

RSU 63 — Key Financial / Enrollment Facts

- RSU 63 covers the three towns of Eddington, Holden, and Clifton. ([Wikipedia](#))
- The district has about **435 students** total. ([Public School Review](#))
- Student–teacher ratio is about **10:1**. ([Public School Review](#))
- According to recent data, the district’s **average spending per student** (all-in) is about **\$25,841–\$26,910** per year — significantly above the state median per-student spending (state median ~ \$21,191). ([Public School Review](#))
- Revenue per student is ~\$28,556, also above the state median of ~\$21,600. ([Public School Review](#))

These numbers indicate that RSU 63 spends more per student than is typical statewide, which reflects factors like small size, staffing, services offered, and perhaps the local funding mix.

Special-Services / Special Education: A Key Cost Driver in Maine (and for RSU 63)

- In Maine generally, funding for special education and related student support services has become one of the fastest-growing cost centers in school budgets. ([The University of Maine](#))
- Between 2006 and 2013, per-pupil spending for special education in Maine grew by about 37% — compared with 17% growth for regular instruction. ([The University of Maine](#))
- Many of the rising costs are due to increased numbers of identified students with special needs, as well as more intensive services: one-on-one aides, self-contained “behavioral” or “life-skills” classrooms, related services (speech, occupational therapy, etc.), and often more expensive transportation or out-of-district placements. ([The University of Maine](#))
- According to a 2025 internal budget document for RSU 63, a substantial portion of the budget increase came directly from special education: in their FY26 proposed budget, the district added **\$180,197** under Special Education. ([Cloudinary](#))

Thus, special education and support services represent a significant — and growing — share of RSU 63’s expenditures.

Why RSU 63’s Per-Student Costs Are High (Relative to State Median)

Given the data above, RSU 63’s relatively high per-student costs can be understood as the product of several interacting factors:

1. **Small district size + low student population.** With only ~435 students, the district has less ability to spread fixed costs (administration, buildings, utilities, staffing) over large enrollment. Such “scale inefficiency” typically means higher per-student cost in small rural districts.
2. **Relatively generous staffing ratios.** A 10:1 student–teacher ratio is lower (i.e., more staff per student) than many larger, more crowded districts — which raises instructional costs per student.
3. **High per-student service costs.** The burden of special education and student-support services — which statewide have ballooned — falls heavily on smaller districts that must meet individual needs and possibly cover costly service requirements (therapies, aides, transportation, etc.).
4. **Local funding choices beyond the baseline.** As is common across Maine, districts may spend more than the baseline “essential programs” funding level, especially to meet service needs not fully covered by state formulas. ([The Maine Monitor](#))

Put simply: in a small, rural district like RSU 63, fixed costs and special-service needs combine to drive per-pupil spending well above the statewide median.

Implications for Consolidation into a Single Elementary School

If the towns in RSU 63 considered consolidating the elementary schools into a single building (i.e., moving from multiple small elementary schools to one centralized facility), here’s how the cost dynamics might play out — and why consolidation might **not** produce major per-student savings:

- Consolidation could reduce some fixed costs (e.g., one building instead of two, fewer administrative overheads, simplified maintenance).
 - However, **special-education and support services costs are largely driven by individual student needs rather than by the number of school buildings**. Those costs — aides, therapies, specialized classrooms, transportation (especially in a rural area), possibly out-of-district placements — would largely remain the same per student, regardless of how many buildings exist.
 - In fact, consolidation might not reduce — and could even increase — transportation costs or logistical complexity for special services, **depending on where the centralized school is located relative to students' homes**.
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Conclusion

RSU 63 already spends significantly more per student than the state median, largely because of structural factors associated with small district size, generous staffing ratios, and especially the need to provide robust special-education and student-support services. Given that **special services** — which are individualized and often expensive — are the main cost driver, consolidating into a single elementary school is unlikely to yield major overall per-student savings. In other words, consolidation might modestly reduce some overhead costs, but it would not substantially change the cost-per-student equation for RSU 63. The savings from consolidating could be significant overall, but the savings would largely come from reducing the cost of building maintenance.

Recommendation of Action ACE Transportation Committee

The ACE Transportation Committee respectfully submits the following recommendations to the School Board regarding opportunities to improve district transportation efficiency and reduce student ride times.

1. Addition of One Bus to Address Peak Ride Times

We recommend that the district explore the use of one additional bus to alleviate extended ride times currently experienced by students on **Bus A in the morning** and **Bus B in the afternoon**. Preliminary review suggests that an additional vehicle dedicated to these routes could meaningfully reduce ride duration.

