

A Feasibility Study on Regionalization and Shared
Services in the Kittatinny Regional, Fredon, Hampton,
Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack School Districts

Rowan School Regionalization Institute
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	16
Study Purpose.....	16
Consolidation Options.....	17
Consultant Backgrounds.....	17
GOVERNANCE and LAW.....	20
1. School District Profiles.....	20
2. Statutory Review and Transition Features.....	25
3. Election Process and Board Composition.....	29
4. State Monitoring Status.....	33
5. Stakeholder Input.....	34
6. Potential Political Issues.....	48
7. Governance and Legal Impact.....	48
EDUCATION and PROGRAM.....	50
8. Curriculum and Instruction.....	50
9. Performance Measures.....	61
10. Preschool Education.....	81
11. Special Education.....	82
12. Support Programs.....	84
13. Extracurricular Programs.....	86
14. School and District Staffing.....	88
15. Educational and Programmatic Impact.....	95
DEMOGRAPHY and FACILITIES.....	99
16. Municipal Profiles.....	99
17. Housing Starts.....	104
18. Enrollment History.....	106
19. Enrollment Projections.....	108
20. Disaggregated Enrollments.....	112
21. Facility Utilization.....	116
22. Demographic and Facilities Impact.....	120
FINANCE and OPERATIONS.....	122
23. Collective Bargaining Agreements.....	122
24. Operating Expenses.....	131
25. Borrowing Margin, Debt Allocation, and Reserves.....	134
26. Contracted Services and Tuition.....	137
27. Shared Services.....	146
28. State Aid.....	153
29. Local Tax Levies with Potential Cost Savings.....	174
30. Financial and Operational Impact.....	196
FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS.....	201
APPENDIX.....	212

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This study outlines the potential consolidation or expansion of shared services among five New Jersey (NJ) school districts under the Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP), which was established to provide financial assistance and incentives to local government entities in the State, including school districts, to help them operate more efficiently and reduce costs. By participating in LEAP, local governments and boards of education in NJ can access funding, resources, and expertise to help them streamline their operations, reduce duplication, and achieve cost savings while maintaining or improving the quality of services provided to their residents and businesses.

The intent of this study is to examine relevant data in order to provide recommendations on the feasibility of consolidating operations to enlarge the current limited purpose, grades 7-12, Kittatinny Regional School District (Kittatinny) into one all purpose, grades pre-kindergarten (pK) to 12, regional school district that would either include: (a) all constituent members of the regional – Fredon Township School District (Fredon), Hampton Township School District (Hampton), Stillwater Township School District (Stillwater), and Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School District (Sandyston-Walpack); or (b) an enlargement of the current regional to include grades 6-12. Concurrently, the study will investigate opportunities to share services more effectively and efficiently among the five districts.

The boards of education of Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater have expressed an interest in examining the feasibility of reorganizing their school districts or seeking ways in which to expand shared services across their schools and districts. The Sandyston-Walpack Board of Education has chosen not to participate actively in this study. Therefore, the investigations include accessing and analyzing the available public data for Sandyston-Walpack as well as information procured from the district through the state's Open Public Records Act.

The study team worked through the Rowan University School Regionalization Institute led by Director Mark Magyar, MLIR, who developed the new regionalization law as policy director for the NJ Senate Majority Office. The Institute retained the following experts to collaborate on this study: G. Kennedy Greene, Ed.D. – Lead Investigator and Chief Editor; Scott A. Oswald, Ed.D. – Project Manager; Barbara Behnke, M.A. – Education & Program; Lucille Davy, Esq. – Governance & Law; Brian Diamante – Finance & Operations; Ray Kuehner – Finance & Operations (transportation); Lynn E. Shugars, CPA – Finance & Operations; Donna Snyder-DeVita, M.A. – Finance & Operations; George Sundell – Demography & Facilities; and Arisahi Mora Lázaro, Rowan University research assistant.

Governance and Law

The five school districts in this study are all public entities located in Sussex County, NJ. Kittatinny is a limited purpose, grades 7-12, regional school district with five constituent districts including Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack. Three of the constituent municipalities – Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater Townships – are home to their own grades pK-6 school districts. Sandyston and Walpack Townships formed the Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School District, a limited-purpose regional district for students in grades pK-6.

To guide this study process, Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater established a steering committee that included the superintendents and business administrators from each of the districts. Board members representing each of the school districts were also invited to join the committee. Members of the Kittatinny-Fredon-Hampton-Stillwater steering committee met with the study team to provide oversight and guidance, develop a study outline, and ensure that information was shared with the leadership of all districts. The committee intended to serve as a forum for district representatives to discuss critical interim planning decisions affecting the districts leading up to any potential regionalization vote or any decision to explore additional shared services.

If the Kittatinny Regional Board of Education and NJ Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) or his/her representative determine, after consultation and study, that it is advisable to expand the purposes of the regional district, then such proposal shall be submitted to the voters in each of Kittatinny's constituent districts. The law requires that the proposal be submitted to the voters of *each of the constituent districts* of the regional (emphasis added), instead of to the voters of the regional at large. If a majority of the voters in a majority of the constituent districts that constitute the limited purpose regional vote to expand it into an all purpose regional, then the proposal is considered adopted. In this case, a proposal would be submitted to the voters of the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack school districts. If voters in three of the four districts agree, Kittatinny would be enlarged into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional.

Should the vote in one municipality be in the negative, "Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, a board of education of a constituent district of a limited purpose regional district that does not vote to join an all purpose regional district pursuant to the provisions of this subsection may continue to send such students as were enrolled in the limited purpose regional district to the schools that were established as part of the limited purpose regional district."

It is necessary to consider the viability of two additional scenarios proposed by the steering committee for investigation. The first one is an option in which Kittatinny and Hampton would merge into one all purpose, grades pK-12 regional. Our research indicates that it is not possible for a single district (i.e., Hampton) alone to vote to expand an existing regional to an all purpose regional.

The other scenario that needs examination is the one in which Kittatinny would expand its current limited purpose of grades 7-12 to include grade 6. The study team believes this would require petitioning the Commissioner, since this grade level configuration is not recognized as a limited purpose district under the current law. It is recommended that members of the steering committee

request a meeting with the Commissioner, as this study pursues whether there may be educational and/or financial advantages to a grades 6-12 configuration.

The new members of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional, who shall serve until the election of the first elected members of that regional, shall be selected as follows:

- (1) two-thirds shall be selected from among the members of the boards of education or governing bodies of the constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional (2 from Hampton BOE, 2 from Stillwater BOE, 1 from Fredon BOE, and 1 from Sandyston-Walpack BOE); and
- (2) one-third shall be selected from among the members of the board of education of the limited purpose regional proposing to add additional purposes (3 Kittatinny BOE members – 1 from Fredon, 1 from Hampton, and 1 from Stillwater).

The law requires that board membership be apportioned based upon the proportional number of pupils enrolled from each constituent district that was part of the limited purpose regional. However, limited purpose constituent districts are permitted to apportion board members, as nearly as may be, according to the number of each of their inhabitants.

If a proposal does not move forward to expand Kittatinny from a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional or to add the 6th grade, a discussion would be encouraged among district leaders and boards of education to maximize opportunities for shared services among the districts.

Thereafter, the development and approval of specific contracts would be necessary to design and adopt shared services agreements between the schools and districts.

Each district scored admirably in its most recently completed NJQSAC monitoring cycles. Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack were recognized as high performing districts, while Kittatinny was deemed high performing in all areas but one. Additional alignment through a consolidation of the boards of education could aid in strengthening those scores in a more universal manner while reducing the time spent on completing the self evaluation and review. That time may then be redirected toward students, staff, and program development.

To gather stakeholder input, the study team conducted surveys of board members, parents, staff members regarding what they see as benefits and/or concerns with regionalization. The study team conducted a survey of 9th grade students reflecting on their academic experiences and preparation in their elementary schools. Responses are detailed within the body of this report.

Education and Program

Since all students from grades 7 through 12 already attend Kittatinny HS, this study was conducted with a focus on the curricular programs offered by the grades pK-6 elementary schools in Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater with a lesser emphasis on the programs offered at the high school level. However, the benefits of program coordination between the elementary schools and the regional high school will be included.

The region is to be complimented for the sustained joint curricular work done over many years. The Kittatinny Regional Consortium established content area committees in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies to develop a shared curriculum for implementation across the five regional schools. This curriculum was revised in the summer of 2024 through a collaborative process that included representatives from each of the schools.

Key strengths of this model include the use of a shared curriculum across districts, common assessment tools, a centralized curriculum coordination structure, and ongoing collaboration with high school staff. In particular, there is strong alignment in core programs, especially in ELA and Math, which supports continuity in student learning. In addition, there is significant coordination in regard to instructional times allocated to core content.

Variability in some supplemental resources and program implementation may lead to differences in instructional quality and student outcomes, despite the presence of a shared core curriculum. Differences in instructional delivery models—such as departmentalized versus self-contained classrooms—may further influence instructional depth and teacher expertise within specific content areas. Greater alignment in how assessment data is analyzed and used to inform instructional practices could further enhance consistency and improve student outcomes across the region.

With regard to specials classes (art, music, world language, etc.), students enter Kittatinny with varying levels of readiness, confidence, and prior experience. These disparities may impact students' ability to fully engage in elective offerings, participate in extra curricular programs, and pursue advanced coursework.

Although the length of the school days for grades pK-6 students in Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack range from 7 hours to 6 hours and 23 minutes, a more significant educational factor is instructional time. The data indicates notable variation in daily instructional time across the districts, which compounds significantly over the course of a 180-day school year. Fredon provides the greatest amount of daily instructional time at 5 hours and 52 minutes, compared to 5 hours and 16 minutes in Stillwater. Over a full school year, this results in a cumulative difference of approximately 108 instructional hours, or the equivalent of about 18 additional full school days.

While the districts have worked extremely well together, a regional curriculum office serving grades pK-12 could provide even more cohesive direction, consistent support, and streamlined coordination of curriculum and instructional practices across all grade levels. If implemented appropriately, this approach could yield further academic benefits and free up resources to expand instructional support systems, such as interventionists and special education services.

The study also examines standardized assessment results across the districts, focusing on the NJ Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) for English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Math). The five districts met the federal ELA and Math proficiency standards in all ten measures, which is a strong indicator of academic success. Growth is significant too, as it is more under the locus of school control. Fredon, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack exceeded the Math growth target, while

Hampton met its expectation. Fredon also exceeded the ELA targets, while the other elementary districts met theirs. These results are reflective of the longstanding efforts made by teachers, administrators, and a shared regional coordinator to align elementary curriculum in this region.

Kittatinny met neither growth target for its 7th and 8th grade students, nor the graduation standard for its high schoolers for this particular school year. Consideration of moving the 6th grade students to Kittatinny may create better alignment in a more traditional middle school approach. However, Kittatinny's SAT scores and graduation rates among other performance data show that the school is consistently above the state averages for high school districts.

Disaggregated results by student groups show that 42 of the 52 federal proficiency standards were met or exceeded, which speaks well of the successful work on the part of these schools and their staff members to reduce achievement gaps.

An overview of the past three years of state NJSLA data shows that 46 of the 57 ELA, 36 of the 60 Math, and 16 of the 18 Science results met or exceeded state averages. That said, there remain disparities among the four elementary district assessment scores at various grade levels. Stillwater's Math scores most often rank highest, while there is more of a balance among the ELA results.

With only two years of data, Kittatinny Regional HS students are performing above the state average on the NJ graduation assessment in all four metrics and significantly above in three of the four. The disaggregated data flow into comparisons between Kittatinny's Grade 11 students and their peers across the state, where results at the school are well beyond state averages. Again, this is a strong testament to the collaborative work being done to align curricula and provide support to students with differential learning needs.

In terms of student growth, the 32 elementary scores indicate that the schools met or exceeded that standard with only two exceptions that were each one point below the target. In short, the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack schools are consistently assisting their students' academic growth to a successful level.

Kittatinny's 7th and 8th grade students have struggled more in reaching the state growth standard. The differences in these results provide an opportunity for district leaders working within a regional setting to examine the programs and instructional practices that are yielding the highest levels of student growth in ELA and Math. A grades pK-12 regional and/or a unified grades 6-8 middle school program can improve connectivity and provide targeted support to the teachers preparing students to meet or exceed academic standards as they enter high school.

In SAT Reading and Writing over five years, Kittatinny students scored consistently above, and had a strong percentage of students well above, the college readiness benchmarks as compared to the state average. Math showed similarly strong results. Kittatinny students have increased their enrollment and performance in advanced coursework over time, and in some cases significantly, over the five year period. The disaggregated data reveal that Kittatinny student enrollment and performance by disaggregated groups is also regularly well above state averages.

The high school had higher graduation rates, in some cases by several points than the state average over the four year time period. Notably, the school is doing quite well in preparing its students with disabilities to meet their graduation requirements and earn their diplomas. In terms of postsecondary enrollment, Kittatinny was well above the state average in all four of the years studied, and all disaggregated groups with sufficient numbers have been well represented at the postsecondary level.

The total number of preschool students in the Kittatinny region was 119 during the 2024-25 school year. The realistic preschool universe was 205 students, meaning that 58% of that universe was being served. It is worth noting that Stillwater is doing an excellent job in providing classroom instruction to 96% of its preschool population. To get to 90% in the other districts, Fredon would need at least 2 additional classrooms, Hampton would need 3, and Sandyston-Walpack would need 2.

The data on students in separate special education programs (more commonly known as “out-of-district placements”) show that each district in the region educates at least 96% of its students within their own schools, notably with Stillwater educating all of its students in-district. This is not only good for students, it is efficient financially as out-of-district tuition and transportation regularly approach \$100,000 and above.

Of those special needs students educated in-district, more than 70% are in regular education classes for more than 80% of their day in four of the five districts, showing a strong commitment to inclusive education for classified students. The exception is Hampton at just under 50%, which is an area for further examination.

The districts within the Kittatinny region demonstrate a commitment to supporting diverse student needs through MTSS, multilingual services, and gifted and talented programming. While there are clear strengths in shared frameworks and collaborative efforts, the structure, staffing, and consistency of implementation vary across districts, resulting in some differences in student access and support.

The extracurricular and athletic programs at Kittatinny reflect a strong commitment to providing students with opportunities for engagement, leadership, and skill development beyond the classroom. At the elementary level, all districts provide access to some extracurricular activities; however, there is notable variability in both the number and type of offerings. Expanding and standardizing offerings—particularly in areas such as the arts, STEM, leadership, and athletics—would strengthen student engagement and better prepare students to take full advantage of the extensive opportunities available at Kittatinny.

School and district staffing is an important topic to address potential concerns about sufficient staff levels to address the multiple needs students present. The staffing analyses begin by comparing actual school-level and district-level positions to enrollment-scaled school models. This can be tricky, as the models are general in nature but they do provide some basis for evaluation.

Kittatinny's overall staffing level shows a student to staff ratio of 9.0 to 1, nearly one and a half points below the state model. Among the 46 grade 7-12 or 9-12 school districts across the state, Kittatinny has the 7th smallest enrollment. A basic principle of economics is that economies, or efficiencies, can be found the larger the scale of operations gets up to a point. Kittatinny's smaller enrollment makes finding such staffing efficiencies challenging. Similar to the high school comparison, the region's elementary schools are all smaller than the state model of 400 students, although Hampton and Stillwater are closer than Fredon. As with Kittatinny, the smaller enrollments of each district make greater staffing efficiencies elusive.

A consolidated grades pK-12 system would enable the board and leadership to streamline staffing. With school-level staff remaining relatively constant, the opportunities for efficiency will be more available by combining some positions on district office staffs. Administrative tasks currently duplicated across five school districts could be folded into single processes.

Moving the 6th grade students from the elementary districts to Kittatinny would be more of a school level change versus a district reorganization. In this scenario, school level staffing could undergo some consolidation due to scheduling efficiencies, though most of the 6th grade teachers would likely be employed in a new location. It is difficult to project any support staff and administrative relocations given the movement of just one grade level.

Demography and Facilities

This domain opens with a series of tables depicting demographic data in each municipality in the Kittatinny region regarding population and housing levels and median ages and incomes along with disaggregations by race and ethnicity from 2018 to 2023. Populations grew modestly in Fredon (1.6%) and Stillwater (2.4%) Townships with the others being relatively flat. Six year averages for live births showed a slightly negative trend, though Stillwater's percentage of births to population was the highest among the communities.

Research indicates that there are no planned major housing developments above the recent averages in any of the five municipalities that might impact school enrollment significantly at this time. Affordable housing mandates for Round Four have recently been issued for present and prospective need obligations and are at a combined level of 257 units for the five municipalities with Hampton's need the largest at 81. If, when, and how the mandates will be met is unknown at this time. Compliance with the obligations needs to be monitored on a municipal and project basis.

Enrollments for the combined region of school districts decreased over the six years of actual enrollment by 98 students from an initial high of 1,768 students to a period low of 1,653 in the 2023-24 school year. In the projection period from 2025-26 to 2029-30, enrollments are projected to increase by 101 students over the end of the actual period, an aggregate increase of 6.0%, or about 1.2% per year, and a material average change of approximately 7.2 students per grade over 14 grade levels.

The overall growth in grades pK-6 enrollment in the region over the next five years is projected to be 86 students from the 2024-25 actual enrollment of 951 students, an aggregate increase of 9.1%, or about 1.8% per year, and a material average change of approximately 10.8 students per grade over 8 grade levels. Grade 7-12 enrollments peaked in 2019-20 at 890 students, leading to a loss of 171 students during the actual enrollment period. The projected grades 7-12 enrollment gains 21 students up to 740 in 2029-30. An enlargement of the current limited purpose regional into an all purpose regional would not alter the overall enrollment projections growth in any way.

Given that the scenario contemplated would not change the composition of districts in this region, there is expected to be no impact on racial and other demographic groups from a full grades pK-12 regionalization. However, increases in the number of students of Hispanic (from 11.6% to 16.4% of the total enrollment) and Multiracial (from 1.9% to 2.2%) backgrounds provide an opportunity to evaluate the equity of access to resources and programs in the schools for these traditionally underserved groups.

Grades 7-12 enrollments at Kittatinny that decreased 171 in the period from 2019-20 to 2024-25 are projected to increase by 21 in the period from 2025-26 to 2029-30. The analysis of facilities utilization indicates the potential for 8 available classrooms in 2029-30, allowing for consideration of moving the region's 6th grade students to Kittatinny. In 2025-26, the four 6th grades were projected to have 157 students in 8 classrooms, but drop to 126 by 2029-30. Combining the 6th grades and using the state class size guideline of 24 would require 7 classrooms in 2025-26, dropping to 6 by 2029-30.

The reality is that high schools like Kittatinny offer a broad spectrum of courses to address student interests, and many of those classes are scheduled with fewer students than the state guidelines would suggest. Changing that dynamic is an important curricular consideration that would need to be decided in order to provide the number of classrooms needed by a combined 6th grade. A more targeted classroom use study would need to be done to determine exactly how rooms are being utilized currently. Core facilities such as the media center, cafeteria, and gymnasium would also need to have their capacities considered to provide for the needs of an additional 120 to 160 students.

At the elementary level, Fredon and Hampton show decreasing student projections moving from a need of 2 rooms to a need of just 1 each. However, both districts are still projected to need this additional classroom space. Stillwater is projected to increase by 78 students causing the school to use up all of its 3 currently available spaces. Moving 6th grade students to Kittatinny could help alleviate the space needs for elementary students in all three districts. Given a future need for elementary classrooms due to projected enrollment increases across the region, an option to consider for preschool expansion could be leasing space to create a joint preschool center in another facility.

Finance and Operations

This domain opens with a comparison of the districts' collective bargaining agreements. Negotiations on a new agreement are expected to begin shortly after public approval of a regionalization. The law allows a period of three years for that negotiation to be successfully concluded before imposing the contract of the largest constituent district made up of only the identical grade levels.

One issue with the statutory references is that they are clearly applicable to districts pursuing regionalization using the 2021 School Regionalization Efficiency Program (SREP) grant; however, Kittatinny and its partners have been approved for a LEAP grant, which is an earlier and broader consolidation program. Do the 2021 statutes now apply to all who pursue regionalization? The statute does not state so, and no official agency has come forward with a ruling. However, the consultants believe this is the legislative intent and that other related decisions have leaned in the direction of favoring the SREP statutes as guiding regionalization moving forward.

As expected, there are some important differences among the various aspects of the contract that would have to be coordinated through that negotiation. Of particular importance are the recognition clauses, working conditions, salaries, and benefits. For example, regional entry level salaries (BA Step 1) show notable variance. While Fredon, Hampton and Stillwater remain within approximately \$1,350 of each other, Sandyston-Walpack is \$4,883 below the highest grades pK-6 district (Hampton). Kittatinny's starting salary is \$4,670 above the highest grades pK-6 district (Hampton), and \$9,553 above the lowest grades pK-6 district (Sandyston-Walpack). Kittatinny remains distinctively higher through mid-career steps and at the top of the guide.

Budgetary costs per student were examined comparing district spending priorities and efficiency to their peers across the state. Economies of scale tend to favor larger entities. Kittatinny is the 7th smallest of its 46 peer districts. Sandyston-Walpack (7th smallest) and Fredon (16th smallest) have among the lowest enrollments of their 58 peer districts, while Stillwater (29th) and Hampton (30th) are more towards the middle of the group. Taken together, the dynamics around higher per pupil costs would be difficult to change without the higher enrollment that an enlarged regional would provide.

In terms of direct spending on students reflected as a percentage of dollars allocated to classroom instruction, Kittatinny spends 57.9% on instruction, slightly above the state median of 57.6%. The state median for grades K-6 districts is 58.8%, which Fredon (46.9%) and Sandyston-Walpack (54.4%) are below. This indicator provides direct student academic experiences, and therefore should receive primary attention and commitment in the district budget. However, smaller districts have to spend more of their limited monies on more fixed costs such as administration, operations, and maintenance. For example, administration is often identified by the public as an area to realize potential efficiencies. Kittatinny's \$2,326 per student sits well above the state median of \$2,078, and all of the grades K-6 districts spend considerably above the state median of \$1,968 per student.

Experienced administrators are in demand and cost more than those with less experience, and regionalization may be a useful consideration in seeking efficiencies here.

Fredon issued general obligation bonds for the acquisition and construction of major capital facilities. As of June 30, 2025, the bonds payable consist of refunding bonds issued in 2017 due in annual installments through July 15, 2033 in the amount of \$2,605,000. Kittatinny, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack do not have any outstanding bonds payable currently. Reserve accounts are stable and well-resourced at this time.

The proposed regionalization would result in little to no change as far as what schools the students attend, so there would likely be no change to any of the current transportation programs unless the district chooses to seek a higher level of efficiency or revised routes. An evaluation of student transportation seat time and distance traveled was conducted for all bus services within the region. The student ride times and distances traveled in each case are within what is reasonable for an area of this size. Kittatinny's data is different from the elementary districts, which is to be expected as it covers the entire region of municipalities, and middle and high school students can more easily adjust to extended bus rides. Regionalization is not expected to affect student seat time or travel distance, as there are no current plans or discussions to alter the schools attended by students.

Adding students in Grade 6 to the existing routes for grades 7-12 would have resulted in 113 additional students to be transported: Hampton 53, Stillwater 25, Fredon 22, and Sandyston-Walpack 13. The analysis suggests available space for an additional 125 students. While these figures demonstrate that the existing fleet could accommodate the increase in student numbers, several critical factors require consideration: overloading could become a concern, if the majority of students reside in areas where buses are nearing capacity; potential increases in overall grade level enrollment may further increase the risk of exceeding bus capacities; and if buses servicing certain areas have room but necessitate additional stops, this could extend the time students spend in transit.

A possible solution would be to have the Kittatinny transportation supervisor input the anticipated 6th grade students into the routing system and design new bus routes to ensure balanced loads and minimal increases in seat time. Once updated, all routes should undergo a rebidding process. Should rebidding occur, it is advisable to conduct a bell schedule study within each elementary district. At present, Kittatinny, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack operate bus routes using a single-tier system. It is recommended that districts collaborate to establish a bell schedule facilitating a double-tier route arrangement. Modifying elementary school bell times by 10 to 15 minutes could yield significant cost savings in transportation without major disruption.

All of the districts in this study participate in significant shared services. It is obvious that the districts in the Kittatinny region have worked hard to establish money saving and efficiency enhancing shared services. In fact, they are a model of shared services and cooperation among districts both in the regional group and outside of it.

While current operations are being managed productively and result in good audits, the districts might benefit from a well staffed regional business office model. By maintaining a well-staffed

central hub while keeping essential support staff at the individual school level, a staff could be developed that would provide depth, specialization and continuity. This model would still require duplication of reports for multiple districts. Beyond a joint business office, other possible areas identified for exploration included counseling, facilities, food services, special education, special subject teachers, and transportation.

State aid under the status quo is stable but not without some risk. Under current conditions, four of the five districts are projected to see modest aid increases through FY 2032, driven primarily by categorical aid growth tied to enrollment and student demographics.

Option 1 (grades pK-12 regional) produces a modest state aid disadvantage relative to the status quo because an all purpose grades pK-12 regional would not be eligible for equalization aid. This is primarily because the combined wealth factors push the regional's local fair share above its adequacy budget. Under the capped scenario, this difference is small with the regional receiving approximately \$34,000 less in cumulative aid than the separate districts over five years, a difference of less than a tenth of a percent of the regional's total operating budget in any given year. Under the uncapped scenario, the gap is considerably larger, reaching \$855,000 less per year by FY 2032 if the state returns to full formula funding.

Option 2 (grades 6-12 regional) does not materially alter the state aid picture. Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 regional would redistribute aid between the regional and the elementary districts as 6th grade students and their associated funding shift to the regional. However, none of the underlying formula dynamics would change enough to generate equalization aid eligibility for any district, or to meaningfully improve or worsen the region's aggregate aid totals. The impact of this option on state aid is best categorized as a reallocation rather than a change in total funding.

The differences in projected state aid between regionalization and the status quo are relatively modest compared to the districts' total operating budgets. This should be weighed against potential administrative savings, education benefits, and other non-aid factors analyzed elsewhere in this study when evaluating each option's overall financial impact.

Existing choice students in Kittatinny are expected to remain in place through graduation in an enlarged, all purpose regional or an expanded limited purpose regional. Any new choice program enrollment or program expansion in the regional may require approval from the NJ Department of Education.

Both Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack receive sizable appropriations of federal impact aid due to the amount of tax-exempt properties in the districts owned by the federal government. Under regionalization, all federal land currently generating impact aid will remain within the region, and therefore, it is the consultants' expectation that the enlarged regional under either option would continue to receive impact aid proportional to the federal land in the district.

Modest cost savings of \$885,800 have been projected. These savings would come primarily from consolidating administrative functions across the current constituent districts. They include the

projected higher cost of moving staff to the appropriate default salary guides as identified by statute. There are other opportunities for savings that are not included in the calculations such as consolidation of audits, curriculum and textbook purchases, in-district special education programs, student transportation, technology infrastructure, district office functions, unified contract negotiations, and the potential for self-insured health benefit plans that would be viable in an enlarged regional.

Despite these cost savings, the consultants assume all existing programs would be maintained. The actual implementation and allocation of any cost reductions would ultimately be determined by the regional board of education, ensuring that decisions about resource allocation will be made with consideration of the region's specific needs and priorities in mind. The cost savings detailed in the study represent potential tax savings, as the actual impact on future tax levies in each municipality will depend on decisions made by a future board. The board will need to balance potential tax relief against the educational programming needs of the students.

With respect to taxes in the communities, the apportionment method selected for the expanded regional district will determine who pays how much. The variation in tax impact the various methods produce completely outweigh the cost savings effect. For example under Option 1, shifting from pure equalized property valuation (EPV) to pure enrollment (ENR) swings Hampton's annual tax impact by nearly \$2.7 million and Stillwater's by \$3.2 million. The selection of the apportionment ratio is, in practical terms, the decision that matters most for individual taxpayers in the communities. The right answer depends on the communities' collective values, not the data alone.

While there is no permanent apportionment formula that produces universal tax savings, the reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR provides a viable option for consideration. It holds all three adversely affected communities to increases of less than \$21,000 in average annual levy (less than two-tenths of one percent of each community's total levy). At the household level, the reference ratio provides Sandyston (-\$479 per average assessed home) and Fredon (\$-341) with substantial tax advantages. It produces nearly identical small increases on the average homeowners in Hampton (+\$5) and Stillwater (+\$10).

At this ratio, Walpack's increase is similar in size at \$13,000, however with just 7 municipal residents, this translates to approximately \$524 per year on an average assessed home. Since Walpack's municipal government pays school tax obligations through its limited municipal budget, this increase will not actually be felt at the household level but instead through larger municipal payments to the regional.

The transitional apportionment plan presented guarantees savings for all five communities in each of the first five years to provide a period of stabilization before the permanent formula takes effect before beginning a phase-in to permanent apportionment by formula by year ten.

Under Option 2, moving 6th grade into the regional shifts a portion of each community's equalized property valuation from the elementary districts to Kittatinny's apportionment base and changes each municipality's share of regional costs even though underlying property wealth is unchanged.

Because 6th grade enrollment is proportionally similar across all constituent districts the EPV reallocation is expected to be generally uniform. Dramatic shifts in relative cost burden among the municipalities are not anticipated under EPV-only apportionment.

Option 2 is not expected to substantially alter each community's share of the regional's costs. While each community would contribute a higher amount due to the regional's increased costs, it would simultaneously experience reduced costs in its independent elementary district. The offset may not be one-to-one, but it is not expected to shift each district's relative tax position in comparison to the status quo.

INTRODUCTION

Study Purpose

The Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) was established to provide financial assistance and incentives to local government entities in the state of New Jersey (NJ), including school districts, to help them operate more efficiently and reduce costs. The program is administered by the state's Department of Community Affairs with main purposes that include:

- Encouraging local governments, including school districts, to implement shared services and consolidate operations to reduce costs and improve efficiency;
- Providing financial support for the study and implementation of shared services, consolidation, and other efficiency-related initiatives;
- Offering technical assistance and guidance to local governments and school districts to help them identify and pursue opportunities for greater efficiency and cost savings;
- Promoting best practices and innovative solutions in local government and school district operations to enhance service delivery and/or reduce the burden on taxpayers; and
- Supporting the development of local capacity to enable long-term, sustainable improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

By participating in LEAP, local governments and boards of education in NJ can access funding, resources, and expertise to help them streamline their operations, reduce duplication, and achieve cost savings while maintaining or improving the quality of services provided to their residents and businesses.

The intent of this study is to examine relevant data in order to provide recommendations on the feasibility of consolidating operations to enlarge the current limited purpose, grades 7-12, Kittatinny Regional School District (Kittatinny) into one all purpose, grades pre-kindergarten (pK) to 12, regional school district that would either include: (a) all constituent members of the regional – Fredon Township School District (Fredon), Hampton Township School District (Hampton), Stillwater Township School District (Stillwater); and Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School District (Sandyston-Walpack); or (b) an enlargement of the current regional to include grades 6-12. Concurrently, the study will investigate opportunities to share services more effectively and efficiently among the five districts.

The study will examine district operations in the following areas, which make up the four major domains of this project: governance and law; education and program; demography and facilities; and finance and operations. Each of these considerations must be studied to understand the overall impact of the potential formation of an all purpose, regional school district. The Governance and Law domain focuses on school district profiles, statutory review and transition features, election

process and board composition, state monitoring status, stakeholder input, and potential political issues. The Education and Program domain examines the curriculum and instructional factors, performance measures, preschool education, special education, support programs, extracurricular programs, and school and district staffing. The Demography and Facilities domain looks at municipal profiles, housing starts, enrollment history, enrollment projections, disaggregated enrollments, and school facility capacities. The Finance and Operations domain explores collective bargaining agreements, operating expenses and cost savings; school aid, local tax levies, debt allocation and reserves, contracted services and tuition, and shared services.

Consolidation Options

The boards of education of Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater have expressed an interest in examining the feasibility of reorganizing their school districts or seeking ways in which to expand shared services across their schools and districts. The Sandyston-Walpack Board of Education has chosen not to participate actively in this study. Therefore, the investigations will include accessing and analyzing the available public data for Sandyston-Walpack as well as information procured from the district through the state's Open Public Records Act.¹ The scenarios being studied include:

1. All Purpose Regional Grades pK-12: The expansion of the limited purpose, grades 7-12 Kittatinny Regional into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional including the districts of Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack.
2. Limited Purpose Regional Grades 6-12: The expansion of the limited purpose, grades 7-12 Kittatinny Regional into a grades 6-12 regional district.
3. Status Quo: Maintaining the status quo governance with opportunities to better align educational programs and support services while reducing or controlling the costs of educating students in each district through the addition and/or expansion of shared services and other efficiencies.

