

## **Mount Greylock Regional School District School Committee**

**Location: Zoom Remote Meeting**

**Date: Thursday, Feb 25, 2021 Time: 6 pm**

Present: Christina Conry, Carrie Greene, Michelle Johnson, Jose Constantine, Julia Bowen, Curtis Elfenbein, Steve Miller

Also present: Jason McCandless, Joe Bergeron

### **Special Open Session Agenda**

- I. Call to order
- II. MISSION: At Mount Greylock Regional School District, our mission is to create a community of learners working together in a safe and challenging learning environment that encourages restorative based processes, respect, inclusive diversity, courtesy, integrity, and responsibility through high expectations and cooperation resulting in life-long learning and personal growth.
- III. Public Comment
- IV. Approval of Minutes- February 11, 2021 VOTE
- V. School Choice Discussion
- VI. Tuition Agreement - Hancock and New Ashford FY22 rates
- VII. Substitute Rates
- VIII. FY22 Budget Apportionment Discussion
- IX. Pooled Covid Testing Update
- X. Finance Subcommittee Update
- XI. Upcoming Meetings
  - A. Mar. 11, 2021 - Finance Subcommittee, 4 pm
  - B. Mar. 11, 2021 - Public Hearing FY22 Budget followed by the regular School Committee Meeting, 6 pm
- XII. Other business not anticipated by the Chair within 48 hours of meeting
- XIII. Motion to Adjourn

Start time: 6pm

Special Open Session Agenda

- I. Call to order 6:01pm
- II. MISSION: At Mount Greylock Regional School District, our mission is to create a community of learners working together in a safe and challenging learning environment that encourages restorative based processes, respect, inclusive diversity, courtesy, integrity, and responsibility through high expectations and cooperation resulting in life-long learning and personal growth.
- III. Public Comment  
  
None
- IV. Approval of Minutes- February 11, 2021 VOTE  
Moved by Curtis, seconded by Julia, passes unanimously
- V. School Choice Discussion  
Superintendent presentation

## Section 6: Education in out-of-town high schools

Section 6. If a town of less than five hundred families or householders, according to such census, does not maintain a public high school offering four years of instruction, it shall pay the tuition of any pupil who resides therein and obtains from its school committee a certificate to attend a high school of another town included in the list of high schools approved for this purpose by the department. The department shall approve the high schools which may be attended by such pupils, and it may, for this purpose, approve a public high school in an adjoining state. Whenever, in the judgment of the department, it is expedient that such a pupil should board in the town of attendance the town of residence may, through its school committee, pay toward such board, in lieu of transportation, such sum as the said committee may fix.

If the school committee refuses to issue a certificate as aforesaid, application may be made to the department, which, if it finds that the educational needs of the pupil in question are not reasonably provided for, may issue a certificate having the same force and effect as if issued by the said committee. The application shall be filed with the superintendent of schools of the town of residence, and by him transmitted forthwith to the department with a report of the facts relative thereto.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section6A>

Have agreements with Hancock and New Ashford.

## Tuition: In Short

### **In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:**

- Towns that are educationally “non-operative” towns (no in-town public schooling option) must provide for the education of their students.
- Towns that are non-operative or provide elementary school only must likewise provide middle and/or high school opportunities for their students and may do so
  - In neighboring communities
  - In neighboring states
  - With independent schools, including boarding schools if necessary, all at the cost of the sending town.
- Failure for a town to reach agreement with one of the above options among school committees will result in the Commonwealth “certifying” or ordering an agreement into existence.
- We have formal, written agreements with our neighboring communities of Hancock and New Ashford for these reasons.

# Tuition Agreements

Mt. Greylock has signed tuition agreements with the town of New Ashford and Hancock, MA to attend Lanesborough Elementary School and the Mt. Greylock Regional School.

