

Chapter 9: EDUCATION

Introduction

Pomfret is currently home to one of the highest performing elementary schools in the state.¹ Middle and high school students are bused to Woodstock Union High School and Elementary School. Pomfret strongly encourages children to seek education beyond high school so they will not only become self-supporting but also more employable in today's technological society. This effort includes academic as well as technical training.

The State of Pomfret's Education

State-wide and Windsor County-wide, the number of school age children is predicted to decline.² As a result, students Kindergarten through fourth grade are sent to Woodstock Elementary School and students seventh grade and up are sent to Woodstock Union High School. Students in fifth and sixth grade are sent to The Prosper Valley School located in South Pomfret.

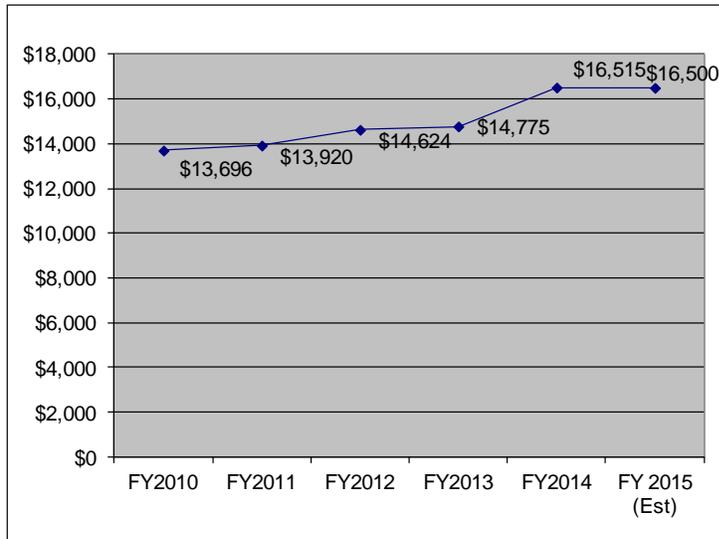
Vermont offers limited school choice within the public education system, including inter-district open enrollment. Therefore, it is important that Pomfret maintain competitive educational programs to retain local students and continue to attract tuition paying students from other towns. The possibility of the implementation of a broader Public School Choice policy should be kept in mind as long-range plans for the education of Pomfret students are developed.

¹ "Annual Report: Year Ending December 31, 2013." Pomfret, Vermont. (2013).

² Jones, Ken and Lilly Schwartz. "Vermont Population Projects -- 2010 - 2030." State of Vermont. (August 2013).

The annual cost per pupil ratio is the clearest measure of school costs in any community. The per pupil cost in the Prosper Valley School District for the last five years is shown below.

Figure 1 - Pomfret Education Spending per Pupil

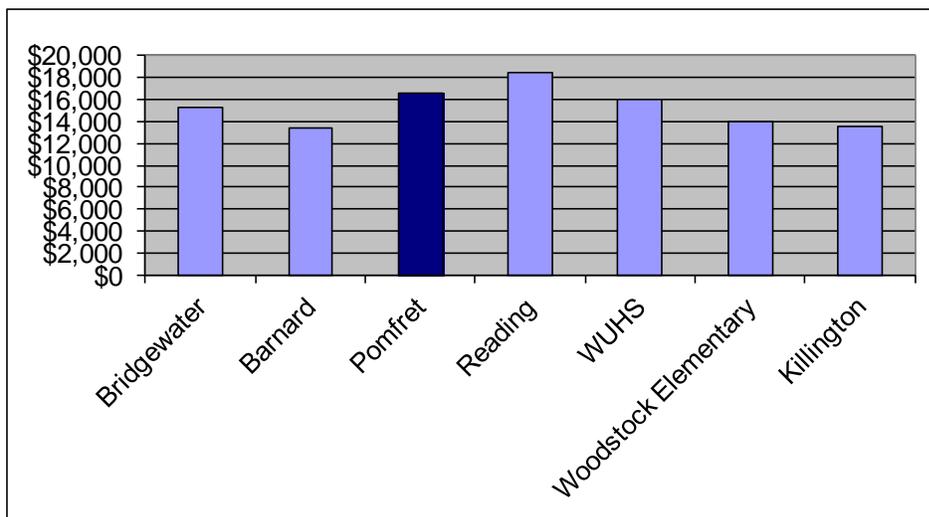


Source: Pomfret Town Report 2013

According to the most recently released figures from the State (May 2013) Vermont’s average cost per pupil was \$15,925 in FY2011,⁵ while Pomfret spent \$13,920 per pupil in that same year.

A comparison of current per pupil spending in other area schools is shown below.