Consultant Backgrounds

The Sweeney Center for Public Policy and the Rowan University College of Education formed the Rowan School Regionalization Institute to assess the impact of the school regionalization law (P.L.2021, c.402), make recommendations on policies to advance regionalization, and conduct feasibility studies for interested districts. As the lead agency, the Kittatinny Regional Board of Education retained the Institute to prepare this study to address the requirements of its LEAP grant.

The Rowan University School Regionalization Institute is led by Director Mark Magyar, MLIR, who developed the new regionalization law as policy director for the NJ Senate Majority Office. He has met with superintendents and board members from dozens of school districts to advise them on regionalization issues. The Institute retained the following experts to collaborate on this study:

¹ N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.

G. Kennedy Greene, Ed.D., adjunct associate professor in the Department of Education Policy and Social Analysis at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is a former superintendent of schools in Newton (Sussex County) and a past president of the NJ Association of School Administrators. Dr. Greene served as the lead investigator, editing and contributing to all domains of the study.

Scott A. Oswald, Ed.D., adjunct professor in the Colleges of Education at Stockton and Rowan Universities. He is a former shared superintendent of schools in Collingswood and Oaklyn (Camden County), past executive committee member of the NJ Association of School Administrators, and past president of the Camden County Association of School Administrators. Dr. Oswald served as the project manager.

Barbara Behnke, M.A., educational consultant with the Penn Learning Network and mentor for NJExCEL and NJ Leader to Leaders. She is a former curriculum director in Maple Shade (Burlington County), former superintendent/principal in Delanco (Burlington County), former high school English teacher, past chair of the Burlington County Curriculum Consortium, and past member of the Burlington County Principal and Supervisory Association's Steering Committee. Mrs. Behnke focused on the Education & Program domain.

Lucille Davy, Esq., attorney, certified K-12 mathematics teacher, and former NJ Commissioner of Education. She developed school regionalization initiatives both as Commissioner and as co-chair of the Legislature's Economic and Fiscal Policy Workgroup. Ms. Davy focused on the Governance & Law domain.

Brian Diamante, president and chief executive officer of The Diamante Group LLC, a school data services provider. He has over a decade of education finance experience. Mr. Diamante focused on the Finance & Operations domain.

Ray Kuehner, school transportation consultant. He is a former school transportation supervisor and a past president of the NJ School Transportation Supervisors Association. Mr. Kuehner focused on transportation within the Finance & Operations domain.

Lynn E. Shugars, CPA, started working with school districts as an auditor before transitioning into the role of school business official. Over her 31 year career, she demonstrated her expertise in school districts of various sizes and configurations in Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Ocean Counties. Mrs. Shugars focused on the Finance & Operations domain.

Donna Snyder-DeVita, M.A., consultant with The Diamante Group LLC. She was the Sussex County representative to the NJ Association of School Business Officials board, chaired its education committee, and served on many other statewide committees. She served as a NJ school business official for many years with demonstrated expertise in all areas of school business management. Ms. Snyder-DeVita focused on the Finance & Operations domain.

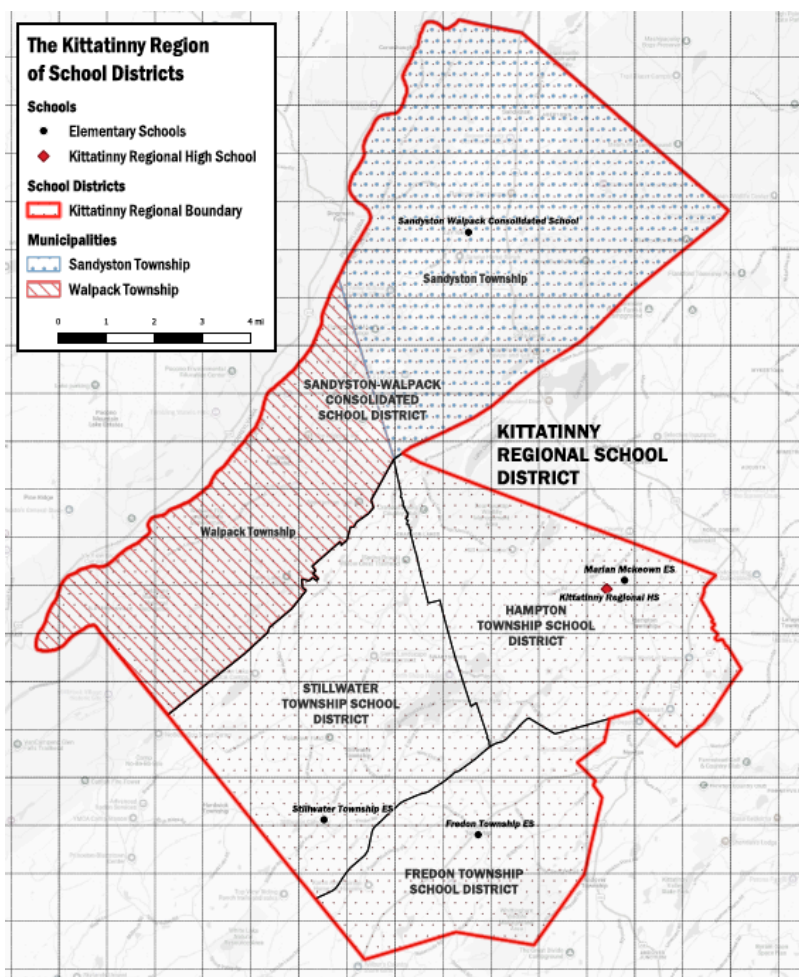
George Sundell, chief executive officer of Sundance Associates. The firm provides services including facilities planning, demographic analysis, redistricting, community relations and participation programs, and grant writing to public school systems throughout NJ. Mr. Sundell focused on the Demography & Facilities domain.

Arisahi Mora Lázaro, Rowan University assistant, served as a data researcher.

GOVERNANCE and LAW

1. School District Profiles ²

FIGURE 1
Map of the Kittatinny Region



The five school districts in this study are all public entities located in Sussex County, NJ. Kittatinny is a limited purpose, grades 7-12, regional school district with five constituent districts including Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack. Three of the constituent municipalities – Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater Townships – are home to their own grades pK-6 school districts. Sandyston and Walpack Townships formed the Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School District, a limited-purpose regional district for students in grades pK-6.

The school districts are all situated in the western portion of the county. Abutting the Delaware River, Sandyston-Walpack is the westernmost district and is made up mostly of land that is

² Mission statements, district goals, and other information in this section retrieved from district websites

designated as either the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area or state protected lands. It is bordered on its southeast by Stillwater and Hampton, which are in turn bordered further southeast by Fredon.

Kittatinny is the only district in the region that participates in the state's interdistrict school choice program. Sussex County has a dozen other school districts that offer school choice options for families at varying grade levels. The county has one charter school, the Sussex County Charter School for Technology, serving students in grades 6-8. The districts are within reasonable proximity to Ridge and Valley Charter School in Frelinghuysen Township in Warren County for students in grades K-8. Sussex County Technical School in Sparta Township is a public vocational school option for students in grades 9-12.

There are several private schools in the county that offer tuition-based choices for families: Catholic Academy of Sussex County (grades pK-12) in Sparta Township; Hilltop Country Day School (pK-8) also in Sparta; Northwest Christian School (pK-8) in Hampton Township, and Sussex Christian School (pK-8) in Sussex Borough.

Kittatinny

Kittatinny is a grades 7-12 regional district with one school: Kittatinny Regional High School located in Hampton Township. The school educates students from Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township.

By a 60%-40% margin, voters approved a February 1973 referendum that allocated \$5.7 million (equivalent to \$40.4 million in 2024) towards the cost of construction of the new Kittatinny Regional High School facility. In August 1974, the Newton Public School District was notified that students from the five townships that would become Kittatinny's constituent districts who had attended Newton High School as part of send/receive relationships would be leaving the high school. Kittatinny opened its facility to students in September 1975.

The district mission statement reads, "Kittatinny Regional School District is committed to inspiring and nurturing productive, confident, lifelong learners capable of realizing their full potential as individuals who contribute responsibly to their community and the world that awaits them."

District goals for the 2024-25 school year were:

- Continue to effectively implement the action plans for the 4 goals outlined in strategic plan with active action plans in each goal area: student-led interdisciplinary learning opportunities that focus on career readiness; student voice and school pride; community; and technology facilities/funding (KEF);
- Develop at least two paths to career exploration through an internship/externship/concurrent learning program providing a plan that allows flexible scheduling that will allow all students to participate in job shadowing and career exploration for implementation during the 2025-2026 school year;

- Work with the board of education and school community to develop a public relations ad hoc committee to improve consistent communication between the board of education and school district to all of our community inclusive of constituency groups that reside and work in our community; and
- Create and mail quarterly newsletters informing the Kittatinny school community of the pertinent school news and updates that impact our school community and community as a whole. These communications may include positive programming, student highlights, athletics success, along with communicating the challenges that we face to provide a well rounded comprehensive academic and co-curricular program at Kittatinny Regional High School.

As noted in its district goals, Kittatinny has a strategic plan for 2022-2027 with four goal statements:

- To develop student-led learning opportunities to empower students to make informed choices in order to become productive citizens in a changing global world;
- To increase the opportunities for all students to communicate so that all voices are welcomed and heard;
- To maximize and simplify the bi-directional connection between KRHS and the community; and
- To develop creative funding avenues outside tax revenue sources to implement the community strategic plan committee's vision to improve our facility and programs.

Fredon

Fredon is a grades pK-6 district with one school: Fredon Township School. It is a constituent district of Kittatinny, where its junior high and high school age students attend. The district mission statement read as follows: "Fredon Township School District welcomes learners, fosters growth, uncovers potential, supports experience, inspires success, masters Common Core and NJ Student Learning Standards."

The district has a 2023-2028 strategic plan with four goal statements:

- Foster an environment that encourages students to be well-rounded, confident, accountable, and prepared for the next step in their education;
- To maintain a level of communication that improves impressions of the school and broadcasts school events to promote an atmosphere that encourages community involvement and academic achievement;
- To obtain consistent communication between staff, students, and families that promotes ownership, accountability, and self-advocacy skills that are necessary to be independent and successful learners; and

- To create a safe, secure, and consistent learning environment while maximizing the best use of facilities and available personnel.

Hampton

Hampton is a grades pK-6 district with one school: Marion E. McKeown School. It is a constituent district of Kittatinny, where its junior high and high school age students attend. The district mission statement reads as follows:

The mission of the Marian E. McKeown School, Hampton Township's progressive, family oriented, learning community in the "Heartland of Sussex County" is to provide each child with varied educational experiences, while emphasizing individual student academic growth, through community support, in a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment in order to develop life-long learners who are productive citizens.

The district goals are:

- Conduct a thorough cybersecurity assessment and research possible solutions to increase the safety and security of the "instructional technology platform" for Hampton Township S.D.;
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the current school safety procedures inclusive of physical plant and security hardware, software, and communication services; and
- Assess and present what is in place for the mental health and social emotional learning of students and staff. This would include a process and procedures handbook to respond to mental health and loss crises.

Stillwater

Stillwater is a grades pK-6 district with one school: Stillwater Township School. It is a constituent district of Kittatinny, where its junior high and high school age students attend. The district mission statement reads as follows:

The Stillwater Township School, a high-achieving, rural school of excellence, works in partnership with students, parents, staff and a caring community to provide every student a progressive and nurturing educational environment designed to maximize individual potential, instill self-esteem, promote citizenship and foster an appreciation for local history and a passion for life-long learning.

The district goals for 2024-25 were:

- To successfully implement a new math program across all grade levels that promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and aligns with state standards, ensuring the rigor of content is maintained and assessed consistently throughout the academic year. (Strategic Plan Goal #1: Teaching and Learning);

- Increase overall student attendance across the district within the academic year through targeted interventions, community engagement, and support systems that address barriers to regular attendance. (Strategic Plan Goal #4: The Whole Child); and
- To enhance our culture of acceptance and awareness with staff, students, and the community through mental health and social emotional learning opportunities (Strategic Plan Goal #2: Global Citizenship and Strategic Plan Goal #4: The Whole Child).

The district has a 2025-2030 strategic plan with three goal statements:

- Create self-driven, open-minded students who have a love of learning, and who can think critically and collaborate with others;
- Explore innovative approaches to operational funding and capital projects in order to maintain quality elementary education in Stillwater for our students, and for the benefit of our stakeholders, so that we may ensure financial stability now and in the future; and
- Maintain and enhance safety and security to protect and provide a positive learning environment for students, staff, and the community to sustain learning excellence.

Stillwater takes pride in being consistently one of the highest performing elementary schools in Sussex County.³ The special education staff does an excellent job of individualizing instruction for every student under their care, and the expanding preschool program is another strength of the district. Plans for the 2026-27 school year include opening a fifth preschool classroom as enrollment is projected to increase to around 75 students.

The district is grateful for all of the ways township residents support the school. One way the school gives back is through the annual Senior Luncheon where students serve more than 200 senior citizens lunch as the band and choir performs. Every year the school also hosts a special Veterans Day assembly to thank and recognize the service men and women living in the community.

Sandyston-Walpack

Sandyston-Walpack is a limited purpose, grades pK-6, regional district with one school: Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School in Sandyston Township. It is a constituent district of Kittatinny, where its junior high and high school age students attend. As previously stated, the Sandyston-Walpack Board of Education has chosen not to participate actively in this study. The district mission statement reads as follows:

Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School District strives for excellence with dedication to diverse educational opportunities. Students are challenged to maximize intellectual, emotional, social and physical potential. Our values, knowledge, and skills are nurtured in partnership with family and community. Learning takes place in a safe and positive environment that respects individual potential and differences. Sandyston-Walpack

³ Information in these two paragraphs comes from written responses by the superintendent to questions from the study team

Consolidated School District offers dynamic and developmentally appropriate programs which meet New Jersey State Student Learning Standards. Our commitment to life-long learning promotes success in an ever-changing global society.

The district goals for 2024-25 were:

- By June 2025, levels of student achievement in the areas of ELA and Math, will increase between 3%-5% at all grade levels, as measured by the results of diagnostic, formative and summative (local and State) assessments, supported by appropriate professional development, data analysis and data-informed instruction;
- By June 2025, the District will assess, develop and maintain a positive school climate and culture to support student learning and growth, as measured by the results of the NJ School Climate Improvement Survey (2025), supported by the analysis of NJSCI data (2024) and implementation of the Second Step Social Emotional Learning program; and
- By June 2025, the District will improve its fiscal health, operations and infrastructure as measured by the results of an analysis of current practice and the implementation of recommended actionable items in the areas of operations, finance and systems organization.

2. Statutory Review and Transition Features

This study examines the expansion of Kittatinny, a limited purpose regional serving students in grades 7-12, into an all purpose regional that would serve students in grades pK-12 from the five municipalities whose high school students attend Kittatinny Regional High School (Kittatinny HS) as constituent members: Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township.

Statutory Review

All Purpose Regional Grades pK-12

If the Kittatinny Regional Board of Education and NJ Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) or his/her representative determine, after consultation and study, that it is advisable to expand the purposes of the regional district, then such proposal shall be submitted to the voters in each of Kittatinny's constituent districts.⁴ The application would include the specific language to be used on the referendum ballot, including implementation date, cost share, and apportionment of seats on the new regionalized board. Although it is not mentioned explicitly in the law, it would appear that two or more of the constituent districts could petition the Commissioner to study and investigate the expansion of the limited purpose regional into an all purpose regional if the Kittatinny Board did not seek to move forward with a consolidation proposal.

⁴ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33

The authority to convert a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional is found in statute.⁵ The law requires that the proposal be submitted to the voters of *each of the constituent districts* of the regional (emphasis added), instead of to the voters of the regional at large. If a majority of the voters in a majority of the constituent districts that constitute the limited purpose regional vote to expand it into an all purpose regional, then the proposal is considered adopted.⁶ In this case, a proposal would be submitted to the voters of the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack school districts. If voters in three of the four districts agree, Kittatinny would be enlarged into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional.

Should the vote in one district be in the negative, “Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, a board of education of a constituent district of a limited purpose regional district that does not vote to join an all purpose regional district pursuant to the provisions of this subsection may continue to send such students as were enrolled in the limited purpose regional district to the schools that were established as part of the limited purpose regional district.”⁷ After approval by the voters as outlined above, the board of education of the regional and the board(s) of education of one or more local districts determined to enlarge the regional shall proceed with the regionalization plan.⁸

Alternative Regionalization Scenarios

It is necessary to consider the viability of two additional scenarios proposed by the steering committee for investigation. The first one is an option in which Kittatinny and Hampton would merge into one all purpose, grades pK-12 regional. Our research indicates that it is not possible for a single district (i.e., Hampton) alone to vote to expand an existing regional to an all purpose regional. Under current law, if the Kittatinny Board wanted to move forward with a proposal to expand Kittatinny into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional, it would by necessity need to include the voters in all of its constituent members.⁹ The law includes an alternative for “two or more local districts” to create a new regional, either limited or all purpose.¹⁰ However, by definition Kittatinny is not a local district,¹¹ and therefore, a proposal for Hampton and Kittatinny to expand or form an enlarged regional could not move forward.

Moreover, any attempt to expand the limited purpose regional done without the other constituent members of the limited purpose regional would presumably leave a single non-regional district (Hampton) as the all purpose, grades pK-12 district; hence, Kittatinny would no longer be a regional district. The other constituent districts would then be in a send-receive relationship with the new grades pK-12 district. This result would be similar to the existing structures seen around the state where a grades pK-12 district educates the high school-aged children from cluster elementary districts through send-receive agreements. In essence, Kittatinny would cease to exist and Hampton

⁵ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2

⁶ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2.a

⁷ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2.a

⁸ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-44.1.a

⁹ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33

¹⁰ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-34

¹¹ N.J.S.A. 18A:1-1

would become the pK-12 receiving district for grades 7-12 students. Difficult questions would arise such as: who would own the asset that is Kittatinny Regional HS?; who would assume all of the previous regional's debt?; and what would become of Kittatinny's impact aid? For the reasons noted here, this proposal has been withdrawn.

The other scenario that needs examination is the one in which Kittatinny would expand its current limited purpose of grades 7-12 to include grade 6. The study team believes this would require petitioning the Commissioner, since this grade level configuration is not recognized as a limited purpose district under the current law.¹² If the Commissioner agreed that Kittatinny could be expanded to add education of the 6th graders from the existing constituent districts, a referendum would be required to ask voters of those districts to approve such a change.

However, the process to add the 6th graders to the existing regional is different from the one that expands an existing limited purpose district to an all purpose grades pK-12 district. Adding the 6th grade would require a majority of votes cast among all of the voters in the regional.¹³ Note that this change would also necessitate the modification of the existing grades pK-6 districts' configuration, as they would then be constituent districts of a grades 6-12 regional, and thereby educating students in grades pK-5 only. It is recommended that members of the steering committee request a meeting with the Commissioner, as this study pursues whether there may be educational and/or financial advantages to a grades 6-12 configuration.

Transition Features

To guide this study process, Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater established a steering committee that included the superintendents and business administrators from each of the districts. Board members representing each of the school districts were also invited to join the committee. The Sandyston-Walpack Board chose not to participate actively in this study.

This steering committee followed a model used in Monmouth County by the Henry Hudson Regional, Highlands, and Atlantic Highlands school districts that guided their successful September 2023 referendum vote to regionalize into a grades pK-12 district effective July 1, 2024. Several members of the Rowan School Regionalization Institute team were involved in the Henry Hudson initiative.

Members of the Kittatinny-Fredon-Hampton-Stillwater steering committee met with the study team to provide oversight and guidance, develop a study outline, and ensure that information was shared with the leadership of all districts. The committee intended to serve as a forum for district representatives to discuss critical interim planning decisions affecting the districts leading up to any potential regionalization vote or any decision to explore additional shared services.

Upon receipt and review of this study, members of the steering committee will take a role in presenting the findings at a combined public meeting and potentially at other smaller gatherings.

¹² N.J.S.A. 18A:13-2.b

¹³ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33

There will be multiple opportunities for the boards to receive feedback and input from all members of the participating communities after the study is published and presented. The committee can then discuss the study findings and public responses in order to consider a joint recommendation to their boards on next steps to pursue regionalization or specific shared services.

Approval by the Commissioner would need to be received at least sixty days prior to a proposed regionalization vote, which can be held on any of the four specified capital referendum dates in September, December, January, and April, or at the November general election. Under existing state statutes, the enlargement of a limited purpose regional into an all purpose grades pK-12 regional would require the approval of a majority of voters in a majority of the constituent districts. It is not known whether the Commissioner would approve a referendum that did not include each school district in an existing region. This study was funded under a LEAP grant, which provides no mechanism for the State to pay referendum costs like the newer SREP does.

If enlargement of the regional is approved, an interim board would be formed with two-thirds of its members from among the members of the boards of education or governing bodies of the constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional, and one-third from among the members of the board of education of the limited purpose regional, with such members selected according to the number of each constituent districts' inhabitants.

Transition to a new or enlarged regional is generally timed to occur at the beginning of the school fiscal year on July 1 with implementation of a new budget for the regional adopted in accordance with state budget timelines. As an example, Henry Hudson Regional voters passed their regionalization referendum in late September 2023, and the fully regionalized district began operation on July 1, 2024. This provided nine months for implementation planning. The appointed interim board continued to serve through January 1, 2025, when a new board elected by voters in November 2024 was sworn into office.

If the citizens of the constituent districts in Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack vote to enlarge the regional, a similar schedule could be followed, with creation of an interim board that would serve until January 1 following implementation of a July 1 regionalization.

Status Quo with Shared Services

If a proposal does not move forward to expand Kittatinny from a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional or to add the 6th grade, a discussion would be encouraged among district leaders and boards of education to maximize opportunities for shared services among the districts.

Thereafter, the development and approval of specific contracts would be necessary to design and adopt shared services agreements between the schools and districts.

Implementation Grants

The Division of Local Government Services, which provided the grant that funded this study, offers LEAP implementation grants of up to \$400,000 to cover one-time costs for regionalization and shared services initiatives. Henry Hudson received a \$400,000 LEAP grant to cover its

implementation costs. The program has been funded annually, was included in the approved state budget, and is anticipated to be available if a regionalization moves forward here. Members of the Rowan School Regionalization Institute team could continue to provide expertise through a regionalization planning, referendum, and implementation process, as they did for Henry Hudson Regional.

3. Election Process and Board Composition

If the voters decide to enlarge the limited purpose regional, all members would be chosen at the next annual school election.¹⁴ The constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional shall calculate and apportion the membership of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional upon the basis of a proportional number of pupils enrolled from each constituent district that constitutes the limited purpose regional, with each district having at least one member. In the alternative, by resolution the constituent districts may propose to calculate and apportion membership of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional among the constituent districts as nearly as may be according to the number of their inhabitants, except each shall have at least one member.¹⁵

The board of education of a regional district shall consist of nine members unless it consists of more than nine constituent districts.¹⁶ If a proposal to add additional purposes to a limited purpose regional is adopted, the constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional shall calculate and apportion the membership of the board of education. The new members of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional, who shall serve until the election of the first elected members of that regional, shall be selected as follows: ¹⁷

- (1) two-thirds shall be selected from among the members of the boards of education or governing bodies of the constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional; and
- (2) one-third shall be selected from among the members of the board of education of the limited purpose regional proposing to add additional purposes.

¹⁴ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2.b

¹⁵ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.3.a

¹⁶ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-8

¹⁷ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.3.a

TABLE 1
Current Membership, Kittatinny Regional Board of Education

District	Number of Board Members
Fredon	2
Hampton	3
Stillwater	3
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	1

TABLE 2
Interim Apportionment, Kittatinny Regional Board of Education
Grades pK-12 based on Student Enrollment, 2024-25

District	Student Enrollment	Percentage of Enrollment	Number of Interim BOE Members
Kittatinny	n/a	n/a	3 (1 Fredon, 1 Hampton, 1 Stillwater)
Fredon	203	21.3%	1
Hampton	322	33.9%	2
Stillwater	296	31.1%	2
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	130	13.7%	1

NJ law specifies how the composition of the interim regional grades pK-12 board of education is to be determined.¹⁸ The interim board would reflect the same composition as the final board that would be elected in the following school election as referenced in Table 2 if based on student enrollment, and Table 3 if based on the resident population.

¹⁸ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2.b

TABLE 3
Interim Apportionment, Kittatinny Regional Board of Education
Grades 6-12 based on Resident Population (2023)

District	Resident Population	Percentage of Population	Number of Interim BOE Members
Kittatinny	n/a	n/a	3 (1 Fredon, 1 Hampton, 1 Stillwater)
Fredon	3,264	23.1%	1
Hampton	4,910	34.8%	2
Stillwater	4,030	28.5%	2
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	1,924	13.6%	1

The post-interim board would reflect the same composition as the final board that would be elected in the following school election as referenced in Table 4 if based on student enrollment, and Table 5 if based on the resident population.

TABLE 4
Post-Interim Apportionment, Kittatinny Regional Board of Education
Grades pK-12 based on Student Enrollment 2024-25

District	Number of Elected BOE Members
Fredon	2
Hampton	3
Stillwater	3
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	1

In either case, the permanent board of an all purpose regional would be structured the same as the current Kittatinny Regional Board: three members from Hampton; three from Stillwater; two from Fredon; and one from Sandyston-Walpack.

TABLE 5
Post-Interim Apportionment, Kittatinny Regional Board of Education
Grades pK-12 based on Resident Population

District	Number of Elected BOE Members
Fredon	2
Hampton	3
Stillwater	3
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	1

The first elected members of the enlarged regional shall be elected in accordance with the proposal to calculate and apportion membership of the board of education, adopted pursuant to the statute, at the annual election to be held in the calendar year first succeeding the year in which the election for the creation of the district was held.¹⁹ State law also requires that the initial terms of the first elected board be staggered, and in this case, there would be three members elected for three years, three for two years, and three for one year.²⁰

With regard to the order in which seats are filled, state statute requires that in regionals with nine members, three members shall be elected for three years, three for two years and three for one year, which shall be allocated to the constituent districts to the extent of apportioned membership on the regional board, starting with the allocation of the terms of three years, by allocating one of such terms to each of the constituent districts in the alphabetical order of the names of such districts, and continuing in such order with allocations of the two year terms and then allocation of the one year terms.²¹

If based on current enrollment projections, board membership of the enlarged regional would be as follows: Fredon - one for a 3-year term and one for a 2-year term; Hampton - one for a 3-year term, one for a 2-year term, and one for a 1-year term; Sandyston-Walpack - one for a 3-year term; and Stillwater - one for a 2-year term and two for a 1-year term. If based on the number of inhabitants, board membership of the enlarged regional would be the same as would the terms. Thereafter, all members shall be elected for 3-year terms.

The school regionalization law is silent on the number of times or how frequently a regionalization referendum can be held. The State's education law does not generally address referendum timing or frequency other than to say they must be held during the April school election, the November statewide general election, or on special election dates authorized in N.J.S.A. 19:60-2 – the fourth

¹⁹ N.J.S.A. 18A:33-33.3b

²⁰ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-46.1

²¹ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-38.1

Tuesday in January; the second Tuesday in March; the last Tuesday in September; or the second Tuesday in December.

Districts are prohibited from consolidating, regionalizing, or withdrawing from a regional if it will increase or exacerbate the segregation of students by racial, socioeconomic, disability or English language learner status.²² In this case, the statute is not applicable since all students in the communities currently attending the limited purpose regional would remain in attendance with their peers in the all purpose regional.

4. State Monitoring Status

The Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJSAC) is the NJ Department of Education's (NJDOE) monitoring and district self-evaluation system for public school districts. It is a single comprehensive system that consolidates and incorporates the monitoring requirements of applicable state laws and programs and complements federally required improvements. The system focuses on monitoring and evaluating districts in five key components that have been identified to be essential factors in effective districts. These components are Instruction and Program, Fiscal Management, Governance, Operations, and Personnel. A district that achieves a score of 80% or higher in each of these five components is designated as "high performing".

Kittatinny completed its most recent NJSAC review during the 2023-24 school year. During that cycle, four of the five areas met or exceeded the standard for a high performing district: Fiscal Management 100%; Governance 95%; Operations 95%; and Personnel 100%. The district was deemed by NJDOE to need a district improvement plan in Instruction and Program given a score of 75%, five points shy of the high performing standard. It should be noted that this component is highly dependent upon state assessment results.

Fredon completed its most recent NJSAC review during the 2024-25 school year. During that cycle, the district was designated as high performing, having earned the following scores in each of the five component areas: Instruction and Program 84%; Fiscal Management 100%; Governance 100%; Operations 100%; and Personnel 100%.

Hampton completed its most recent NJSAC review during the 2022-23 school year. During that cycle, the district was designated as high performing, having earned the following scores in each of the five component areas: Instruction and Program 80%; Fiscal Management 100%; Governance 100%; Operations 98%; and Personnel 95%. Hampton is awaiting its results for the 2025-26 QSAC cycle.

Stillwater completed its most recent NJSAC review during the 2024-25 school year. During that cycle, the district was designated as high performing, having earned the following scores in each of the five component areas: Instruction and Program 81%; Fiscal Management 100%; Governance 100%; Operations 100%; and Personnel 100%.

²² N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.11

Sandyston-Walpack completed its most recent NJQSAC review during the 2024-25 school year. During that cycle, the district was designated as high performing, having earned the following scores in each of the five component areas: Instruction and Program 85%; Fiscal Management 96%; Governance 100%; Operations 94%; and Personnel 100%.

Each district scored admirably in its most recently completed cycles. Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack were recognized as high performing districts, while Kittatinny was deemed high performing in all areas but one. Additional alignment through a consolidation of the boards of education could aid in strengthening those scores in a more universal manner while reducing the time spent on completing the self evaluation and review. That time may then be redirected toward students, staff, and program development.

5. Stakeholder Input ²³

Board Member Survey

Board members from the four districts were asked to respond to a survey seeking their input regarding the need for regionalization, their views of the potential benefits and greatest concerns, and what they identified as most needed in order to make a responsible decision regarding moving forward. Responses were received from one Fredon board member, five Hampton board members, seven Kittatinny board members, and three Stillwater board members.

Almost all of the board members indicated that a formal feasibility study to evaluate the potential impacts of regionalization is warranted at this time, although the Stillwater board members all said it was not warranted. When asked on a scale of 1 to 5 with “1” being strongly opposed and “5” being strongly supportive, more than 80% of responding board members responded with a “4” or “5,” although Stillwater respondents were either neutral or opposed.

In response to a question regarding what they considered to be the most significant potential benefits to regionalization, the cost savings and operational efficiencies were identified by 75% of the respondents. About 80% identified either the enhanced long-term financial stability or the stable and equitable tax base as one of the three most significant benefits. There was similar support for the educational advantages that included expanded academic programs and curriculum coherence for all students from preschool to 12th grade.

When asked to identify their greatest concerns or their view of potential challenges, more than half of the respondents identified the loss of local control and community identity, and almost as many said the potential for school closures. A second group of issues, including logistical issues such as transportation times, disruption to students and families, and the potential to lay off administrative staff were noted by several respondents. A few members were concerned about a loss of unique educational programs and financial uncertainty.

²³ Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this aspect of the study

Board members were asked which aspect of the study would be most critical to analyze to ensure a responsible decision would be made; the top two priorities were the financial impact (including tax implications, state aid, and debt service) and the educational impact (including curriculum alignment, course offerings, special education services, and academic outcomes). Several members also ranked the community and governance impact (including maintaining community identity, school structure and a new governance structure) and operational and logistical impact (including transportation, facilities usage, and staff impacts) among their top three priorities.

In an open-ended question, board members were asked to state the single question they wanted a feasibility study to answer. Many of the responses concerned the cost savings and financial implications of regionalization, and how students and taxpayers would benefit. A final open-ended question sought additional comments or concerns. Those responses included:

- Academic benefits can be identified;
- Regionalization is inevitable, best to get out in front of it before the state takes action;
- What happens if all of the districts do not want to participate;
- Sending districts do not want to lose home rule;
- Opposed to regionalizing but would like to know the benefits;
- Having the state decide is a terrible idea;
- Do not want to lose small town charm;
- Financial recommendations should have clear graphics with data; and
- Open to hearing all sides and think there could be positive changes for all students.

Parent Survey

Parents of students attending the Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater schools were asked to complete a survey regarding their preliminary views of regionalization, including the most significant benefits, their greatest concerns, and questions they wanted answered in the study.²⁴ Almost 170 people responded to the survey, more than half of whom have lived in the community for more than 16 years. Only 11% have lived there for less than five years, and 35% have lived in the community between 6-15 years.

Responses were received from a broad cross-section of parents: 21% from Fredon, 35% from Hampton, 32% from Stillwater, 9% from Sandyston-Walpack, and 4% from parents of choice students. Almost 10% of those responding were from parents of a preschool aged child and nearly 20% were alumni of Kittatinny. Although overall results are discussed below, data disaggregated by constituent district is also provided.