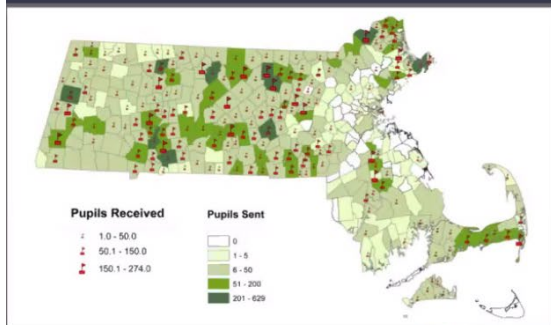


## The Agreements:

- Generally based on regional per pupil expenditures less transportation costs and special education per pupil costs which are born by the sending town.
  - Current year agreed upon cost: \$15,249 (21-22 TBD)
  - 2021-2022:
    - Hancock: 31 students at Mt. Greylock
    - New Ashford: 6 students at Lanesborough Elementary, 11 students at Mt. Greylock.
- Sending towns required to pay 100% of special education costs for students on IEP's, and 100% of costs associated with section 504 Plans that require services and/or equipment above what is on hand within the regional district.
- Sending towns carry the costs of any out of the regional district programming and transportation costs (with a refund provided back to the sending town if a move to an out of district placement is made during a school year).
- Agreements renew automatically unless the regional district or the sending town opt to not extend the agreement.
- Not in the agreement but in MA General Law—costs associated with vocational school tuition and transportation are born by the sending town.

2021-2022 numbers not determined yet, waiting for numbers from state, will get those numbers later

## School Choice:



## Mt Greylock Regional School District Policy

### JFBB - SCHOOL CHOICE

It is the policy of this school district not to admit non resident students under the terms and conditions of the Interdistrict School Choice Law. This decision must be reaffirmed annually prior to June 1st by a vote of the School Committee following a public hearing. In the event the School Committee votes to participate, the following local conditions would apply:

1. That by May 1 of every school year, the administration will determine the number of spaces in each school available to choice students.
2. That by June 1 of every school year, a public hearing will be held to review participation in the school choice program.
3. That resident students be given priority placement in any classes or programs within the district.
4. That the selection of non resident students for admission when the number of requests exceeds the number of available spaces be in the form of a random drawing. There will be two drawings for this purpose. The first will take place during the last week of the current school year but no later than July 1st. The second will be conducted during the week immediately preceding the opening of the next school year and will be based on the possibility of unexpected additional openings.
5. Any student who is accepted for admission under the provisions of this policy is entitled to remain in the district until graduation from high school except if there is a lack of funding of the program.
6. The School Committee affirms its position that it shall not discriminate in the admission of any child on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, homelessness, ancestry, athletic performance, physical handicap, special need, pregnancy, pregnancy related condition, academic performance or proficiency in the English language.

SOURCE: MASC February 2019

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 71.6; 71.6A; 76.6; 76.12; 76.12B

BESE Regulations 603 CMR 26.00

Voted 2.13.20

[https://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/mtgreylockset/mtgreylock/JFBB/z2Code\\_JFBB](https://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/mtgreylockset/mtgreylock/JFBB/z2Code_JFBB)

# School Choice Process

MA General Law Part I, Title XII, Chapter 76, Section 12b(j)

(j) School committees may establish terms for accepting non-resident students; provided, however, that if the number of non-resident students applying for acceptance to said district exceeds the number of available seats, said school committee shall select students for admission on a random basis; provided, further, that said school committee shall conduct said random selection twice: one time prior to July first and one time prior to November first; provided, further, that no school committee shall discriminate in the admission of any child on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, ancestry, athletic performance, physical handicap, special need or academic performance or proficiency in the English language. The Massachusetts commission against discrimination, established by section fifty-six of chapter six, shall have jurisdiction to enforce the provisions of this section; provided, however, that all students described in subsection (m) shall be entitled to remain in the receiving districts they are attending or have been accepted to attend. Any school committee that accepts non-resident students under the provisions of this section shall notify each district from which it has accepted a non-resident student of its acceptance of that student; provided, however, that a school committee may not publicly release the names of students leaving or entering a district under the provisions of this section. Notwithstanding the preceding provisions of this paragraph, any sibling of a student already enrolled in the receiving districts shall receive priority for admission to said district.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter76/Section12B>

