district. Our schools are filled with great teachers who are committed to the academic and social-emotional well-being of all our students. Sit in with a class of any age and you'll observe high-quality instruction and curious, confident learners. Our stu-

dents demonstrate strong overall achievement and generally perform higher than students across Vermont. We are especially proud that our assessments show an increase in achievement and growth in our middle-grade students, as well as for our students experiencing poverty.

While we are pleased with the growth in our state-wide assessment scores, our everyday focus is more specific. We want to ensure that each student enrolled in a Colchester school is achieving at their highest level; and frankly speaking, we have room for improvement there. Our schools are continuously analyzing student performance gaps to reformulate the services that we offer to ensure we are meeting the needs of all our students. A closer look at our data shows that certain groups of students are learning at different rates than their classmates.

These learning gaps are not unique to our school district, but this cannot continue in Colchester. Every child deserves the best chance to learn, no matter their disability or their background. Our strategic plan and the investments made by our community will help focus on this work as we strive to push each and every learner to do their very best.



Sincerely,  
*Amy Minor*  
SUPERINTENDENT

*“Our schools are filled with great teachers who are committed to the academic and social-emotional well-being of all our students.”*



## Community Extends Beyond School Campus

**I**NTERNALLY, WE OFTEN TALK about our “school community,” be it on a district, school, or classroom level. However, we’d be remiss if we didn’t acknowledge the incredible partnerships that we have within our town community.

From local businesses contributing donations or supplies for academic projects and athletic teams, to local experts in various trades taking the time to encourage the aspirations of our high schoolers, to the collaboration of Colchester Parks and Recreation with middle school students to lessen negative

environmental impacts at one of our beaches, to retired community members reading with kindergarten students, to students planting, harvesting and donating vegetables to their neighboring food shelf. The kids may be the heart and soul of this district, but it’s clear that our community is what keeps us vibrant and connected.

Thank you for helping our youngest community members to see how they can contribute to the people and places that make up our town. If you’d like to get involved with our schools, we’d love to have you!



Veterans Day Luncheons are an annual tradition for many of our schools.



**Over 730** parents and community members volunteered in our schools last year.

## Essential Expectations Guide Students from Pre-school Through Graduation

**A**S A SCHOOL DISTRICT, WE ARE inevitably preparing students for life in adulthood. To reach that point, there is a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be critically important to success in today’s world. After extensive research, the district established a common set of skills that we call our Essential Expectations. In their

simplest form, they are Think, Learn, Communicate, and Act.

We begin introducing these skills in prekindergarten and they build in complexity each year. Students must demonstrate that they have mastered each skill in order to graduate. Each Essential Expectation has subcategories that further delineate the skill. For example, “Learn” includes expectations of self-regulation, organization,

persistence, collaboration, and commitment. The “Think” expectation calls for students to master the ability to observe & identify, question & infer, analyze & evaluate, synthesize & innovate, and process & approach.

Now embedded in our district mission statement, the Essential Expectations are also reflected on report cards to show students’ growth in their ability to think critically, act responsibly, communicate effectively and learn continuously. We are excited to have a common set of expectations for all of our learners - a guide for successful learning in every grade, class, and school.

For more information on the Essential Expectations required to graduate, visit: [www.csdvt.org/essentialexpectations](http://www.csdvt.org/essentialexpectations)



CHS offers **110 courses** in its Program of Studies.

## School Safety is Top Priority

**T**HERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT to the Colchester School District than to ensure we are providing an enriching, welcoming and safe learning environment. We believe that the safest schools are those that foster a climate of support, respect and instill a sense of community among its students, families, and staff.

Across the country, there are concerns over safety in schools and Colchester is no different. The safety and well-being of each student is our highest priority. To that end, we are continuously working with our local first responders to evaluate our procedures and keep up-to-date with the latest safety training methods. Every district employee receives emergency response training and is required to participate in school-wide drills to familiarize themselves with the nature of different emergency responses.



**Two** Colchester Police Officers are embedded in our school district.

The district has always had strong partnerships with our local police, fire, and rescue departments. Not only do they visit our schools to educate our students and staff, execute safety drills, and provide real responsive care, but our students also contribute to their organizations through internships and community service projects.

In regards to our facilities, the district was recently awarded grant funding to update the intercom system at MBS and to purchase and install security cameras at CMS. In addition to grant funds, each year the district designates funds from the voter budget to improve the security of our buildings. For example, this fall CHS received new doors for the front entrance. As taxpayers and members of this community, thank you for doing your part to ensure our schools are a safe place where our students can learn and grow in a caring environment.



