

OPEN ENROLLMENT

February 10, 2026

What is Open Enrollment?

- In New Hampshire law, an “open enrollment public school” means any public school which provides education to its resident students while also choosing to accept students from outside its district
- In 2009, the open enrollment law prescribed a tuition formula (not less than 80% of the sending districts cost per pupil)
- It also provided the ability for a school district to limit the number of “resident pupils who may attend open enrollment schools located inside and outside the school district”

Are there NH open enrollment schools?

- Between 2009 and November 2025, Prospect Mountain in Alton, NH was the only open enrollment school district. They voted in 2022 to be an open enrollment district – accepting students into the district, while permitting 0% students to tuition out-of-district. Their primary goal was to support the district's declining student enrollment
- On October 15, 2025, the New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled that “a sending school district is required to pay tuition to an open enrollment receiving school in another district even if the sending district has not adopted an open enrollment program”

Communities must decide

- Communities will need to decide whether they are willing to accept students, how many they will accept, and whether they will send students with tuition outside the district
- Based on current interpretation, **ONLY** districts that vote to be an open enrollment district can receive tuition students **AND** limit the number of tuition students they agree to send outside the district

WLCSD Warrant Article

Article 4: Open Enrollment

Shall the Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School District vote to adopt an Open Enrollment school program, designating grades 1-12 at Florence Rideout Elementary School and Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative Middle/High School as open enrollment schools pursuant to NH RSA 194:D, for the purpose of enabling the District to admit non-resident students to the High School and Elementary School pursuant to RSA 194-D, with 100% of its eligible resident pupils permitted to attend the District's schools and 0% of its resident pupils in grades preschool-12 permitted to attend open enrollment schools located outside of the District, and further, to limit the number of non-resident pupils who may attend the Middle-High School and Elementary School under provision of RSA 194-D to no more than 10% of the District's current enrollment in grades 1-12 and to allow the administration to set admission standards and criteria as well as a maximum capacity for each school, grade, and program within that total number.

PROS and CONS

❖ If our community votes NO to adopt the Open Enrollment warrant article then:

- If a resident parent/guardian chooses to enroll their student(s) at an Open Enrollment school, WLCSD will be responsible for paying tuition to the receiving district
- WLCSD would NOT be able to place a cap on the number of tuition students leaving the district
- WLCSD would not be required to accept students from outside the school district
- We would pay approximately \$20,000 to another school district for each student + additional cost such as special education

❖ If our community votes YES to adopt the Open Enrollment warrant article then:

- WLCSD can accept up to 10% (50-55) tuition students in grades 1-12 from outside the district
- WLCSD **can** limit the number of resident students it sends with tuition (0%) to open enrollment schools outside of Wilton-Lyndeborough
- WLCSD can select students based on aptitude, academic achievement, or need, provided that the criteria is directly related to the academic goals of the school

What is the potential impact on WLCSD if the Open Enrollment warrant article is not approved?

If the warrant article is not supported then we risk:

- Financial instability and uncertainty – loss of funding and budget shortfalls
- The inability to build a staff, issue contracts, and finalize courses
- Having to consider eliminating programs
- Ambiguity with special education services

HOW MANY STUDENTS WITH TUITION COULD LEAVE WLCSD BEFORE SCHOOL CLOSURE BECOMES A VIABLE AND NECESSARY OPTION FOR THE DISTRICT?

Looking ahead at current legislation

There is pending legislation proposing to make further amendments to the open enrollment statute; if these proposed amendments become the law, then districts could:

- ❖ **No longer limit the number of resident students who could attend open enrollment schools in other districts**
- ❖ **Only deny a transfer if the incoming student was expelled, had a history of documented discipline issues, a history of chronic absenteeism, and/or the grade/school had reached its stated capacity**
- ❖ **Face paying up to 100% of its average per pupil cost to another district**

NOTE: If pending legislation becomes law, then the current Open Enrollment law would be repealed