

# SAU70 2023 Survey Free-Text Responses: MCS Only

SAU70 Comprehensive Family Costs Survey May 2023

Based on 556 completed surveys: 73 specific to MCS

## Free-Text Answers

Select portions redacted to eliminate potential identifying information for individuals. Each redacted word is replaced by four asterisks: \*\*\*\*.

Only free-text response questions are included in this document.

Some respondents wrote free-text answers similar to “No”, “None”, and “Nothing”. Answers like these are not present in this document; these are the differences in counts between “# Responses” and “# Specific Responses” below.

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| Total | --                      | 3,769 | 2,570 | 292 | --      |

**Q02: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q01: Did the perceived quality of the SAU70 schools have an impact on your decision to live specifically in Hanover or Norwich?***

**169 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 123 responses → 12 MCS responses**

1. We moved in 2019 because we lived the programs at SAU 70 schools
2. My \*\*\*\* has challenges and I have found Marion cross to be the best fit for his needs!
3. The public school were the primary reason we purchased a home in Norwich

4. Yes, but we also lucked out. We were looking for places to live throughout the Upper Valley, and happened to find a house open in Norwich.
5. I could live 5 minutes down the road in a more affordable house, but I'd be in another school district.
6. My \*\*\*\* lives in Norwich. So my daughter attends Marion Cross
7. The school system was the primary reason we moved to Norwich and pay the home prices and taxes that we do.
8. Also, foreign language instruction starting in kindergarten was a main reason we chose this district
9. We 100% live in this town for the schools
10. As a \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*, moving to VT in 2019 was a well-researched choice. Access to high quality public education, support for \*\*\*\* parents (VT Act 166 and the Family Place were amazing resources when my kid was in pre-school), the potential for flexible/hybrid work, the gender pay gap (VT still has work to do, but it's better than most states), the green landscape, and the proximity to Dartmouth College (for its diversity in an otherwise overwhelmingly white region) all factored into the decision to move here.
11. Quality is also why I am leaving. The grade inflation and neglect of basic curricular needs is simply unforgivable.
12. I attended Hanover schools as a child (Ray, Richmond, and HHS); I now live in Norwich because I wanted my child to attend Marion Cross and then HHS - this was the sole factor driving our decision to live in Norwich as opposed to another UV town

**Q04: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.**  
***Re Q03: Generally, is living in Hanover or Norwich financially challenging for your family?***

**180 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 141 responses → 18 MCS responses**

1. I don't think it's fair to say we are “struggling”, but I do feel like we've paid a premium to live here specifically for the good schools. When I think long term about our life, the most likely thing we will do is leave Norwich and move further out where we will be able to save substantially more.
2. It is necessary for two incomes
3. The lack of after school, vacation or summer care in Norwich
4. The lack of affordable housing is a huge issue and as \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* I'm afraid I will have to pull my \*\*\*\* out of the SAU70 school district

5. There is not much housing available and the cost for housing is extremely high for what houses are available
6. I grew up in Norwich. I attended Marion Cross School. Now that I have my own family in Norwich it's getting dangerously too expensive to live here. We can barely afford our current taxes and per usual, they will continue to rise. This makes it almost impossible for younger families to live in this town. I'm sad to say, we will likely have to put our home on the market in the next few years, when we can no longer afford to live here. I'm so saddened by this.
7. We do have to think about finances. It's not a barrier to access, but not something we take lightly. We make decisions about what our children can or cannot participate in based on both logistical and financial issues in mind.
8. The high tax rate has to be accounted for in our finances, but the excellent quality of the school system makes it a good investment
9. We both work remote and I have to travel for work. There are not jobs here.
10. Cost of housing and taxes in Norwich are extremely high. My annual income for \*\*\*\* household makes it an ongoing challenge to live in this area.
11. The current tax burden in Norwich is alarming and growing more challenging. It is becoming a challenge to save meaningfully for college.
12. worried about the pending tax increases, it's a lot of money on top of a mortgage
13. Taxes are quite high in Norwich and seem to be getting higher all the time
14. We fortunately got our house before the housing cost went up. We couldn't afford to live here today if we bought a house
15. As taxes increase, we are definitely more cautious about our finances. Most of the time we are okay, but there a few home ownership issues that will have us looking more closely at our budget and what we can actually afford.
16. As a \*\*\*\* household, the cost of housing in Norwich is a major concern. I rent, and worry about how \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* would cope if our annual lease were not renewed. Would \*\*\*\* still be able to stay in \*\*\*\* school, where \*\*\*\* is thriving? Would I be able to find, and then afford, rent at the next place? I also wonder if I'll ever be able to afford my own place in Norwich some day.
17. Taxes, fees for sports, and heating costs.
18. We currently rent in Norwich and are constantly concerned that the cost of renting will simply be too much. Home ownership is simply too much at this time, in this town.