# A word from our students...

## Student Highlight 🌀 TULLIA MAMENGA, CLASS OF 2020



“The people that make up the Colchester School District have played a major role in molding me into the student that I am today. Moving to America in 2009 was a hard adjustment for me, however, I am grateful to the teachers and fellow peers that have guided me through such a difficult process. Being a current senior at Colchester High School has allowed me to reflect on the impact that people in the district have had on my life as well as my education. Colchester really provides a community of people who are willing to aid and lift one another up. I have loved being a part of such a vibrant and loving community

for the past 10 years of my life. For these reasons, I would like to thank the many friends that I have met and grown close to for these past years, as well as the teachers that have provided me with a wonderful education. I would like to give a big shout out to teachers such as Mrs. Rosato (ELL Teacher), Mr. Simmons (Middle School Math Teacher), Mr. Hall (Debate coach), and Mrs. Pastore (Guidance Counselor). Without you guys I would not have attained such success in my academic career. With all that the district has prepared me with, I am excited for what the future entails at Colby College.”

**Tullia was recently awarded a full, four-year Questbridge College Match Scholarship to attend Colby College. She is on a pre-med track and aspires to become a doctor.**

## Alumni Highlight 🌀 STEVEN SONNTAG, CLASS OF 2015

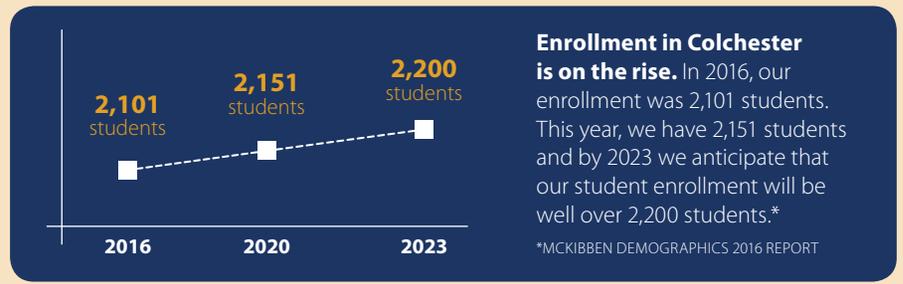


“I first started shaking poms in the Colchester High School Gymnasium as a member of the CHS Dance Team and now I do so at Gillette Stadium as a New England Patriots Cheerleader. While attending CHS, I was lucky to not only have supportive friends and family, but some of the very best teammates. Having such a fantastic experience in the elite dance program at Colchester High School, I decided I wanted to continue my love for dancing. I attended

Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts and created my own dance team. Over four years there, I was able to build the program up and we became the second ranked pom team in New England! After college, I didn't want to give up performing in an athletic atmosphere, so started the process that would eventually lead to spending most of my Sundays cheering for the best team in the NFL.”

**Steven Sonntag is one of the first male cheerleaders in decades to make the New England Patriots squad.**

PHOTO BY MARK JOHNSON

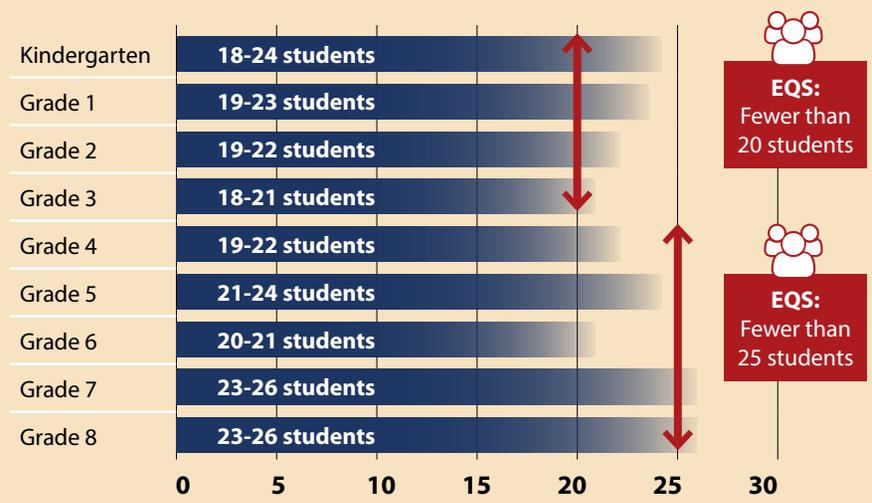


## How Many Are Too Many?

The Vermont Agency of Education sets Education Quality Standards (EQS) to ensure that all students in public schools are afforded opportunities that are substantially equal in quality and enables them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education. Those standards specify that classes in grades K-3 shall average fewer than 20 students per teacher. In grades 4-12, classes shall average fewer than 25 students per teacher. For high school, the total class roll of a teacher shall not exceed 100 students. Given our enrollment trends, we are striving to be in compliance with the Vermont Agency of Education's recommendations for class size, but many of our elementary classrooms are slightly above the recommendation. When classes exceed the number of students recommended, it significantly limits the teacher's ability to provide high-quality feedback and focused individualized instruction to meet student needs.

