

Pelham School District

Caregiver Budget Discussion

Questions & Answers

Questions & Answers (As of 2.11.2026)

Q: What is Pelham's relationship with Amherst in comparison to the other two towns (Leverett & Shutesbury)

A: Pelham Elementary School is its own municipal school district serving grades K-6. Amherst, Leverett, and Shutesbury are also separate municipal districts. The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District is a regional district serving grades 7-12 and is comprised of students from Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury.

It should be noted that the Superintendent, Dr Xi, oversees Amherst Public Schools, Pelham Elementary School, and the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District.

Q: What is Pelham's contribution to the Regional District?

A: As a member of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, Pelham contributes an annual assessment to the regional district that is separate from the Pelham Elementary School budget. This assessment is calculated based on the methodology outlined in the Regional Agreement.

Q: What percentage of Pelham's contribution to the Regional District is School Choice Funds?

A: Pelham Elementary School Choice funds go directly to the district and are separate from the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District school choice funds.

Q: Is the Pelham School District receiving the reimbursement fees that should go to the Town of Pelham?

A: Charter School tuition is charged directly to the school district. For municipal districts, the Commonwealth sends Charter School Tuition reimbursement directly to the Town, not the school district. The Town of Pelham is currently using free cash to support the Charter School tuition assessment within the school budget.

Q: What is the outlook for students who Choice-in Pelham?

A: Students currently choiced into Pelham will remain at this time.

Q: Is there security for students who Choice-in Pelham? Can Choice Students remain in Pelham through 6th grade??

A: At this time, no decision has been made to move Pelham's sixth graders to Chestnut Street Academy. Chestnut Street Academy will serve Amherst Public School sixth graders and is a new school within the Amherst School District. It is not part of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, although it will be housed within the Amherst-Pelham Regional Middle School building.

Q: How does losing 6th graders (transitioning to Amherst PS) save the Town of Pelham money?.

A: This question requires further analysis. However, there is precedent for this type of arrangement, as discussed in the January 22, 2026, presentation, including examples such as Erving tuitioning students to Gill-Montague for grades 7-12.

Q: When will caregivers know more about the next school year, 26-27; i.e., 5th graders remaining at Pelham Elementary School?

A: The Pelham Elementary School budget must be voted on by March 2026. Additional information regarding grade configurations and programming will be discussed during the Pelham School Committee Meetings.

Q: Clarification on how combining Kindergarten and Grade 1 into a single classroom saves money?

A: Combining Kindergarten and Grade 1 into a single classroom would result in a reduction of one teaching position, generating savings that help reduce the operating budget and address the projected deficit.

Q: How can caregivers remain engaged and informed about this process, next steps, and decisions? Is there something Pelham residents can do to encourage the Town to provide more funding for the School? Is there a way to advocate for having a large group discussion with leadership, the school committee, and the finance committee?

A: Caregivers and residents are encouraged to:

- Attend and follow Pelham School Committee meetings and Pelham Town Meetings
- Share concerns with the Pelham School Committee, the Superintendent, and the Town of Pelham
- Advocate at the state level by contacting State Representative Aaron Saunders
- Pelham currently receives Rural School Aid, which is included in the FY27 budget proposal. This aid was reduced in FY26. Residents are encouraged to advocate for funding Rural School Aid at \$60 million statewide.
- Representative Saunders holds monthly office hours at the Pelham Library. Updates are expected in February and can be found at: <https://www.aaronsaunders.org/>

Q: Does combining Kindergarten and Grade 1 into a single classroom mean the school choice funds for the school would decrease?

A: Depending on enrollment in the combined K-1 classroom, School Choice acceptance for Kindergarten and Grade 1 may be reduced in FY27. However, based on enrollment and class size limits in grades 2-6, School Choice applicants may still be accepted in those grade levels.

Q: Is it possible to regionalize Pelham and Amherst?

A: Yes, this is possible and a lengthy process; this is different than a tuition-in agreement.

Q: Is Pelham a Title 1 school, and if so, have we received all funding connected to that?

A: Pelham is not a Title I School. They are above the low-income threshold to qualify. The state sets the limits for Title I (35%).

Q: Are we receiving Special Education funding proportionate to our Special education population at our school?

A: Pelham receives the IDEA grant, and their full allocation is applied and accounted for within the budget already. IDEA funds are used to support a special education teacher, contracted psych services, and PT services.

Q: What is the per-pupil cost at local schools?