## In Short

- The district provides two random selections for open school choice slots per year.
  - Last week of the school year before July 1
  - The week prior to school opening
- No discrimination—MCAD is the enforcing agency where necessary.
- Receiving districts report back to sending district and to the Commonwealth who school choice students are.
- Siblings of students already enrolled receive priority placement for school choice openings.

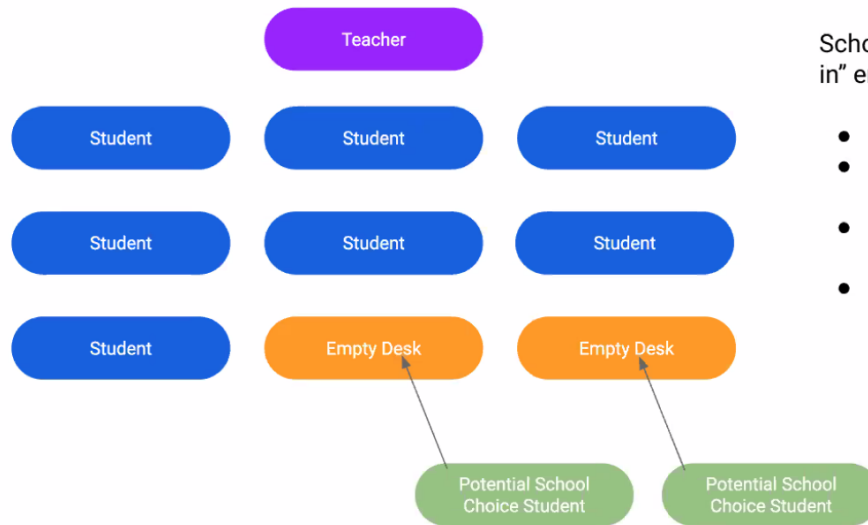
# School Choice at Work

- “School Choice” was adopted in the Commonwealth as a part of the 1993 Education Reform Acts
- A district may not choose whether to send or allow students to leave by school choice
- A district may choose whether or not to participate as a receiving district through school choice
- Mt. Greylock (and the two member towns prior to regionalization) is a long time participant in the Commonwealth’s School Choice Program

## Key Points

- Once a student is accepted via school choice, that student has a right to graduate from the school district
  - Choices made at the elementary level will impact middle and high school class sizes
- No transportation is provided via the school choice program
  - families/guardians must provide their own transportation
- In general, a school choice student tuition is \$5,000, except for approved Commonwealth Virtual Schools whose tuition is \$8,741 (plus a \$75 per student administrative fee)

# School Choice at Work (Ideally)



School Choice allows districts to “fill in” empty seats that

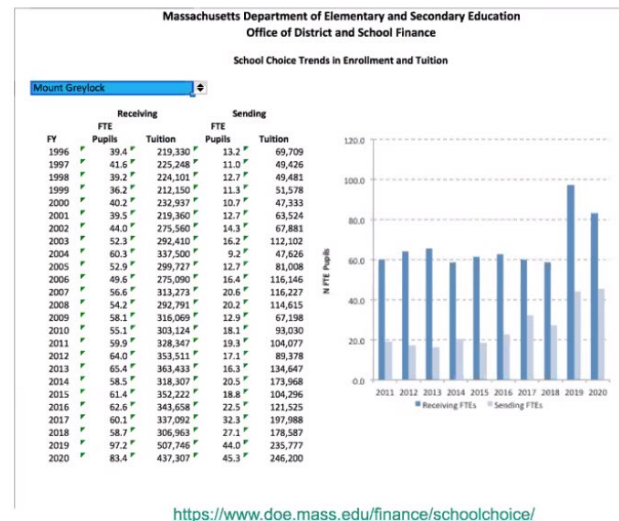
- Do not add to labor costs,
- Do not add to administrative costs,
- Do not add to facilities/utilities costs,
- Do not negatively impact the organization or operation of an existing classroom, class section, or the orderly and effective operation of the school.