When asked how supportive they were for a study on regionalization, more than 37% were supportive or strongly supportive, 43% were neutral and said they needed more information but were open minded, while nearly 20% were opposed or strongly opposed. Three out of four respondents

²⁴ Responses from Sandyston-Walpack were only to those surveys sent by Kittatinny

said the study should be done to get clear factual information and data regarding the financial, educational, and community impact, while 16% were unsure and 9% said a study was not necessary.

Respondents were asked to identify the three most significant benefits. More than 70% said more opportunities for students (more classes, programs, art, music), almost 60% said improved financial efficiency or long term value for taxpayers, and almost 40% identified access to better and more modern school facilities and technology among their top three.

When asked to identify their most important concerns, longer bus rides and transportation issues, the potential for property tax increases, loss of their town's community identity and control over local schools, and possible decline in the quality of education were noted most often as among the top three. Nearly 40% said the potential closure of a school within the community was an important concern.

Parents were asked two open-ended questions: one to identify the single most important question for the feasibility study to answer and the other to share comments on the topic of regionalization. Their responses to the first question can be grouped into several areas:

- Quality of education programs – academic benefits to students including students with special needs, impact on student educational experiences;
- Tax implications – impact on property taxes, fiscal benefits, long-term sustainability;
- Impacts on staff – potential increase in class size, use of existing buildings, potential for school closure; and
- Thorough analysis and understanding of impacts – district is already a regional, do benefits outweigh any negative impacts?

The final survey question sought parent comments. Many of the responses were related to those given to the open-ended question identified above. Some additional comments of note include:

- Larger class sizes will affect small group learning and students will get lost;
- Regionalization could give students more options;
- What is the time frame and how quickly could this happen;
- A bigger regional school district might result in less parent involvement ;
- Pre-kindergarten in a separate school building;
- Junior/senior high already regionalized and we know it works;
- Might lose students to other districts if we regionalize;
- Might lose state funding if we regionalize;
- Don't like shared administrators among schools;
- Timely and important but need more information;
- Not sure if this is cost effective; and
- How would regionalization address loss of state funding?

Results disaggregated by constituent district

Parent answers to the survey questions including perceived benefits of regionalization as well as significant concerns were also analyzed by constituent district. Parents of choice students made up less than 5% of the cohort, so their responses were not included in these disaggregated results.

TABLE 6
Support for their district doing a formal regionalization study ²⁵

	Strongly Opposed	Opposed	Neutral (or need more information)	Supportive	Strongly Supportive
Fredon	11.4%	0%	37.1%	34.3%	17.2%
Hampton	5.2%	8.6%	53.4%	13.8%	19.0%
Stillwater	25.9%	9.3%	35.2%	22.2%	7.4%
Sandyston-Walpack	7.7%	0%	53.9%	7.7%	30.8%

A majority of parents in Hampton and Sandyston-Walpack and more than a third in Fredon and Stillwater were neutral or felt they needed more information before making a judgment. Support for conducting a study was strongest in Fredon (51.5%) while the strongest opposition to conducting one was in Stillwater (35.2%).

TABLE 7
Percentage of respondents choosing the identified benefit of regionalization

	#1 Identified Benefit	#2 Identified Benefit	#3 Identified Benefit
Fredon	Improve financial efficiencies – 83%	More student education opportunities – 69%	Better school facilities and technology – 40%
Hampton	More student education opportunities – 79%	Improve financial efficiencies – 57%	Better school facilities and technology – 45%
Stillwater	More student education opportunities – 65%	Improve financial efficiencies – 48%	Better school facilities and technology – 30%
Sandyston-Walpack	More student education opportunities – 69%	Improve financial efficiencies – 54%	More sports and extra-curriculars – 38%

Other questions asked about the most important benefits and concerns parents have. In terms of benefits, all districts cited more educational opportunity or improved financial efficiencies as their top two in one order or the other. Three of the four cites their third most important benefit as better facilities and technology. Concerns were more divergent as can be seen in Table 8.

²⁵ Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “strongly opposed” and 5 being “strongly supportive”

TABLE 8
Percentage of respondents choosing the identified concern of regionalization

	#1 Identified Concern	#2 Identified Concern	#3 Identified Concern
Fredon	Potential property tax increase – 54%	Longer bus rides and transportation – 51%	Education quality decline & potential school closure – 43%
Hampton	Potential property tax increase – 59%	Education quality decline – 50%	Loss of community identity/local control – 42%
Stillwater	Loss of community identity/local control & education quality decline – 39%	Potential school closure & longer bus rides and transportation – 37%	Potential property tax increase – 30%
Sandyston-Walpack	Loss of community identity/local control – 62%	Potential school closure & longer bus rides and transportation – 54%	Potential property tax increase – 38%

Finally, parents were asked what information would be most critical for them to make an informed decision. Table 9 shows the rankings by parents in each of the constituent districts in order of importance among four choices. Student experience was ranked most critical by each district, followed by education quality in three of the four.

TABLE 9
Critical information needed for an informed decision on regionalization

	Financial impact: clear understanding of tax implications	Student experience: start times; class sizes, bus routes, school assignments	Community impact: effect on school buildings, community traditions, local control	Education quality: academic, athletic & extra-curricular program enhancements
Fredon	2 nd	1 st	4 th	3 rd
Hampton	3 rd	1 st	4 th	2 nd
Stillwater	3 rd	1 st	4 th	2 nd
Sandyston-Walpack	3 rd	1 st	4 th	2 nd

Staff Member Survey

In a survey similar to that answered by board members and parents, staff members were asked to provide input as well as their perceptions of the most significant potential benefits and the greatest concerns or potential challenges to consolidating the districts into a single grades pK-12 district. As shown in Table 10, a total of 96 responses were received: 66% from teachers; 9% from certified support staff (e.g., counselors, nurses, child study team members); 17% from non-certified support staff (e.g., paraprofessionals, custodians, clerical staff); and 8% from administrative staff (e.g., principals, directors, supervisors).

TABLE 10
Respondent Roles

	Respondents	Teaching	Certified Support	Non-Certified Support	Administrative
Kittatinny	36	26	1	6	3
Fredon	14	9	2	2	1
Hampton	24	14	4	4	2
Stillwater	22	14	2	4	2
TOTAL	96	63	9	16	8

Respondents were asked how long they had worked in the district. Almost half (47%) had spent 16 or more years in their district, 13.5% spent between 11 and 15 years, 13.5% between six and ten years, and 26% had worked in their district for five years or less. A majority of those who completed the survey were elementary level teachers (59%) while 36% were either middle, middle and high school, or high school teachers, and under 5% were district level employees.

Staff members were asked to identify the three most significant potential with the most frequent responses being: (1) potential for improved salary and benefits packages in a larger district – 53%; (2) broader and more diverse academic programs for students – 46%; (3) more opportunities for specialized instructional roles (e.g. coaches, specialists) – 43%; and (4) increased opportunities for professional collaboration with a larger group of colleagues – 41%. The greatest concerns or potential challenges identified were: (1) job security, seniority, and tenure implications – 59%; (2) potential for larger classes sizes or reduced instructional autonomy – 52%; (3) loss of our school’s unique culture and sense of community – 47%; and (4) the process of merging different union contract and salary guides – 44%.

One question asked staff members to identify the area believed to be most critical to analyze to ensure a fair and positive outcome for staff from among these four areas: (1) staffing and contracts – a clear and transparent plan for merging seniority lists, honoring contracts, and placing staff; (2) curriculum and instruction – a detailed comparison and plan for aligning curriculum, academic programs, grading policies, and teacher evaluation models; (3) school culture and climate – an assessment of how the unique identities of the schools will be respected and integrated; and (4) student experience – an analysis of the impact on class sizes, students support services, and transportation. Respondents also identified the 2nd and 3rd most important areas. Using a weighted measure, staffing and contracts was overwhelmingly the top choice, with curriculum and instruction, and the student experience well behind but receiving very similar support. School culture and climate was a distant fourth choice.

The survey concluded with two opportunities for staff to provide open-ended feedback. Similar to the parent survey, respondents were asked to name the single most important question that a

feasibility study should answer, and then to share any additional comments or concerns. Their responses can be grouped into several general themes listed in order of frequency:

- How would the role of faculty change including class assignments and class size?;
- What are the benefits for students and what is best for them?;
- How will staff contracts be affected including job security and tenure?;
- What are the financial benefits and projected cost savings, and are there tax implications without sacrificing education?;
- Would the administrative structure change, e.g. having in-district child study teams and guidance counselors?;
- Will the number of administrators be studied?;
- Would services to students with special needs improve?;
- How would academic and early childhood opportunities broaden and/or improve?;
- How would a transition be made without disruption including bus transportation? Would more students spend more time on the bus?;
- Would resources be distributed equitably to all schools?;
- Why is regionalization necessary and would the benefits outweigh any negative impacts?;
- What are the negative impacts on Kittatinny Regional?;
- What does regionalization look like if implemented, and how would one building support all students and staff?; and
- Would this be done in collaboration with staff?

Among the comments received, some expressed support for regionalization. Others were concerned about educational autonomy, students' sense of safety and belonging, transparency, long-term stability, and the need to keep current education programs. Several mentioned the need for educators to have a voice and be included in the discussions. Finally, one educator said that cost efficiency is not sufficient, that the study must show student outcomes will improve, student supports will be strengthened, instructional quality and class size will be maintained, and consistency and continuity for students will be protected during and after the transition.

Results disaggregated by constituent district

When these responses were disaggregated by district, some interesting differences emerged. Tables 11 and 12 reflect the prioritization of these potential benefits and concerns.

TABLE 11
Percentage of respondents choosing the identified benefit of regionalization

	#1 Identified Benefit	#2 Identified Benefit	#3 Identified Benefit
Kittatinny	Broader and more diverse academic programs – 52.8%	Access to better facilities and technology – 41.7%	More opportunities for specialized instruction – 38.9%
Fredon	Increased opportunity for professional collaboration; potential for improved salary and benefits; and more opportunities for specialized instruction – 57.1%	Broader and more diverse academic programs – 42.9%	More diverse student body – 21.4%
Hampton	Potential for improved salary and benefits – 75%	Broader and more diverse academic programs; increased opportunity for professional collaboration; access to better facilities and technology – 33.3%	More opportunities for specialized instruction – 29.2%
Stillwater	Potential for improved salary and benefits – 59.1%	More opportunities for specialized instruction – 54.6%	Broader and more diverse academic programs – 45.8%

TABLE 12
Percentage of respondents choosing the identified concern of regionalization

	#1 Identified Concern	#2 Identified Concern	#3 Identified Concern
Kittatinny	Process of merging union contracts and salary guides – 58.3%	Potential for larger class size or reduced instructional autonomy – 50%	Job security and tenure implications – 44.4%
Fredon	Loss of school's unique culture and sense of community – 71.4%	Job security and tenure implications; potential for larger class size or reduced instructional autonomy – 62.5%	Process of margining union contracts and salary guides – 28.6%
Hampton	Job security and tenure implications – 75%	Loss of school's unique culture and sense of community – 62.5%	Potential for larger class sizes or reduced instructional autonomy – 45.8%
Stillwater	Job security and tenure implications; Loss of school's unique culture and sense of community – 63.6%	Potential for larger class size or reduced instructional autonomy – 50%	Process of merging union contracts and salary guides – 36.4%

Finally, given four choices, staff members were asked what information would be most critical for them to make an informed decision about regionalization, ranking their top three in order of importance, as noted in Table 13.

TABLE 13
Critical information needed for an informed decision on regionalization

	Staffing and Contracts	Instruction and Curriculum	School Culture and Climate	Student Experience
Kittatinny	1 st	2 nd	4 th	3 rd
Fredon	1 st	3 rd	3 rd	2 nd
Hampton	1 st	3 rd	4 th	2 nd
Stillwater	1 st	3 rd	4 th	2 nd

Student Survey

The study team conducted a survey of 9th grade students reflecting on their academic experiences and preparation in their elementary schools. There were 106 responses, 85 of them from students who attended elementary schools in this region (i.e., Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, Sandyston-Walpack).

CHART 1
Elementary School Attended

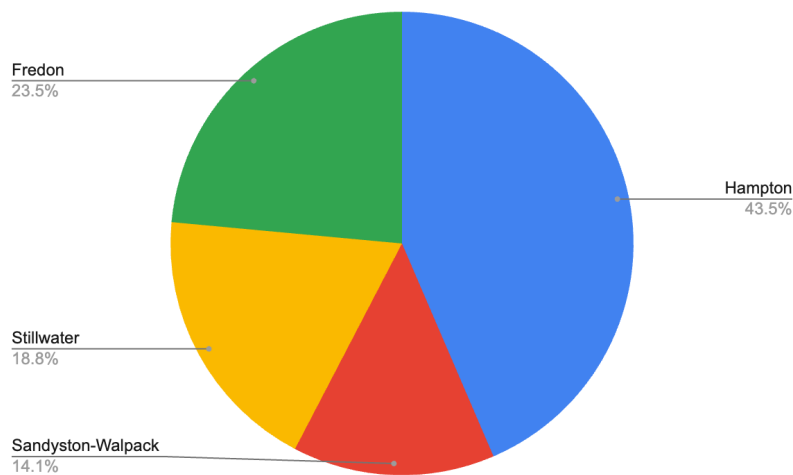


CHART 2

How much reading were you asked to do in 6th grade in any subject area? ²⁶

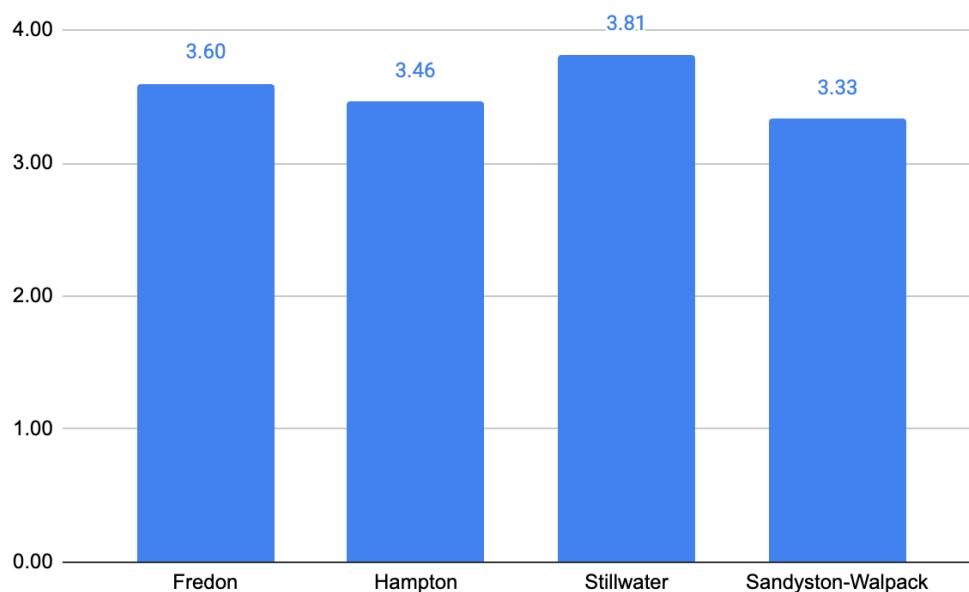
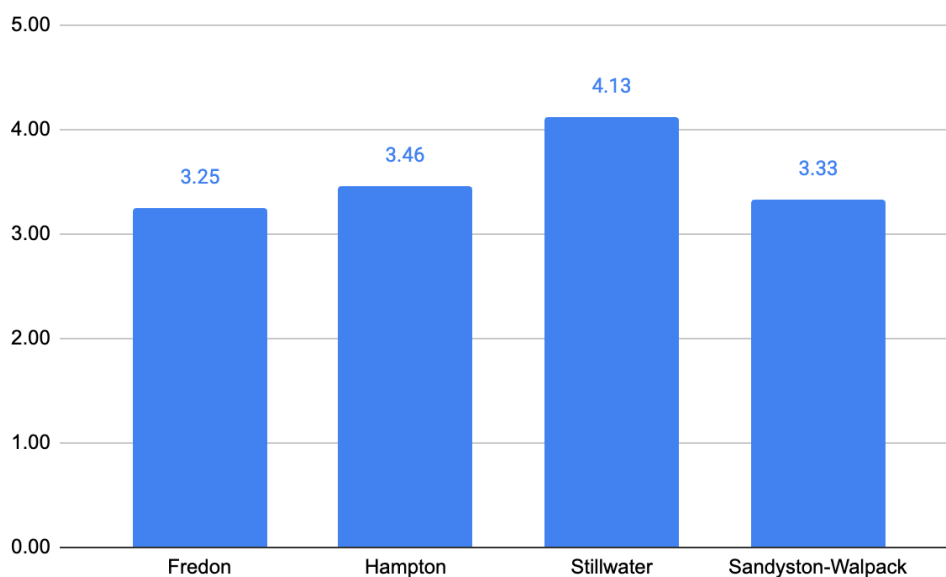


CHART 3

Did you think the reading skills you developed in elementary school prepared you for the reading you were expected to do in 7th grade? ²⁷



²⁶ 1 = "not much at all"; 5 = "a lot"

²⁷ 1 = "not prepared at all"; 5 = "very well prepared"

CHART 4

How much writing were you asked to do in 6th grade in any subject area? ²⁸

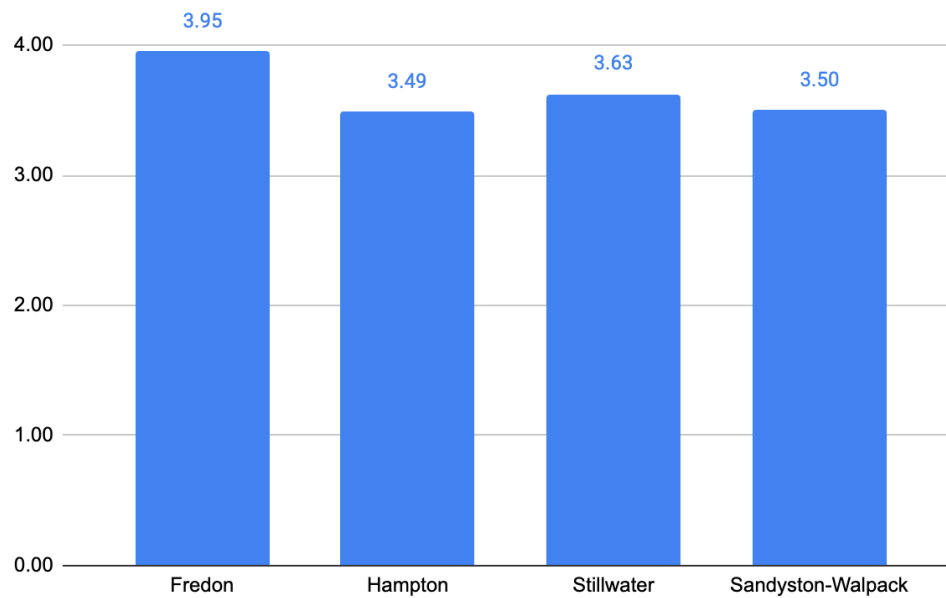
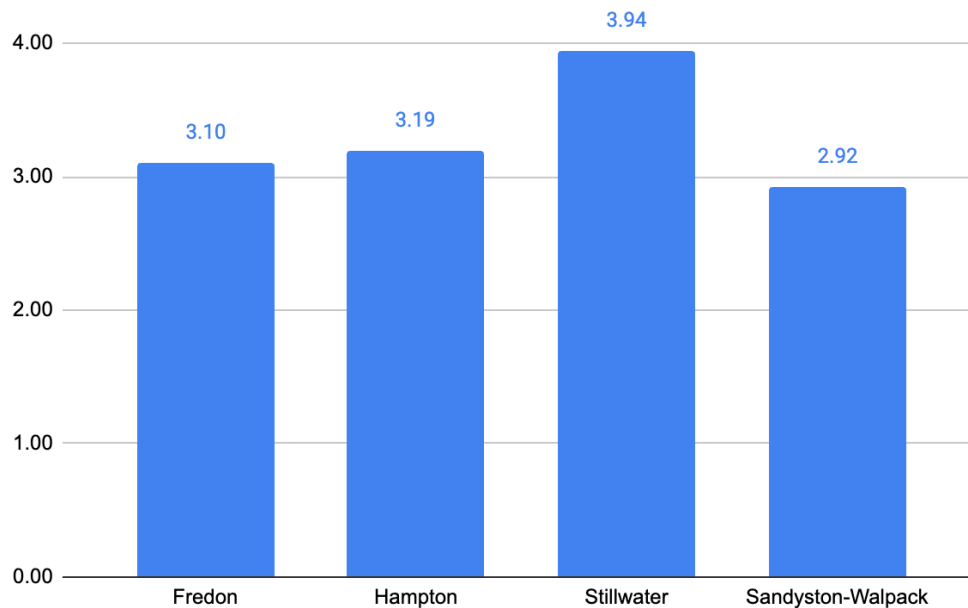


CHART 5

Did you think that the writing skills you developed in elementary school prepared you for the writing you were expected to do in 7th grade? ²⁹



²⁸ 1 = "not much at all"; 5 = "a lot"

²⁹ 1 = "not prepared at all"; 5 = "very well prepared"

Students from Stillwater reported the highest level of reading across subject areas and how that prepared them for Kittatinny with the other three elementary districts being relatively even. Writing results were more uneven with Fredon leading the way with how much writing they were asked to do across subject areas and Stillwater students expressing strong belief in their preparation for middle school. These perceptions can be compared with the English language arts performance measures in the Education and Program domain.

CHART 6
Math Course Currently Taken

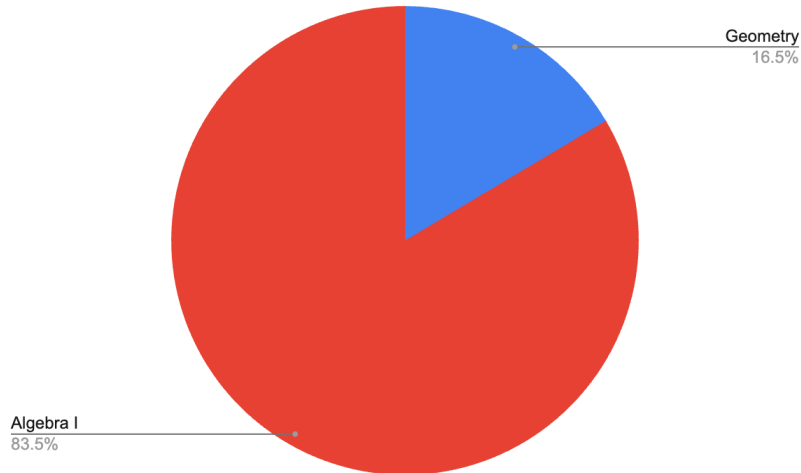
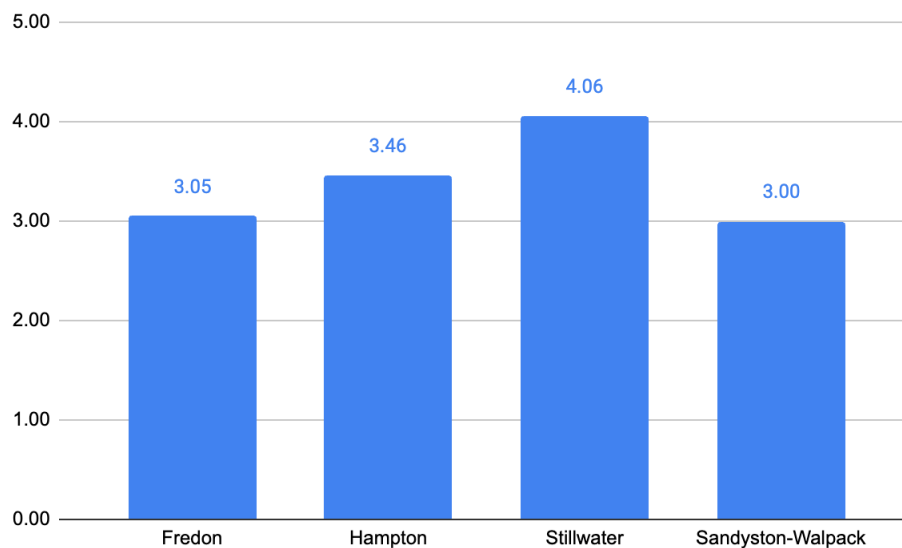


CHART 7
How prepared were you for your 7th and 8th grade math classes? ³⁰



³⁰ 1 = "not prepared at all"; 5 = "very well prepared"

TABLE 14

Based on your experience, did you feel that you were better prepared, less prepared, or as prepared as other students in your 7th and 8th grade math classes?

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Better Prepared	5.0%	24.3%	25.0%	0.0%
As Prepared	60.0%	59.5%	56.2%	50.0%
Less Prepared	35.0%	16.2%	18.8%	50.0%

With regard to preparation in math, Stillwater students again reported high levels of preparedness followed by Hampton with Fredon and Sandyston-Walpack students relatively even. The question in Table 14 comparing levels of preparation to their peers show Stillwater and Hampton students having similarly high responses of feeling better prepared than peers, “as prepared” being relatively even among the four, and a sizable proportion of students in Fredon and Sandyston-Walpack feeling less prepared. Again, these perceptions can be compared with the math performance measures in the Education and Program domain.

CHART 8
Science Course Currently Taken

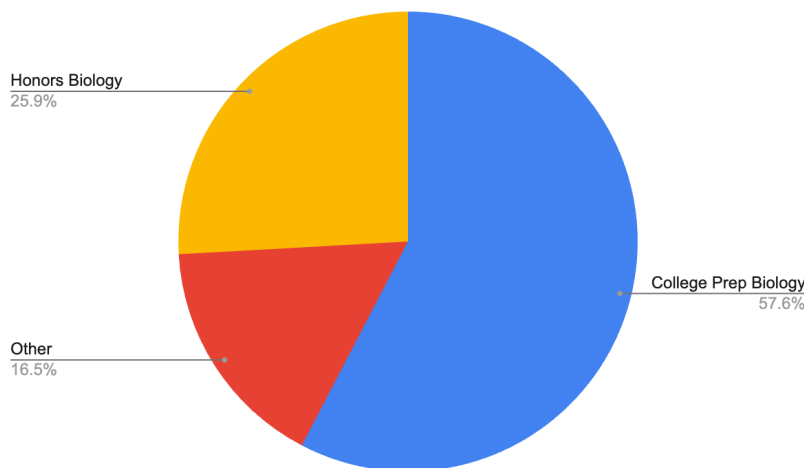


CHART 9

Did you think that the science you learned in elementary school prepared you for the science you were expected to do in 7th and 8th grade? ³¹

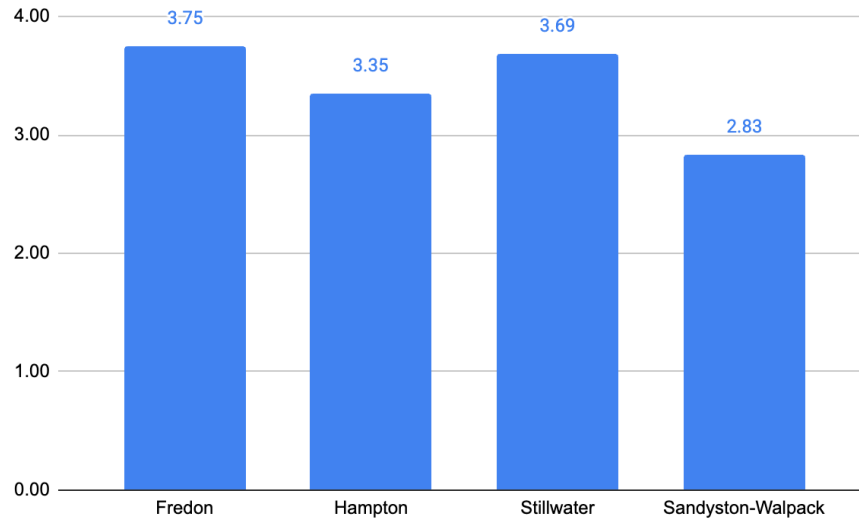
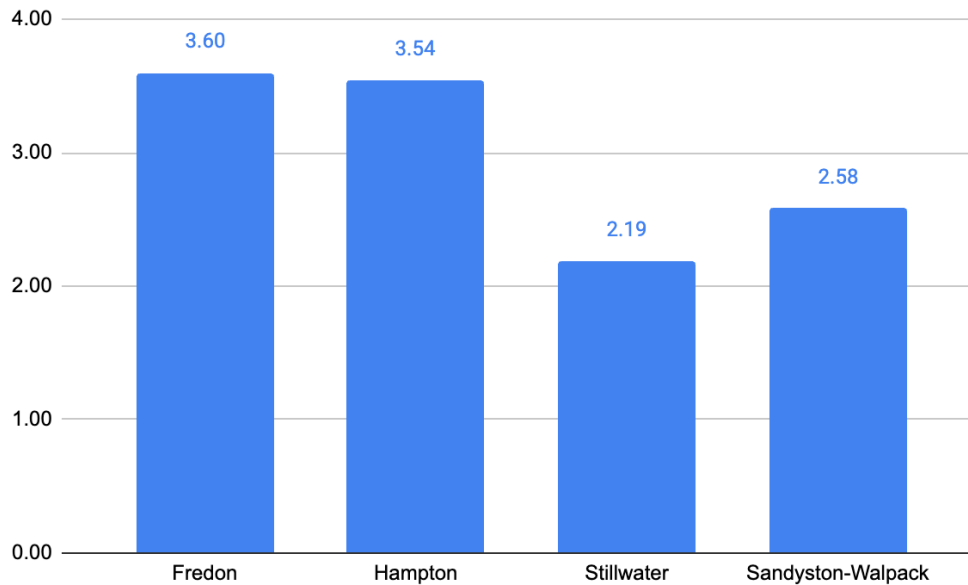


CHART 10

How often did you do any hands-on science experiments prior to your 7th grade science class? ³²



³¹ 1 = "not prepared at all"; 5 = "very well prepared"

³² 1 = "never or hardly ever"; 5 = "all the time"

With regard to science preparation, Stillwater and Fredon responded strongly with Hampton close behind. Interestingly, hands-on science experiments were strongly reported by Fredon and Hampton students with Stillwater reporting by far the lowest level of conducting science experiments.

TABLE 15

Did you learn to play a musical instrument in school prior to entering Kittatinny?

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Still Play	15.0%	13.5%	12.4%	16.7%
Started and Stopped	55.0%	27.0%	43.8%	33.3%
Never Started	30.0%	59.5%	43.8%	50.0%

86% of the respondents expressed that they took at least four of the five primary non-core classes (physical education, art, music, world language, technology/STEM) in 6th grade, and all but one felt they were adequately prepared to use technology as a learning tool by 7th grade.

6. Potential Political Issues

The Sandyston-Walpack Board of Education did not send representatives to the steering committee and made it known that the district was neither interested in actively participating in the study nor in considering regionalization with the other constituents. The study team gathered publicly available data on Sandyston-Walpack and made an information request through the Open Public Records Act for additional data. These records were provided by the district, and the team is grateful for this cooperation.

7. Governance and Legal Impact

This study explores the potential transition of Kittatinny Regional from a limited purpose grades 7–12 system into a comprehensive grades pK–12 all purpose regional. This expansion would unify primary and secondary education for its five constituent municipalities of Fredon, Hampton, Sandyston, Stillwater, and Walpack Townships. The Sandyston-Walpack Board of Education did not send representatives to the steering committee and made it known that the district was neither interested in actively participating in the study nor in considering regionalization with the other constituents.

It is necessary to consider the viability of two additional scenarios proposed by the steering committee for investigation. The first one is an option in which Kittatinny and Hampton as partner districts would merge into one all purpose, grades pK–12 regional. Our research indicates that it is not possible for a single district (i.e., Hampton) alone to vote to expand an existing regional to an all purpose regional. The other scenario that needs examination is the one in which Kittatinny would expand its current limited purpose of grades 7–12 to include grade 6. The study team believes this

would require petitioning the Commissioner, since this grade level configuration is not recognized as a limited purpose district under the current law. It is recommended that members of the steering committee request a meeting with the Commissioner, as this study pursues whether there may be educational and/or financial advantages to a grades 6-12 configuration.

If a majority of the voters in a majority of the constituent districts that constitute the limited purpose regional vote to expand it into an all purpose regional, then the proposal is considered adopted. In this case, a proposal would be submitted to the voters of the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack school districts. If voters in three of the four districts agree, Kittatinny would be enlarged into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional.

If the voters decide to enlarge the limited purpose regional, all members would be chosen at the next annual school election. The constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional shall calculate and apportion the membership of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional upon the basis of a proportional number of pupils enrolled from each constituent district that constitutes the limited purpose regional, with each district having at least one member.