A: This information is outlined below. It is important to note that per-pupil data can be calculated for regular education, special education, or a combination of both. The

data referenced here was pulled from DESE's website and includes both regular education and special education.

Expenditures Per Pupil		
FY	District	Total Expenditures
2024	Amherst	\$30,025
2023	Amherst	\$27,333
2022	Amherst	\$27,075
2021	Amherst	\$26,345
2024	Leverett	\$21,519
2023	Leverett	\$21,177
2022	Leverett	\$20,983
2021	Leverett	\$23,592
2024	Pelham	\$21,768
2023	Pelham	\$18,732
2022	Pelham	\$19,297
2021	Pelham	\$19,950
2024	Shutesbury	\$24,989
2023	Shutesbury	\$22,613
2022	Shutesbury	\$24,331
2021	Shutesbury	\$23,099

Pelham Elementary School Budget Funding

1/30/2026		FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	
		Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Projected	Change
PAYROLL ACCOUNTS:								
Salaries		\$ 1,544,352	\$ 1,577,218	\$ 1,760,553	\$ 1,813,397	\$ 1,829,800	\$ 1,910,453	\$ 80,653
Contracts		\$ -	\$ 2,155	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Substitutes		\$ 18,968	\$ 20,597	\$ 42,098	\$ 26,669	\$ 29,386	\$ 26,760	\$ (2,626)
								\$ -
EXPENSE ACCOUNTS:								
								\$ -
Regular Education		\$ 6,219	\$ 10,325	\$ 11,093	\$ 7,357	\$ 12,624	\$ 12,624	\$ -
English Learner Education		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Special Education		\$ 70,924	\$ 4,945	\$ 3,541	\$ 2,835	\$ 62,020	\$ 10,320	\$ (51,700)
Other Programs		\$ 19,660	\$ 26,054	\$ 35,459	\$ 109,529	\$ 62,212	\$ 145,470	\$ 83,258
Student Services		\$ 1,044	\$ 1,192	\$ 1,884	\$ 754	\$ 1,525	\$ 1,525	\$ -
Support Services		\$ 2,835	\$ 4,116	\$ 4,381	\$ 1,692	\$ 5,290	\$ 4,260	\$ (1,030)
Program and Staff Development		\$ 2,056	\$ 12,191	\$ 6,745	\$ 1,621	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500	\$ -
School Administration		\$ 4,620	\$ 5,119	\$ 7,415	\$ 4,571	\$ 6,160	\$ 8,175	\$ 2,015
Central Administration		\$ 15,682	\$ 9,149	\$ 34,516	\$ 21,244	\$ 21,779	\$ 16,653	\$ (5,126)
Information Systems		\$ 12,071	\$ 10,711	\$ 18,447	\$ 13,835	\$ 33,920	\$ 26,920	\$ (7,000)
Facilities		\$ 16,486	\$ 28,580	\$ 33,545	\$ 33,325	\$ 29,270	\$ 29,270	\$ -
Utilities		\$ 28,197	\$ 36,901	\$ 810	\$ 50,008	\$ 45,283	\$ 50,859	\$ 5,576
Transportation		\$ 52,041	\$ 52,102	\$ 47,771	\$ 47,534	\$ 43,884	\$ 49,002	\$ 5,118
Risk & Benefits		\$ 335,985	\$ 386,907	\$ 409,674	\$ 425,048	\$ 463,822	\$ 514,187	\$ 50,365
Control Accounts		\$ -	\$ 2,164	\$ 3,126	\$ 3,165	\$ (1,283)	\$ 500	\$ 1,783
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 2,131,140	\$ 2,190,425	\$ 2,421,059	\$ 2,562,585	\$ 2,653,192	\$ 2,814,477	\$ 161,285
	\$\$ Change	\$ 91,083	\$ 59,284	\$ 230,634	\$ 372,160	\$ 232,133	\$ 161,285	
Budget Support	% Change	4.46%	2.78%	10.53%	16.99%	9.59%	6.08%	
Total Appropriated Amount		\$ 1,634,407	\$ 1,669,323	\$ 1,717,149	\$ 1,760,078	\$ 1,804,080	\$ 1,891,493	\$ 87,413
	\$\$ Change	\$ (32,844)	\$ 34,915	\$ 47,826	\$ 90,755	\$ 86,931	\$ 87,413	
	% Change	-1.97%	2.14%	2.87%	5.44%	5.06%	4.85%	
Chapter 70		\$ 240,583	\$ 242,533	\$ 244,333	\$ 250,153	\$ 292,599	\$ 358,213	\$ 65,614
Town to Cover Charter Starting FY26						\$ 26,742	\$ 35,000	
Medicaid Reimbursement		\$ 5,500	\$ 4,090	\$ 6,888	\$ 4,771	\$ 4,771	\$ 4,771	\$ -
Funded from Choice Revolving								\$ -
Planned		\$ 225,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 402,500	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ -
Additional								\$ -
Funded from Circuit Breaker/Grants/Other		25,650	24,479	25,214	47,583	25,000	25,000	\$ -
TOTAL BUDGET SUPPORT		\$ 2,131,140	\$ 2,190,425	\$ 2,421,059	\$ 2,562,585	\$ 2,653,192	\$ 2,814,477	\$ 393,419
								14.83%
						Town No Increase Gap	\$ 1,804,080	
							\$ (87,413)	