Q06: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.

*Re Q05: Have you ever used a supplementary private educational service for your child, such as one-on-one tutoring or group-based lessons, for subjects also taught in school, such as math, reading, or writing? Please select all that apply.*

197 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 160 responses → 19 MCS responses

1. My \*\*\*\* would benefit from math tutor but can't afford
2. Our student has had reading challenges that have been unaddressed by MCS since \*\*\*\* was in \*\*\*\* grade. Almost 2 years ago, we had \*\*\*\* evaluated by the school. We felt \*\*\*\* needed help but \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* denied \*\*\*\* services so we were forced to pay for individual reading tutoring. For the last year and a half, we have been paying a private O-G certified tutor for 1 or 2 visits per week.
3. Piano and English classes, and plan to do math class as well
4. Core reading and math instruction is significantly weaker than expected given the reputation of the school
5. Tutor for reading.
6. Our student has a private tutor
7. we have done language camps / lessons in Spanish and French
8. My \*\*\*\* uses these services on a daily basis and has an IEP
9. Considering Kumon math for my son who was in remote school for \*\*\*\* grade and missed some fundamentals. The Kumon method has helped my daughter with her fact fluency.
10. I feel that my children are not being challenged enough at school and I am considering adding to their education with outside opportunities.
11. Our current \*\*\*\* grader had had a full year of remote school and felt insecure about her math abilities. We enrolled her in Kumon to help her with her fact fluency and have been very happy with the increase in her confidence and fact fluency.
12. I have paid for music lessons and I have considered additional tutoring in writing skills but have not found any.
13. We pay for math enrichment exercises because our children perform above grade level.
14. my child has an IEP, and that's extremely helpful in getting their needs met.
15. We have hired an occupational therapist to work with our child on fine motor skills
16. We have thought about private classes and we will likely have to if they cut foreign language

17. My child is just in pre-k so it's not something we've encountered just yet.
18. My child needs 1:1 attention that he's not able to get in school.
19. Child currently in Pre-K so not an issue yet

Q08: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.

*Re Q07: Philosophically, do you feel that taxpayers should pay for the costs of these supplementary private educational activities for subjects taught in school, or should costs be borne out by participating students and their families?*

210 responses. After removing "no" and similar responses → 173 responses → 24 MCS responses

1. We answered "taxpayers 100%" b/c we feel it is the school's responsibility to educate students, 100%. If there is a deficit in learning, the school should provide the student with the needed support. There should not ever be a reason for the family of a student with learning challenges to go outside the school system.
2. My hope would be that all children get the help they need in tax-funded public schools. If the tutoring is extra (beyond what is expected grade level) then that seems like families should pay for that.
3. it would be nice to have tutoring available and coordinated by the school or PTO
4. Taxpayers should pay for core instruction. Core instruction is incredibly weak. Supplemental services would be less common if core instruction was stronger. Supplemental services should have tiered offerings with base tier provided by school (taxpayers) and families paying additional. Must say current IEP process is pathetic (qualification, matching special educator skills to students, expectation of special educators for progress) and special educators seem generally unqualified to address specific student needs. Understand they are "trained" and "certified" but that doesn't matter if a kid needs reading support and the special educator has no specialized training in teaching reading. Everything about non-Core services at Marion Cross feels like purely check the box activities and we deserve better. There is a reading and math problem at Marion Cross and the administration doesn't seem like they can/want to do anything about it.
5. SAU 70 is a notoriously affluent district, with enough resources that if distributed with wisdom should leave no child at a disadvantage due to financial constraints.
6. Put the public funds into the school and increase the support / offerings there.
7. Exceptional (gifted) support needed