The new members of the board of education of the enlarged all purpose regional, who shall serve until the election of the first elected members of that regional, shall be selected as follows: two-thirds shall be selected from among the members of the boards of education or governing bodies of the constituent districts constituting the limited purpose regional; and one-third shall be selected from among the members of the board of education of the limited purpose regional proposing to add additional purposes.

Ultimately, the permanent board of an all purpose regional would be structured the same as the current Kittatinny Regional board: three members from Hampton; three from Stillwater; two from Fredon; and one from Sandyston-Walpack.

Each district scored admirably in its most recently completed NJQSAC cycles. Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack were recognized as high performing districts, while Kittatinny was deemed high performing in all areas but one. Additional alignment through a consolidation of the boards of education could aid in strengthening those scores in a more universal manner while reducing the time spent on completing the self evaluation and review.

Stakeholder input was gathered largely through a series of surveys. Responses to prompts on benefits and concerns of regionalization were received from 16 board members, 170 parents, and 96 staff members. Tenth grade students were also surveyed with 106 responses to questions regarding elementary school academic preparation. More details on questions and responses are contained in the body of the report.

EDUCATION and PROGRAM

8. Curriculum and Instruction

Since all students from grades 7 through 12 already attend Kittatinny HS, this study was conducted with a focus on the curricular programs offered by the grades pK-6 elementary schools in Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater with a lesser emphasis on the programs offered at the high school level. However, the benefits of program coordination between the elementary schools and the regional high school will be included.³³

The NJ Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) serve as the foundation for education in the state. These standards outline the minimum knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire at each grade level in various subject areas. The NJDOE regularly updates and revises these standards to ensure they align with current educational research and best practices.

By way of background information, districts use the NJSLS as follows:

Adoption and Implementation

The NJDOE adopts and publishes the NJSLS, which cover the core subjects of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Visual and Performing Arts, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, and Computer Science and Design Thinking. The NJSLS also include standards in Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills. Content and skills addressed in these latter standards include Personal Financial Literacy, Career Awareness Exploration, Preparation and Training, Career and Technical Education, and Life Literacies and Key Skills. This last standard outlines key literacies and technical skills such as critical thinking, global and cultural awareness, and technology literacy that are crucial for students to develop to live and work in an interconnected global economy.

Curriculum Development

School districts, including those in this study, use the NJSLS as a guide to developing their curricula. They create instructional plans that ensure students have the opportunity to master the content and skills outlined in the standards. Districts may also design curriculum maps to show the progression of skills and knowledge from one grade level to the next.

Assessment and Accountability

The NJSLS influence the development of state assessments, which are used to measure student proficiency and growth. These assessments are designed to reflect the content and skills specified in the standards. Schools and districts are held accountable for student performance

³³ Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this aspect of the study

based on these assessments. Results may impact school ratings, teacher evaluations, and other aspects of the accountability system.

Monitoring and Adjustments

School districts regularly monitor student progress through various in-district assessments and adjust instructional practices based on the data. This process ensures that students are meeting the standards and that any necessary interventions are implemented.

Professional Development

Teachers and administrators participate in professional development to understand the NJSLS and how to effectively implement them in the classroom. This training helps educators align their teaching practices with the standards.

Parent and Community Communication

Best practices suggest that schools communicate with parents and the community about the NJSLS, providing information on what students are expected to learn at each grade level. This transparency helps foster collaboration between educators, parents, and the community.

Curricular Philosophies, Content Focus, and Instructional Resources³⁴

The districts in the Kittatinny region pride themselves on their curriculum coordination which is evidenced in the core of their model: a single regional curriculum coordinator. This individual is responsible for developing and organizing a curriculum plan that applies to all schools in the region with the goal of ensuring consistency and a cohesive vision across the districts. The coordinator focuses on grades pK-8 with the goal of creating a strong foundation for younger students. This is connected to the high school curriculum through collaboration, which includes secondary content supervisors working with the regional coordinator to ensure a seamless transition and consistent curriculum from grades 7-12.

The major goal is to ensure all students entering 7th grade at Kittatinny have a shared or similar skill set. They use a shared model curriculum across the region to provide students with the same foundational knowledge and abilities regardless of which elementary school they attend. It is important to note that while the core curriculum is shared, there is some flexibility in how it is taught in each elementary school. Teachers can tailor their instruction to the unique needs of their students and community while still adhering to the shared curriculum.

Some 6th grade teachers expressed a desire for greater vertical articulation between themselves and Kittatinny's 7th grade teachers. A suggestion was made to schedule at least three meetings throughout the year for teachers, including those in specials areas, to identify gaps in student achievement and discuss possible solutions.

³⁴ Responses to curricular resource surveys in November-December 2025; Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this aspect of the study

TABLE 16
Instructional Resources, ELA, 2025-26

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Textbook Series	7-12: Novel units	K-5: Readers and Writers Workshop 6: Novel Units	K-5: Readers and Writers Workshop 6: Novel Units	K-5: Readers and Writers Workshop 6: Novel Units
Screening Tool(s)		Renaissance Star 360 Assessments and Link It	Renaissance Star 360 Assessments and Link It	Renaissance Star 360 Assessments and Link It
Supplemental Materials		K-3: Foundations	K-3: Foundations Nessu, Literably, Learning Without Tears	K-3: Foundations
Instructional Time	40 mins/day	K-3: 114 mins/day	K-2: 120 mins/day 3-6: 80 mins/day	K-2: 120 mins/day 3-6: 80 mins/day
Course Levels	HS: ACP, CP, Honors and AP in grades 11 and 12 JH: Honors offered in grade 8			
Additional Course Offerings	HS: Creative Writing, Drama in Literature, Lit Theme and Analysis, Psych/Multicultural, World Literature, Writing for Digital Media JH: Design Media Research			

TABLE 17
Instructional Resources, Math, 2025-26

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Textbook Series	7-8: Big Ideas and Illustrative Mathematics Pre-Algebra: Big Ideas Accelerated Algebra I: Illustrative Mathematics and Pearson's Algebra I: Common Core 2012	Savvas enVision Mathematics 2024	Savvas enVision Mathematics 2024	Savvas enVision Mathematics 2024
Screening Tool(s)		Renaissance STAR 360, MAP testing, Savvas enVision Benchmarks, LinkIt	Renaissance Star 360	Renaissance STAR 360, MAP testing, Savvas enVision Benchmarks, LinkIt
Supplemental Materials	Desmos Khan Academy	Freckle.com Prodigy.com MobyMax.com	Freckle.com Prodigy.com MobyMax.com	Freckle.com Prodigy.com MobyMax.com
Instructional Time	40 mins/day	76 mins/day	80 mins/day	K-2: 70 mins/day 3-6: 80 mins/day
Course Levels	HS: CP, ACP and Honors JH: Honors offered in grade 8 (Algebra I) Pre Algebra offered in grade 7			
Additional Course Offerings	HS: CP Contemporary Math, Statistics and AP Statistics AP Calculus AB and BC			

TABLE 18
Instructional Resources, Science, 2025-26

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Textbook Series	Glencoe Earth, Life Science	Mystery Science	Mystery Science	Mystery Science
Supplemental Materials	STEMScopes, OpenSciEd	STEMScopes	STEMScopes	STEMScopes
Instructional Time	40 mins/day	38 mins/day	K-2: 80 mins/day, alternates with Social Studies 3-6: 40 mins/day	K-6: 40 mins/day
Course Levels	HS: ACP, CP, Honors JH: Honors offered in grade 8			
Additional Course Offerings	HS: Anatomy & Physiology, AP Chemistry II, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, AP Physics C: Mechanics, AP Physics I and II, Chem in Community, Forensics, Life Science, Science Exploration JH: Forensics			

TABLE 19
Instructional Resources, Social Studies, 2025-26

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Textbook Series	America: History of Our Nation World Geography Textbook	K-2: locally developed using online resources 3-5: myWorld Interactive Social Studies 6: myWorld Interactive World History	K-2: locally developed using online resources 3-5: myWorld Interactive Social Studies 6: myWorld Interactive World History	K-2: locally developed using online resources 3-5: myWorld Interactive Social Studies 6: myWorld Interactive World History
Supplemental Materials	Junior Scholastic Magazine	Studies Weekly	Studies Weekly	Studies Weekly
Instructional Time	40 mins/day	38 mins/day	K-2: 80 mins/day, alternates with Social Studies 3-6: 40 mins/days	40 mins/day
Course Levels	HS: ACP, CP, Honors JH: Honors offered in grade 8			
Additional Course Offerings	HS: AP Economics:Macro and Micro, AP US Government, AP World History, AP US History, AP European History, Current Issues, Sociology, Anthropology			

The region is to be complimented for the sustained joint curricular work done over many years. The Kittatinny Regional Consortium established content area committees in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies to develop a shared curriculum for implementation across the five regional schools. This curriculum was revised in the summer of 2024 through a collaborative process that included representatives from each of the schools. The work was guided by the regional curriculum coordinator, a literacy consultant, and instructional supervisors from Kittatinny. It is also important to note that Hampton utilizes a departmentalized model in grades 3–6, with a designated ELA teacher for each grade level.

Key strengths of this model include the use of a shared curriculum across districts, common assessment tools, a centralized curriculum coordination structure, and ongoing collaboration with high school staff. In particular, there is strong alignment in core programs, especially in ELA and Math, which supports continuity in student learning.

In addition, there is significant coordination in regard to instructional times allocated to core content. Elementary ELA times range from 114 to 120 minutes daily in grades K-2, though that drops to 80 minutes per day in grades 3-6 in Hampton and Stillwater. Math times range from 70 to 80 minutes daily, and Science and Social Studies schedules average 38-40 minutes per day.

Variability in some supplemental resources and program implementation may lead to differences in instructional quality and student outcomes, despite the presence of a shared core curriculum. Differences in instructional delivery models—such as departmentalized versus self-contained classrooms—may further influence instructional depth and teacher expertise within specific content areas.

Another important consideration is the use of assessment and data. The districts utilize common tools, including STAR, MAP, and LinkIt, which enable cross-district comparisons and support data-driven instruction. While this represents a significant strength, greater alignment in how assessment data is analyzed and used to inform instructional practices could further enhance consistency and improve student outcomes across the region.

Specials

TABLE 20
Instructional Time, Specials, 2025-26

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Physical Education	HS: Daily PE classes, semester of Health in each grade 9-12; additional Courses include: Introduction to Exercise Science, and Nutrition Fundamentals JH: PE and Health	K-3: 114 mins/wk 4-6: 152 mins/wk	80 mins 2x/wk, Health 40 mins 1x/wk	160 mins/wk
Art	HS: Studio Foundations, 2 and 3 Dimensional Studio, Advanced Studio, AP Drawing JH: Art 7 and 8	K-3: 30 mins/wk 4-6: 38 mins/wk	40 mins/wk	40 mins/wk
Music	HS: Concert Band & Choir, Into Music Theory, Wind Symphony, Select Choir JH: Band and Chorus	K-3: 30 mins/wk 4-6: 38 mins/wk	40 mins/wk, instrumental music offered in grades 4-6	40 mins/wk
Technology STEM	HS: AP Computer Science, Excel/Google Suite, Intro to Comp Programming, Intro to Web Design, CAD, Architectural Design, Steam Connections, Digital Photography, Woods, Carpentry & Home Main, Video Production, Engineering Concepts and Systems, Robotics, Trade Preparedness JH: STEAM	K-3: 30 mins/wk 4-6: 38 mins/wk	STEM: 40 mins/wk Computers: 40 mins/wk	STEAM: 40 mins/wk

World Language	HS: Spanish I-AP; French I-AP; German I-IV H JH: German 7 and Spanish 8	K-3: 30 mins/wk 4-6 : 38 mins 2x/wk	Spanish: 40 minutes bimonthly	K-6: 40 mins/wk
Other	HS: Accounting and Finance, Entrepreneurship, Intro to Business Mgmt., Personal Finance Mgmt, Sports and Ent. Mktg, Hospitality and Tourism JH: Business and Career Exploration	WIN: 190 mins/wk SEL: 38 mins/wk	Library: 40 mins/wk	Mindfulness: 40 minutes biweekly 3-6: Intervention Activity 26 mins/day

Kittatinny highlighted the following programs they are able to offer students: Architecture/Engineering, Drama, Trades Preparedness, Wood Shop, Band, and Chorus. New programs in collaboration with Sussex County Community College are Automotive, Welding, and Athletic Training Supports Medicine. The school is looking to expand to also offer Culinary and Optics programs. Fredon is currently exploring Project Adventure Curriculum to pilot for Physical Education. They also have a TREP\$ Market. Stillwater offers a Makerspace STEAM program and Yoga.

The related arts programs vary in structure, frequency, and delivery model across the districts. These inconsistencies result in uneven student exposure to core disciplines such as world language, the arts, and STEM. For example, world language instruction ranges from bimonthly sessions to twice-weekly instruction, and access to instrumental music and technology programming differs by school. Students who have received world language instruction beginning in elementary school by a certified teacher have a stronger foundation in vocabulary, cultural understanding, and language learning skills.

As a result, students enter Kittatinny with varying levels of readiness, confidence, and prior experience. These disparities may impact students' ability to fully engage in elective offerings, participate in extra curricular programs, and pursue advanced coursework.

Class Sizes

TABLE 21
Average Class Sizes, 2025-26 ³⁵

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Preschool		14	14.5	14
Kindergarten		15	15.5	19
Grade 1		21	19	20
Grade 2		13	15	17
Grade 3		14	15.5	18.5
Grade 4		14	17	18.5
Grade 5		21	19	15
Grade 6		16	16	17.5
Grade 7	22			
Grade 8	21			
ELA 9	17			
ELA 10	17			
ELA 11	17			
ELA 12	17			
Overall Average	18.5	16.0	16.4	17.4

The State has identified suggested maximum class sizes of 20 students for grades K-5, 22 for grades 6-8, and 24 for grades 9-12.³⁶ The data above reveals the overall similarities among the districts and grade level differences within them. The latter is a challenge especially for districts with one school and for those with low enrollments, who often have just one or two classrooms per grade level. This makes it hard to attain efficiencies in personnel allocation and student-to-teacher ratios. The data shows that all districts in the study are generally below or at least close to the State's suggested maximums. Regionalization of the districts may allow for decisions on more efficient placement or sharing of teaching staff.

³⁵ Grades K-8 class sizes are based on homerooms, grades 9-12 are based on English classes

³⁶ Maximum class sizes are from NJDOE's room capacity guidelines in the long range facilities plan for district practice

Length of School Day, Instructional Time, and School Calendar

TABLE 22
Length of School Day, Instructional Time, and School Calendar, 2024-25 ³⁷

District	Grade Level	Start/End Time of School Day	Length of School Day	Instructional Time	First/Last Day of School Year
Kittatinny	7-12	7:35 AM-2:15 PM	6h 45m	5h 36m	9/3/2024-6/11/2025
Fredon	pK-6	8:15 AM-3:15 PM	7h 0 m	5h 52m	9/3/2024-6/12/2025
Hampton	pK-6	8:30 AM-2:53 PM	6h 23m	5h 35m	9/3/2024-6/16/2025
Stillwater	pK-6	8:25 AM-3:06 PM	6h 41m	5h 16m	9/3/2024-6/12/2025
Sandyston-Walpack	pK-6	8:23 AM-3:10 PM	6h 47m	5h 40m	9/3/2024-6/12/2025

Although the length of the school days for grades pK-6 students in Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater and Sandyston-Walpack range from 7 hours to 6 hours and 23 minutes, a more significant educational factor is instructional time. The data indicates notable variation in daily instructional time across the districts, which compounds significantly over the course of a 180-day school year. Fredon provides the greatest amount of daily instructional time at 5 hours and 52 minutes, compared to 5 hours and 16 minutes in Stillwater. Over a full school year, this results in a cumulative difference of approximately 108 instructional hours, or the equivalent of about 18 additional full school days.

Technology Access and Resources

Kittatinny is a one-to-one (1:1) Chromebook-based district with each student receiving a device in 7th grade. They also provide hotspots for use in households that do not have wifi or internet access. The district has a number of technology resources with programming classes, technology courses, and robotics courses, as well as programs in graphics, design, architecture and engineering. They are investigating the possibility of transitioning a printing lab into a design and graphics lab for sign making for the 2026-27 school year.

In Fredon, students are provided with a 1:1 Chromebook in grades K-6. In Hampton, all students are provided with a 1:1 Chromebook and receive computer science and design thinking in grades K-6. They also have a computer lab featuring iMac computers. In Stillwater, students are provided with a 1:1 Chromebook in grades K-6.

Professional Development

The districts participate in joint regional professional development and align their school calendars to facilitate collaboration. A review of the district professional development plans revealed the focus each puts on this essential contributor to student success. Regional in-services are held throughout the school year. Topics to start the 2025-26 school year included: a keynote by Cornell

³⁷ School websites and district provided information

Thomas on The Power of Positivity; Managing Behaviors in the Classroom; Teaching Strategies-Introduction to Creative Curriculum for Preschool; Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and Math; Special Area curriculum team meetings, and Using Data to Inform Small Group Instruction.

Each district had different goals and priorities noted in their plans as summarized below:

Kittatinny

- Work collaboratively and emphasize student learning as their primary mission with specific attention being devoted to:
 - Curriculum revision across all grade levels which includes horizontal and vertical articulation;
 - Preparations for changes in the state testing program;
 - Building a culture of teacher-initiated professional development and expanding professional learning opportunities; and
- Fully utilize the LinkIt platform, its modalities and what it can do to help prepare students academically.

Fredon

- Foster a positive climate and culture that boosts staff morale and community collaboration; and
- Support an environment that provides opportunities for student academic growth and success with professional learning communities embedded into the plan.

Hampton

- All professional teaching staff are involved in job embedded learning focusing on ELA, math, social studies, science, world languages, STEM, technology, visual arts, physical education, and gifted and talented; and
- The focus for the 2025-2026 school year is on math and ELA curriculum; and
- Additional training is provided on teaching practices and RTI strategies, assessment training, behavioral programs in special education, and building positive classroom climate (AI computer technology skills were added recently).

Stillwater

- Focus on Math and ELA, utilizing Elevate Educators and a Math and ELA consultant to support the work.

Potential Improvements in Instructional Program and Curricular Coordination

Whenever there exists a school configuration where students from separate districts find themselves coming together for the first time in a common junior high or high school, challenges associated with curricular inconsistencies exist, as do opportunities associated with additional curriculum alignment. However, the districts in the Kittatinny region have strived to create a cohesive curriculum and set of expectations across the elementary schools. There is tremendous collaboration going on among all five districts when it comes to core content in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Common curricula and professional development planning are models from which other regions in the county and beyond could benefit.

Differences in instructional delivery models, such as departmentalized versus self-contained classrooms, could be addressed through a more strategic use of staff and expertise.

Departmentalized models such as Hampton's grades 3-6 ELA approach could be expanded. Literacy coaches, Math specialists, STEM/Technology teachers, and interventionists could provide enhanced instruction through teacher specialization and more targeted student support.

Another opportunity would be to jointly analyze and use assessment data to inform instructional practices. This would eliminate gaps and redundancies, ensuring every student enters Kittatinny with similar preparation and smoother transitions between grade bands.

Given the disparities in related arts preparation at the elementary schools, establishing a more standardized and equitable related arts framework across the region is recommended. It would ensure that all students have consistent opportunities to develop creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and discipline-specific skills. There is an opportunity to design and implement a unified related arts framework that guarantees equitable access, consistent instructional time, and aligned curricular experiences for all students. Such a model would better prepare students for the diverse academic and extracurricular opportunities available at Kittatinny and support the development of well-rounded learners.

While the districts have worked extremely well together, a regional curriculum office serving grades pK-12 could provide even more cohesive direction, consistent support, and streamlined coordination of curriculum and instructional practices across all grade levels. If implemented appropriately, this approach could yield further academic benefits and free up resources to expand instructional support systems, such as interventionists and special education services.

9. Performance Measures

Federal Accountability Status

The federal government's Every Student Succeeds Act mandates that states create accountability frameworks to pinpoint schools requiring additional support and enhancement. These frameworks must evaluate student performance using a comprehensive approach that extends beyond standardized test results alone, including academic achievement levels, student growth

measurements, high school graduation rates, and advancement tracking for multilingual learners. States are also required to break down educational data by various student demographic groups and guarantee that assessment practices reach every student within their systems. Table 23 identifies those metrics and their status for the 2023-24 school year.

TABLE 23
Overall Federal Accountability Status, 2023-24 ³⁸

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	4-Year Grad Rate	Chronic Absenteeism
Kittatinny	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
Fredon	Y	Y	E	E	-	Y
Hampton	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y
Stillwater	Y	Y	Y	E	-	Y
Sandyston-Walpack	Y	Y	Y	E	-	N

The five districts met the ELA and Math proficiency standards in all ten measures, which is a strong indicator of academic success. Growth is significant too, as it is more under the locus of school control. Fredon, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack exceeded the Math growth target, while Hampton met its expectation. Fredon also exceeded the ELA targets, while the other elementary districts met theirs. These results are reflective of the longstanding efforts made by teachers, administrators, and a shared regional coordinator to align elementary curriculum in this region.

Kittatinny met neither growth target for its 7th and 8th grade students, nor the graduation standard for its high schoolers for this particular school year.³⁹ Consideration of moving the 6th grade students to Kittatinny may create better alignment in a more traditional middle school approach. In a later subsection, this study will look at Kittatinny’s SAT scores and graduation rates among other performance data, and find that the school is consistently above the state averages for high schools.

Chronic absenteeism is the non-academic measure, and four of the five districts met the federal standard. This is good news given ongoing statewide and national issues with student absenteeism during and post-pandemic.

Tables 24 to 28 provide the disaggregated results by student group. 42 of the 52 group proficiency standards were met or exceeded, which speaks well of the successful work on the part of these schools and their staff members to reduce achievement gaps.

³⁸ The table shows whether the district met annual federal accountability targets for each indicator; E = exceeds standard; Y = meets target/standard; N = does not meet target/standard; dash = not applicable; an asterisk (*) indicates that due to accountability calculations, data was not made public for groups of less than 20 students

³⁹ High schools do not have growth targets, but Kittatinny received growth scores for its 7th and 8th grade students

TABLE 24
Federal Accountability Status Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Ability, Income, and Language, Kittatinny, 2023-24 ⁴⁰

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	4-Year Grad Rate	Chronic Absenteeism
White	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
Hispanic	Y	Y	*	*	*	Y
Black	*	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*	*
Students with Disabilities	Y	Y	N	*	*	N
Economically Disadvantaged	Y	Y	*	*	*	N
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*	*

TABLE 25
Federal Accountability Status Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Ability, Income, and Language, Fredon, 2024-25

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	Chronic Absenteeism
White	Y	Y	E	E	Y
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	Y
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Students with Disabilities	*	*	*	*	N
Economically Disadvantaged	*	*	*	*	*
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

⁴⁰ Asian/HI/PI = Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander

TABLE 26
Federal Accountability Status Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Ability, Income, and Language, Hampton, 2024-25

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	Chronic Absenteeism
White	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hispanic	-	-	*	*	Y
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Students with Disabilities	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Economically Disadvantaged	*	*	*	*	Y
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

TABLE 27
Federal Accountability Status Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Ability, Income, and Language, Stillwater, 2024-25

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	Chronic Absenteeism
White	Y	Y	Y	E	Y
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Students with Disabilities	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Economically Disadvantaged	*	*	*	*	N
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

TABLE 28
Federal Accountability Status Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Ability, Income, and Language, Sandyston-Walpack, 2024-25

	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	ELA Growth	Math Growth	Chronic Absenteeism
White	Y	Y	Y	E	Y
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Students with Disabilities	*	*	*	*	N
Economically Disadvantaged	*	*	*	*	*
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

State Assessment Scores (aggregated) ⁴¹

Standardized state assessments provide a common metric for assessing the academic performance of students across different schools or districts across the State. The State has adopted several different assessment regimes over the past two decades and is using the NJ Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) presently. NJSLA allow for a standardized evaluation of how well students are mastering key concepts and skills as outlined in the NJSLs in the subjects of ELA, Math, and Science. Tables 29 through 37 indicate the percentage of total students meeting or exceeding expectations by grade level and/or subject area in the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 school years.

⁴¹ Data in the remainder of this section retrieved from NJ School Performance Reports

TABLE 29
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA ELA Expectations, 2021-22

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		45%	38%	82%	54%	42%
Grade 4		52%	66%	54%	47%	49%
Grade 5		48%	68%	58%	36%	50%
Grade 6		76%	68%	75%	68%	48%
Grade 7	63%					53%
Grade 8	47%					51%
Grade 9	53%					49%

TABLE 30
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA ELA Expectations, 2022-23

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		48%	45%	36%	32%	42%
Grade 4		68%	64%	72%	39%	51%
Grade 5		67%	63%	57%	80%	53%
Grade 6		58%	66%	48%	64%	49%
Grade 7	62%					56%
Grade 8	48%					55%
Grade 9	47%					52%

TABLE 31
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA ELA Expectations, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		52%	85%	44%	53%	44%
Grade 4		62%	53%	55%	52%	51%
Grade 5		77%	63%	67%	69%	52%
Grade 6		71%	60%	63%	71%	53%
Grade 7	60%					54%
Grade 8	53%					53%
Grade 9	66%					58%

TABLE 32
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Math Expectations, 2021-22

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		50%	47%	52%	54%	45%
Grade 4		39%	34%	64%	13%	39%
Grade 5		28%	49%	58%	29%	36%
Grade 6		28%	32%	66%	53%	31%
Grade 7	30%					34%
Grade 8	13%					15%
Algebra MS						
Algebra HS	26%					35%
Geometry	29%					50%
Algebra II	*					68%

TABLE 33
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Math Expectations, 2022-23

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		32%	34%	29%	32%	46%
Grade 4		37%	42%	56%	15%	44%
Grade 5		42%	35%	71%	47%	40%
Grade 6		46%	56%	52%	29%	34%
Grade 7	38%					34%
Grade 8	24%					18%
Algebra MS						
Algebra HS	30%					35%
Geometry	59%					55%
Algebra II	*					66%

TABLE 34
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Math Expectations, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 3		52%	65%	48%	59%	48%
Grade 4		50%	39%	48%	33%	45%
Grade 5		32%	37%	67%	46%	40%
Grade 6		54%	43%	69%	57%	36%
Grade 7	43%					38%
Grade 8	24%					20%
Algebra MS						
Algebra HS	33%					40%
Geometry	62%					53%
Algebra II	*					73%

TABLE 35
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Science Expectations, 2021-22

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 5		40%	34%	43%	21%	25%
Grade 8	16%					16%
Grade 11	32%					29%

TABLE 36
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Science Expectations, 2022-23

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 5		50%	28%	37%	27%	27%
Grade 8	21%					18%
Grade 11	32%					30%

TABLE 37
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Science Expectations, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Grade 5		41%	30%	59%	23%	27%
Grade 8	26%					19%
Grade 11	32%					28%

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on standardized test scores has been deep and varied depending on multiple factors, including the level of disruption to education, the availability of resources for remote learning, and the effectiveness of mitigation strategies implemented by schools and districts. To a great extent, statewide assessment scores have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, although more work is needed.

An overview of the past three years of data shows that 46 of the 57 ELA, 36 of the 60 Math, and 16 of the 18 Science results met or exceeded state averages. That said, there remain disparities among the four elementary district assessment scores at various grade levels. Stillwater’s Math scores most often rank highest, while there is more of a balance among the ELA results.

The NJ Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) debuted in 2023 as a Grade 11 assessment required by the State for graduating high school. Performance is measured in ELA and Math with the percentages of those students deemed “graduation ready” displayed in Table 38. With only two years of data, Kittatinny HS students are performing above the state average in all four metrics and significantly above in three of the four.

TABLE 38
Percentage of Grade 11 Students Meeting or Exceeding NJGPA Expectations

	Kittatinny ELA	State Average ELA	Kittatinny Math	State Average Math
2023	85%	81%	66%	55%
2024	> 90%	83%	72%	56%

State Assessment Scores (disaggregated)

TABLE 39
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA ELA Expectations
Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
White	63%	66%	64%	56%	61%
Hispanic	53%	63%	59%	60%	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Female	67%	76%	72%	64%	73%
Male	53%	56%	55%	47%	40%
Students with Disabilities	17%	42%	23%	20%	31%
Economically Disadvantaged	55%	*	53%	75%	*
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

TABLE 40
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Math Expectations
Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
White	40%	46%	45%	58%	49%
Hispanic	25%	50%	27%	30%	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*
Female	35%	41%	41%	53%	58%
Male	38%	54%	46%	62%	32%
Students with Disabilities	14%	32%	18%	23%	23%
Economically Disadvantaged	19%	*	27%	44%	*
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

TABLE 41
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding NJSLA Science Expectations
Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny Grade 11	Kittatinny Grade 8	Fredon Grade 5	Hampton Grade 5	Stillwater Grade 5	Sandyston Walpack Grade 5
White	34%	26%	47%	33%	57%	23%
Hispanic	9%	30%	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	*	*	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	*	*	*	*	*	*
Female	31%	22%	33%	19%	67%	*
Male	35%	29%	50%	39%	*	*
Students with Disabilities	10%	6	*	10%	*	*
Economically Disadvantaged	6%	*	*	*	*	*
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*	*

Addressing achievement gaps requires that schools provide targeted support and resources to underserved students and communities, encourage a focus on culturally responsive teaching practices, and implement policies that foster inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students. The districts in the Kittatinny region show generally smaller point differences in the scores of similarly situated student groups (e.g., comparing the scores of students with disabilities across the districts) than the study team tends to see in other regions.

These results flow into comparisons between Kittatinny’s 11th grade students and their peers across the state, where disaggregated results at the school are well beyond state averages. Again, this is a strong testament to the collaborative work being done to align curricula and provide support to students with differential learning needs.

TABLE 42
Percentage of Grade 11 Students Meeting or Exceeding NJGPA Expectations
Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny ELA	State Average ELA	Kittatinny Math	State Average Math
White	> 90%	90%	73%	69%
Hispanic	75%	72%	67%	38%
Black	*	73%	*	33%
Asian/HI/PI	*	>90%	*	88%
NA/AK	*	76%	*	44%
Multiracial	*	88%	*	62%
Female	89%	87%	71%	57%
Male	>90%	78%	73%	55%
Students with Disabilities	57%	72%	<10%	36%
Economically Disadvantaged	86%	54%	79%	18%
Multilingual Learners	*	24%	*	13%

Student Growth Scores

In their simplest form, student growth scores are a measure of how much student learning is increasing above standard expectations over a given period of time. NJ uses a median student growth percentile (mSGP) model to indicate growth on statewide ELA and Math assessments by school. This mSGP is derived from each individual's student growth percentile (SGP) for ELA in grades 4-8 and for Math in grades 4-7. The SGP measures each student's academic progress from one year to the next compared to other students with similar prior test scores. Members of this similar group are called a student's academic peers, and the mSGP is the median score among those peers.

The mSGP falls between 1 and 99 and is separated into three levels. According to the State, an mSGP below 35 indicates low growth, an mSGP between 35 and 65 indicates typical growth, and an mSGP greater than 65 indicates high growth. The calculation of mSGPs relies on two consecutive years of assessment results that calculate individual SGPs. Due to the cancellation of the NJSLA in both 2019-20 and 2020-21, SGPs were not calculated for those years or in 2021-22. mSGPs for each district from two years before and two years after the pandemic are shown in Tables 43 and 44.

TABLE 43
Median Student Growth Percentiles for ELA, 2017-18 to 2023-24

	2017-18	2018-19	2022-23	2023-24
Kittatinny	44	36	29	36
Fredon	66.5	48	71	61.5
Hampton	44	39	61	42.5
Stillwater	64	50	50.5	49
Sandyston-Walpack	60	68	56	52

TABLE 44
Median Student Growth Percentiles for Math, 2017-18 to 2023-24

	2017-18	2018-19	2022-23	2023-24
Kittatinny	31	25	33	22
Fredon	67	54.5	61	65.5
Hampton	39	49	63	50.5
Stillwater	59	63	64	71
Sandyston-Walpack	67	55	46	60.5

Districts achieving mSGP scores between 40.0-59.5 are considered as having met the federal accountability standard. The 32 elementary mSGP scores in this dataset indicate that student growth met or exceeded that standard with only two exceptions that were each one point below the target. In short, the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack schools are consistently assisting their students' academic growth to a successful level. Kittatinny's 7th and 8th grade students have struggled more in approaching the state standard.

The differences in these results provide an opportunity for district leaders, working within a regional setting, to examine the programs and instructional practices that are yielding the highest levels of student growth in ELA and Math. A grades pK-12 regional and/or a unified grades 6-8 middle school program can improve connectivity and provide targeted support to the teachers preparing students to meet or exceed academic standards as they enter high school.