Q: Can you explain what is included in the “Other Programs” budget line item, and why there is a significant increase projected for FY27?

A: These costs reflect charter school tuition assessments and school choice tuition assessments. When students attend a charter school or choose to enroll in another district through school choice, Pelham is responsible for paying the associated tuition. Currently, we have one student attending a charter school, as well as a student who has chosen to attend another district and has significant special education needs. Pelham remains financially responsible for these tuition expenses.

Q: My child's full-size school bus is consistently about one-quarter full. Are there potential transportation savings that could be explored?

A: The district is required to provide transportation seats for all students who are eligible, regardless of whether they ultimately choose to ride the bus. Currently, Pelham Elementary operates two buses due to the geographic distance and travel demands across the town. Transportation standards also require that bus ride times remain under one hour. If routes were combined into a single bus, the travel time would exceed allowable limits, making consolidation impractical.

Q: What budget cuts are being considered that would not be student-facing?

A: At this time, we have proposed combining Kindergarten and Grade 1 into a single classroom.

Q: Have census data and growth projections for Pelham been considered when discussing grade combinations or the possibility of closing the school?

A: Census data and enrollment growth projections should be an important part of any discussion around grade combinations or the potential closure of the school. However, decisions of this magnitude require a thorough review of multiple factors beyond enrollment alone. In particular, the financial impact on the Town of Pelham must be carefully evaluated, and the Town's Finance Department should play a central role in assessing the broader budgetary implications alongside projected growth trends.

Q: If it is more cost-effective over a five-year period to reduce class sizes, pursue tuition-in arrangements with nearby districts, or close the school, please present the supporting calculations during meetings so families can reference actual data rather than speculation.

A: This is an important topic that requires a thoughtful, data-informed process over time. While a range of options has been raised as part of early discussions, they would require thorough financial analysis. These conversations must involve the School Committee, District Leadership, the Pelham Community, and, importantly, the Town of Pelham, given the significant long-term financial and educational impacts. At this time, we are still in the beginning stages of these discussions.

Q: There is a narrative within the Pelham community that local taxes are funding the education of non-residents. My understanding is that this is inaccurate, and I would

appreciate the School Committee helping to clarify or reframe this. I found this article helpful in explaining the financial realities of school choice:

<https://theberkshireedge.com/the-dollars-and-cents-of-school-choice-explained/>

A: Under Massachusetts school choice, when a non-resident student attends Pelham Elementary, the sending district pays tuition to Pelham, with a base rate of approximately \$5,000 per student. If the student requires special education services that generate additional costs, the sending district remains responsible for those expenses. Pelham Elementary is primarily funded through the town's local property tax contribution, supplemented by state education aid and other revenue sources, which together support the education of Pelham resident students.

Q: Given that many school costs (administration, nurse, principal, building operations) are fixed regardless of enrollment, would the School Committee consider strategies to increase elementary enrollment through school choice rather than reducing enrollment by combining grades? From my perspective, it may be more feasible to attract school choice students in the younger grades, when families are more likely to consider a new school.

A: This is a question that involves both enrollment and broader financial planning. While certain operational costs remain fixed regardless of student numbers, decisions about pursuing school choice strategies or adjusting grade configurations require careful analysis of educational impact, staffing, capacity, and long-term financial sustainability. Any consideration of increasing enrollment through school choice would need to be evaluated in coordination with the School Committee and the Town of Pelham, since these discussions are closely connected to the town's overall financial condition.