8. We're proponents of equity ; and in making sure that every child has access to the supports they need. If extra support is necessary for the child to perform at grade level, it really should be funded at a public level (not individual families) ; otherwise, you'll drive the divisions even further.
9. Benefit should be income based. I.e., lower income should receive higher subsidy.
10. The students' education should be the top priority for our tax payers.
11. I understand that there are equity implications for the costs of these services falling to families, but I can't see how this would be a justified taxpayer expense in any way.
12. With my income, I cannot afford for taxes to increase in Norwich.
13. If a student is struggling in a topic the school should have the resources to help them. They should also be able to accommodate an advanced child with a system that flexes for skill level.
14. We would prefer that MCS provide instruction for children at their ability level. Right now, the administration of MCS seems ambivalent to the learning needs of kids above grade level.
15. If a student is performing below grade level at some part of the required curriculum - like math or reading, taxpayers should pay for some remedial help. If a student is passing but the parent wants them to do better, the parent should be more involved and pay for costs.
16. I think the district's resources should be entirely focused on in-school education.
17. If the student has an IEP and the school can't meet their needs, then the school system (taxpayers) are required to fund whatever additional services are needed to meet those needs. Other than that situation, I believe families should cover the costs. The schools should be meeting the educational needs of all students. If they aren't, there are issues that need to be addressed at the school system level, not at the individual family level.
18. Answering with the assumption that this is a family choice to do additional tutoring, not something included in an EST or other individualized learning plan.
19. Would be nice to offer income-based scholarships for students that need extra support but don't qualify through the school
20. Baseline education should be adequate and everything over and above should out of pocket
21. All students should get access to the educational supports that they need. However, families that are wanting extracurriculars to get their child ahead in math, English, etc. should be providing that themselves.
22. I'd rather the school provide what students need, including more challenging academic work at the elementary school level for kids who are ready for that, so that it doesn't become an issue of families who can afford to seeking additional challenges outside of school while others who can't afford to or don't have the time having children not reaching their academic potential due to the limited offerings at the public school for advanced students
23. Need based. Why is that not an option above?

24. Generally families should bear these costs, with some exceptions for those who are not financially able to do so and, in those cases, financial assistance should be offered, but only for those activities directly tied to school (e.g. March intensive) and not for general tutoring, enrichment, etc.

**Q10: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.**

*Re Q09: Have you ever used a supplementary educational service for your child, such as one-on-one tutoring or group-based lessons, for supplementary academic subjects that are not taught in your school, such as coding or additional languages not currently taught? Please select all that apply. Note that we are not referring to subject-based camps that occur only during summer or vacation breaks.*

129 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 90 responses → 11 MCS responses

1. To be quite frank, my children are very bright and often seems bored by school and I wonder if I should be providing her with more learning opportunities- she's so hungry to learn.
2. I don't know where I can find these camps and the right people to teach.
3. Reading and math are the priority. Since you ask though, we find the French instruction to also be incredibly weak. Fully supportive of teaching French at school and we have no expectation of our children becoming fluent due to elementary school French by any means but the time spent in French today feels like a waste given children seem to have extremely limited French vocab (forget conversational skills) after years of taking French. So either make the time spent meaningful or find something else to do with the time. That being said more time on reading instruction with ineffective curriculum and weak core instruction doesn't necessary fix the primary issues
4. Spanish is not offered at Marion Cross and I want my children to improve / maintain their Spanish skills
5. I am looking into math, writing and language additional programs for my children. In addition, we do art outside of school.
6. Music lessons since they start so late in our school system.



7. We have enrolled our children in science and robotics enrichment activities to cultivate a love of learning.
8. My oldest is too young but we plan to pay for coding classes next year
9. Second and third languages
10. I've looked for world language instruction outside of school for elementary schoolers since the offerings are so limited currently, but there's nothing I can find available in the Upper Valley.
11. Proper language instruction for children at MCS

**Q12: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.**

***Re Q10: If your child has an IEP or 504 plan, do you supplement this plan with private services?***

**114 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 67 responses → 6 MCS responses**

1. We have been using outside services for our \*\*\*\* for almost 2 years. \*\*\*\* sees an \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* specialist, a behavioral specialist for \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*, and a traditional therapist for \*\*\*\*. Furthermore, the school never responded to our request for help with our student's \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* issues so we have sought an OT on our own, outside of school.
2. I don't know what is 504 and IEP
3. We pay out of pocket for a therapist
4. My child attends weekly private therapy for a mental disorder.
5. If my child's needs weren't being met at the school, I'd work with the school to ensure the needs were met with school funding as is legally required for IEPs.
6. My child had an IEP and it was determined by the school that \*\*\*\* no longer qualified. Since the loss of services, \*\*\*\* grades and engagement with school have suffered.

**Q14: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.**  
*Re Q13: Does your child currently receive mental health and/or behavioral health services?*

107 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 63 responses → 11 MCS responses

1. Challenging to find therapy in the area
2. Our student is in need of emotional and social support which the school has not been willing/able to provide. Therefore, we pay for \*\*\*\* to receive traditional therapy for anxiety and see a \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* expert. We are paying out of pocket for these services.
3. Finding affordable private services was a major problem/challenge
4. We are very grateful for this service.
5. We pay out of pocket for a therapist.
6. Educational Support Team within school and private therapy.
7. The waitlists in the upper valley are extremely long.
8. \*\*\*\* meets with school counselor weekly. Thats all that is needed.
9. School was not only unhelpful but lacked referral resources.
10. Our child receives counseling services via a CBT practice for their \*\*\*\* disorder.
11. My child struggles socially and there is no one at school to help.