College and Career Readiness Indicators

Tables 45 and 46 show the results of the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) administered at Kittatinny HS. Many students faced challenges in accessing resources and preparing for exams during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, while others were impacted during the years leading up to their scheduled exam, even as school returned to more normal schedules. In SAT Reading and Writing over five years, Kittatinny students scored consistently above, and had a stronger percentage

of students well above, the college readiness benchmarks as compared to the state average. Math showed similarly strong results.

TABLE 45
SAT Reading and Writing Scores, Kittatinny, 2019-20 to 2023-24

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Average Score	557	586	571	562	577
State Average	536	557	538	533	530
% at or above CRB ⁴²	83%	96%	92%	87%	88%
State Average	69%	76%	68%	67%	65%

TABLE 46
SAT Math Scores, Kittatinny, 2019-20 to 2023-24

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Average Score	549	574	555	538	566
State Average	536	560	532	525	519
% at or above CRB ⁴³	56%	69%	68%	61%	75%
State Average	52%	60%	49%	48%	46%

TABLE 47
Advanced Course Enrollment and Scores, Kittatinny, 2019-20 to 2023-24

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Students Enrolled in an AP/IB Course ⁴⁴	38.2	38.4	37.0	44.2	48.4
State Average	35.7	35.7	34.5	34.9	35.9
Students Taking One or More AP/IB Tests	32.4	27.8	31.2	41.0	36.5
State Average	28.9	27.2	28.4	29.7	30.8
Students with AP Scores of 3+ (IB 4+)	24.5	16.5	20.7	24.8	23.9
State Average	22.8	17.9	19.9	21.3	23.0
Students Participating in Dual Enrollment	55.8	60.4	60.8	73.0	80.0
State Average	20.2	22.3	24.4	24.0	26.9

Participation and achievement in courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Dual Enrollment are other indicators of college readiness. Kittatinny Regional HS students have

⁴² Reading & Writing college readiness benchmark (CRB) is 480

⁴³ Math CRB is 530

⁴⁴ AP = Advanced Placement; IB = International Baccalaureate; shows the percentage of 11th and 12th graders who enrolled in one or more AP or IB courses; Kittatinny offers only AP courses

increased their enrollment and performance in advanced coursework over time, and in some cases significantly, over the five year period. The disaggregated data reveal that Kittatinny student enrollment and performance by disaggregated groups is also regularly well above state averages.

TABLE 48
Advanced Course Enrollment, Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender,
Ability, Income, and Language, Kittatinny, 2023-24

	Kittatinny AP/IB Enrollment	State Average AP/IB Enrollment	Kittatinny Dual Enrollment	State Average Dual Enrollment
White	49.0%	41.8%	80.4%	33.0%
Hispanic	35.0%	23.2%	65.0%	20.9%
Black	*	20.3%	*	17.4%
Asian/HI/PI	*	70.5%	*	32.5%
NA/AK	*	30.4%	*	28.6%
Multiracial	*	41.0%	*	29.0%
Female	52.1%	41.4%	81.0%	30.2%
Male	44.4%	30.6%	78.9%	23.7%
Students with Disabilities	2.6%	4.8%	48.7%	10.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	17.9%	22.8%	60.7%	20.2%
Multilingual Learners	*	9.8%	*	8.8%

Graduation and Postsecondary Enrollment

TABLE 49
Graduation Rates, Kittatinny, 2021-2024

	2021 cohort		2022 cohort		2023 cohort		2024 cohort	
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State
Four-Year Graduation	89.7%	90.6%	93.3%	90.9%	93.6%	91.1%	93.9%	91.3%
Five-Year Graduation	95.2%	92.5%	94.9%	92.7%	93.9%	92.6%	95.6%	92.6%

Kittatinny HS is the only school in this study that awards high school diplomas and reports the post-high school plans of its students. Its graduation data, across 4-year and 5-year cohorts are noted

in Table 49. The school had higher graduation rates, in some cases by several points, than the state average over the four year time period.

TABLE 50
Four-Year Graduation Rates, Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability,
Income, and Language, Kittatinny, 2024 Cohort ⁴⁵

	Kittatinny	State Average
White	94.7%	95.0%
Hispanic	80.0%	86.9%
Black	n/a	86.5%
Asian/HI/PI	*	96.7%
NA/AK	n/a	91.7%
Multiracial	*	92.3%
Female	96.9%	93.1%
Male	91.7%	89.5%
Students with Disabilities	88.0%	80.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	89.5%	87.1%
Multilingual Learners	n/a	78.9%

An examination of graduation rates by student subgroups in Table 50 is also important to get a fuller picture of the performance of the school in meeting the needs of all of its students. For those subgroups with sufficient enrollment, Kittatinny HS is graduating students above the state average in most cases. Notably, the school is doing quite well in preparing its students with disabilities to meet their graduation requirements and earn their diplomas.

Tables 51 and 52 document postsecondary enrollment rates by the percentage of graduates that were enrolled in any institution by the fall of the following year, 16 months after graduating from high school. As the tables demonstrate, Kittatinny HS was well above the state average in all four of the years studied, and all disaggregated groups with sufficient numbers have been well represented at the postsecondary level.

⁴⁵ n/a = no data available

TABLE 51
Postsecondary Enrollment Rates In Any Institution, Kittatinny, 2020-23 ⁴⁶

	Kittatinny	State Average
Class of 2020	83.0%	76.3%
Class of 2021	80.7%	73.7%
Class of 2022	79.3%	73.3%
Class of 2023	84.3% - 86.8%	75.1% - 77.4%

TABLE 52
Postsecondary Enrollment Rates In Any Institution, Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, Kittatinny, Class of 2023 ⁴⁷

	Kittatinny
White	83.6% - 86.2%
Hispanic	*
Black	*
Asian/HI/PI	*
NA/AK	*
Multiracial	*
Female	87.7% - 90.4%
Male	80.6% - 83.1%
Students with Disabilities	*
Economically Disadvantaged	90.0% - 92.8%
Multilingual Learners	*

School Climate

The State's primary school climate measures are chronic absenteeism and student discipline. Chronic absenteeism refers to a situation where a student misses 10% or more of the school year for almost any reason excused or unexcused. This can have a profound impact on education due to missed instructional time and lost opportunities for social interaction and the development of

⁴⁶ NJDOE reported a range for overall postsecondary enrollment for the Class of 2023; the lower bound of the range is the percentage of students who were matched by the National Student Clearinghouse; the upper bound of the range represents an estimate of the percentage of students that may have enrolled, given the potential reasons that students may not be matched

⁴⁷ State averages were not available for this disaggregated data

interpersonal skills. Students who are frequently absent tend to have lower academic achievement compared to their peers who attend school regularly. Chronic absenteeism has been linked to higher dropout rates as students who are frequently absent may become disengaged from school, leading them to disenroll before completing their education. This can have long-term consequences for their future opportunities and success.

TABLE 53
Chronic Absentee Rates, 2021-22 to 2023-24 ⁴⁸

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Kittatinny	21.7	12.6	9.1
Fredon	21.4	8.5	6.9
Hampton	9.9	9.8	8.6
Stillwater	13.6	17.5	9.9
Sandyston-Walpack	11.8	13.7	14.8
State Average	18.1	16.6	14.9

TABLE 54
Chronic Absentee Rates, Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
White	9.6%	7.0%	8.4%	9.6%	10.5%
Hispanic	4.1%	4.0%	11.1%	10.5%	*
Black	7.7%	*	*	*	*
Asian/HI/PI	27.3%	*	*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	0.0%	*	*	*	*
Female	8.9%	5.9%	8.2%	8.1	10.8%
Male	9.5%	7.9%	8.9%	11.9%	20.8%
Students with Disabilities	17.4%	17.2%	10.3%	11.9%	26.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	21.4%	*	5.3%	26.9%	31.3%
Multilingual Learners	*	*	*	*	*

The rates of chronic absenteeism for the school districts involved in this study are presented in Tables 53 and 54. NJDOE recommends caution in comparing the 2022-23 chronic absenteeism rates

⁴⁸ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NJDOE received a federal waiver which removed the requirement to report on chronic absenteeism and related accountability measures for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years

with rates from prior years as the pandemic impacted attendance rates in a significant way. Depending on the years examined, the data shows little consistency, though the 2023-24 data are trending generally in a positive direction. It could be beneficial for the districts in the region to examine the strategies being employed by each one to see where improvements may be made.

Table 55 displays behavioral incident numbers and rates, while Table 56 shows disaggregated data for student suspensions.

TABLE 55
Student Discipline Data, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
Violence Incidents	3	0	0	0	8
Weapons Incidents	1	0	0	0	1
Vandalism Incidents	0	0	0	0	0
Substance Incidents	1	0	0	0	0
HIB Incidents	7	0	1	2	3
TOTAL	12	0	1	2	12
Incidents per 100 students	1.62	0	0.31	0.67	9.60

TABLE 56
Students with any Suspension, Disaggregated by Race, Ethnicity,
Gender, Ability, Income, and Language, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
White	5%	0%	0%	< 5%	< 5%
Hispanic	8%	0%	0%	< 5%	*
Black	14%	*	*	*	*
Asian	9%	*	*	*	*
HI/PI	*		*	*	*
NA/AK	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial	0%	*	*	*	*
Female	2%	0%	0%	< 5%	< 5%
Male	10%	0%	0%	< 5%	< 5%
Students with Disabilities	9%	*	0%	< 5%	< 5%
Economically Disadvantaged	14%	0%	0%	< 5%	< 5%

Potential Improvements in Performance Measures

The five districts met the federal ELA and Math proficiency standards in all ten measures, which is a strong indicator of academic success. Fredon, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack exceeded the Math growth target, while Hampton met the expectation. Fredon also exceeded the ELA targets, while the other elementary districts met theirs. These results are reflective of the longstanding efforts made by teachers and a shared coordinator to align the grades pK-6 curricula in this region.

An overview of the past three years of data shows that 46 of the 57 ELA, 36 of the 60 Math, and 16 of the 18 Science results met or exceeded state averages. That said, there remain disparities among the four elementary district assessment scores at various grade levels. Stillwater's Math scores most often rank highest, while there is more of a balance among the ELA results.

The 32 elementary mSGP scores in this dataset indicate that student growth met or exceeded the standard with only two exceptions that were each one point below the target. In short, the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack schools are consistently assisting their students' academic growth to a successful level. Kittatinny's 7th and 8th grade students have struggled more in approaching the federal standard, suggesting a continuing need for articulation with the work being done prior to reaching the regional.

That said, the end results at Kittatinny HS as measured by SAT scores, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment among other measures demonstrate that students in the region are being well prepared at all the schools in the region and are exceeding their peers across the state. A full grades pK-12 regionalization, and/or moving the 6th grade into a unified middle school program, can only enhance educational effectiveness by further aligning essential elements in the educational program. This coordination directly influences student achievement, as evidenced in assessment outcomes and accountability metrics, since these components are fundamentally interconnected.

A unified system also creates a more efficient approach to equity by making it easier to address achievement gaps, graduation rate disparities, and discipline inequities through dedicated resources and concentrated efforts to improve outcomes for all students. Although the measures show that the schools in the Kittatinny Region are doing well in this regard, regionalization can allow for focused attention and resources on climate and culture programs that smaller districts might find challenging to implement independently, ultimately benefiting all students in the partnership.

10. Preschool Education

TABLE 57
Preschool Classrooms, 2025-26

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
Regular Ed/Inclusion	2	4	3.5	1
Self-Contained	0	0	0.5	0

By securing preschool expansion funding, Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack offer free, universal programs designed to give children a head start. These programs emphasize an inclusive environment, prioritizing integrated classrooms for general and special education students over self-contained settings. All districts use the state-approved Creative Curriculum.

The State uses ninety percent of twice the number of students in Grade 1 to estimate a “realistic” universe of preschool students. This is considered realistic, because parents are not required to enroll their children in district sponsored preschool. Some will make the decision to keep their three- and four-year old children at home, while others may send them to private options.

TABLE 58
Preschool Students Enrolled Compared to Preschool Universe, 2024-25

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	TOTAL
Students	26	27	54	12	119
Universe	50	68	56	31	205
Percentage Served	52%	40%	96%	39%	58%

As shown in Table 58, the total number of preschool students in the Kittatinny region during the 2024-25 school year was 119. The realistic preschool universe was 205 students, meaning that 58% of that universe was being served. It is worth noting that Stillwater is doing an excellent job in providing classroom instruction to 96% of its preschool population. To get to 90% in the other districts, Fredon would need at least 2 additional classrooms, Hampton would need 3, and Sandyston-Walpack would need 2. The potential for these additional classroom spaces will be addressed further in the Demography and Facilities domain.

As per state guidelines, districts taking advantage of state funding must commit to hiring a preschool instructional coach, a preschool intervention and referral specialist, and a community and parent involvement specialist. The first two positions are combined and shared among the four districts, and the community and parent involvement specialist role is integrated into other positions.

Potential Improvements in Preschool Education

The NJDOE encourages districts to reach and maintain a preschool enrollment of at least 90% of their preschool universe, defined as twice the number of students enrolled in first grade. Typically, districts are limited in their ability to meet this goal because of space constraints. The Kittatinny region has a preschool universe of 205 students. Using the state maximum of 15 students per classroom, the region would need at least 7 additional classrooms to meet that preschool universe and perhaps one or two more to address students needing self-contained classrooms. The facilities analysis that follows will investigate the potential capacity available to address this opportunity.

Whether operating as an enlarged regional or establishing a shared service agreement to help coordinate the preschool programs, the districts would have the opportunity to share professional staff such as the instructional coaches, intervention staff, and family and community liaisons. Operating a preschool program under a shared services agreement, while possible, comes with complications. Preschool funding is allocated by district with only students domiciled in that district eligible to attend. While sharing staff like a master teacher and interventionist is technically possible, it may be difficult to make happen in practice.

11. Special Education

The districts in the Kittatinny region offer a standard array of programming for their students with special learning needs. These include a mix of the following in-district special education programs: preschool integrated with special and general education students; a combination of pull-out resource replacement and/or in-class resource support; and self-contained programs as student needs warrant. The districts have a mix of part-time and full-time child study team members and use mostly contracted providers for related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, and behavior analysis. Speech and language therapy is generally handled by employees, either full- or part-time.

In Table 59, the data on students in separate programs (more commonly known as “out-of-district placements”) show that each district in the region educates at least 96% of its students within its own schools, notably with Stillwater educating all of its students in-district. This is not only good for students, it is efficient financially as out-of-district tuition and transportation regularly approach \$100,000 and above.

TABLE 59
Classified Student Rates⁴⁹ and Placements⁵⁰, 2023-24

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack
# of Classified Students	127	32	69	74	25
% of Total Enrollment	16.8%	17.1%	21.2%	25.7%	18.9%
% in Regular Education > 80% of Day	70.9%	81.5%	49.2%	76.7%	72.0%
% in Regular Education 40-80% of Day	22.1%	14.8%	42.6%	23.3%	16.0%
% in Regular Education < 40% of Day	5.5%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	8.0%
% in Separate Programs	1.6%	3.7%	3.3%	0.0%	4.0%

Of those students educated in-district, more than 70% are in regular education classes for more than 80% of their day in four of the five districts, showing a strong commitment to inclusive education for classified students. The exception is Hampton at just under 50%, which is an area for further examination. The percentage of students attending regular education less than 40% of the day correlates to those who spend a majority of their day in self-contained classes.

TABLE 60
Self-Contained Programs, 2025-26 ⁵¹

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Preschool Disability				0.5
Multiple Disabilities		1	1	
Language Learning Disability			1	
Emotional Regulation Impairment				1
Autism Disability				1

The specific self-contained programs and student numbers are shown in Table 60. There may be one or two opportunities to consider combining self-contained programs depending on grade levels

⁴⁹ NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs, Age 3-21 Classification Rates as of 10-15-2023

⁵⁰ NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs, Local Special Education Profiles 2025; while not perfectly aligned, >80% correlates roughly with students primarily in in-class support/inclusion classes, <40% correlates roughly with students largely in self-contained classes, and 40-80% represents a mixed approach

⁵¹ District provided data

served. However, there is nothing apparent that could lead to large-scale cost savings given so few self-contained classes.

One option to improve coordination of elementary to secondary IEP and program transition would be to consider a single regional director. Presently, Kittatinny and Fredon share a director, and the principals at Hampton and Stillwater oversee special services. The five districts could also consider the option of consolidating their child study teams and special education programs into a regionalized special education service under a single director through a shared services contract to maximize the efficiency of the programs they offer.

12. Support Programs

Multitiered Systems of Support

Often tied to education laws and regulations that require schools to provide support for struggling students, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is a framework used by schools to proactively identify and assist students who need help academically, behaviorally, and/or socially. The three-tiered system ranges from Tier 1 universal supports, which begins with high-quality classroom programming for all students, to Tiers 2 and 3 targeted supports that usually take the form of small group and individual interventions, respectively. All identification and support is driven by data from screenings and progress monitoring to determine which interventions are working and which need adjustment.

Intervention and referral services (I&RS) are the MTSS vehicles used by NJ's elementary and secondary schools to support students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, or health difficulties that may be impacting their educational performance. The purpose of I&RS, known in some schools as a response to intervention (RTI) committee, is to identify and assist students who are struggling before their issues escalate to the point of requiring more intensive interventions or special education classification. The process typically involves the identification of students at risk, followed by an assessment of the needs of those students. Once needs are determined, the team develops an action plan that outlines the implementation of services its members believe will support the student's success and then monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of those interventions, adjusting the plan as necessary.

Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater employ a common I&RS process that includes a review of universal academic, behavioral, and social-emotional screening data at regular intervals throughout the school year. Teachers and parents may initiate a referral to the staff team after all Tier 1 supports have been exhausted. At Tier 2, students receive targeted, systematic instruction in small groups in the general education classroom. An intervention plan is put into effect and revisited regularly by the I&RS team. If the interventions put in place are not successful, the team will work to adapt the plan, either adding or changing goals, incorporating different accommodations, or increasing the intensity of the interventions. If student needs are more significant, the team may determine that a referral to the child study team or a community resource may be needed.

Kittatinny offers Readiness LA and Math courses in the high school to provide students with test preparation skills as well as twenty-first century college and career skills.

Multilingual Education

Each of the districts must adhere to NJ administrative code for bilingual education when crafting programming and schedules for students.⁵² The low numbers of multilingual learners (MLs) in these schools do not require a full bilingual program (i.e., subjects being taught in both languages), but eligible students must receive either English language services (ELS) or an English as a second language (ESL) program. The difference here is that ELS encompasses a wide range of services including translation, interpretation, and various other forms of language support, while ESL programs are specifically structured to develop English language proficiency through systematic instruction.

The entire region had four MLs in 2024-25, and is projected to have fewer than that over the near term. Kittatinny develops an individualized learning plan for the students and immersion is a major aspect of the plan. They provide additional learning opportunities for students with a certified ESL teacher during the school day and after school. Fredon has no students receiving ELL programming, while Hampton has a .5 FTE teacher with only 2 periods per day. With two students receiving services, Stillwater has a 1.0 FTE ESL teacher one period per day.

Gifted Education

Just like students with learning disabilities and multilingual learners, the learning needs of gifted students are addressed in state administrative code.⁵³ The law codifying school district responsibilities states that they must establish a process to identify students as gifted and talented using multiple measures, and that these students require modification to their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.⁵⁴

In 2022, the elementary districts worked with Kittatinny to develop a comprehensive gifted and talented program that uses the same identification procedures, eligibility letters, screening letters, screening profiles, and activities. Typical of most high schools, Kittatinny offers advanced classes such as Honors, AP, and Dual Credit to provide enhanced opportunities for gifted high school students. Kittatinny offers a Kaleidoscope course in grades 7 and 8 for gifted students.

Two programs used in Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater are Building Blocks in grades K-2 and Pinwheel in grades 3-6. These offer interdisciplinary connections that can be developed within content area lessons. All work together to share program ideas to develop and facilitate consortium wide activities for students. Coordinators of the programs meet in shared professional development at least twice a year. Fredon's and Hampton's grades K-2 students participate in gifted and talented

⁵² N.J.A.C. 6A:15

⁵³ N.J.A.C. 6A:8

⁵⁴ P.L.2020, c.338; NJ Student Learning Standards

activities during their library special, while grades 3-6 students are pulled out of class for activities. In Stillwater, students in grades 2-6 attend one pull-out period a week.

Potential Improvements in Support Programs

The districts within the Kittatinny region demonstrate a commitment to supporting diverse student needs through MTSS, multilingual services, and gifted and talented programming. While there are clear strengths in shared frameworks and collaborative efforts, the structure, staffing, and consistency of implementation vary across districts, resulting in differences in student access and support.

Across the region, MTSS frameworks are in place to identify and support students academically, behaviorally, and socially-emotionally. While all districts utilize an MTSS framework, differences in staffing, scheduling, and delivery models suggest variability in the consistency and intensity of interventions across schools.

Multilingual learner services are limited across the region due to low enrollment, with most districts serving only a small number of students each year. While the low incidence of MLs presents challenges in program development, a more coordinated regional approach could enhance consistency and ensure access to appropriately certified staff and resources when needed.

Gifted and talented programming represents an area of relative strength in terms of regional collaboration. The elementary districts and Kittatinny have established a shared framework for identification and programming, including common screening tools and program models such as Building Blocks (grades K–2) and Pinwheel (grades 3–6), as well as the Kaleidoscope course at the junior high level. However, the delivery of services varies by district. Some districts provide enrichment within existing structures, such as during library special, while others offer pull-out programs with varying frequency. These differences may result in uneven levels of enrichment and challenge for identified students. Greater consistency in scheduling and service delivery would help ensure equitable access to gifted programming across the region.

13. Extracurricular Programs

The extracurricular and athletic programs at Kittatinny reflect a strong commitment to providing students with opportunities for engagement, leadership, and skill development beyond the classroom. The school offers a comprehensive and diverse range of activities for students in grades 7–12, including academic clubs (Math League, Debate, Mock Trial), performing arts (Marching Band, Musical, Madrigals), leadership and service organizations (Student Council, National Honor Society, Interact), and career-focused groups such as DECA and TSA. This breadth of offerings, along with a robust interscholastic athletic program, provides students with meaningful opportunities to explore interests, develop talents, and build connections that support college and career readiness.

TABLE 61
Student Activities, 2024-25

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Student Activities	9-12: Book, Debate Team, DECA, Interact, Jazz Band, LMTI, Madrigals, Marching Band, Math League, Musical, NHS, Newspaper, Peer Leadership, Fall Play, Prizm, Robotics, Ski, Student Council, TSA, Yearbook 7-8: Mock Trial, Musical, Newspaper, Solar Sprints, Student Council	Volleyball, SEEK, Chef it Up	K-6: Talent Show 5-6: Trep\$, Math, School Newspaper, Sport Speciality, eSports, Yearbook 6 only) 3-6: Ski, Kids Heart Challenge, Board Game 4-5: Book, SEEK (4 only) 3-4: Crazy 8s, Math, 2-3: Fitness, Social Skills, Lego, Craft (2 only)	Public Relations, Yearbook, Student Council, Garden 6: SEEK, Trep\$, Art 5-6: Projector, E-Gaming, Book (5 only) 3-6: Fall Morning Fitness 2: Math, Lego 2-3: Lego League K-2: Let's B-Social, Spring Morning Fitness

TABLE 62
Athletic Programs, Kittatinny, 2024-25

Varsity	Varsity / Junior Varsity	Junior High
Cheerleading, Cross Country*	Field Hockey, Football, Soccer*, Tennis*, Basketball*, Wrestling*, Swimming*, Ice Hockey, Baseball, Softball, Track*, Golf, Lacrosse*	Soccer*, Field Hockey, Cross Country, Basketball*, Swimming (co-ed), Track (co-ed)

* Separate programs for girls and boys

At the elementary level, all districts provide access to extracurricular activities; however, there is notable variability in both the number and type of offerings. Programs such as TREP\$, student council, yearbook, LEGO, and fitness activities are present across multiple districts, indicating a shared commitment to enrichment. Still, the availability, frequency, and scope of these activities differ significantly. Expanding and standardizing offerings—particularly in areas such as the arts, STEM, leadership, and athletics—would strengthen student engagement and better prepare students to take full advantage of the extensive opportunities available at Kittatinny.

Beyond a simple expansion of choices, regionalization makes the extracurricular programs themselves stronger and more sustainable. By combining student populations, clubs and sports teams can draw from a larger pool of participants, making it easier to field an athletic team or ensure a specialized club has enough members to be successful. A larger, unified district also combines the talents of the entire staff, creating a deeper bench of teachers and aides to serve as advisors and coaches for a wider variety of activities. This consolidation of resources—both students and staff—leads to higher-quality, more stable programs and opens the door for new, more ambitious offerings that single small schools could not support on their own.

14. School and District Staffing

In a regionalized district, the board of education works with district- and building-level administrators to determine staffing needs at each elementary grade level (pK-6) and within each secondary subject area for grades 7-12. Grade 6 would be considered secondary in the option where that grade is consolidated into a middle school program at Kittatinny. Staff members may be moved between grade levels or across schools, within their areas of certification, to best meet the needs of the students they serve. These intra-district transfers and reassignments have the potential, over time, to lead to increased staffing efficiencies.

Class sizes, subject and course offerings, and the ability of the instructional staff to meet the needs of individual students will be top of mind in discussions surrounding staffing at each of the schools. While specific enrollment projections are an important metric when it comes to scheduling the actual number of sections of classes and hiring certificated staff to teach those sections, another way to examine instructional staff needs is by looking at student-to-staff ratios across the districts.

School and District Staff Comparisons ⁵⁵

One means of assessing the level of staffing in various roles is to compare them to state models found in the Educational Adequacy Report (EAR). As required under SFRA, the EAR is issued every three years and can be considered as the amount a thorough and efficient education should cost, which then determines how much state funding each district receives. The 2026 EAR recommended an increase to the per pupil base, added mental health staff, expanded school security, added caps on aid increases and decreases, and included three-year averaging for local fair share to reduce volatility.

The EAR concludes with an appendix presenting school and district staffing models. They are essential tools because the entire SFRA formula is built on a model district concept with hypothetical schools that reflect what a well-run district needs to provide an adequate education.

Tables 63 and 64 compare the schools and districts in the Kittatinny region to these state staffing models. Elementary schools are based on a model with 400 students, middle schools on 600 students, and high schools on 1,640 students. The district model combines six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school for a total of 5,240 students. Each model is then scaled to the actual district enrollment to make for a useful comparison.

⁵⁵ Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this aspect of the study

TABLE 63
School Staff Comparison to State Model, Kittatinny, 2025-26 ⁵⁶

	Kittatinny	State Scale
Classroom Teachers	59.7	53.3
Intervention Teachers	1.0	0.8
Library Media Specialists	0.2	0.8
Counselors	3.0	3.8
Nurses	1.0	0.8
Principals	1.0	0.4
Assistant Principals	2.0	1.2
Clerical Staff	7.0	3.7
Athletic Director	1.0	0.4
School Staff Total	75.9	65.2
Student Enrollment	683	
Student to Staff Ratio	9.0	10.4

The school comparison for Kittatinny HS is based on the high school model with 1,640 students despite Kittatinny housing two middle school grades. There are no split models that contemplate a junior-senior high structure such as Kittatinny's, so the choice was made to use the high school model. That and the significant scaling necessary to make comparisons (Kittatinny's scale is 41.6% of the state high school model) make the task challenging.

Kittatinny's overall staffing level shows a student to staff ratio of 9.0 to 1, nearly one and a half points below the state model. Among the 46 grade 7-12 or 9-12 school districts across the state, Kittatinny has the 7th smallest enrollment. A basic principle of economics is that economies, or efficiencies, can be found the larger the scale of operations gets. Kittatinny's smaller enrollment makes finding such staffing efficiencies challenging.

Similar to the high school comparison, the region's elementary schools are all smaller than the state model of 400 students. As with Kittatinny, the smaller enrollments of each district make greater staffing efficiencies elusive. Stillwater maintains the highest efficiencies in the region being only half a point off the state scale.

⁵⁶ Position control rosters; preschool teachers are not included in this analysis, as their levels are directly impacted by student enrollments and state funding levels; special education teachers and paraprofessionals are not included, as their levels are highly dependent upon IEP needs; security staff are not included as they are difficult to track

TABLE 64
School Staff Analysis to State Model, Elementary Districts, 2025-26

	Fredon	State Scale	Hampton ⁵⁷	State Scale	Stillwater	State Scale
Classroom Teachers	12.0	10.6	19.0	16.4	14.0	14.1
Specials Teachers	3.0	2.5	6.3	3.9	5.6	3.3
Intervention Teachers	0.2	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.3
Library Media Specialists	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.0	0.6
Counselors	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.6
Nurses	1.0	0.5	1.5	0.7	1.0	0.6
Principals	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.6
Assistant Principals	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Clerical Staff	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.3
School Staff Total	21.2	16.9	32.0	26.2	23.6	22.6
Student Enrollment	192		298		257	
Student to Staff Ratio	9.1	11.4	9.3	11.4	10.9	11.4

Table 65 takes a closer look at the choices made in terms of providing “specials” classes such as art, music, and world language. The three districts offer much the same in terms of these classes with a scale comparable to their enrollment differences. Of note is Hampton’s 1.8 music teachers, allowing for a more robust set of offerings in that content area.

TABLE 65
Specials Teachers by Subject Area, Elementary Districts, 2025-26 ⁵⁸

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater
Physical Education	1.0	2.0	2.0
Art	0.5	1.0	1.0
Music	0.6	1.8	0.8
Technology/STEM	0.0	1.0	0.8
World Language	0.4	0.5	1.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 66 looks at the district level staffing for each of the region’s districts. Using the state model would be inappropriate, as the model enrollment of 5,240 students is many times the size of these districts, creating unrealistic expectations for seeking efficiencies.

⁵⁷ Principal also serves as curriculum and special education supervisor

⁵⁸ Instructional staff are measured in full time equivalents or FTEs

TABLE 66
District Staff Analysis, Kittatinny Region, 2025-26 ⁵⁹

	Kittatinny ⁶⁰	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater ⁶¹
Superintendents/CSAs	0.7	0.5	0.3	1.0
Directors/Supervisors/Coordinators	4.2	0.5	0.1	0.1
Child Study Team Staff	3.0	1.5	2.3	1.2
Business Administrators	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.0
Clerical Staff	4.6	3.0	2.6	4.0
Technicians	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Custodial/Maintenance Staff	9.5	3.0	4.2	4.2
District Staff Total	25.0	9.5	10.3	11.5
Student Enrollment	683	211	322	309
Student to Staff Ratio	27.3	22.2	31.3	26.9

As expected, Fredon with the smallest enrollment has the least efficient student to staff ratio at the district level. Again, scale matters; it is difficult for smaller districts such as these to get economies of scale. That said, Hampton has the highest ratio and benefits from sharing Kittatinny's superintendent and perhaps some services from its district staff. Consolidation of district staffs can provide some benefit in improving efficiency over smaller offices.

Tables 67 to 69 compare staff experience and retention to state averages and student to staff ratios, and staff salaries to other peer districts across the state.

⁵⁹ Split positions within a single district are counted solely in the primary position; for example, a superintendent also serving as a district's director is counted only as the superintendent; this is done differently in the cost savings subsection

⁶⁰ Superintendent is shared with Hampton

⁶¹ Principal also serves as supervisor of special education

TABLE 67
Staff Experience and Retention, Kittatinny Region, 2023-24 ⁶²

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	State Average
Average teacher years of experience in public schools	19.0	13.4	13.6	14.6	14.4	12.6
Average teacher years of experience in district	16.9	11.9	11.1	10.1	13.0	11.3
Percentage of teachers with 4+ years in district	98.8%	73.7%	71.1%	62.9%	71.4%	73.6%
One year retention of teachers	97.6%	90.5%	90.0%	90.6%	86.7%	89.5%
Percentage of teachers out-of-field	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%
Average administrator years of experience in public schools	20.6	7.7	17.0	14.5	17.0	16.2
Average administrator years of experience in district	16.4	7.7	6.3	8.5	0.5	12.5
Percentage of administrators with 4+ years in district	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	76.8%
One year retention of administrators	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	87.9%

TABLE 68
Student to Staff Ratios and Staff Salaries, 2024-25 ⁶³

	Kittatinny	Peer Rank	State Median
Ratio of Students to Classroom Teachers	9.7	42	11.3
Median Classroom Teacher Salary	\$101,445	41	\$84,240
Ratio of Students to Support Personnel	64.6	23	70.9
Median Support Personnel Salary	\$105,673	45	\$86,111
Ratio of Students to Administrators	82.6	37	123.6
Median Administrator Salary	\$138,262	24	\$133,945
Ratio of Faculty to Administrators	9.8	32	12.0

⁶² NJDOE School Performance Reports

⁶³ NJDOE Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending; ranks are among the State's 46 school districts educating students in grades 7-12 or 9-12, highest to lowest for ratios and lowest to highest for salaries

Notable data in Table 67 show that Kittatinny has easily the most experienced teachers and administrators and the highest staff retention rate. The elementary districts are near or above the state average in these measures. Average salaries for secondary teachers are regularly higher than for elementary teachers, all other things being relatively equal. Beyond that, it should come as little surprise given the staff experience that Kittatinny has by far the highest salaries in the region, and also against its grades 7-12/9-12 peer districts. Comparing the elementary districts, Stillwater's average salaries are the highest, although that seems less closely aligned with experience. Stillwater may just have high starting and mid-career salaries, which will be assessed later in the study with a look at the collective bargaining agreements. The other three elementaries have administrative salaries below the state median, which is often noted positively by taxpayers.