## School Choice–Local Impacts

The Mt. Greylock Regional School District and former variations of such have historically approached school choice as a reasonable means of filling empty seat without impacting individual classrooms or schools negatively.

Some guiding thoughts as we proceed:

- Choice can never push the boundaries of class size overload.
- We owe Lanesborough and Williamstown residents active stewardship of their investments in their schools.
- It is preferable to accept students in K and 1 and have them be a long term member of our community.
- Siblings must receive priority preference.
- This past school year was, for most districts, a year to limit choice in substantive ways, as so much was unknown about the upcoming year—protecting class size is a special priority this year
- We will bring back specific school-by-school and grade-by-grade recommendations in March.





Mount Greylock Regional School District Enrollment Projections (V2020)

Grade	2015	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
K	82	66	55	54	52	51	49	48	47	45	45	45
1	83	83	68	57	56	54	53	51	50	49	47	47
2	86	85	86	71	60	59	57	56	54	53	52	50
3	101	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57	55	54	53
4	79	90	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57	55	54
5	89	86	92	94	88	89	74	63	62	60	59	57
6	102	76	84	90	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57
7	97	91	74	82	88	90	84	85	70	59	58	56
8	106	130	100	83	91	97	99	93	94	79	68	67
9	91	85	129	99	82	90	96	98	92	93	78	67
10	86	77	76	120	90	73	81	87	89	83	84	69
11	81	84	75	74	118	88	71	79	85	87	81	82
12	87	84	82	73	72	116	86	69	77	83	85	79
Total	1170	1129	1099	1070	1048	1026	958	919	896	863	824	783

## For Future

Mount Greylock Regional School District Enrollment Projections (V2020)

Grade	2015	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
K	82	66	55	54	52	51	49	48	47	45	45	45
1	83	83	68	57	56	54	53	51	50	49	47	47
2	86	85	86	71	60	59	57	56	54	53	52	50
3	101	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57	55	54	53
4	79	90	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57	55	54
5	89	86	92	94	88	89	74	63	62	60	59	57
6	102	76	84	90	92	86	87	72	61	60	58	57
7	97	91	74	82	88	90	84	85	70	59	58	56
8	106	130	100	83	91	97	99	93	94	79	68	67
9	91	85	129	99	82	90	96	98	92	93	78	67
10	86	77	76	120	90	73	81	87	89	83	84	69
11	81	84	75	74	118	88	71	79	85	87	81	82
12	87	84	82	73	72	116	86	69	77	83	85	79
Total	1170	1129	1099	1070	1048	1026	958	919	896	863	824	783

Thank you.

In March, we will ask for a general agreement that the Mt. Greylock Regional School District will continue to participate in the Commonwealth's School Choice Program as a receiving district.

We will also ask for approval of a school-by-school, grade-by-grade approval of open spaces to accept school choice students.

This will allow us to proceed with the two levels of process we need to follow per our district policy to admit new school choice students to the school district.

Deeper into the future our post-Covid enrollment picture will require close watching as will the impacts of tuition and school choice on future enrollments.

Berkshire county numbers of future students: lack of growth of neighbors who tuition to us will have impact. If we believe these numbers, past numbers support, will have available spots and need to be thoughtful / strategic on how we will use.

Carrie: what percent of students are tuition / choice?

Jake: A little under 1100 students this year, around 35 or so tuition, according to DESE about 81 are school choice. Could comprise 10-13% of our student body.

Carrie: do we know how many students choice out of our district?

Jake: In the 20 school year: number going in is about 2/3rds of what goes out, last year was the closest to lining up, still about a 20-30 differential.