**Q16: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know.**  
*Re Q15: Does your child have difficulty obtaining nutritious meals?*

97 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 52 responses → 5 MCS responses

1. My child eats the most unhealthy foods at school, unfortunately.... things that are artificially colored, full of sugar, and processed. They also got candy for taking their standardized tests. Not ideal.
2. The school food is not nutritious enough.
3. Parent neglect is primary concern for lack of meals.
4. School lunches are not quality. So we do have to make more meals for lunch at home. Not really free if it's not good for you

5. I would love for school meals to be more nutritious, organic, and locally sourced for all children.

**Q18: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q17: Does your child have regular access at home to technologies or devices needed for educational purposes, such as internet access, a computer, a tablet, or a printer?***

**104 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 62 responses → 7 MCS responses**

1. I do not want my child to spend significant time in front of a screen.
2. We do not let the children use technology - this was not an option for the answers.
3. We do have these things at home, but our children do not need access to them to do schoolwork at home yet.
4. iPad and tablet. Laptop if needed.
5. Good internet service is unavailable where we live
6. Internet access is difficult
7. Currently, my child is in 1st Grade, so the need for access to such devices outside of the school day is minimal. I can imagine we'll need to figure something else out in the future.

Q20: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q19: During this 2022-2023 academic year, does your child participate in organized afterschool athletic activities of some sort? Please select all that apply. Note that we are not referring to subject-based camps that occur only during summer or vacation breaks.*

125 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 92 responses → 8 MCS responses

1. Given the other academic, social, emotional and occupational activities she must pursue, she only has time for 1 after school athletic activity
2. UVAC Swimming
3. Our child does gymnastics and swimming. She used to also do trail running through Parks & Rec.
4. Not quite "no interest", just didn't have enough info to sign up in time.
5. Norwich Rec, Skating, Soccer, baseball, skiing
6. Still young so just rec dept
7. I work until 5:30 and can't take her.
8. CCBA; northern lights; dartmouth skiway

Q22: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q21: Philosophically, do you feel that taxpayers should pay for the costs of these afterschool athletic activities, or should costs be borne out by participating students and their families?*

190 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 161 responses → 17 MCS responses

1. Public school sponsored athletics should be just that, accessible to all children regardless of need.

2. Some clubs (Ford Sayer) for example, have scholarships so that any student can participate, regardless of financial need. I think this is a good way to ensure equitable access.
3. School sponsored activities should be funded by taxpayers. Private or club sports should be privately financed.
4. All children should have equal access to afterschool sports.
5. Depends on the activities.
6. Again, I think there should be subsidies for low income families.
7. School should have sports programs after school.
8. I think the accessibility of sports should be as accessible as possible to everyone. The cost of most Norwich Rec programs is very reasonable; I don't know the extent to which it is subsidized by the taxpayers.
9. With my income, I cannot afford for taxes to increase in Norwich.
10. I think it is important that the school offer activities through 5pm to support working families. It is also important to offer both athletic and non-athletic options
11. The only exception I would make is if students had demonstrated financial need.
12. Known sliding scale to ensure all can participate
13. Most physical fitness in school isn't adequate. It should be part of education. I guess it's whether you see "school" as 730-2 pm babysitting or a culture of developing good habits to follow through life. I think the latter but taxpayers shouldn't pay for everything. Should be individualized somewhat
14. Cost should not be the reason why a student is unable to participate in after school activities. However, if we had to choose between paying for academic or athletic support, as a tax payer, I would choose academic over athletic.
15. These are as much part of childhood development as traditional education and should be treated as such.
16. I think it would be an incredible benefit for otherwise marginalized families to have access to extracurriculars at a reduced cost. It's also easy for me to see how single parents could benefit from being relieved of such costs, especially when their co-parents may be unsupportive or not present/engaged.
17. Need based

Q24: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q23: How do you feel about the additional costs of athletics to your family?*

145 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 109 responses → 13 MCS responses