## How Do We Compare?

### Colchester class sizes vs. Vermont Education Quality Standards



ON JANUARY 28, the Colchester School Board approved a budget of \$44,626,828 for fiscal year 2021. This represents an increase of 4.78% over the current year's spending plan. When calculated in the state formula, this translates to an estimated 3.10% educational tax increase. Approval of this budget by voters would permit the school board and administrators to advance academic planning, support student needs, and maintain the district's facilities and grounds used by students and the Colchester community.



Last year, the district recouped **\$14K** through the sale of old technology.



Our school buses travel **1,548 miles a day** transporting students to school.



### How Would This Proposed Increase Affect You?

Property Value	FY 2020 Current Year	FY 2021 Proposed Budget	Annual Increase
\$100,000	\$1,549	\$1,597	\$48
\$150,000	\$2,323	\$2,395	\$72
\$200,000	\$3,097	\$3,193	\$96
\$250,000	\$3,872	\$3,991	\$119
\$300,000	\$4,646	\$4,790	\$144
\$350,000	\$5,420	\$5,588	\$168
\$400,000	\$6,194	\$6,386	\$192

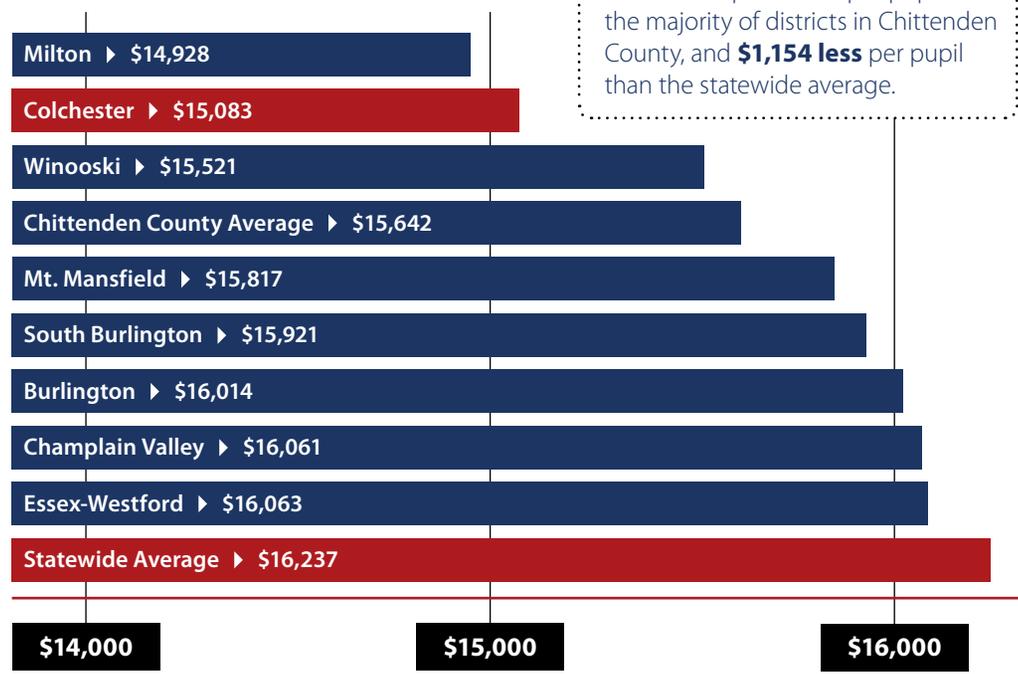


"For a Colchester home with an assessed value of \$250,000, the homeowner would pay an additional \$119 per year or \$39.66 each tax installment, unless they qualify for a property tax credit."