Julia: in a future meeting would like to know why we lose students.

Jose: where funds end up going / how used.

Joe: Funds restricted in how we can use, have to use for educational purposes, cannot go out and buy a building. Usually use to fund a portion of teacher salaries, consistent enough (don't dry up from year to year). Another use is educational technology purchasing.

Jose: follow-up: what percentage of the budget? How much? How dependent are we?

Joe: Typically spend \$800,000 to \$900,000 from tuitioning, choice \$500,000 to \$600,000 on a \$23 million operating budget (doesn't include paying down building). Roughly 1 in 23 dollars spent coming from tuition, a bit less from choice.

Jake: will get in to weeds more on available spaces later, hope to have per pupil from state but do not know when we will get. Does not vary too much year to year.

VI. Tuition Agreement - Hancock and New Ashford FY22 rates

Steve: lot of work done by people over the years on these, believe now automatically renew unless a party opts out by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Jake: Yes, started this conversation with neighbors in January, have the go ahead. Do think that should look at the language. Will talk to legal to clarify. Sort of carries thru for 2021.... We will double check.

VII. Substitute Rates

Jake: one of first things I looked at when arrived, concerned about availability given the conditions this year, compared rates across county. Our substitute rates are at or above the rest of Berkshire County. \$100/day if DESE certified, \$90 if college degree, \$80 high school diploma or equivalent. Nurses: licensed, cpr certified \$160/day. Custodial/cafeteria: paid at the hourly step 1 rate in current collective bargaining agreement. Long term substitute (sub fills in continuously for same person exceeding 10 days, starts day 11) paid \$220/day. Aligns closely with step 1 bachelor's degree. For paras it is step 1 hourly rate.

Julia: do we have subs when we need subs?

Jake: for the most part yes.

Michelle: Really?

Jake: during a pandemic year when subs have to know zoom – not the year to make that determination. Looked at it early in Nov as were struggling to get subs in. Common topic of conversation among the supers on how hard to get substitute teachers / paras.

Julia: Related: do any of the schools have inhouse full time subs ready to jump in if needed?

Jake: no, would have mixed thoughts on how that investment pays off, have looked at that every year for last seven years.

VIII. FY22 Budget Apportionment Discussion

Joe: So far know chapter 70 funds holding steady. Chapter 71 seeing a drop of \$70,000 or so. Number that tends to change as legislature goes thru. Grant funding: rosy picture but



not a lot of info. Worked with corona virus relief funds from federal government that are apportioned by states. Could be \$400,000 in aid up to a million. DESE saying hold tight, funding coming, discussions happening, but no concrete information yet, little disconcerting as decisions coming up....

District has done a good job of under-estimating revenue for years and saving for rainy days, healthy balances, can smooth out impact of additional programming needed while state funding lags behind.

State looks at ability of towns to pay (how much Lanesborough / Williamstown should pay as a minimum). Minimum local contributions, must provide. Then look at foundational enrollments – how many kids towns send to school. Have seen shock in those numbers. Down in many areas for reasons other than some grades larger / smaller. Final is the equalized value of the towns. Based on property values across various sectors. Most recent numbers came out middle of last year, steady relationship b/w the two towns.

Holding tight, soon will forge ahead.

Carrie: E&D another part, can you touch on that? Choice and tuition: how does it work with the two elementary schools. Is this district wide or stay with schools?

Joe: Regional agreement is silent on how we need to spend choice, tuition and E&D (excess and deficiency: a fund that builds up over time as we spend less than required to or than we have appropriated, fund that unlike tuition/choice is capped at a certain percentage of our budget, reported on an annual basis, way to shore up bumps from year to year, more restricted fund in how large can build up). Attempt to make sure tuition / choice are used where they are generated. LES and MtG two schools that have tuition agreements. WES has a more significant volume of choice funds. Our use of these funds is not restricted.