1. Some of the sports have what I see as prohibitively expensive costs: gear and logistics.
2. With 3 kids I have to make trade-offs!
3. If the sports can be coordinated right after school and from school, it would be much easier for working parents.
4. With 3 kids in various sports, I do have to make decisions about what my kids can participate in (the additional costs of equipment and the logistical hurdles are also important considerations).
5. Logistics - would be nice to have someone who can bring kids from school to the location
6. There is not dedicated chaperon to ensure child is transported safely between school release and Parks & Rec sport activity. It is left for each family to coordinate which can be challenging for single working parents.
7. after school athletics are optional. Another option is after school jobs! which help our kids earn money
8. Having information about days/times for athletics further in advance would help with planning, not over-scheduling, etc.
9. I'm really speaking to rec dept for young kids. Maybe the cost should be by recommended donation--absurd to think a child can't play baseball because of 40 buck sign up fee
10. I wish that this was multipick because the issue is financial and logistics for our family
11. Time and transportation can be challenging with multiple kids going in different directions
12. See previous response.
13. Seeing as though we are an elementary family, the costs for after school programming (rec. department) is relatively affordable. As we age out of early age rec activities we do know that costs for team participation will increase. A bit concerned, but we'll make it work.

Q26: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q25: During the 2022-2023 academic year, does your child participate in performing arts, such as music or theatre, of some sort? Please select all that apply. Note that we are not referring to subject-based camps that occur only summer or vacation breaks.*

122 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 83 responses → 9 MCS responses

1. school band and lessons
2. My children take piano lessons
3. We are waiting for school based instrument learning!
4. During the school year, the logistics of arranging rides and getting our child to and from places is too much/
5. This would be great after school
6. I would love to try music lessons for my kids but it is too expensive and they have not expressed a strong interest.
7. Not offered to younger kids through the school
8. I look forward to my child being able to participate in such activities as part of her school day. I don't think she's currently old enough.
9. Again my child is just in preK but I would love a local resource for musical training for young kids after school.

Q28: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q27: Philosophically, do you feel that taxpayers should pay for the costs of these performing arts activities, or should costs be borne out by participating students and their families?*

143 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 107 responses → 13 MCS responses

1. Again it's a public school, athletics and arts should be factored into the budget with limited if any further assistance from families. Limiting children' access to athletics or the arts is exclusive and has no place in public schools.
2. If in school should be taxpayer, if club / private / not affiliated with school should be financed by family.
3. It would be amazing to have performances to help the children learn drama, self esteem and confidence.
4. I think having access to these opportunities through school is great.
5. I'm ok if the school or class puts on a play as part of the curriculum and that is handled during the school day. if they want to do other stuff outside of the school day, they can do it on their own.
6. Taxpayer subsidizes to ensure all can participate
7. Our child is too young, we don't know what's available
8. Same thought apply to all after school activities. Theatre,sports, music. There is no difference just personal interest
9. Again, I would not want students not to get these experiences solely because of costs. However, if we have to choose tax payer money should be used for academics.
10. These are as much part of childhood development as traditional education and should be treated as such.
11. I wish that the elementary school offered more options for musical instrument instruction during school or after school, I'm glad there are some options for band instruments but the groups dont meet frequently enough and I think most kids who learn an instrument well are doing so via out-side of school lessons which are expensive
12. In general, I think the costs of childcare and education (broadly) could be much better supported by local, state, and federal governments. It's incredibly expensive to raise a child in America, and I only have one!
13. Need based



**Q30: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q29: How do you feel about the additional costs of performing arts to your family?***

**107 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 61 responses → 9 MCS responses**

1. Before school lessons are not ideal for our family in general. Morning music lessons/band occasionally compete with additional before school academic help
2. I'm so happy that my kids are taking piano- they LOVE it. But, it's \$350/month for both of them. Every time I write that check I think about how this is so obviously something that they're getting because we have the financial resources to do so. It's very obvious to me that only rich kids would be able to afford this. I'd love for some way to expand access- but I don't know what that would look like.
3. We made the choice to pay for sports this year. Paying for both would be challenging
4. We do not personally have financial hardship, but firmly believe that children's trajectories should not be stunted due to a lack of funds in the public sector.
5. Our child has done performing arts during the summer - through Parks & Rec and through other local organizations. We choose based on costs & schedules.
6. I don't think the costs are unreasonable, but they force trade-offs for us.
7. This seems like an expensive thing to get into but my kids are young so no experience
8. I wish that this was multipick because the issue is financial and logistics for our family
9. Again, I see how providing subsidies or support for these costs could hugely benefit marginalized families, solo income households, etc.

Q32: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q31: During this 2022-2023 academic year, does your child participate in outside of school in other subject-specific activities not related to previous questions, such as robotics or art, of some sort? Please select all that apply. Note that we are not referring to subject-based camps that occur only during summer or vacation breaks.*

100 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 55 responses → 9 MCS responses

1. All of our after school time is going to academic tutoring, OT, or therapy
2. Art classes
3. \*\*\*\* \*\*, Children's Art Norwich
4. Religious education and associated language tutoring
5. Girl Scouts
6. \*\*\*\* \*\* art classes
7. We plan to do this next year and plan to pay out of pocket
8. My daughter takes a private art class once a week throughout most of the school year; usually on Wednesdays, the shortest day of the week. This serves two functions: 1) to help her develop artistic skills and sensibilities, and 2) to allow me to work a full-time schedule.
9. These offerings are very hard to find.