2. Use of a Van for Outlier Stops

The committee recommends that the district evaluate the feasibility of deploying a van to service outlier stops that significantly extend bus ride times. Students residing at these locations could be transported more efficiently by van rather than by a full-size bus, potentially shortening overall route times and improving scheduling reliability.

3. Request for Proposal (RFP) with CYR Bus Company

After receiving initial rough estimates from CYR Bus Company. Those numbers were \$650,000 per contract year, along with an additional rough estimated \$12,000 bi-annual sports transportation budget. This does not include field trips or sports practice transportation. We believe it is worthwhile for the district to issue a formal **Request for Proposal (RFP)**. A detailed proposal process may reveal potential cost savings and/or operational efficiencies should the district consider contracting with CYR. We further recommend that the resale value of existing infrastructure and equipment be factored into the analysis.

4. Review of Morning Drop-Off Logistics

We further recommend that the district examine the logistics of allowing certain students—particularly those who board first and consequently experience the longest ride times—to be dropped off at their respective schools as buses pass those locations during morning routes. Implementing this adjustment could improve student experience and reduce time spent on the bus. We recognize there are some potential drawbacks with this recommendation. One such concern is the potential for uncontrolled

numbers of students partaking in this service, which could exceed the capacity of available staff.

5. Closure of One or More Schools

The following statistics are based on RSU 63, Pre-K through 8th grade. It does not include high school routes or other district trips.

- The 2024-2025 total fuel cost for all three schools was \$53,664.
- The projected cost without Eddington School is \$37,924, which will result in roughly a 30.4% annual savings.
- The projected cost without Holden School is \$48,342, which will result in roughly a 10% annual savings.

If all students were consolidated to Holbrook, there would be a larger monetary and time savings realized.

RSU 63 Facilities Sub-Committee Report of Findings

The Facilities Sub-Committee was convened to examine potential operational and capital efficiencies within the district's school buildings. The committee's work focused on three primary facilities: Eddington School, Holden School, and Holbrook Middle School.

The charge of the sub-committee was not to advocate for a particular outcome, but rather to gather information, analyze existing conditions, and outline potential implications of future decisions that may face the district. In particular, the committee examined:

- Existing space utilization and functional layouts within all three buildings
- High-level consolidation scenarios and their potential impacts on building layout and capacity
- Anticipated or known major capital expenditures, with emphasis on Eddington and Holden
- Land and surrounding areas of schools including any buildings
- Safety and proximity to responding agencies

This report summarizes the committee's findings and is intended to support informed discussion and long-term planning by the School Board.

Existing Space Utilization

The sub-committee completed updated floor plans for Eddington School, Holden School, and Holbrook Middle School. These plans were used to evaluate current space utilization, identify any obvious constraints or inefficiencies, and understand how instructional and support spaces are distributed within each building.

Across the three facilities, the committee found that:

- None of the buildings are currently experiencing acute space shortages that significantly impede day-to-day operations.
- Certain spaces are underutilized or inflexibly configured due to original building design, age, or programmatic changes over time.

Consolidation Scenarios

Using the newly completed floor plans, the committee explored hypothetical consolidation scenarios in which either Eddington School or Holden School were to close, or both, with students redistributed between the remaining school(s).

These scenarios were examined at a conceptual level only and were not intended as formal proposals. The analysis focused on:

- Whether the remaining buildings could physically accommodate additional students
- How classroom assignments, common spaces, and support areas might need to be reallocated
- Potential operational challenges related to traffic flow, scheduling, and student movement within buildings

Capital Expenditures

A central component of the committee's work was reviewing anticipated major capital expenditures, particularly those facing Eddington and Holden Schools. For both schools, the committee reviewed the known major needs facing the District. The following items were studied further to obtain budgetary pricing for replacement:

Eddington School

- Boiler (controls, pumps, new boiler room, air handlers - See attached for full report)
 - ABM: \$924,000.00
 - Mechanical Services: \$717,550.00
 - RH Foster: \$979,825.00
- Roof (Total Repair/Replacement Cost for Current Needs - See roofing report for full details) - \$57,800 - 59,500
- Septic System Replacement - approximately \$150,000.00 (A formal bid was not obtained)
- Generator - \$50,000+ (A formal bid was not obtained)

Holden School

- Boiler (controls, pumps, pedestal - See attached for full report)
 - ABM: \$330,000.00
 - Mechanical Services: \$468,250.00
 - RH Foster: \$385,000.00
- Roof (Total Repair/Replacement Cost for Current Needs - See roofing report for full details) - \$19,000-20,500
- Septic System Replacement - approximately \$150,000.00 (A formal bid was not obtained)