TABLE 69
Student to Staff Ratios and Staff Salaries, 2024-25 ⁶⁴

	Fredon	Peer Rank	Hampton	Peer Rank	Stillwater	Peer Rank	Sandyston Walpack	Peer Rank	State Median
Ratio of Students to Classroom Teachers	10.0	24	8.5	42	8.6	41	10.1	22	9.9
Median Classroom Teacher Salary	\$66,382	24	\$68,892	32	\$78,197	54	\$71,506	39	\$69,343
Ratio of Students to Support Personnel	62.0	32	67.5	27	71.8	22	45.7	49	64.7
Median Support Personnel Salary	\$54,123	7	\$48,546	6	\$84,646	49	\$62,152	16	\$73,603
Ratio of Students to Administrators	62.0	50	114.6	29	110.4	32	64.0	47	115.0
Median Administrator Salary	\$99,425	11	\$106,273	15	\$128,010	32	\$96,780	9	\$123,540
Ratio of Faculty to Administrators	7.2	51	15.4	23	14.4	25	7.8	48	13.1

Shared Personnel

There is important personnel sharing in place currently among the districts. The Kittatinny superintendent is shared with Hampton. There is one curriculum coordinator that services each district in the region. A special services director is shared between Kittatinny and Fredon. Varied responsibilities are not reflected frequently in employees' official job titles, as staff members in districts of these sizes commonly fulfill multiple roles. The goal should be delivering equivalent or enhanced educational services through optimized staffing and operational practices whenever feasible.

⁶⁴ NJDOE Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending; ranks are among the State's 58 school districts educating students in grades K-6, highest to lowest for ratios and lowest to highest for salaries

Projected Staffing Needs

Determining staff requirements for consolidated districts is a multifaceted process. While exact enrollment figures are necessary to finalize hiring and class schedules, student-to-teacher ratios offer an alternative lens for long term planning. Ultimately, these staffing decisions must balance class size, curriculum breadth, and the quality of individualized student support.

A consolidated grades pK-12 system would enable the board and leadership to streamline staffing. Staff could be redistributed across the district based on their certifications to maximize student support. These internal reassignments allow the regional to become more efficient over time, ensuring teachers are placed in roles that best leverage their expertise.

Under the proposed expansion of the regional, this study assumes all current schools will stay open and fully staffed. Each building would keep its existing principals, teachers, and essential support teams—including nurses, counselors, and librarians. Essentially, the day-to-day staff needed to run each school would remain unchanged.

With school-level staff remaining relatively constant, the opportunities for efficiency will be more available by combining some positions on district office staffs. A single unified district would need only one superintendent and one business administrator, while assistant superintendent and assistant business administrator positions would need to be considered in a new structure. In addition to the highest level administrative positions within the districts, there also exist several supervisory position responsibilities and costs that could be shared across a regional district. The programmatic benefits of considering such consolidation in the areas of technology, special education, and preschool education were addressed earlier in this domain. Central office staff could be consolidated as well and aligned for the development of more specialized expertise.

TABLE 70
District Staff Model Comparison, Status Quo to Proposed Grades pK-12 Regional ⁶⁵

	Current	Proposed
Superintendents/CSAs	2.5	1.0
Assistant Superintendents	0.0	0.0
Directors/Supervisors/Coordinators	5.8	5.0
Child Study Team Staff	7.1	6.0
Business Administrators	3.8	1.0
Assistant Business Administrators	0.0	1.0
Clerical Staff	14.2	10.0
Technicians	2.0	2.0
Custodial/Maintenance Staff	20.9	20.0
Total Staff	56.3	46.0

⁶⁵ Excludes Sandyston-Walpack

Table 70 outlines what a regional district office structure might look like based on a projected 2025-26 enrollment of 1,658 students compared to staffing in Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater separately today. The result is a personnel level that is more streamlined, and potentially more efficient, than is possible in the status quo district configuration.

Administrative tasks currently duplicated across five districts could be folded into single processes. From state monitoring systems to district audits to routine report submissions and numerous other responsibilities, these duties are performed five times whenever deadlines for reports or data uploads occur. This duplication consumes both time and money while diverting resources from more productive applications. Eliminating redundancy would likely generate staffing efficiencies and enable cost savings or funding redirected toward educational programming.

As years pass following any regionalization, there will likely be opportunities to realize efficiencies through routine attrition and changing student needs. As such, it will be important for district- and school-level administrators to pay close attention to staffing needs in each school as these opportunities present themselves.

Moving the 6th grade students from the elementary districts to Kittatinny would be more of a school level change versus a district reorganization. In this scenario, school level staffing could undergo some consolidation due to scheduling efficiencies, though most of the 6th grade teachers would likely be employed in a new location. It is difficult to project any support staff and administrative relocations given the movement of just one grade level.

15. Educational and Programmatic Impact

Our research confirms that the school boards, leadership, and staff across the districts in the Kittatinny region are profoundly dedicated to their students. After a thorough review of curriculum, staffing, and professional development, we found no evidence that merging into a full pK-12 regional would negatively impact student performance. In fact, our analysis suggests that closer collaboration would actually broaden student opportunities while making the delivery of education more efficient and effective.

The team of consultants believes that students in a fully regionalized district will continue to receive at least the same or better access to quality education than they currently receive. The study of high performing schools is both substantial and complex, with specific findings varied. While each study includes nuances, most include the following common characteristics:⁶⁶

- A clear and shared focus
- High standards and expectations for all students
- Effective school leadership
- High levels of collaboration and communication

⁶⁶ The Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools, The Danielson Group

- Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards
- Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching
- Focused professional development
- Supportive learning environment
- High level of family and community involvement

Each district in this region currently reflects these core characteristics, and there is a great deal of collaboration happening, especially in the realms of curriculum and professional development. However, because current programming varies between schools, a regional merger would allow for a more consistent, better-aligned educational strategy. This unified approach would strengthen existing programs and provide students with a more seamless academic experience than the current individual district models allow.

Academics

As has been stated throughout this report, the five districts in the Kittatinny region have worked together productively for many years to align common curricula, resources, and instructional time. This collaboration results in a much more common elementary experience leading into high school than most other regions we have encountered. In many ways, the Kittatinny region is a model for what real curriculum articulation should look like.

The assessment results bear this out. An overview of the past three years of data shows that 46 of the 57 ELA, 36 of the 60 Math, and 16 of the 18 Science results met or exceeded state averages. The 32 elementary growth scores in this dataset indicate that student growth met or exceeded that standard with only two exceptions that were each one point below the target. That said, there remain some disparities among the four elementary district assessment scores at various grade levels and among disaggregated groups.

Due in part to the outstanding success of grades pK-8 curriculum coordination, students at Kittatinny HS regularly outperform its peers statewide on SAT scores, advanced course access and results, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment.

Preschool Students

All of the elementary districts in the region participate in the State's preschool expansion program to offer free, universal programs using the State-approved Creative Curriculum. The schools are meeting 58% of their preschool universe as a whole, though Stillwater is meeting 96% of its population. Using the state maximum of 15 students per classroom, the region would need at least 7 additional classrooms to meet that preschool universe and likely one or two more to address students needing self-contained classrooms. Whether operating as an enlarged regional or establishing a shared service agreement to help coordinate the preschool programs, the districts would have the opportunity to share professional staff such as the instructional coaches, intervention staff, and family and community liaisons.

Students Identified with Special Needs

Each district in the region educates at least 96% of its students with disabilities within its own schools, notably with Stillwater educating all of its students in-district. This is not only good for students, it is efficient financially as out-of-district tuition and transportation regularly approach \$100,000 and above. There may be one or two opportunities to consider combining self-contained programs depending on grade levels served. However, there is nothing apparent that could lead to large-scale cost savings given so few self-contained classes.

Of those students educated in-district, more than 70% are in regular education classes for more than 80% of their day in four of the five districts, showing a strong commitment to inclusive education for classified students. The five districts could consider the option of consolidating their child study teams and special education programs into a regionalized special education service under a single director through a shared services contract to maximize the efficiency of the programs they offer.

Students Identified with Support Needs

Strong coordination among the districts is also found in the support programs offered to students. Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater employ a common MTSS process that includes a review of universal academic, behavioral, and social-emotional screening data at regular interviews throughout the school year. In 2022, the elementary districts worked with Kittatinny to develop a comprehensive gifted and talented program that uses the same identification procedures, eligibility letters, screening letters, screening profiles, and activities. However, the delivery of services varies by district. Multilingual learners are few in number in this region, and sufficient services are in place to address their needs.

Extracurriculars

The extracurricular and athletic programs at Kittatinny reflect a strong commitment to providing students with opportunities for engagement, leadership, and skill development beyond the classroom. At the elementary level, all districts provide access to extracurricular activities; however, there is notable variability in both the number and type of offerings. The availability, frequency, and scope of these activities differ significantly. Expanding and standardizing offerings would strengthen student engagement and better prepare students to take full advantage of the extensive opportunities available at Kittatinny.

Staffing

Class sizes, subject and course offerings, and the ability of the instructional staff to meet the needs of individual students will be top of mind in discussions surrounding staffing at each of the schools. Among the 46 grade 7-12 or 9-12 school districts across the state, Kittatinny has the 7th smallest enrollment. A basic principle of economics is that economies, or efficiencies, can be found the larger the scale of operations gets. Kittatinny's smaller enrollment makes finding such staffing

efficiencies challenging. As with Kittatinny, the smaller enrollments of each elementary district make greater staffing efficiencies elusive.

There is important personnel sharing in place currently among the districts. The Kittatinny superintendent is shared with Hampton. There is one curriculum coordinator that services each district in the region. A special services director is shared between Kittatinny and Fredon. Varied responsibilities are not reflected frequently in employees' official job titles, as staff members in districts of these sizes commonly fulfill multiple roles.

Under the proposed expansion of the regional, this study assumes all current schools will stay open and fully staffed. With school-level staff remaining relatively constant, the opportunities for efficiency will be more available by combining some positions on district office staffs. The result of a model regional district office is a personnel level that is more streamlined, and potentially more efficient, than is possible in the status quo district configuration.

DEMOGRAPHY and FACILITIES

16. Municipal Profiles

The following section provides information regarding selected demographic characteristics for each of the five municipalities in the Kittatinny region of Sussex County, NJ.⁶⁷ They include Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township. Fredon, Hampton and Stillwater each has a grades pK-6 district with one elementary school. Sandyston and Walpack have a consolidated grades pK-6 district with one elementary school. All are constituent members of the grades 7-12 Kittatinny Regional School District.

Fredon Township

TABLE 71
Selected Demographic Characteristics, Fredon Township

	2018		2023		Change	% Change
Population	3,214		3,264		50	1.6%
Housing Units	1,187		1,265		78	6.6%
Median Age	45.2		48.0		2.8	6.2%
Median Income	\$114,643		\$142,292		\$27,649	24.1%
Mean Income	\$143,188		\$196,672		\$53,484	37.4%
Race	2018	% of Population	2023	% of Population	Change	% Change
Hispanic/Latino	216	6.7%	74	2.3%	-142	-65.7%
White	2,911	90.6%	2,928	89.7%	17	0.6%
Black	5	0.2%	18	0.6%	13	260.0%
Asian	28	0.9%	43	1.3%	15	53.6%
NA/AK	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
HI/PI	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
Other Alone	5	0.2%	29	0.9%	24	480.0%
Two or More Races	49	1.5%	172	5.3%	123	251.0%

Fredon Township is an independent municipality that spans a total area of 17.92 square miles (46.40 km²). In terms of population, Fredon is the third largest of the region at 3,264 residents in 2023, which represents a slight increase of about 1.6% (50 persons) since 2018. The median age has increased 2.8 years to 48.0, while median household incomes have increased 24.1% to \$142,292. It has also seen important shifts in its racial demographics, with decreases among Hispanic (-65.7%, -142 persons), and increases among the Asian (15 persons), White (17 persons), Black (13 persons), Other Alone (24 persons), and Multiracial (480.0%, 123 persons) populations.

⁶⁷ American Community Survey 2023, U.S. Census

Hampton Township

TABLE 72
Selected Demographic Characteristics, Hampton Township

	2018		2023		Change	% Change
Population	4,916		4,910		-6	-0.1%
Housing Units	2,277		2,138		-139	-6.1%
Median Age	47.2		51.6		4.4	9.3%
Median Income	\$74,467		\$105,636		\$31,169	41.9%
Mean Income	\$94,374		\$123,334		\$28,960	30.7%
Race	2018	% of Population	2023	% of Population	Change	% Change
Hispanic/Latino	311	6.3%	257	5.2%	-54	-17.4%
White	4,402	89.5%	4,293	87.4%	-109	-2.5%
Black	71	1.4%	20	0.4%	-51	-71.8%
Asian	90	1.8%	79	1.6%	-11	-12.2%
NA/AK	0	0.0%	7	0.1%	7	
HI/PI	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
Other Alone	11	0.2%	11	0.2%	0	
Two or More Races	31	0.6%	243	4.9%	212	683.9%

Hampton Township has a total area of 25.48 square miles (66.00 km²) and the largest population in the region with 4,010 residents in 2023. It has experienced a 6 person decrease in its population since 2018. The median age has increased 4.4 years to 51.6, while median household income has risen over 41.9% to \$105,636. Hampton has seen shifts in its racial demographics, with increases in Multiracial (683.9%, 212 persons) and Native American/Alaskan (up from zero to 7 persons) populations, and decreases among Whites (-109 persons), Blacks (-51 persons), and Asians (-11 persons).

Sandyston Township

Sandyston Township has a total area of 42.06 square miles (108.94 km²). Sandyston has the fourth largest population of the five municipalities, with a total of 1,924 persons as of 2023. The overall population has been relatively stable between 2018 and 2023 with a negligible loss of 1 person (-0.1%). The median age has decreased by 2.6 years to 44.6, and median household income has increased nearly 53.4% since 2018 to \$120,227. There have been changes in the racial makeup, with increases in the White (1.3%, 23 persons), and Multiracial (324%, 107 persons) populations, and decreases in the Black (-100%, from 8 to 0 persons), Other Alone (from 7 to 0 persons), Asian (from 36 to 4 persons) and Hispanic (-68.9%, from 122 to 38 persons) populations.

TABLE 73
Selected Demographic Characteristics, Sandyston Township

	2018		2023		Change	% Change
Population	1,925		1,924		-1	-0.1%
Housing Units	957		907		-50	-5.2%
Median Age	47.2		44.6		-2.6	-5.5%
Median Income	\$83,000		\$104,609		\$21,609	26.0%
Mean Income	\$98,576		\$141,094		\$42,518	43.1%
Race	2018	% of Population	2023	% of Population	Change	% Change
Hispanic/Latino	122	6.3%	38	2.0%	-84	-68.9%
White	1,719	89.3%	1,742	90.5%	23	1.3%
Black	8	0.4%	0	0.0%	-8	-100.0%
Asian	36	1.9%	4	0.2%	-32	-88.9%
NA/AK	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
HI/PI	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
Other Alone	7	0.4%	0	0.0%	-7	
Two or More Races	33	1.7%	140	7.3%	107	324.2%

Stillwater Township

TABLE 74
Selected Demographic Characteristics, Stillwater Township

	2018		2023		Change	% Change
Population	3,936		4,030		94	2.4%
Housing Units	1,768		1,858		90	5.1%
Median Age	46.2		51.2		5	10.8%
Median Income	\$84,583		\$109,777		\$25,194	29.8%
Mean Income	\$101,951		\$117,459		\$15,508	15.2%
Race	2018	% of Population	2023	% of Population	Change	% Change
Hispanic/Latino	120	3.0%	194	4.8%	74	61.7%
White	3,755	95.4%	3,603	89.4%	-152	-4.0%
Black	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
Asian	0	0.0%	144	3.6%	144	
NA/AK	0	0.0%	2	0.0%	2	
HI/PI	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
Other Alone	0	0.0%	80	2.0%	80	
Two or More Races	61	1.5%	7	0.2%	-54	-88.5%

Stillwater spans a total area of 40.39 square miles (104.60 km²) and is the second largest of the five communities by population with 4,030 residents as of 2023, representing an increase of 2.4% (94 persons) since 2018. The median age has increased 5.0 years to 51.2, and median household income has increased 29.8% to \$109,777. This has been accompanied by increased racial and ethnic diversity, with decreases in White (-4.0%, from 3,755 to 3,603 persons) and Multiracial (-88.5% from 61 to 54 persons) populations and increases in Asian (from 0 to 144 persons), Hispanic (61.7%%, from 120 to 194 persons), Native American (0 to 2), and Other Alone (0 to 80) residents.

Walpack Township ⁶⁸

Walpack Township has a total area of 24.88 square miles (64.45 km²) and has the smallest population of the five municipalities by far, with a total of 7 persons as of 2020. Few demographic characteristics are available for the township due to its small population. In 1962, following the devastation caused by Hurricanes Connie and Diane in 1955, a proposal was made by Congress for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to alleviate flooding on the Delaware River by constructing a dam at the site of Tocks Island. This dam, 10 miles south of Walpack, would have created a lake roughly 40 miles long and 1 mile wide. Over the next 15 years, approximately 72,000 acres of the surrounding land, including Walpack, were claimed under eminent domain by the government for this project, and most long-time area residents were forced to move out. However, the dam and lake were never actually built.

Birth Data

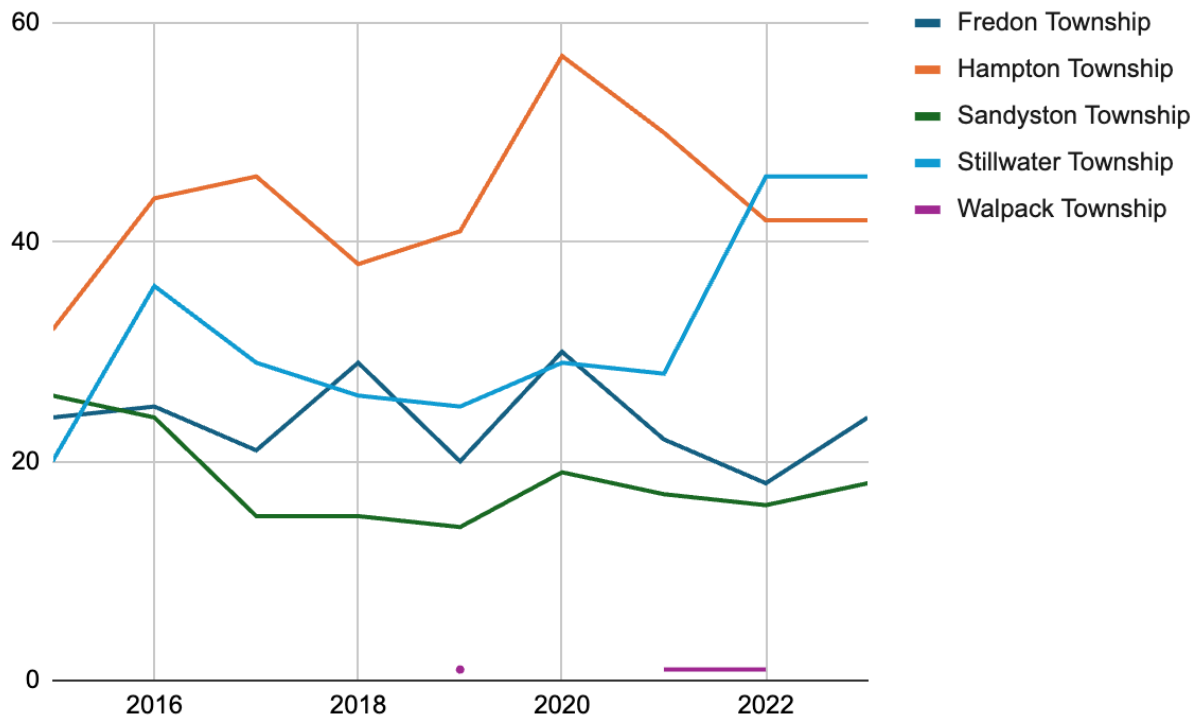
Tracking the number of children born in a school district is important in demographic studies in order to project kindergarten enrollment over future years by seeing trends over the recent past. The data is also useful in evaluating the relative health of a municipality, as population growth is often the result of a desire by parents and others to move into and stay in a community of choice. Births in the region have been averaging 119 per year and trending -1.0 births each year over the last 6 years.

TABLE 75
Live Births by Municipality, 2015-23

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 6 yr avg	2025 roll avg
Fredon Twp	24	25	21	29	20	30	22	18	24	24	23
Hampton Twp	32	44	46	38	41	57	50	42	42	45	46
Sandyston Twp	26	24	15	15	14	19	17	16	18	17	17
Stillwater Twp	20	36	29	26	25	29	28	46	46	33	35
Walpack Twp					1		1	1		1	1
TOTAL	102	129	111	108	101	135	118	123	130	119	120

⁶⁸ Comparative demographics are not made for Walpack Township by the U. S. Census

CHART 11
Live Births by Municipality, 2015-23



Comparing birth data to total population is one way to look at community health through relative potential for organic growth in a municipality (i.e., at least replacement level) apart from other factors such as family mobility. Table 76 presents that perspective, showing Stillwater, at 0.48%, having the largest increase in births relative to population in the region from 2018 to 2023, while births in Hampton and Sandyston had similar moderate increases (0.09 to 0.16%) relative to population, and Fredon had a -0.16% decrease relative to population.

TABLE 76
Comparing Live Births to Total Population

	Births 2018	Population 2018	% Births to Population 2018	Births est. 2023	Population 2023	% Births to Population 2023
Fredon Twp	29	3,214	0.90%	24	3,264	0.74%
Hampton Twp	38	4,916	0.77%	42	4,910	0.86%
Sandyston Twp	15	1,925	0.78%	18	1,924	0.94%
Stillwater Twp	26	3,936	0.66%	46	4,030	1.14%
Walpack Twp	0	6	0.00%	0	0	
TOTAL	108	13,991	0.77%	130	14,128	0.92%

17. Housing Starts

Another factor that impacts enrollment is the level of new housing construction in a community. Tables 77 and 78 look at recent building permits and certificates of occupancy. Building permits are issued to developers at the start of construction of a recently approved project or subdivision. Certificates of occupancy are issued following inspection and approval of constructed units.

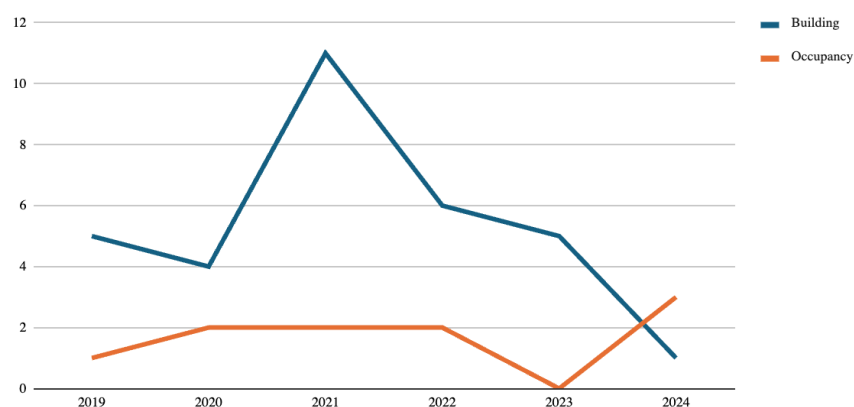
TABLE 77
Building Permits Issued, 2019-24

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Fredon Twp	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Hampton Twp	3	3	9	2	4	0	21
Sandyston Twp	0	0	0	1	0	n/a	1
Stillwater Twp	1	1	2	2	1	1	8
Walpack Twp	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0
TOTAL	5	4	11	6	5	1	32

TABLE 78
Certificates of Occupancy Issued, 2019-24

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Fredon Twp	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Hampton Twp	0	0	2	0	0	3	5
Sandyston Twp	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0
Stillwater Twp	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
Walpack Twp	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0
TOTAL	1	2	2	2	0	3	10

CHART 12
Comparing Occupancy Certificates to Building Permits, 2019-24



Research indicates that there are no planned major housing developments above the recent averages in any of the five municipalities that might impact school enrollment significantly at this time. The tables above comport with the level of increases in population in each of the communities. As a percentage of the total units in each community, these are marginal increases in housing with either approval for construction or those for which certificates of occupancy have been issued. No township experienced significant housing development.

In 2025, NJ municipalities entered the fourth round of affordable housing obligations, which involves reassessing their obligations to provide housing for low and moderate-income individuals through July 2035. This round follows the abolishment of the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) and the establishment of a new municipal compliance program.

Municipalities must provide a realistic opportunity for the construction of their fair share of affordable housing by adopting a binding resolution by June 30, 2025. Challenges may follow with an adoption of an implementing ordinance by March 15, 2026.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing mandates for Round Four have recently been issued for present and prospective need obligations as shown in Table 79. They are at a combined level of 257 units for the five municipalities with Hampton's need the largest at 81. If and when the mandates will be met is unknown at this time. Compliance with the obligations needs to be monitored on a municipal and project basis.

TABLE 79
Affordable Housing Obligations, Fourth Round, 2025

	Present Need	Prospective Need	Total
Fredon Twp	0	70	70
Hampton Twp	0	81	81
Sandyston Twp	4	38	42
Stillwater Twp	11	53	64
Walpack Twp	0	0	0
TOTAL	15	242	257

On January 22, 2025, the Fredon Township Committee adopted Resolution 2025-28, accepting the obligations as proposed by the Department of Community Affairs. The township proposes to continue using the realistic development potential (RDP) from Round Three of 29 units plus an additional RDP of 7 units for a total RDP of 36 units. The Township proposes a durational adjustment to all of its unmet needs and has several mechanisms in place to address the obligation outside of sewer service obligations. They are 10-unit municipally-sponsored 100% affordable projects that meet the criteria under N.J.A.C. 5:97-3.14, and the Township will support the

development of two supportive houses/group homes, each with four bedrooms for a total of 8 units. Likewise, two inclusionary zones remain in place.

Hampton Township will meet its needs via the Haberman Projects. The Haberman site was in Rounds One and Two as its affordable housing zone. A total of 333 housing units are permitted, which equates to 10 units of housing per acre (du/ac) net density or 2.4 du/ac gross density. 45 (13.5%) of the residential units, shall be affordable for rent. Haberman has not applied for site plan or subdivision approval. Additionally, Haberman has not proceeded with infrastructure improvements for the provision of sewer or water to the property. Despite this, there is no evidence currently that Haberman does not intend to proceed with the development. In Round Three, 43 of the remaining family rental units will satisfy the obligation. The Round Four obligation includes 9 units. The one remaining family rental at the Haberman site will satisfy a portion of that obligation. The township lacks the wastewater facilities currently (public sewer and/or on-site treatment facilities) to fully address the remaining Round Four obligation.

Sandyston Township has not adopted a housing element and fair share plan at this time, and compliance with the need for 42 units is not yet planned. Plans for Stillwater Township are also unclear at this time, but the municipality has committed to the 64 unit need through a January 2025 resolution.

In summary, no residential construction projects are known to be planned that will significantly impact the district's enrollment in the near future.

18. Enrollment History

Table 80 shows the combined enrollment history for each of the districts over the past six years. The enrollment history in the Kittatinny region from 2019-20 to 2024-25 shows decreases of 5.5% from 1,768 to 1,670, a decrease of 98 students. This data is used to calculate combined average survival ratios to project the total enrollment for a potential grades pK-12 regional school district. The average migration ratios across grades K-12 indicate that the number of students transitioning from one grade level to the next is 1.04, a consistent but low flow of students through the school system.

Kittatinny is the only district in the region that participates in the State's interdistrict school choice program. While the State does not provide numbers of students enrolled as school choice students by district, Kittatinny's program has been particularly successful financially. It was expected to receive \$471,614 in state school choice aid for the 2025-26 school year.⁶⁹

The State also does not publish the enrollments of charter school students by student resident district. However, the financial impact on each district can be considered based on the payments identified for charter school students.⁷⁰ For the 2025-26 school year, the region's districts allotted the following amounts for their resident students to attend charter schools: Kittatinny \$307,316; Fredon \$57,795; Hampton \$59,221; Stillwater \$123,321; and Sandyston-Walpack \$45,750.

⁶⁹ NJDOE State Aid Summaries

⁷⁰ NJDOE User-Friendly Budgets

TABLE 80
Student Enrollment History, 2019-20 to 2024-25 ⁷¹

2019-20	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	150	152	135	123	166	159		302	583	5	0	890
Fredon	24	33	14	19	27	26	33	26							152	26	0	0	15	193
Hampton	57	56	47	38	46	30	51	36							268	36	0	5	9	318
Stillwater	35	38	28	34	22	33	35	30							190	30	0	9	23	252
Sandyston-Walpack	17	22	11	15	16	21	17	13							102	13	0	0	0	115
TOTAL	133	149	100	106	111	110	136	105	150	152	135	123	166	159	712	407	583	19	47	1768
2020-21	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	107	152	145	133	123	164		259	565	4	0	828
Fredon	24	19	31	18	19	24	26	29					0		137	29	0	0	9	175
Hampton	32	33	52	46	39	45	30	49					0		245	49	0	4	11	309
Stillwater	20	30	35	28	34	25	35	38					0		187	38	0	10	36	271
Sandyston-Walpack	26	19	24	12	14	15	17	14					0		101	14	0	1	0	116
TOTAL	102	101	142	104	106	109	108	130	107	152	145	133	123	164	670	389	565	19	56	1699
2021-22	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	141	108	140	142	131	118		249	531	5	0	785
Fredon	25	27	20	33	19	21	25	28							145	28	0	0	13	186
Hampton	44	37	35	51	45	39	42	30							249	30	0	10	11	300
Stillwater	36	31	26	36	26	32	27	31							178	31	0	10	47	266
Sandyston-Walpack	24	29	16	22	14	15	13	19							109	19	0	0	0	128
TOTAL	129	124	97	142	104	107	107	108	141	108	140	142	131	118	681	357	531	25	71	1665
2022-23	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	111	141	100	131	147	132		252	510	7	0	769
Fredon	21	22	25	20	30	19	24	25							140	25	0	0	14	179
Hampton	46	45	34	36	55	45	40	41							255	41	0	17	10	323
Stillwater	29	40	33	27	39	27	32	27							198	27	0	18	39	282
Sandyston-Walpack	15	12	28	16	22	12	15	13							105	13	0	2	0	120
TOTAL	111	119	120	99	146	103	111	106	111	141	100	131	147	132	698	358	510	44	63	1673
2023-24	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	106	110	129	102	138	146		216	515	7	0	738
Fredon	29	28	21	23	22	32	22	24							148	24	0	0	14	186
Hampton	38	38	44	34	33	58	52	42							259	42	0	0	13	314
Stillwater	26	30	38	36	29	40	25	36							198	36	0	0	53	287
Sandyston-Walpack	15	17	14	29	18	22	13	15							113	15	0	0	0	128
TOTAL	108	113	117	122	102	152	112	117	106	110	129	102	138	146	718	333	515	7	80	1653
2024-25	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	SC	PK	Total
Kittatinny								0	116	105	111	134	103	142		221	490	8	0	719
Fredon	20	19	28	26	27	22	34	21							156	21	0	0	26	203
Hampton	41	30	38	48	34	34	60	51							244	51	0	0	27	322
Stillwater	25	38	31	40	38	28	42	25							217	25	0	0	54	296
Sandyston-Walpack	15	12	17	15	26	14	21	13							105	13	0	0	12	130
TOTAL	101	99	114	129	125	98	157	110	116	105	111	134	103	142	722	331	490	8	119	1670
Average S/R		1.01	1.04	1.01	1.00	1.11	0.95	1.09	1.07	1.01	1.03	1.07	1.09							

⁷¹ NJDOE Fall Enrollment Reports; SC = self-contained special education students; pK = prekindergarten students

19. Enrollment Projections

This study used a standard cohort survival model for the projections. A cohort model tracks students as they move year to year from grade to grade and develops growth ratios between grade levels. For example, if there are 100 students in grade 1 in a given year and in the next year when these students become second graders the number increases to 104, that would be a growth rate of 4% or a cohort survival ratio of 1.04. This growth/decline ratio between years and grades is calculated for six years of enrollment providing five growth/decline ratios for each grade to grade and year to year change. The average of the five ratios between each grade then serves as the multiplier for future growth between each grade. If the average ratio is 1.02 and the last historical year for grade 1 enrollment is 100, then the projection for the next second grade would be 102 students. This average, grade-to-grade survival ratio is applied to all grade levels for the next five years to complete the five-year projection.