Q34: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q33: Philosophically, do you feel that taxpayers should pay for the costs of these other activities, or should costs be borne out by participating students and their families?*

99 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 57 responses → 7 MCS responses

1. Subsidies for low income families
2. If it is school-sponsored it should be funded, if it is a private company using the school premises or there is a 'materials' fee or other, that is understandable and should also have a slush fund to cover costs for families for which they are prohibitive.
3. The program is very high quality.
4. see above.
5. Support access
6. These are as much part of childhood development as traditional education and should be treated as such.
7. See previous responses.

Q36: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q35: How do you feel about the additional costs of these other activities to your family?*

65 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 21 responses → 3 MCS responses

1. I have no problem with kids wanting to pursue athletics, art, drama etc on their own. I think public education should be to set the up to succeed in life - attain proficiency in skills like math, reading, writing, learning how to think critically so they can get a job and be productive members of society
2. Could always make it work financially but if everything cost money you start making concessions
3. Currently, these costs are unavoidable because they impact my ability to work and provide for our household. That said, we have no emergency savings and live

paycheck to paycheck. I often feel forced to choose between long-term stability and giving my child a good start.

**Q38: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q37: During the recent April Spring Break, what did your child do during workday hours? Please select all that apply.***

129 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 99 responses → 13 MCS responses

1. stayed with grandparents
2. Plan family vacations for school vacation weeks
3. UVAC Splash Camp
4. Stayed at home while parent worked
5. We spent the April break on a family vacation out of the country.
6. Having both a February and April break is challenging for working parents.
7. Family Vacation
8. Traveled out of town with family to museums and other cities
9. We are also educators so we have the same vacation time as our children.
10. So thankful for vacation camp! We need the childcare coverage and she needs the play time.
11. Coordinate with other families to share care
12. School vacations are very hard for working parents and there are very few options for children not taking fabulous and exotic vacations.
13. We have to have a nanny and babysitter to have adequate care during work hours

**Q40: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q39: Does providing caregiving or activities for your child during school breaks present challenges for your family?***

103 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 64 responses → 11 MCS responses

1. We work from home, so the kids can be at home.

2. The lack of spaces in such programs or existence of programing is a major factor, potentially one determining if we are able to stay in the district. The practices are very disconnected from the needs of working families, and elitist in that regard.
3. I am also a teacher, so have the same vacations as my child
4. The conference days and other random days off were very hard for two working parents who have limited vacation time
5. Vacations are consistently a childcare and logistical challenge for us
6. We both have to work during the school breaks and don't have child care.
7. The provided responses do not quite capture our experience. Sometimes we plan vacations and sometimes it can be challenging.
8. It's not a challenge but we lose the second parent income because school isn't reliable enough. Inservice days. Snow days. Sick days. Couldn't keep a job
9. See previous responses.
10. This stuff is expensive and may take away from other long range savings plans or family vacations.
11. The number of in-service days; teacher/parent conference days etc etc seems to be increasing? In any event the sporadic and frequent nature (when combined with snow days) is very difficult to manage

**Q42: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q41: Does early Wednesday dismissal present challenges for your family?***

**120 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 86 responses → 18 MCS responses**

1. I like the early Wednesday dismissal- it's so nice to have a little extra time during the day to do extra activities (especially during the winter, when daylight hours are few!). My kids are still little, and honestly a full school day can seem long for them- they come home exhausted. So, it's nice to have a short day in the middle.
2. It does not provide challenges for my family, but it doesn't make sense for families with two working parents.
3. Wednesday early dismissal is just another challenge for families to navigate instead of perhaps school starting fifteen minutes later in the day or some other way to approach the issue.
4. Because I am a teacher, and my husband is at work, it is difficult to have early dismissal.
5. There are Wednesday tennis lessons currently
6. We always have sports lined up on Wednesdays.
7. We are able to work around the early dismissal