Figure 2 - Comparative per Pupil Spending



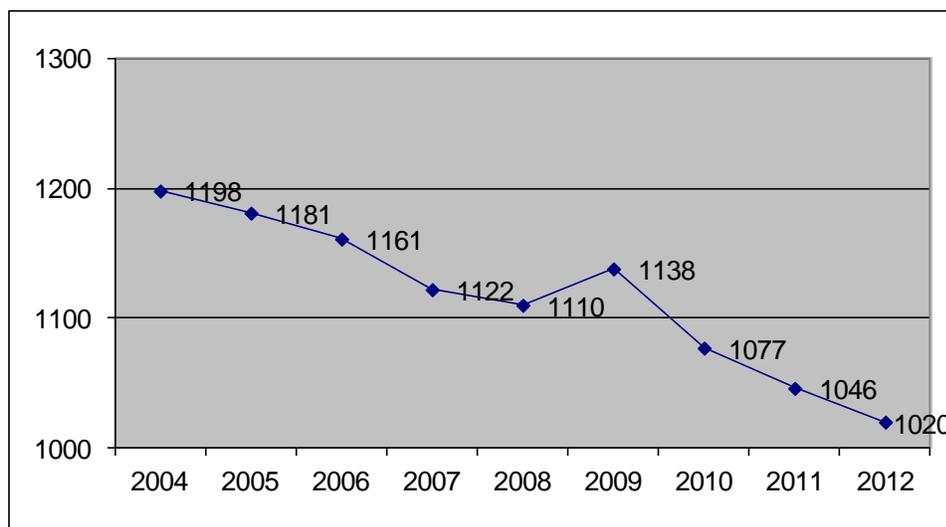
Source: Vermont Agency of Education FY2014

⁵ Dixon, Mark. “Public Education Finances: 2011.” Governments Division Reports. U.S. Census Bureau (May 2013).

According to a report done for Vermont's Joint Fiscal Office,⁶

- State and local revenues for K-12 education increased by almost 83.7% between FY 2001 and FY 2012.
- This increase is due in part to declining enrollments, and in part to substantial increases in state education revenues.
- Vermont has experienced the second greatest percentage decrease in student population (18.1%) over the time frame of the study.
- Average school district size has dwindled to 299 students – making the state's school districts the smallest in the nation with an average enrollment that is less than 10% of the size of the average school district in the United States.

Figure 3 - Windsor Central Supervisory Union Opening Enrollment



Source: Pomfret Town Report 2013

Historically, between 50-75% of Pomfret high school graduates have gone on to two-year technical vocational colleges or four-year colleges and universities.

Pomfret residents can be proud of the commitment by the townspeople to ensure that a superior education is provided to elementary school age children by constructing a new K-6 school. It provides highly visible evidence that education is a high priority in the minds of Pomfret taxpayers, and it affords a superb opportunity to continue to improve the academic aspects of student life for Pomfret children. The Prosper Valley School is to be commended for introducing programs at an early elementary level to help students make critical decisions. The number of townspeople, parents, and others who have volunteered time, energy, and expertise to help students and teachers testifies to widespread Town support for quality education. Continuing broad-based participation by all Pomfret residents in the process of developing long-range plans should be encouraged.

⁶ Picus, Lawrence O., Allan Odden, William Glenn, Michael Griffith, and Michael Wolkoff. "An Evaluation of Vermont's Education Finance System." Lawrence O. Picus and Associates.

Adult Education

The Artistree Community Arts Center in South Pomfret provides adult education courses in visual, performing, and culinary arts.

While some opportunities for adult education are offered through the Abbott Memorial Library, Pomfret's proximity to both Woodstock, Vermont and various institutions of higher education (including Dartmouth College) provides ample opportunities for adult learning activities.

Long-Range Goal

1. An educational environment that enables every student to strive toward their creative and intellectual potential.
2. The town government, the local schools, school district, and community fruitfully collaboration.

Policies and Objectives

1. Provide a physical environment that facilitates learning.
2. Establish academic programs that teach practical skills, challenge each student intellectually, and foster creativity, including those students with special needs and talents.
3. Provide education for Pomfret children in a cost-effective manner that minimizes property tax increases.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to schedule school budget information meetings in Pomfret prior to voting on the school budgets. (School Board)
2. Encourage parent involvement in school board decision. (School Board).
3. Continue to encourage and promote community use of the school facility. (School Board)
4. Monitor the effectiveness of the Prosper Valley School (Pomfret and Bridgewater School merger) and evaluate whether additional merger(s) are necessary. (School Board, Selectboard, Planning Commission)
5. Provide high school students with comprehensive vocational training so they can become more employable in today's economy. (School Board)

6. Where possible, supplement classroom teaching with creative activities funded by grants and foundations, such as the artist-in-residence program of the Pentangle Council on the Arts. (School Board)
7. Provide community-based workshops and vocational programs for the community and potential start-up businesses. Long-range planning and consideration of outside sources of funding should continue to be included in this process. (School Board)