Holbrook School

- Roof (Total Repair/Replacement Cost for Current Needs - See roofing report for full details) - \$40,000-44,450

Land/Grounds

Eddington School

- Surrounding property is privately owned
- Play ground
- Storage Shed
- Before/After school building

Holden School

- Surrounding property is primarily town-owned, with one side being privately owned
- Playground
- Baseball field
- Bleachers
- Little league shack
- Two dugouts
- PTG (Parent–Teacher Group) shed
- Two storage sheds
- Nature trails & fairy garden
- Garden for Garden Club

Holbrook School

- Playground
- Two baseball/softball fields
- Four dugouts
- Soccer field
- Bleachers
- Snack shack
- Storage shed/garage

Safety Overview

Eddington School

Law Enforcement

- Primary coverage is provided by the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office. While a single deputy does not cover the entire county, deputies are responsible for significant geographic areas—approximately 3,397+ square miles—and rotate through designated patrol zones.

Fire Protection

- Primary fire department located 2.3 miles away (approximately 5 minutes)
- A fire hydrant is located in front of the school; however, it is supplied by a 2-inch line, which is not sufficient for full fire suppression needs
- The building is supported by three water tanks for the sprinkler system

Mutual Aid Support

- Dedham Fire Department: 12.5 miles (approximately 19 minutes)
- Brewer Fire & Police: 8.5 miles (approximately 12 minutes)

Holden School

Law Enforcement

- Primary coverage provided by Holden Police Department, located 0.2 miles away (approximately 1 minute).

Fire Protection

- Holden Fire Department located 0.2 miles away (approximately 1 minute)
- Dry hydrant available at the Holden Town Office
- Building supported by one water tank for the sprinkler system

Mutual Aid Support

- Dedham Fire Department: 4.9 miles (approximately 9 minutes)
- Brewer Fire & Police: 6 miles (approximately 9 minutes)

Holbrook School

Law Enforcement

- Primary coverage provided by Holden Police Department, located 3.2 miles away (approximately 6 minutes).

Fire Protection

- Holden Fire Department located 3.2 miles away (approximately 6 minutes)

Mutual Aid Support

- Dedham Fire Department: 3.8 miles (approximately 7 minutes)
- Brewer Fire & Police: 8.9 miles (approximately 14 minutes)

Comparative Considerations

- At this time, Holbrook School does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the entire student population. An enrollment decrease of approximately 50 students or more would be required for this to become feasible.
- Holden School offers the shortest response time for both police and fire services, enhancing overall student and staff safety.
- Holden School offers greater capacity for dedicated classroom space, allowing both general education and specialty programs to be housed in permanent classrooms rather than relying on mobile, cart-based instruction.
- Holden and Holbrook Schools have generators, Eddington school does not.

- The cost of a generator for Eddington would be greater than \$50,000.
- Roof Inspections - Holden Schools roof is significantly cheaper to replace when compared to Eddington School.
 - Eddington Elementary School: \$57,800-59,500
 - Holden Elementary School: \$19,000-20,500
- Boiler Estimates - Holden Schools boiler is significantly cheaper to replace when compared to Eddington School.
 - Eddington Elementary School: \$717,550.00 - \$979,825.00
 - Holden Elementary School: 330,000.00 - \$468,250.00
- In its current condition, Holden School offers a larger outdoor campus with multiple on-site structures when compared to Eddington School.
- Due to much of the surrounding property being town-owned, Holden School has the capacity for future expansion if needed.
- If Holden were to be closed, and Eddington stayed open, a bathroom would need to be added on. A cost estimate for this was not obtained.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive review by the Facilities sub-committee, the following conclusions and recommendations are presented:

1. School Consolidation

Given current enrollment levels, it is recommended that one school be closed. The closure of two schools would only be considered feasible should total district enrollment decline to below 300 students.

2. Recommended Closure

Based on the data analyzed, it is recommended that Eddington School be selected for closure.

3. Grade Reconfiguration

It is further recommended that:

- Holden School to serve students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3
- Holbrook School to serve students in Grades 4 through 8.

4. Facility Improvements – Holden School

To support this reconfiguration, the following capital improvements at Holden School are necessary:

- Replacement of the existing boiler
- Roof repairs
- Installation of remote carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in all classrooms
- Installation of a new septic system

5. Site Expansion and Student Space Needs

- The School Board would collaborate with the Town of Holden to secure additional land adjacent to Holden School in order to create a fenced outdoor area suitable for Pre-Kindergarten and to accommodate increased student population needs.
- According to the Holden Town Manager, the Select Board would likely approve this land transfer as a donation, with no purchase required.