TABLE 81
Enrollment Projections for Combined School Districts, 2025-26 to 2029-30

Year	Births	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	K-5	6-8	9-12	pK	Total
2025-26	135	139	97	119	133	123	101	157	113	116	99	110	136	103	712	385	448	106	1,652
2026-27	118	122	136	101	124	132	126	100	160	113	110	98	112	136	741	374	456	132	1,702
2027-28	123	132	119	142	104	122	136	126	103	161	107	109	100	111	756	389	427	140	1,712
2028-29	130	142	129	124	147	104	126	136	129	103	152	106	111	100	772	368	468	133	1,741
2029-30	119	125	139	134	128	146	107	126	139	129	97	150	107	110	779	394	465	133	1,771

The kindergarten ratio is generally projected by calculating the difference between live births attributable to a community and student enrollment in kindergarten five years later. A six-year average of live births was used for the live births to kindergarten ratio in the fifth year of the projection (2029-30) when those births five years earlier (2024) were not yet available in the data.

Enrollments for the combined region of school districts were decreasing over the six years of actual enrollment by 98 students from an initial high of 1,768 students to a period low of 1,653 in school year 2023-24. In the projection period, enrollments are projected to increase by 101 students over the end of the actual period, an aggregate increase of 6.0% or about 1.2% per year and a material average change of approximately 7.2 students per grade over 14 grade levels.

CHART 13
Enrollment History and Trend, 2019-20 to 2029-30

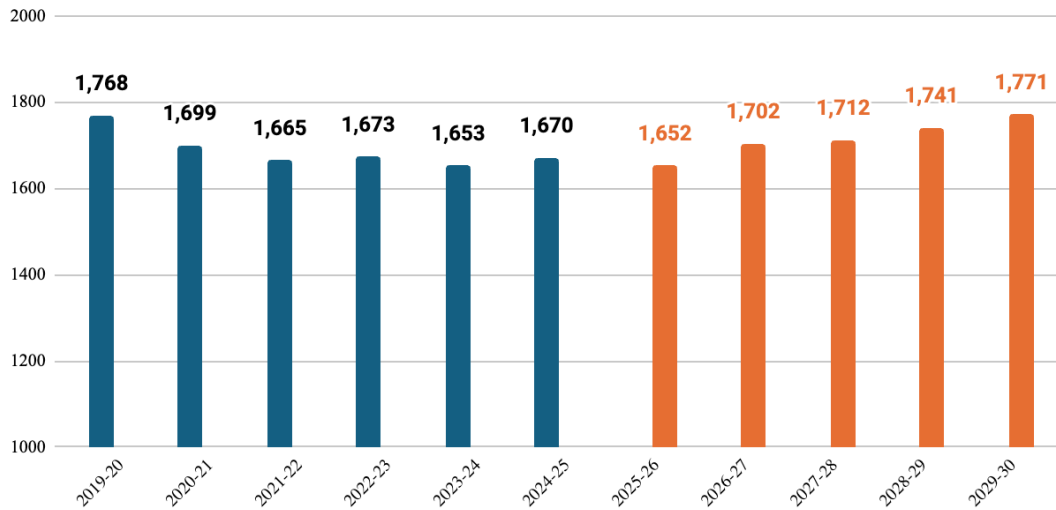


TABLE 82
Elementary Enrollment Projections, Elementary Districts, 2025-26 to 2029-30

2025-26	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-5	6-8	SC	PK	Total
Fredon	31	19	31	29	26	24	33	0	0	159	33	0	19	211
Hampton	53	29	39	48	34	35	60	0	0	238	60	0	24	322
Stillwater	36	37	32	41	39	29	43	0	0	214	43	0	52	309
Sandyston-Walpack	19	12	17	15	24	13	21	0	0	101	21	0	11	133
TOTAL	139	97	119	133	123	101	157	0	0	712	157	0	106	975
2026-27	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-5	6-8	SC	PK	Total
Fredon	23	30	20	34	28	28	23	0	0	163	23	0	16	202
Hampton	46	52	30	39	49	35	35	0	0	250	35	0	20	305
Stillwater	35	35	38	33	42	40	29	0	0	223	29	0	86	338
Sandyston-Walpack	18	19	12	18	14	23	13	0	0	104	13	0	11	128
TOTAL	122	136	101	124	132	126	100	0	0	741	100	0	132	974
2027-28	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-5	6-8	SC	PK	Total
Fredon	19	22	33	22	33	30	28	0	0	159	28	0	21	208
Hampton	39	45	52	30	39	50	35	0	0	256	35	0	20	311
Stillwater	57	34	37	39	34	43	40	0	0	244	40	0	86	370
Sandyston-Walpack	17	18	20	13	17	13	22	0	0	97	22	0	13	133
TOTAL	132	119	142	104	122	136	126	0	0	756	126	0	140	1022
2028-29	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-5	6-8	SC	PK	Total
Fredon	25	18	24	37	22	35	29	0	0	161	29	0	27	217
Hampton	39	38	46	52	30	40	50	0	0	246	50	0	21	317
Stillwater	57	56	35	38	40	35	44	0	0	261	44	0	68	373
Sandyston-Walpack	21	17	19	20	12	16	13	0	0	104	13	0	17	134
TOTAL	142	129	124	147	104	126	136	0	0	772	136	0	133	1041

2029-30	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-5	6-8	SC	PK	Total
Fredon	25	24	20	27	35	23	35			155	35	0	27	216
Hampton	42	38	39	46	53	31	40			249	40	0	21	310
Stillwater	42	56	58	36	38	41	35			271	35	0	68	374
Sandyston-Walpack	17	21	18	19	19	11	15			104	15	0	17	137
TOTAL	125	139	134	128	146	107	126	0	0	779	126	0	133	1037

The overall growth in grades pK-6 enrollment in the region over the next five years is projected to be 86 students from the 2024-25 actual enrollment of 951 students, an aggregate increase of 9.1% or about 1.8% per year and a material average change of approximately 10.8 students per grade over 8 grade levels.

CHART 14
Enrollment Projections, Elementary Districts, 2025-26 to 2029-30

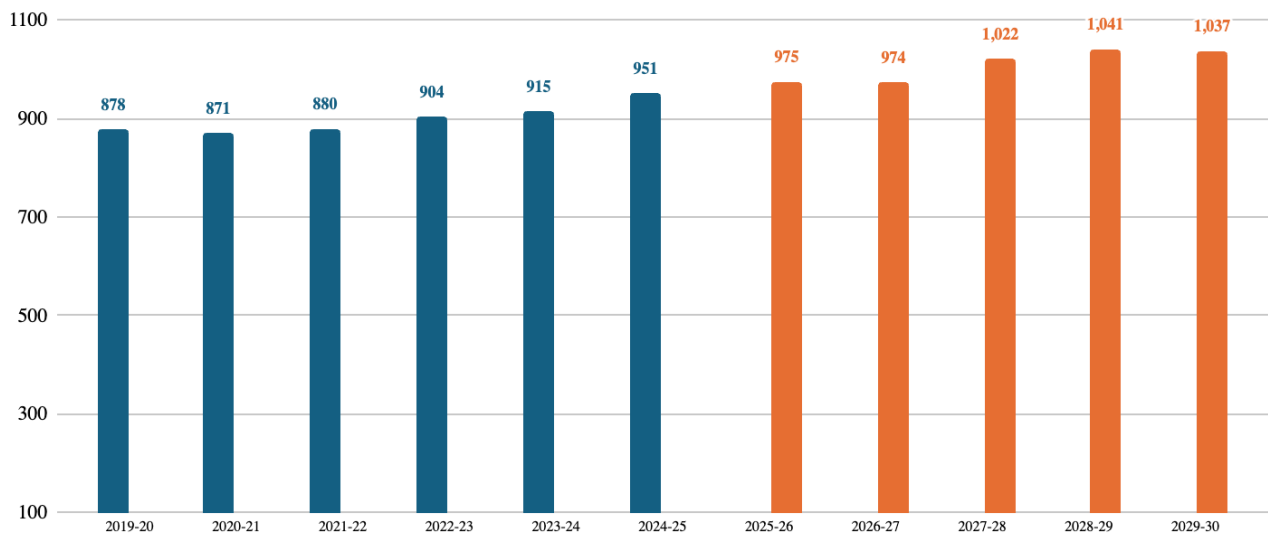


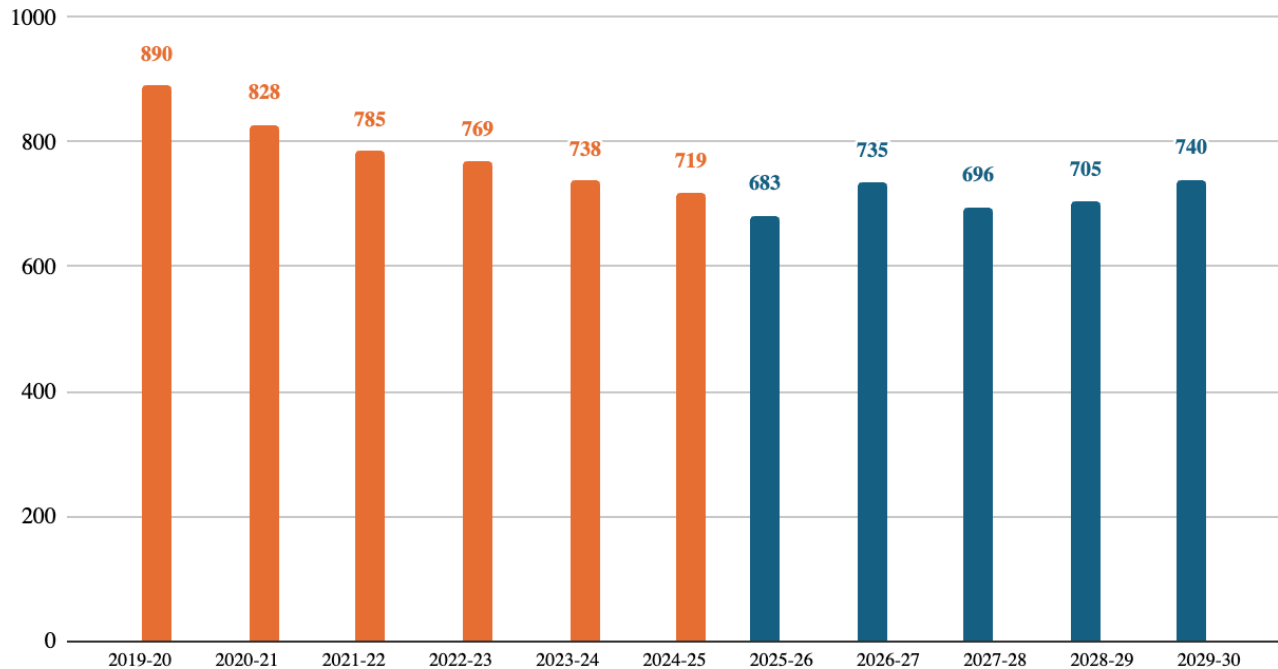
Chart 14 combines the actual 6-year history of pK-6 enrollment and five-year projection data to show a steadily growing trend. An enlargement of the current limited purpose regional into an all purpose regional would not alter the overall enrollment projections growth in any way.

Table 83 and Chart 15 break down the near-term projections for Kittatinny Regional. Grade 7-12 enrollments peaked in 2019-20 at 890 students, leading to a loss of 171 students during the actual enrollment period. The projected grades 7-12 enrollment gains 21 students up to 740 in 2029-30.

TABLE 83
Enrollment Projections, Kittatinny, 2025-26 to 2029-30

	7	8	9	10	11	12	7-8	9-12	SC	Total
2025-26	113	116	99	110	136	103	229	448	6	683
2026-27	160	113	110	98	112	136	273	456	6	735
2027-28	103	161	107	109	100	111	263	427	5	696
2028-29	129	103	152	106	111	100	232	468	6	705
2029-30	139	129	97	150	107	110	269	465	6	740

CHART 15
Enrollment Projections, Kittatinny, 2025-26 to 2029-30



When examining the enrollment projections by elementary and secondary school levels, there are important changes going on in the region. The elementary school enrollment is projected to increase by 86 students over the next five years, while the secondary school enrollment is expected to recover by 21 students. This will be worth monitoring, given Kittatinny’s enrollment decline over the past two decades. If the projected gains in the elementary population are realized and impact the secondary enrollment positively through 2029-30 and beyond, the future enrollment of Kittatinny may be more promising than the previous trendline.

20. Disaggregated Enrollments

Tables 84 through 87 provide disaggregated data from the perspectives of race, ethnicity, income, and language for the students in the Kittatinny region over the past six years with projections for the next five years. As expected, changes in group compositions largely mirror the trends in each municipality.

TABLE 84
Enrollment History, Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity, 2019-20 to 2024-25 ⁷²

2019-20	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	890	813	91.3%	6	0.7%	48	5.4%	12	1.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.3%	8	0.9%
Fredon	193	164	85.0%	0	0.0%	23	11.9%	2	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	2.1%
Hampton	318	287	90.3%	1	0.3%	20	6.3%	4	1.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	1.9%
Stillwater	252	240	95.2%	0	0.0%	8	3.2%	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%
Sandyston-Walpack	115	102	88.7%	1	0.9%	5	4.3%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	5.2%
TOTAL	1768	1606	90.8%	8	0.5%	104	5.9%	21	1.2%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%	26	1.5%
2020-21	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	828	745	90.0%	5	0.6%	52	6.3%	13	1.6%	0	0.0%	3	0.4%	10	1.2%
Fredon	175	145	82.9%	0	0.0%	24	13.7%	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.7%
Hampton	309	278	90.0%	1	0.3%	23	7.4%	3	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	1.3%
Stillwater	271	255	94.1%	1	0.4%	11	4.1%	2	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Sandyston-Walpack	116	103	88.8%	2	1.7%	3	2.6%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	6.0%
TOTAL	1699	1526	89.8%	9	0.5%	113	6.7%	22	1.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%	26	1.5%
2021-22	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	785	703	89.6%	6	0.8%	56	7.1%	10	1.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.3%	8	1.0%
Fredon	186	156	83.9%	0	0.0%	23	12.4%	2	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	2.7%
Hampton	300	265	88.3%	2	0.7%	26	8.7%	3	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	1.3%
Stillwater	266	248	93.2%	3	1.1%	9	3.4%	3	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.1%
Sandyston-Walpack	128	113	88.3%	4	3.1%	6	4.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	3.9%
TOTAL	1665	1485	89.2%	15	0.9%	120	7.2%	18	1.1%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	25	1.5%
2022-23	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	769	680	88.4%	12	1.6%	55	7.2%	9	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	1.7%
Fredon	179	148	82.7%	1	0.6%	25	14.0%	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	2.2%
Hampton	323	280	86.7%	3	0.9%	30	9.3%	3	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	2.2%
Stillwater	282	260	92.2%	4	1.4%	15	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.1%
Sandyston-Walpack	120	107	89.2%	3	2.5%	8	6.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.7%
TOTAL	1673	1475	88.2%	23	1.4%	133	7.9%	13	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29	1.7%
2023-24	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	738	632	85.6%	11	1.5%	71	9.6%	11	1.5%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	12	1.6%
Fredon	186	154	82.8%	1	0.5%	26	14.0%	2	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.6%
Hampton	314	265	84.4%	5	1.6%	35	11.1%	3	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	1.9%
Stillwater	287	260	90.6%	3	1.0%	21	7.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	128	111	86.7%	3	2.3%	8	6.3%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	3.9%
TOTAL	1653	1422	86.0%	23	1.4%	161	9.7%	17	1.0%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	29	1.8%
2024-25	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
Kittatinny	719	593	82.5%	14	1.9%	89	12.4%	8	1.1%	1	0.1%	1	0.1%	13	1.8%
Fredon	203	161	79.3%	0	0.0%	32	15.8%	4	2.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.0%	4	2.0%
Hampton	322	268	83.2%	8	2.5%	38	11.8%	3	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	1.6%
Stillwater	296	267	90.2%	3	1.0%	24	8.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Sandyston-Walpack	130	107	82.3%	4	3.1%	10	7.7%	2	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	5.4%
TOTAL	1670	1396	83.6%	29	1.7%	193	11.6%	17	1.0%	1	0.1%	3	0.2%	31	1.9%

⁷² Enr = Enrollment, NA/AK = Native American or Alaskan, HI/PI = Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, MR = Multiracial

TABLE 85
Regional Enrollment History and Trend
Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity, 2019-20 to 2029-30

	Enr	White	%	Black	%	Hispan	%	Asian	%	NA/AK	%	HI/PI	%	MR	%
2019-20	1768	1606	90.8%	8	0.5%	104	5.9%	21	1.2%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%	26	1.5%
2020-21	1699	1526	89.8%	9	0.5%	113	6.7%	22	1.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%	26	1.5%
2021-22	1665	1485	89.2%	15	0.9%	120	7.2%	18	1.1%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	25	1.5%
2022-23	1673	1475	88.2%	23	1.4%	133	7.9%	13	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29	1.7%
2023-24	1653	1422	86.0%	23	1.4%	161	9.7%	17	1.0%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	29	1.8%
2024-25	1670	1396	83.6%	29	1.7%	193	11.6%	17	1.0%	1	0.1%	3	0.2%	31	1.9%
2025-26	1652	1372	83.1%	33	2.0%	198	12.0%	14	0.9%	1	0.1%	1	0.0%	32	1.9%
2026-27	1702	1391	81.7%	39	2.3%	223	13.1%	14	0.8%	1	0.1%	1	0.0%	34	2.0%
2027-28	1712	1375	80.3%	44	2.6%	243	14.2%	13	0.8%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	36	2.1%
2028-29	1741	1373	78.9%	49	2.8%	266	15.3%	12	0.7%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	38	2.2%
2029-30	1771	1373	77.5%	55	3.1%	290	16.4%	11	0.6%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	40	2.2%

CHART 16
Regional Enrollment History and Trend
Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity, 2019-20 to 2029-30

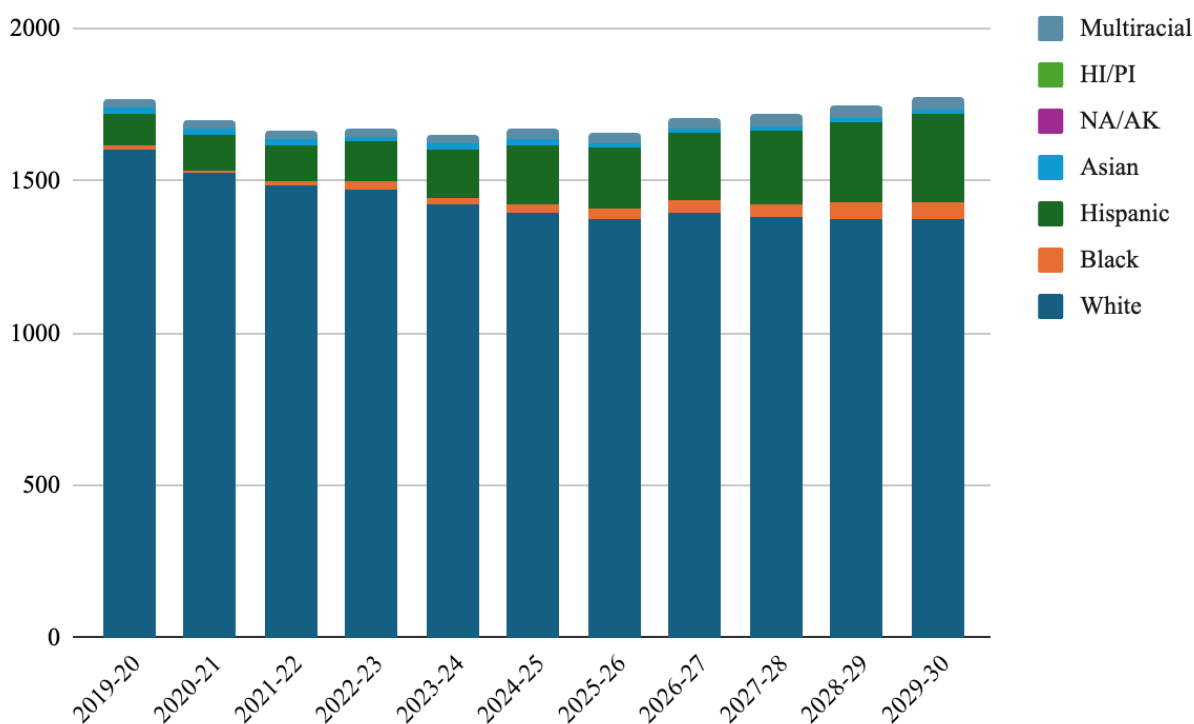


TABLE 86
Enrollment History, Disaggregated by Income and Language, 2019-20 to 2024-25 ⁷³

2019-20	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	890	111	12.5%	0	0.0%
Fredon	193	14	7.2%	0	0.0%
Hampton	318	33	10.3%	0	0.0%
Stillwater	252	42	16.7%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	115	7	6.1%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1768	207	11.7%	0	0.0%
2020-21	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	828	100	12.1%	0	0.0%
Fredon	175	11	6.3%	0	0.0%
Hampton	309	41	13.2%	0	0.0%
Stillwater	271	41	15.1%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	116	7	6.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1699	200	11.8%	0	0.0%
2021-22	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	785	71	9.0%	0	0.0%
Fredon	186	13	7.2%	0	0.0%
Hampton	300	35	11.6%	0	0.0%
Stillwater	266	33	12.4%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	128	14	10.9%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1665	166	10.0%	0	0.0%
2022-23	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	769	71	9.2%	0	0.0%
Fredon	179	6	6.0%	0	0.0%
Hampton	323	38	38.0%	0	0.0%
Stillwater	282	28	28.0%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	120	13	13.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1673	156	9.3%	0	0.0%
2023-24	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	738	72	9.8%	0	0.0%
Fredon	186	6	3.2%	0	0.0%
Hampton	314	31	9.9%	0	0.0%
Stillwater	287	32	11.1%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	128	17	13.3%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1653	158	9.6%	0	0.0%
2024-25	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
Kittatinny	719	81	11.2%	2	0.3%
Fredon	203	26	12.8%	0	0.0%
Hampton	322	36	11.2%	2	0.3%
Stillwater	296	39	13.2%	0	0.0%
Sandyston-Walpack	130	23	17.7%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1670	205	12.2%	4	0.2%

⁷³ ED = economically disadvantaged students as measured by families qualifying for free or reduced price meals; ML = students identified as multilingual learners

TABLE 87
Regional Enrollment History and Trend
Disaggregated by Income and Language, 2019-20 to 2029-30

	Enr	ED	%	ML	%
2019-20	1768	207	11.7%	0	0.0%
2020-21	1699	200	11.8%	0	0.0%
2021-22	1665	166	10.0%	0	0.0%
2022-23	1673	156	9.3%	0	0.0%
2023-24	1653	158	9.6%	0	0.0%
2024-25	1670	205	12.2%	4	0.2%
2025-26	1652	170	10.3%	2	0.1%
2026-27	1702	173	10.2%	2	0.1%
2027-28	1712	172	10.1%	3	0.1%
2028-29	1741	173	9.9%	3	0.2%
2029-30	1771	174	9.8%	3	0.2%

CHART 17
Regional Enrollment History and Trend
Economically Disadvantaged, 2019-20 to 2029-30

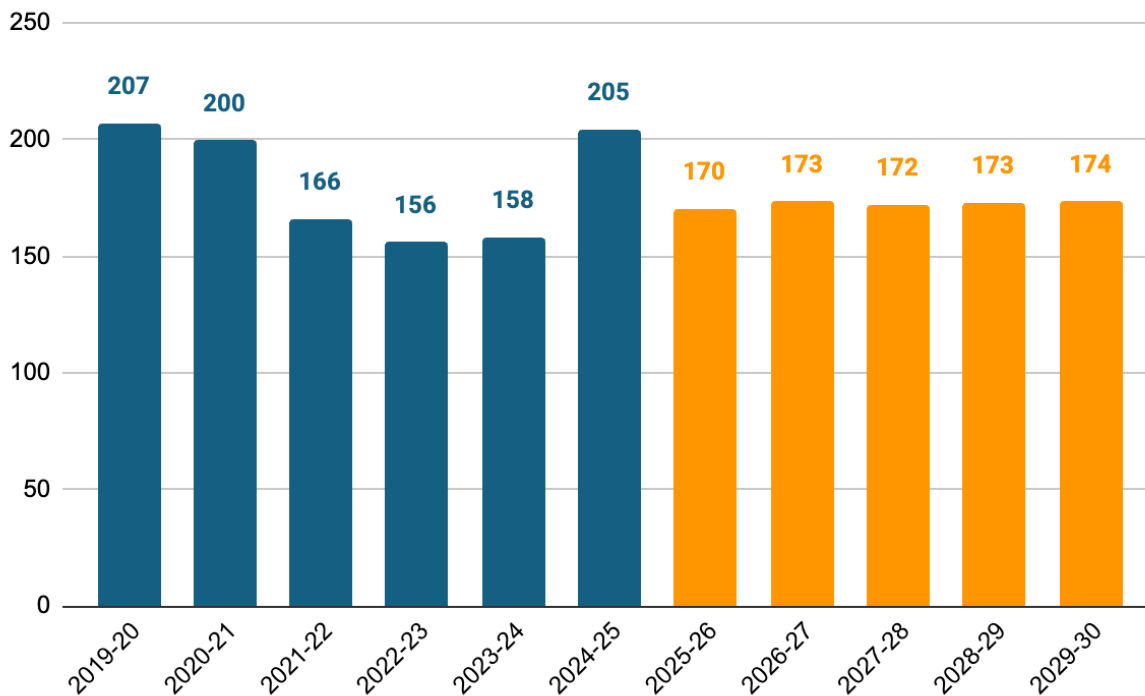
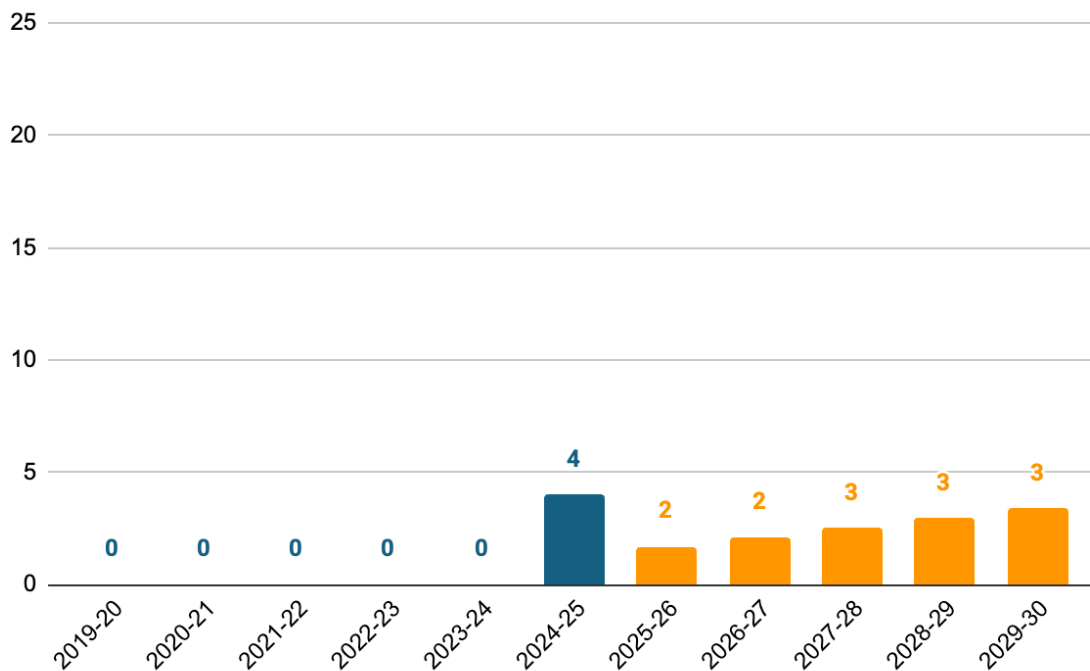


CHART 18
Regional Enrollment History and Trend
Multilingual Learners, 2019-20 to 2029-30



Given that the scenario contemplated would not change the composition of districts in this region, there is expected to be no impact on racial and other demographic groups from a full grades pK-12 regionalization. However, increases in the number of students of Hispanic (from 11.6% to 16.4% of the total enrollment) and Multiracial (from 1.9% to 2.2%) backgrounds provide an opportunity to evaluate the equity of access to resources and programs in the schools for these traditionally underserved groups. Changes in cultural background present opportunities to ensure that honoring the dignity of each student and developing an even greater sense of belonging in the schools' climate are emphasized as priorities.

21. Facility Utilization

This section of the report models the projected use of available instructional space in each school building across the five-year enrollment projection. It is a high-level evaluation for the purpose of analyzing available instructional space in each of the schools, so it does not examine infrastructure such as roofs, heating systems, electrical needs, etc. The data used for this analysis came from a review of the most recent long-range facility plans, which provide detailed information describing capacity generating instructional space in each school such as classroom numbers, classroom sizes, classroom use, and extracurricular and non-instructional spaces. Enrollment projections in this analysis are based on the demographic data presented earlier rather than the average daily enrollments used for state aid projections in the Finance and Operations domain.

Tables 88 through 91 provide grade level projections for each school building: ⁷⁴

- The number of general education and special education (self-contained) classrooms needed for each grade level for each projected year. Full sized classrooms are those with at least 650 square feet of space. While there have been changes over the years in size requirements for new classrooms, this does not apply to older buildings; therefore, the minimum used in this study is 650 square feet;
- The projected average class size for each grade level. While maximum class sizes may be designated by district policy, we used state guidelines for this study. These guidelines are 20 students in grades K-3, 22 in grades 4-5, and 24 in grades 6-12. Guidelines for self-contained classrooms for special education range from 6 for grades K-6 students in autism classrooms to 12 for grades 6-12 in multiply disabled and resource classrooms;
- For pK students, the state maximum of 15 students was used, and all schools in this study have full day programs; and
- A summary of specialized instructional spaces labeled “Sp” for art, music, computers, physical education, etc.