8. The biggest challenge is the different calendar and PD days between norwich and Hanover. Absolutely ridiculous for all the families who teach, work and live in the district.
9. It is difficult but it does make ski lessons possible.
10. It is difficult but it does make ski lessons possible.
11. The afterschool program through IMS has been amazing!
12. We need after school activities on Wednesdays, or make the school day end at 3:10.
13. The early dismissal on Wednesdays, combined with copious in-service days, are an ongoing challenge.
14. I actually now love they get out an hour early, but it was difficult at first because it was different from the rest of the week
15. We're in the after school program, so it's fine, but if we weren't, it would be a real challenge
16. I wish it would more organized for some other aspect of education. I'm not sure why it happens
17. I have to adjust my work schedule to fit the early release. It may not be doable in the future, but okay for now.
18. we are grateful for the afterschool program as we work until 5:30

**Q44: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q43: During the 2022-2023 academic year, do you anticipate that your child will travel (or be offered a travel opportunity) for school-sponsored activities that will cost additional money to you? Please select all that apply.***

**101 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 60 responses → 1 MCS response**

1. No because at MCS all field trip costs are now covered within the budget. What I do not agree with this is that our teacher has commented that classrooms are now capped at the number of off-campus 'experiential' trips they can take because the school has now taken on this cost. We've always understood the reputation and opportunities of community access and involvement never limited a teachers opportunities to provide spectacular learning. I'm afraid that this new policy drastically changes this. Kids are less often outside of the school learning. It's more traditional and data driven. Not exactly why we moved here...

Q46: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q45: How do you feel about the additional costs of this travel to your family?*

108 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 65 responses → 5 MCS responses

1. So far at MCS school field trips have been very affordable - usually the cost is minimal for food or transportation
2. No travel that I know of in 6th grade, but we will foot the cost of whatever comes up!
3. it's all optional, so I'm ok if they don't do it. If they want it bad enough, I hope they'll talk about it and we'll see what we can do.
4. We don't know because we haven't had this happen
5. Everything adds up. I think there is an email every 2 weeks about money for something from school functions or PTO

Q48: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q47: Philosophically, do you feel that taxpayers should for the costs of these school-sponsored travel activities, or should costs be borne out by participating students and their families?*

143 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 106 responses → 8 MCS responses

1. I strongly feel that if it is an opportunity through a public school then it should be funded through the school so that every child in the school has an opportunity to participate! It shouldn't be extra for families.
2. Students who can pay should pay. I would be happy to see taxpayers contribute to a travel equity fund to make trips accessible to all students through individual grants.
3. if these are optional things, then parents should cover it. If a family cannot afford it, that's just real life. I can't do everything I want because I can't afford it.
4. Any taxpayer funds for student travel should be for demonstrated financial need.
5. need-based supplementation to allow equal access by all students

6. In terms of equity, if it's something that is valued by the community and is supposed to be for everybody, there should not be a fee attached to it (including scholarships, etc.) I do realize that raising taxes doesn't solve all the problems either.
7. Need based. But also - the environmental cost of flying students around the world to deliver used cleats should be better examined. As is said, HHS check your privilege.
8. Please see my response to #44

**Q50: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q49: During the 2022-2023 academic year, were you asked to pay for the following additional school-related costs (not for outside organizations)? Please select all that apply.***

**103 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 64 responses → 4 MCS responses**

1. There was a need for supplies in my child's classroom so donations were requested.
2. There was a need for supplies in my child's classroom so donations were requested.
3. We do gifts twice a year for teachers. This is very reasonable and optional.
4. Like I said prior I think there is some reach out for supplies or gifts or donation every 2 weeks. So.e is so sad---like the teacher asked for pencil sharpeners or things that are very basic. How are these things not supplied. Why am I bringing kleenex



Q52: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q51: Considering the previous list, approximately how much money do you think your family has spent on your child for these school-related purposes during this 2022-2023 academic year?*

97 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 61 responses → 4 MCS responses

1. most of this cost is renting an instrument
2. Much of that is hockey-related.
3. Our daughter is in kindergarten so many extracurricular a don't apply yet
4. Our family would be more than happy to incur additional costs should the teaching team open up creative opportunities for learning that take place outside of the school.

Q54: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q53: Considering the previous list, do you feel pressure to pay these costs, which are ostensibly “optional”? Please select all that apply.*

88 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 52 responses → 4 MCS responses

1. Maybe a teeny bit, but I happily participate and think it's for a good cause.
2. I can feel the pressure, but that doesn't make money appear in my wallet, so sometimes the answer is just "sorry, no"
3. Kids need classroom supplies. Teachers need appreciation. Kids need play equipment. The culture is to help here which is great but also in the affluent area we live--I'm not sure why I getting dry erase markers for the classroom
4. We want to support our schools and teachers. I believe that our community values them and wants to show them that appreciation.