Carrie: My question on the regional agreement is that it is not a standard regional agreement, expenses are district wide, set up so that we share the expenses but each town pays for the budget of their elementary school. As we put the budget together we try to keep that in mind.

Jose: When does fiscal year start/end? How do we support summer program – which year's budget?

Joe: July 1 to end of June.

Jake: Last day of school around June 20<sup>th</sup>. Traditionally summer programs in MA start after July 4. So budget the summer program in next year's budget.

#### IX. Pooled Covid Testing Update

Joe: first week of student testing. It was awesome. Happy to have survived it. Lot of coordination, amount of teamwork to get three different buildings with several different mechanisms to get specimens.... As of today 700 of 1100 or so have consented, given that just week one, spent a fair amount of the day in buildings with students, amazing how

empowering it is for a child to do something with a q-tip to see if they have the virus. Great news is that every student I saw had a really positive experience, positive outlook on what this means. Happened quickly but made it feel like something positive for the community. Tested students/staff on Tues/Thurs this week. Tried to map to the same times the college has its courier service going to Cambridge, college is sharing the courier service with us. Trying to make sure get tests to the lab of getting results back during the school week and not weekend – logistic hurdles. So far all negative test results – fantastic (just staff so far). Tuesday: all negative. Also normal: this is a screening program, testing people who have zero reason to believe they have covid, no symptoms, not quarantining, .... Some schools in Boston have gone over a month without a positive. If we do get positives chances are people might've had covid without knowing. Everything is exhaustingly peachy and good.

Steve: To put in perspective how many of the students are fully remote? Both my kids did it, great experiences, was wonderful for them to see what it was like.

Joe: trying to encourage participation of remote students and staff. Should not be excluded from those numbers. For elementary schools about 68 across the two schools that are fully remote (text from Principal Nolan), MtG numbers a bit more fluid.

Jake: Around 70 fully remote from MtG (text from Principal Jake)

Curtis: One of very few able to do this, can you add some details....

Jake: Application process was arduous, organization massive undertaking, Joe and three school nurses (Carol, Cathy, Nicole) / principals.

Michelle: Many thanks to Joe, know it took up many of your hours, know it was the nurses and principals, thank you.

Joe: Nurses pulled out all the stops, staff were really excited about this, yet another thing we are asking our staff to figure out that is new, not normal, been great across all three buildings.

Michelle: Does this give our staff a designation that is medical **non-covid facing healthcare workers?**

- X. Finance Subcommittee Update  
Will hear more next month.

- XI. Upcoming Meetings
  - A. Mar. 11, 2021 - Finance Subcommittee, 4 pm
  - B. Mar. 11, 2021 - Public Hearing FY22 Budget followed by the regular School Committee Meeting, 6 pmMaybe change when the finance committee meets.... Maybe meet March 4<sup>th</sup>.  
The regular meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup> is when we will discuss on further re-opening.

Jake: Commissioner said looking for early April, April 5<sup>th</sup>, for elementary schools in person.... Will talk about some ideas on how to approach. MA Board of Education meeting that will

codify into law / regulation will probably be near the end of first week of March / early second week. Ideally we will have a fuller picture. Meanwhile will continue discussions with locals.

Michelle: March 4<sup>th</sup>: DESE having a meeting at 6 or 7.... Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> would be 4pm.

XII. Other business not anticipated by the Chair within 48 hours of meeting






XIII. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Michelle, seconded by Steve, passes unanimously (Julia aye, Christina aye, Jose aye, Curtis aye, Michelle aye, Carrie aye, Steve aye).

Adjourned at 7:23pm

Minutes by Steven Miller, Secretary

Meeting documents:

-  00 School Committee Agenda 02.25.21
-  04 School Committee 02.11.21 Minutes DRAFT
-  05 and 06 Tuition and School Choice
-  06 Tuition Agreements, Hancock and New Ashford
-  07 Sub Brochure with Rates

Approved 3.11.21 with edit