6. Of note, there is a potential for costs associated with a closed school that are yet to be identified.
7. The attached layouts of the schools are potential layouts, and are for example purposes only, they are not official or definitive.

Operations Subcommittee Review and Conclusions

With the closure of one school, several potential financial changes and impacts on school operations may occur; however, there are also unknown costs associated with the closure of a school. These may include:

- **Administrative and clerical staffing:** The elimination of one assistant principal position, one secretary, and reductions in food service and maintenance staffing associated with a closed facility could result in estimated savings exceeding \$200,000.
- **Maintenance supplies and equipment:** Servicing two facilities instead of three may reduce overall expenditures, with potential savings estimated at up to \$12,000.
- **Waste management services:** Trash removal costs may decrease with only two facilities in operation, with potential savings estimated at up to \$4,000.
- **Grounds maintenance:** Lawn care, snow removal, and related services may decrease, as a closed facility would not require the same level of daily upkeep as an operating school.
- **Utilities:** Electricity usage would be expected to decrease at a closed facility. Other utility costs may also decline; however, precise savings are currently unknown.
- **Staffing efficiency:** Staffing assignments would become more consistent, reducing the need for staff to split time between buildings or travel between locations.
- **Administrative capacity:** Administrators would likely have increased availability to engage directly with students and staff.
- **Additional considerations:** The cost of insuring a closed school and the ongoing costs associated with maintaining a non-operational facility are currently unknown.

Note: All figures provided are estimates. Actual budgetary impacts may vary based on implementation details and future conditions not identified in this review.

RSU #63 A.C.E. Committee Summary of Survey Results for September 2025

In total, 190 surveys were completed throughout all three towns. Below is a summary of the data collected.

Number of survey's completed for each Community:

- Holden: 89
- Clifton: 30
- Eddington: 66
- Not answered: 5

For parents, below are the schools selected for where their children *currently* attend (multiple selections allowed):

- Eddington: 35
- Holden: 42
- Holbrook: 52
- High School: 20
- Homeschool: 7
- N/A: 72

Type of person completing survey:

- Parent/guardian: 106
- RSU #63 Staff: 15
- Non-parent/Community Member: 69

Concerns reported (multiple selections allowed):

- Educational Programs: 99
- Cost savings: 71
- School closure/restructure: 60
- Facility Conditions: 52
- Community Impact: 42
- Class size: 41
- Transportation: 20
- Location: 6

Overall comments, concerns, views and ideas expressed:

- Safety of the students

- Excellent education for the students
- Being an attractive school district – Keeping staff & enticing to families
- Condition of the facilities/schools – maintenance/upkeep
- Keeping Highschool choice
- Taxes/expenses too high/need for cost savings
- Transportation/bussing times need to be reduced
- Keeping small class sizes
- Concern about town identity and community division if a school closes
- The impact a school closure could have on a town/district and its appeal to families
- There were several responses in favor of consolidation (closing one or two schools) and several responses against consolidation.
 - In reference to consolidation, it was requested that a decision not be rushed, and in contrast, it was requested that a decision be made so the district could move forward.
- i395/Rte. 9 connector being a factor in population changes in the future
- Concerns with Rte. 1A being too busy/unsafe
- Proximity to Police/Fire station
- Fear of joining another district (Brewer) and in contrast, disbanding the school district and either combining with another school district or dividing by town again for elementary school
- Bullying in the schools among students, the staff and the district as a whole
- The need for more after-school options
- Wanting factual data on student numbers, class sizes, and birth rates
- Wanting a plan for what the remaining schools would look like, and the plan moving forward for each school, if one were to close, including, but not limited to the following:
 - What grades would be in each school and where would they be located in each school
 - How would grades be separated:
 - During the school day
 - During transitions (hallways)
 - Lunches
 - Recess
 - Specials
 - Bathrooms
 - Bussing
 - Special Education – staffing
 - Would start and end times to the school day change

- If a school were closed, would there be funds that could then be put back into repairs, or educational programs?
- Feelings of too much testing being completed and not enough active teaching/learning
- Concern that it is a predetermined outcome
- Concern that people are using emotions and not facts and data to make a decision
- Concern that the data the ACE committee/School Board has is not correct or is outdated
- Leasing additional space in the buildings for a childcare center to create additional funds
- Consolidating grade levels and having a teacher teach more than one, or a grade and special

In general, people are thankful for the ACE committee and want this to be an open process with valuable information shared, so an informed decision can be made based on the facts and data obtained.