Q56: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q55: Considering the previous list, how do you generally feel about these costs? Please select all that apply.*

86 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 49 responses → 5 MCS responses

1. Again if school sponsored activities I think the school should pay for them. But if private / club these should be paid by families.
2. We don't have trouble covering these costs but we are concerned about equity for families that can't afford it
3. Our family is able to pay most of these fees, but philosophically, we should be moving towards more equitable schooling where fees are not a part of the educational experience for our students.
4. All of the gifts and special occasions at school are lovely and well intentioned but it seems like there are so many between PTO and just requests. A lot of these are also time consuming. My daughter was upset I hadn't bought her a celebration book but her friend got one and the pie day coming up is more than I can contribute to.
5. My answer is based on the fact that my child is young and not eligible yet for many of the more expensive options.

Q58: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q57: If financial aid were available for any of the previous topics, would you anticipate using it? Please select all that apply.*

66 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 25 responses → 3 MCS responses

1. I honestly don't think we'd qualify for any financial aid.
2. see previous comments. It really doesn't matter how I feel. we all can't just do everything we want to do that costs money if we don't have them money. Would I like some more money? sure.
3. Wouldn't need the financial help its just the principal of it all

Q60: If you wish to provide more information about your responses to the previous question, please let us know below. *Re: Q59: How do you feel about a general financial aid fund, covered by donations, that would be used to help cover costs like this? Please select all that apply.*

102 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 68 responses → 8 MCS responses

1. I would donate to specific funds, for example, a travel equity fund. However, I would not be as likely to donate to a general fund.
2. It depends on what costs/fees- if it's something required, then school should pay it. Schools should pay for costs like teacher gifts that are optional
3. if someone wants to donate money so my kid can take a fancy art class, sure, she'd love that.
4. It should be built into the budget
5. Kids growth, development and involvement shouldn't be limited by costs
6. I would want to see clear guidelines and transparency if I were to donate. I think student led fundraising allows students to gain experience and work toward goals they would like to achieve/support pursuits they are specifically interested in and teaches them real world lessons about resources and costs.
7. It may work if there is enough in the donation fund to cover ALL expenses for everybody. Otherwise, we are still asking folks to decide if they need money (which is hard to do for many).
8. I'd rather it be a taxpayer funded financial aid fund, but don't know logistics for how it would be administered. Donation based fund is also a good idea. Tricky part may be stigma.

Q69: Did we miss anything about these issues that you think is important for us to know? Please put anything here that is not covered by the other survey questions.

120 responses. After removing “no” and similar responses → 94 responses → 7 MCS responses

1. We love living in Norwich but have higher expectations for Marion Cross around core instruction, utilizing data driven curriculums, training/aligning faculty around effective curriculum, and setting expectations for improvement. In a town with so many resources (parental engagement, time, money), we can do better. School

board meetings are purely procedural and there should be more accountability of the administration to set goals and show progress. Right now it feels like the school aims to check the box on a low bar of expectations (risk of graduating from high school). The high kids are left to their own devices, the middle kids muddle along, and the low kids don't make progress. There is no accountability for progress and we simply aren't serving our kids well. We should be striving to help each individual child be curious, develop a love learning, and maximize their potential as individuals. That attitude change starts with the SAU and school administration.

2. Generally speaking, there should always be pools of money set aside for children to participate in any activity their parents cannot afford.
3. After school childcare is also a cost I did not see considered in this survey and it especially impacts my family because I am a single parent who works full time to support our family.
4. We feel compelled to enroll our children in additional activities due to our perception that MCS is not properly focused on academic rigor, not a desire to get ahead. We are presently questioning our decision to be "all-in" on the school system.
5. Our impression is that it is probably the minority of families that struggle to pay for some of these activities, and therefore it may not seem like a priority to pay for. But the stigma of living in Norwich without a lot of financial resources has got to be tough, and we should try to make sure that children aren't saddled with that stigma because they can't afford to participate.
6. I hope that the schools can find ways, via donations or a designated fund, to pay for and support attendance at academic and extracurricular activities for those children whose families find it difficult to do so. As MCS has decreased the enrichment and academic rigor it offers in school, families with enough time and money have been seeking more opportunities for their children outside of the public school system, which furthers inequality. I think it's better for the school to offer as much as it can, in terms of more challenging academic work in the lower grades, and more world language, art, and music opportunities, for ALL children, either during or outside of school hours. This should come from the school rather than private organizations who serve only the families who can access their services, and if additional fees are needed to fund programs there should be a donation or taxpayer funded system to make these school-based academic and extracurricular programs available to all kids.
7. It might be useful for new families to get a rundown of all of the special events/costs for the year so they don't come as a surprise or they can plan which events they'll take part in and which they'll miss.