### Spending Per Equalized Pupil by District

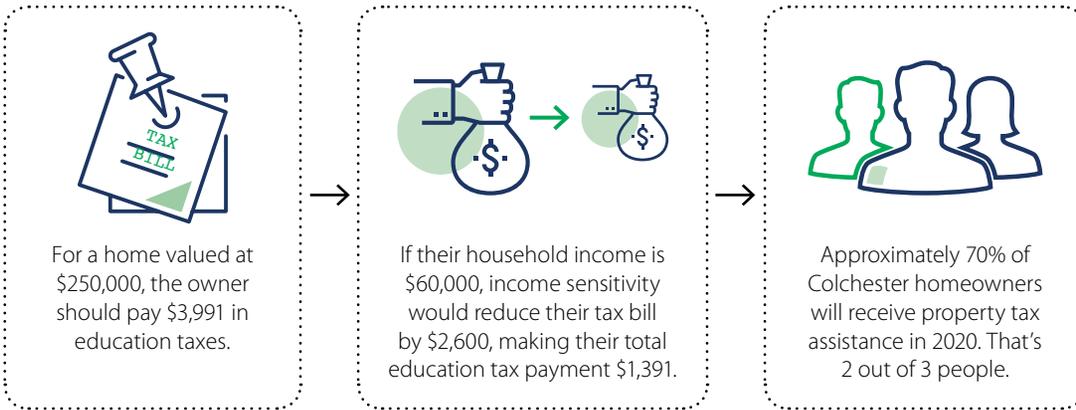


Colchester spends less per pupil than the majority of districts in Chittenden County, and **\$1,154 less** per pupil than the statewide average.



## How Does Income Sensitivity Work?

Income sensitivity, also known as a **property tax credit**, is a form of tax assistance which allows homeowners to pay property taxes based on their income, rather than the value of their home.



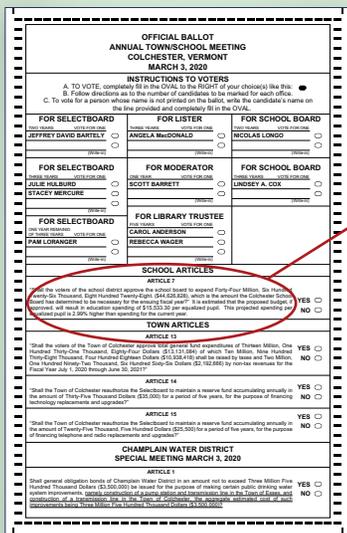
**254,959** meals served last year



Over **500 students** participate in our band and chorus programs.



## Understanding the Ballot on Town Meeting Day



SCHOOL ARTICLES	
ARTICLE 7	
<p>"Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend Forty-Four Million, Six Hundred Twenty-Six Thousand, Eight Hundred Twenty-Eight. (\$44,626,828), which is the amount the Colchester School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?" It is estimated that the proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$15,533.30 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.99% higher than spending for the current year.</p>	<p>YES <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p>
TOWN ARTICLES	
ARTICLE 13	
<p>"Shall the voters of the Town of Colchester authorize the School Board to expend Forty-Four Million, Six Hundred Twenty-Six Thousand, Eight Hundred Twenty-Eight (\$44,626,828), which is the amount the Colchester School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?" It is estimated that the proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$15,533.30 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.99% higher than spending for the current year.</p>	<p>YES <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p>
ARTICLE 14	
<p>"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the School Board to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300) for a period of five years for the purpose of financing technology replacements and upgrades?"</p>	<p>YES <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p>
ARTICLE 15	
<p>"Shall the Town of Colchester authorize the School Board to maintain a reserve fund accumulating annually in the amount of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) for a period of five years for the purpose of financing telephone and radio replacements and upgrades?"</p>	<p>YES <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p>
CHAMPLAIN WATER DISTRICT	
SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 3, 2020	
ARTICLE 1	
<p>"Shall general obligation bonds of Champlain Water District be authorized in an amount not to exceed Three Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,500,000) be issued for the purpose of making certain public drinking water system improvements, capital expenditures and operating and maintenance costs of said Champlain Water District?"</p>	<p>YES <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p>

2.99% is the percentage increase from the FY20 budget.

\$44,626,828 operates a total of seven buildings and provides transportation and education for over 2,100 students.

When calculating spending per student, Vermont uses **"equalized pupils"** rather than an actual head count. The formula gives less weight to pre-kindergarten pupils and extra weight to students in secondary schools, those from economically deprived backgrounds, and those whose first language is not English. The principle behind the weighting is that it costs more to educate students in certain categories.

Source: Public Assets Institute



**50,332 books** were checked out of our school libraries last school year.



**72 community events** were held in the Performing Arts Center last year



UMS students planted, harvested, and donated **203 pounds** of potatoes to the Colchester Food Shelf.

ColchesterSchoolDistrict

CSDCommunity

Colchester\_Schools



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