TABLE 88
Projected Room Utilization, Kittatinny Regional HS

	7	8	9	10	11	12	SC	Sp	Rooms Used	Rooms Available	Rooms Net
Students 2025-26	113	116	99	110	136	103	6				
Full Sized Rooms	5	5	5	5	6	5	2	26	49	58	9
Avg Class Size	23	24	20	23	23	21	3				
Students 2026-27	160	113	110	98	112	136	6				
Full Sized Rooms	7	5	5	5	5	6	2	26	49	58	9
Avg Class Size	23	23	22	20	23	23	3				
Students 2027-28	103	161	107	109	100	111	5				
Full Sized Rooms	5	7	5	5	5	5	2	26	48	58	10
Avg Class Size	21	23	22	22	20	23	3				
Students 2028-29	129	103	152	106	111	100	6				
Full Sized Rooms	6	5	7	5	5	5	2	26	50	58	8
Avg Class Size	22	21	22	22	23	20	3				
Students 2029-30	139	129	97	150	107	110	6				
Full Sized Rooms	6	6	5	7	5	5	2	26	50	58	8
Avg Class Size	24	22	20	22	22	22	3				

⁷⁴ Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this aspect of the study

TABLE 89
Projected Room Utilization, Fredon ES

	pK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	SC	Sp	Rooms Used	Rooms Available	Rooms Net
Students 2025-26	19	31	19	31	29	26	24	33	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	4	19	17	-2
Avg Class Size	10	16	19	16	15	13	12	17					
Students 2026-27	16	23	30	20	34	28	28	23	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	4	18	17	-1
Avg Class Size	8	12	15	20	17	14	14	23					
Students 2027-28	21	19	22	33	22	33	30	28	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	4	19	17	-2
Avg Class Size	11	19	11	17	11	17	15	14					
Students 2028-29	27	25	18	24	37	22	35	29	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	0	4	18	17	-1
Avg Class Size	14	13	18	12	19	22	18	15					
Students 2029-30	27	25	24	20	27	35	23	35	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	4	18	17	-1
Avg Class Size	14	13	12	20	14	18	23	18					

TABLE 90
Projected Room Utilization, Marian E. McKeown ES (Hampton)

	pK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	SC	Sp	Rooms Used	Rooms Available	Rooms Net
Students 2025-26	24	53	29	39	48	34	35	60	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	0	3	22	20	-2
Avg Class Size	12	18	15	20	16	17	18	20					
Students 2026-27	20	46	52	30	39	49	35	35	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	0	3	22	20	-2
Avg Class Size	10	16	18	15	20	17	18	18					
Students 2027-28	20	39	45	52	30	39	50	35	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	0	3	22	20	-2
Avg Class Size	10	20	15	18	15	20	17	18					
Students 2028-29	21	39	38	46	52	30	40	50	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	0	3	22	20	-2
Avg Class Size	11	20	19	16	18	15	21	17					
Students 2029-30	21	42	38	39	46	53	31	40	0				
Full Sized Rooms	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	0	3	21	20	-1
Avg Class Size	11	21	19	20	16	18	16	20					

TABLE 91
Projected Room Utilization, Stillwater ES

	pK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	SC	Sp	Rooms Used	Rooms Available	Rooms Net
Students 2025-26	52	36	37	32	41	39	29	43					
Full Sized Rooms	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		4	22	25	3
Avg Class Size	13	18	19	16	21	20	15	22					
Students 2026-27	86	35	35	38	33	42	40	29					
Full Sized Rooms	6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		4	24	25	1
Avg Class Size	15	18	18	19	17	21	20	15					
Students 2027-28	86	57	34	37	39	34	43	40					
Full Sized Rooms	6	3	2	2	2	2	2	2		4	25	25	0
Avg Class Size	15	19	17	19	20	17	22	21					
Students 2028-29	68	57	56	35	38	40	35	44					
Full Sized Rooms	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	2		4	25	25	0
Avg Class Size	14	19	19	18	19	20	18	22					
Students 2029-30	68	42	56	58	36	38	41	35					
Full Sized Rooms	5	2	3	3	2	2	2	2		4	25	25	0
Avg Class Size	14	21	19	20	18	19	21	18					

Grades 7-12 enrollments at Kittatinny that decreased 171 in the period from 2019-20 to 2024-25 are projected to increase by 21 in the period from 2025-26 to 2029-30. This analysis of facilities utilization indicates the potential for 8 available classrooms in 2029-30, allowing for consideration of moving the region's 6th grade students to Kittatinny. In 2025-26, the four 6th grades were projected to have 157 students in 8 classrooms, but drop to 126 by 2029-30. Combining the 6th grades and using the state class size guideline of 24 would require 7 classrooms in 2025-26, dropping to 6 by 2029-30.

The reality is that high schools like Kittatinny offer a broad spectrum of courses to address student interests, and many of those classes are scheduled with fewer students than the state guidelines would suggest. Changing that dynamic is an important curricular consideration that would need to be decided in order to provide the number of classrooms needed by a combined 6th grade. A more targeted classroom use study would need to be done to determine exactly how rooms are being utilized currently. Core facilities such as the media center, cafeteria, and gymnasium would also need to have their capacities considered to provide for the needs of an additional 120 to 160 students.

At the elementary level, Fredon and Hampton show decreasing student projections moving from a need of 2 rooms to a need of just 1 each. However, both districts are still projected to need this additional classroom space. Stillwater is projected to increase by 78 students causing the school to use up all of its 3 currently available spaces. Moving 6th grade students to Kittatinny could help alleviate the space needs for elementary students in all three districts.

Growing the preschool education program is also under consideration. While Stillwater is providing classroom instruction to 96% of its preschool population, the other three elementary districts do not have the classroom space to get to 90% of their preschool universe. Using the state maximum of 15 students per classroom, the region would need at least 7 additional classrooms to meet the overall preschool universe and perhaps one or two more to address students needing self-contained classrooms.

Given a future need for elementary classrooms due to projected enrollment increases across the region, an option to consider for preschool expansion could be leasing space to create a joint preschool center in another facility. Lease costs are an approved use of preschool expansion aid, and a combined setting would allow for some economies of scale. This would have the added benefit of freeing up elementary classrooms to address the anticipated need for additional space, especially in Stillwater.

22. Demographic and Facilities Impact

Over the period from 2018 to 2023, the populations of Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township grew anywhere from 0.0% to 2.4% for a total of 131 persons. Births in the region have been averaging 119 per year and trending -1 births each year over the last 6 years.

Research indicates that there are no planned major housing developments above the recent averages in any of the four municipalities that might impact school enrollment at this time. Affordable housing mandates are at a combined level of 257 units during the ten-year 2025-2035 Round 4 period. If, when, and how the mandates will be met is unknown at this time and are not expected to significantly impact enrollments.

A comparison of the 2024-25 actual enrollment of 1,670 students with the 2029-30 projection of 1,771 shows an increase of 101 students and a material averaged change of approximately 7+ students per grade over 14 grade levels. Elementary enrollment is projected to peak in 2028-29 at 1,041 students with a growth of 90 students over four followed by a 4 student decrease in the 5th year. The secondary school enrollment peaked at 890 students in 2019-20, the first year of the actual period and decreased to a low of 683 students in the first year of the projection period before projecting to end at 740 students at the end of the projection period. An enlargement of the current limited purpose regional into an all purpose regional would not alter the overall enrollment projections in any way.

Given that the scenario contemplated would not change the composition of districts in this region, there is expected to be no impact on racial and other demographic groups from a full grades pK-12 regionalization. However, slight increases in the number of students of Black (from 1.7% to 3.1% of the total enrollment), Hispanic (from 11.6% to 16.4% of the total enrollment), and Multiracial (from 1.9% to 2.2%) backgrounds provide an opportunity to evaluate the equity of access to resources and programs in the schools for these traditionally underserved groups. There is projected to be a

stabilization of the numbers of both low income and multilingual students across the region over the next five years.

It is understood that schools operate differently than they did twenty years ago, with greater emphasis on using spaces to meet the needs of students with specialized needs as well as a broadening of the curriculum for all students. At most, the projected enrollments show the availability by 2029-30 of -1 classrooms at Fredon ES, -1 at Hampton ES, zero classrooms at Stillwater ES and 8 at Kittatinny HS. Moving 6th grade students to Kittatinny could help alleviate the space needs in all three districts depending on secondary grade level curricular considerations and a further investigation of the current level of classroom use.

FINANCE and OPERATIONS

23. Collective Bargaining Agreements

P.L.2021, c.402 outlines the conditions of regional district formation through the SREP grant, among those being provisions for the main collective bargaining agreement (CBA).⁷⁵ It is specific regarding negotiations on a new contract in that, "... the newly formed regional district shall recognize each majority representative of the existing bargaining units in the largest constituent district as the majority representatives of those separate bargaining units of employees." It notes further that if there is a classification of employees that does not have a CBA in the largest constituent district, the CBA of the next largest would apply.

If the negotiations between the board of education of the new or enlarged regional and the employee bargaining unit(s) do not result in a successor agreement within three years of the formation of the regional, then the salary guide and terms and conditions "of the largest constituent district made up of only the identical grade levels" shall apply.⁷⁶

The 2021 statutes (N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47 et. seq.) are worded in a manner that leaves room for interpretation. Board counsel opinion would be needed if regionalization becomes a reality.

One issue with these statutory references is that they are clearly applicable to districts pursuing regionalization using the SREP grant; however, Kittatinny and its partners were approved for a LEAP grant, which is an earlier and broader consolidation program. Do the 2021 statutes now apply to all who pursue regionalization? The statute does not state so, and no official agency has come forward with a ruling. However, the consultants believe this is the legislative intent and that other related decisions have leaned in the direction of favoring the 2021 SREP statutes as guiding regionalization moving forward.

Another issue is that the 2021 regionalization statutes are silent, and no official agency has ruled, on the question of which CBA applies at the beginning of the enlarged regional's operations. A 1995 statute states that when school districts regionalize, "the terms and conditions of employment ... of the largest constituent school district which is affected, replaced or displaced by, or forms part of the new school district, shall apply until a successor agreement is negotiated with the majority representative of the new school district."⁷⁷ If this earlier statute were applied, then all districts would fall under the terms and conditions of the Kittatinny contract, as the largest constituent district is considered the one which employs the largest number of teaching staff members.

This seems counter to the intent of the 2021 regionalization statutes, as it would limit the incentives between a newly formed board of education and a newly formed association representative to negotiate a truly new successor contract. One of the 2021 statutes addresses expiring agreements

⁷⁵ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.5

⁷⁶ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.5

⁷⁷ N.J.S.A. 18A:6-31.4

with an option “to adopt the expiring salary guide and terms and conditions of employment.”⁷⁸ This suggests that each individual district’s staff members retain rights to the terms and conditions of their existing CBA until a successor agreement is reached. The consultants are leaning toward this interpretation until official clarification is provided. While this would be unwieldy from a management perspective – juggling multiple contracts, salary guides, working conditions, etc. – one benefit is that there is plenty of incentive for both sides to conclude a successor agreement as soon as possible.

The following review of the primary CBAs for Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack intends to provide useful information to aid the negotiations process should the districts decide to form an all purpose regional district, or can be used simply as points for comparison and synthesis in future negotiations as separate districts.⁷⁹ Common labor practices and contractual language could simplify the ability to share staff when desirable. The contracts being reviewed are the ones with the largest number of members, typically including the teaching staff. Personnel excluded in these main contracts may be represented in other CBAs.

Expiration Dates

It is important to note that this analysis is based upon the CBAs in effect for the 2025-26 school year. As such, this analysis represents a snapshot in time for comparison purposes only.

TABLE 92
Expiration of Current Collective Bargaining Agreements

District	Expiration of Current Primary CBA
Kittatinny	June 30, 2027
Fredon	June 30, 2026
Hampton	June 30, 2028
Stillwater	June 30, 2028
Sandyston-Walpack	June 30, 2027

⁷⁸ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.9

⁷⁹ CBAs provided by each district’s administration

Recognition Clauses

The recognition clause identifies who is, and often who is not, represented by the primary CBA. All agreements include certificated staff, but there is variance on the inclusion of non-certificated staff.

TABLE 93
Recognition Clauses

District	Groups Recognized ⁸⁰
Kittatinny	Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, Nurses, Paraprofessionals, School Secretaries/Clerk Typists, Custodians/Maintenance Assistant/Grounds, Child Study Team Members, Aquatics Director, Athletic Trainers, Instructional Technology Support Specialists
Fredon	Certified Teaching Personnel (teachers, nurses, librarian, guidance counselor, speech therapists, remedial reading specialists, social workers, school psychologist)
Hampton	Certified Teaching Personnel, Paraprofessionals, Custodians
Stillwater	Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Administrative Assistants, Custodians
Sandyston-Walpack	Teaching Staff Members, Certified Personnel (excluding administrators), Classroom Aides

Grievance Procedures

Contracts, particularly in unionized districts, often carefully outline grievance procedures to provide a clear and structured process for resolving disputes between employees and the school administration. These procedures are a cornerstone of labor-management relations in the educational sector, serving as a formal mechanism to ensure fairness, protect employee rights, and maintain a stable and positive working environment.

At its core, a grievance is a formal complaint alleging a violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of the terms of the employment contract. In the realm of alternative dispute resolution, arbitration offers a path to settling conflicts outside of a traditional courtroom. However, the weight of the arbitrator's decision hinges on a crucial distinction: whether the process is binding or non-binding. The key difference lies in the finality and enforceability of the outcome.

⁸⁰ Groups are listed using the exact terms present in the recognition clauses

Non-binding arbitration serves as an advisory process. The parties present their cases to a neutral arbitrator who renders a decision; however, this decision is not legally enforceable. Instead, it provides a well-reasoned, third-party perspective on the likely outcome if the case were to proceed to court. Either party has the right to reject the arbitrator's award and can choose to pursue the dispute through litigation.

Binding arbitration is a formal process where the disputing parties agree to be legally bound by the decision of the arbitrator or arbitration panel. This decision, known as an award, is final and has the same force as a court judgment. By choosing binding arbitration, parties effectively waive their right to a trial and agree to a conclusive resolution.

All of the school districts included in this study adhere to binding arbitration within their primary CBAs.

School Calendars and Working Conditions

School calendars, teacher work years, and working conditions often differ from district to district and include both instructional and non-instructional (professional learning) days, the length of the teacher workday, designated duty-free lunch breaks, preparation time, and other miscellaneous provisions. Table 94 summarizes many of these negotiated provisions.

TABLE 94
Working Conditions

District	Teacher School Year (days)	Student School Year (days)	PD, Inclement Weather, etc.	Length Teacher Workday (hrs:mins)	Duty-Free Lunch (mins)	Preparation Time (mins or pds)
Kittatinny	184	180	4	7:00	40	40
Fredon	184	180	5	7:25	30	38
Hampton	183	180	3	7:15	30	1 period/day
Stillwater	183	180	3	7:00	30	1 period/day
Sandyston-Walpack	184	180	4	7:00	n/a	1 period/day

The teacher's work year varies from 183 to 184 days. Staff days are used for classroom preparation and professional learning. The student school year is the same in all school districts at the state minimum of 180 days. The length of the teacher workday varies from 7:00 to 7:25.

Teachers have a guaranteed daily, duty-free lunch in all contracts.⁸¹ The length of time ranges from 30 to 40 minutes daily. Teacher preparation time provides teachers with time to prepare lessons, meet with colleagues or parents, or grade student work among other professional tasks. There is some minor variability dedicated to teacher preparation time, ranging from 38 to 40 minutes. This section of the contract is often worded differently from contract to contract, and it is common to see some divergence between elementary and secondary staff due to the nature of their school day schedules.

Extra service for activities such as overtime, student supervisory duties, faculty meetings, field trip chaperoning, etc. are unique to each contract. Faculty meeting and other meeting time is provided in each contract as per Table 95.

TABLE 95
Extra Services and Duties

	Faculty Meetings	Additional Time
Kittatinny	Max of 3/mo (staff, dept, faculty, grade level)	3 evening assignments; chaperone 1 evening activity
Fredon	Max 1/mo with 4 faculty mtg dates	Back-to school night, 1 set of parent conferences, 2 additional events of teacher's choice
Hampton	Max 4/mo, to be held on Mondays	2 evening parent conferences
Stillwater	Not more than 1/week (faculty and other)	Back to School Night, 2 evening parent conferences
Sandyston-Walpack	10 faculty and 10 PLC mtgs/yr	

Salaries

Important employee safeguards were placed into P.L.2021, c.402. It provides that “the tenure and seniority rights of all employees ... except for superintendents ... shall be recognized and preserved; ... all periods of employment in any of the school districts shall count toward acquisition of tenure and seniority; and ... All statutory and contractual rights to accumulated sick leave, leave of absence, and pension of an employee that have been acquired through employment in any of the districts shall be recognized ...”⁸²

Regional entry level salaries (BA Step 1) show notable variance. While Fredon, Hampton and Stillwater remain within approximately \$1,350 of each other, Sandyston-Walpack is \$4,883 below the highest grades pK-6 district (Hampton). Kittatinny's starting salary is \$4,670 above Hampton, and \$9,553 above the lowest grades pK-6 district (Sandyston-Walpack). Kittatinny remains distinctively higher through mid-career steps and at the top of the guide.

⁸¹ Sandyston-Walpack's CBA does not reference lunch

⁸² N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.10

TABLE 96
Salary Guides 2025 - 2026

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Horizontal Steps	6	5	8	5	5
Vertical Steps	14	17	22	19	16
Salary - Step 1 BA	66,165	60,143	61,495	61,012	56,612
Salary - Step 10 MA	92,465	75,893	68,590	76,897	73,264
Salary - Top of Guide MA+30	105,765	93,028 (MA+15)	102,420	95,470	89,521 (MA+15)

Longevity payments are a form of supplementary compensation awarded to teachers, administrators, and other school staff based on their accumulated years of service. This practice is designed to recognize and reward loyalty, reduce employee turnover, and acknowledge the value of experienced professionals within a school system. Typically, longevity pay is structured as a service increment, or an additional payment beyond the salary guide, for employees who remain in the school district for a set number of years.

In this region, the starting time for longevity is fairly consistent, beginning between 10 and 15 years. For employees hired prior to July 1, 2018, Kittatinny provides a one-time lump sum payment of \$2,350 for teachers with 15 years of service to the district. For teachers hired after July 1, 2018, the longevity payment will be \$1,000. Stillwater offers longevity, which is incorporated into their salary guides, to teachers that reach the top of the guide (steps L1, L2, and L3) and that have worked for 10 years in the district. Payments begin in the first year the teacher reaches the top step of the guide. Step L1 longevity ranges from \$895 to \$2,095. For steps L2 and L3, longevity is \$2,055 and \$3,273, respectively. Sandyston-Walpack provides a \$2,500 longevity payment to any teacher that was hired prior to September 1, 1993 and has completed 18 years of service. Teachers hired after September 1, 1993 are not eligible for longevity. Fredon and Hampton do not offer longevity.

Leaves of Absence

Leaves of absence are generally in line with each other and often fairly standard district-to-district among other school district agreements. Table 97 shows some of the provisions outlined in the CBAs in this region.

TABLE 97
Temporary Leaves of Absence

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Employee Illness Days (10-month)	10	10	10	10	10
Employee Illness Days (12-month)	12	N/A	12	12	N/A
Family Illness Days	conversion of 6 days from sick	4	N/A	3	N/A
Personal Business Days	3 for 10 mo 4 for 12 mo	3	5	3	4
Bereavement Days for Immediate Family	4	4	5	4	5
Bereavement Days for Others	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maternity/Paternity Leave beyond law	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Tuition Reimbursements

Table 98 outlines general provisions around tuition reimbursement. The language in this section of many CBAs can get very detailed and, at times, confusing. As such, the table represents the maximum number of credits for which a tenured employee may apply, the maximum rate at which an employee may be reimbursed, any district maximum that has been established, and whether the employee taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement provisions must commit to remaining in the district for an established length of time.

TABLE 98
Tuition Reimbursements for Teaching Staff

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Eligibility	Available on tenure	NT - 6 credits/yr, Tenured - 12 credits/yr	Available immediately	2nd yr - 3 credits/yr; 3rd yr - 6 credits/yr; Tenured - 9 credits, if funds available, an additional 3 credits	Available on tenure
Maximum Credits per Year	12	12	9	3 in 2 nd year 6 in 3 rd year 9-12 – tenured	6
Rate per credit	NJ state college	Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers
District Maximum	45,000 incr 2.5% per CBA yr	17,000	18,000	12,000	5,000
Commitment after completion of course or program	3 yrs from last payment for vol sep; repayment for anything in 4 yrs	For vol sep within three yrs, not due to retirement, shall reimburse for tuition paid	n/a	For sep not due to retirement or beyond teacher control within two yrs, shall reimburse from final paycheck	n/a

Insurance Coverages

The State mandated that newly hired teachers and other school employees be enrolled in the School Employees' Health Benefits Program (SEHBP) by choosing either the NJ Educators' Health Plan (NJEHP) or the Garden State Health Plan (GSHP), or their private equivalents, as of January 1, 2021, if they commenced employment on or after July 1, 2020. For teachers and other school district employees hired before July 1, 2020, there may be wider options from which to choose.

Here's a breakdown of the key points related to this requirement:

Effective Date: The requirement to enroll new hires in the NJEHP or GSHP (or private equivalent) took effect on January 1, 2021.

Target Group: This mandatory enrollment applied to employees who commenced employment on or after July 1, 2020, and before January 1, 2028, and did not waive health coverage. For the plan year starting January 1, 2028, employees could choose any plan offered by their school district during open enrollment.

Plan Options: These newly hired employees were offered either the NJEHP or the GSHP (or, private equivalents).

TABLE 99
Insurance Coverages

	Kittitanny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Medical	State	Private - SHIF	State	Private - SHIF	Private - SHIF
Min hrs for benefits	30 hrs/wk	Full time	30 hrs/wk	30 hrs/wk	Full time
Coverage	FT employees and dependents	FT employees and dependents	FT employees and dependents	FT employees and dependents	Empl only for 3 yrs, then family eligible
In-Network Copay ⁸³	\$10/\$15	\$10/\$15	\$10/\$15	\$10/\$15	\$10/\$15
Contribution provisions	Ch 44	EHP/GSP Ch 44, or Ch 78	Ch 78 Tier 4 or Ch 44	Ch 44	Ch 44
Payment for Waiver of Coverage	Lower of 25% prem or \$5,000	\$1,500	N/A	Lower of 25% prem or \$5,000	10-15% of BOE share depending on participant number
Rx Copay Generic	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5
Rx Copay Name Brand	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
Dental	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dental Cap	n/a	n/a	\$1,668/yr	\$55/mo	n/a
Vision	Limited part of medical plan	Yes	Limited part of medical plan	Limited part of medical plan	Limited part of medical plan
Disability	No	Yes	No	No	No

For public school teachers in NJ, health insurance is not just a perk; it is a required component of their employment benefits package. Participation in the SEHBP, or its equivalent, is a condition of employment for all full-time public school employees. While local school districts determine the exact definition of full-time, it cannot be less than 25 hours per week. This mandate ensures that educators across the state have access to quality health coverage.

⁸³ Primary/specialist

The cost of health insurance is a shared responsibility between the teacher, their school district, and, sometimes, the state. A teacher's contribution is mandatory and deducted directly from their paycheck. The amount a teacher pays is determined by state law (most notably, Chapter 44, P.L. 2020) and is generally calculated as a percentage of their annual salary, tied to the level of coverage they select (e.g., single, parent/child, employee/spouse, or family). For some plans, the contribution may instead be a percentage of the total premium cost.

Even in the best of circumstances, insurance coverages are nuanced. What appears similar on paper can often be perceived as less than once employees consider the in-network provider list and other specific details of the plan. It is recommended that any new regional board of education enlist the help of a benefits specialist to assist with the analysis and future negotiations of these plans.

24. Operating Expenses

Budgetary Costs per Student

Tables 100 through 104 highlight the spending priorities of each district through budgetary per student costs broken down into five categories: classroom instruction, support services, administration, operations and maintenance, and extracurriculars.⁸⁴ Each category then ranks the districts against their peers across the state in terms of grade level structure.⁸⁵

TABLE 100
Budgetary Per Student Costs, Kittatinny, 2023-24

	\$ Per Pupil	Peer Rank	% of Total	State Median \$	State Median %
Total Budgetary Per Student Costs	\$24,767	36/46		\$21,091	
Classroom Instruction	\$14,347	43/46	57.9%	\$12,146	57.6%
Support Services	\$3,345	22/46	13.5%	\$3,070	14.6%
Administration	\$2,326	30/46	9.4%	\$2,078	9.9%
Operations and Maintenance	\$3,110	29/46	12.6%	\$2,902	13.8%
Extracurriculars	\$1,516	35/46	6.1%	\$952	4.5%

⁸⁴ NJDOE Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending; there are 46 grades 7-12/9-12 districts and grades 58 grades K-6 districts

⁸⁵ Ranking is from lowest to highest spending among NJ's grades 7-12/9-12 districts for Kittatinny and grades K-6 districts for Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack

TABLE 101
Budgetary Per Student Costs, Fredon, 2023-24

	\$ Per Pupil	Peer Rank	% of Total	State Median \$	State Median %
Total Budgetary Per Student Costs	\$23,073	44/58		\$20,303	
Classroom Instruction	\$10,831	19/58	46.9%	\$11,933	58.8%
Support Services	\$5,081	45/58	22.0%	\$3,746	18.5%
Administration	\$2,624	58/58	11.4%	\$1,968	9.7%
Operations and Maintenance	\$4,104	53/58	17.8%	\$2,238	11.0%
Extracurriculars	\$373	47/47	1.6%	\$58	0.3%

TABLE 102
Budgetary Per Student Costs, Hampton, 2023-24

	\$ Per Pupil	Peer Rank	% of Total	State Median \$	State Median %
Total Budgetary Per Student Costs	\$21,875	38/58		\$20,303	
Classroom Instruction	\$12,854	37/58	58.8%	\$11,933	58.8%
Support Services	\$4,083	32/58	18.7%	\$3,746	18.5%
Administration	\$2,513	53/58	11.5%	\$1,968	9.7%
Operations and Maintenance	\$2,280	31/58	10.4%	\$2,238	11.0%
Extracurriculars	\$143	44/47	0.7%	\$58	0.3%

TABLE 103
Budgetary Per Student Costs, Stillwater, 2023-24

	\$ Per Pupil	Peer Rank	% of Total	State Median \$	State Median %
Total Budgetary Per Student Costs	\$21,942	40/58		\$20,303	
Classroom Instruction	\$13,008	39/58	59.3%	\$11,933	58.8%
Support Services	\$3,549	24/58	16.2%	\$3,746	18.5%
Administration	\$2,468	50/58	11.2%	\$1,968	9.7%
Operations and Maintenance	\$2,878	42/58	13.1%	\$2,238	11.0%
Extracurriculars	\$32	11/47	0.1%	\$58	0.3%

TABLE 104
Budgetary Per Student Costs, Sandyston-Walpack, 2023-24

	\$ Per Pupil	Peer Rank	% of Total	State Median \$	State Median %
Total Budgetary Per Student Costs	\$25,298	47/58		\$20,303	
Classroom Instruction	\$13,756	42/58	54.4%	\$11,933	58.8%
Support Services	\$5,955	50/58	23.5%	\$3,746	18.5%
Administration	\$2,479	51/58	9.8%	\$1,968	9.7%
Operations and Maintenance	\$2,879	43/58	11.4%	\$2,238	11.0%
Extracurriculars	\$164	45/57	0.6%	\$58	0.3%

Budgetary costs per student are comparable among districts in a way that total costs are not. Total costs include items such as expenditures funded by restricted grants, pension contributions, tuition payments to other districts and private schools with disabilities, debt service expenditures, and principal and interest payments for the lease purchase of land and buildings.

Per state definition, grades 7-12 and 9-12 districts are grouped into one category of 46 districts. Kittatinny's budgetary cost per student is \$24,767, which exceeds the state median of \$21,091 by more than 17%. The grades K-6 districts are grouped into one category of 58 peer districts. The state median for the budgetary cost per student is \$20,303, and all of the districts in this region are well above that median.

Economies of scale tend to favor larger entities. Kittatinny is the 7th smallest of its 46 peer districts. Sandyston-Walpack (7th smallest) and Fredon (16th smallest) have among the lowest enrollments of their 58 peer districts, while Stillwater (29th) and Hampton (30th) are more towards the middle of the group. Taken together, the dynamic around higher per pupil costs would be difficult to change without the larger enrollment that an enlarged regional would provide.

In terms of direct spending on students reflected as a percentage of dollars allocated to classroom instruction, Kittatinny spends 57.9% on instruction, slightly above the state median of 57.6%. The state median for grades K-6 districts is 58.8%, which Fredon (46.9%) and Sandyston-Walpack (54.4%) are below. This indicator provides direct student academic experiences, and therefore should receive primary attention and commitment in the district budget. However, smaller districts have to spend more of their limited monies on more fixed costs such as administration, operations, and maintenance. For example, administration is often identified by the public as an area to realize potential efficiencies. Kittatinny's \$2,326 per student sits well above the state median of \$2,078, and all of the grades K-6 districts spend considerably above the state median of \$1,968 per student. Experienced administrators are in demand and cost more than those with less experience, and regionalization may be a useful consideration in seeking efficiencies here.

25. Borrowing Margin, Debt Allocation, and Reserves

Borrowing Margin and Debt Allocation

When school districts merge into a regional, state law requires that all issued and outstanding bonds, notes, or other financial obligations of the individual districts become the shared responsibility of the new regional. The debt consolidation process is a standard and mandatory component of regionalization, designed to ensure equitable treatment of all member communities within the new configuration. Flexibility introduced by P.L. 2021, c.402 provides a new process for districts to address disparate debt levels or debt-related concerns that might otherwise be barriers to regionalization through the use of a transitional method of apportionment for up to 10 years, provided that the transitional method is approved by the Commissioner and is agreed to by all participating districts.

Some districts may enter regionalization carrying significant debt from recent building projects or renovations, while others may have minimal or no outstanding obligations. In the proposed scenarios, each community would share the responsibility of paying both principal and interest on all existing debt, regardless of which former district originally incurred it. This debt consolidation can be a contentious aspect of the process, but the consultants emphasize that a holistic view of facilities conditions and future needs should inform these discussions. Districts that have recently invested in facility improvements are contributing updated, modern spaces that will benefit all students in the newly formed regional district. Conversely, districts entering with minimal debt may have deferred necessary facility improvements, potentially creating future capital expenditures that the regional will need to address. Rather than viewing existing debt in isolation, communities should consider both the immediate and shared benefits of recently improved facilities and the long-term capital needs across all buildings that the regional will ultimately need to address.

While a district may have many financial obligations, there are two types of debt, the obligation for which extends for more than one year. Long term debt (bonds) is authorized by voters and expensed through the debt service fund. Short term debt is a multi-year obligation authorized by the school district, but budgeted for in the annual budget process. Energy Savings and Improvement Plans (ESIPs) and Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITAs) are two short term debts that the districts in this region utilize. SBITA's are an area to be explored for sharing services, and a merger may lead to savings due to economies of scale

The issuance of debt and all topics related to it, are strictly guided by N.J.S.A. 18A:24. Once a board of education has been authorized to issue bonds, they may authorize the issuance of temporary notes or loan bonds to fund the initial costs of an approved project as money is needed.

TABLE 105
Borrowing Margin as of June 30, 2025 ⁸⁶

	Avg Equalized Valuation Taxable Property	Debt Limit	Net Bonded School Debt	Legal Debt Margin
Kittatinny	2,407,448,412	84,260,694	0	84,260,694
Fredon	547,128,497	13,678,212	2,605,000	11,073,212
Hampton	893,011,649	22,325,291	0	22,325,291
Stillwater	624,713,812	15,617,845	0	15,617,845
Sandyston-Walpack	341,466,696	8,536,667	0	8,536,667
pK-12 Regional	2,407,448,412	96,297,936	2,605,000	93,692,936

TABLE 106
Debt Service as of June 30, 2024

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029-2033
Kittatinny	0	0	0	0	0
Fredon	255,000	260,000	270,000	280,000	1,540,000
Hampton	0	0	0	0	0
Stillwater	0	0	0	0	0
Sandyston-Walpack	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	255,000	260,000	270,000	280,000	1,540,000

Tables 105 and 106 identify the borrowing margin and debt service amounts for each district as they currently exist. The legal debt limit determines how much bonded debt a district is allowed to incur. This is calculated by multiplying the average of the last three years of equalized valuations by the appropriate percentage for the district's grade level.⁸⁷ The percentage allowable for a K-6 district is 2.5% percent, for a 7-12 district 3.5%, and for a pK-12 district 4.0%. The amount of existing debt is then subtracted from the maximum allowable debt to determine the legal debt margin, also known as remaining available debt capacity. For bonded debt purposes, each district is treated as an independent taxing authority with access to the full taxable base of the municipality it serves. As a result, there is overlap in the equalized valuations used for existing K-6 districts and Kittatinny.

Fredon issued general obligation bonds for the acquisition and construction of major capital facilities. As of June 30, 2025, the bonds payable consist of refunding bonds issued in 2017 due in annual installments through July 15, 2033 in the amount of \$2,605,000. Kittatinny, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack do not have any outstanding bonds payable currently.

In terms of other long-term obligations, Kittatinny commenced acquisition of energy savings equipment through a lease program in the amount of \$3,440,000 on September 30, 2019. This is

⁸⁶ Data in Tables 105 and 106 retrieved from the Annual Comprehensive Financial Reviews

⁸⁷ N.J.S.A. 18A:24-19

payable in annual lease payments and includes principal and interest. The lease is for 20 years and will mature on September 1, 2039.

Reserves

NJ allows many different types of reserve accounts, each of which is legally restricted for specific purposes, and in some cases, has a cap for the dollar amount that may be reserved. Although some reserve accounts require deposits to be specified during budget preparation, other reserves are allowed to be identified at the end of the fiscal year in June, utilizing unspent appropriations or unanticipated revenues. The district audit reviews the reserve accounts to ensure that they do not exceed legal restrictions.

Maintenance reserve accounts are the most common. This account balance cannot, at any time, exceed 4% of the replacement cost of the school district's school facilities for the current year.

Most districts have a capital reserve account, and state statute and code provide the restrictions on it. Deposits are generally transferred by board resolution at year end, but may also be appropriated in the budget planning process. Expenses must be incorporated into the certified budget or approved by voters as a separate proposal. There is also the option of using the reserved funds to offset part or all of the debt service payments on bonded projects. The amount in the reserve is capped at the local share of project costs in the district's approved long range facility plan.

Unemployment reserves cover unemployment benefit costs. Districts may choose to fund their unemployment obligation in one of two ways. When using the benefit reimbursement method versus state contributions, standard practice is to establish an unemployment reserve account.

As many districts face the challenges of reduced or, at best, stable state aid and have more restricted budgets, the establishment of an emergency reserve to address future unanticipated general fund expenses is becoming more common. This account may not exceed \$250,000 or one percent of the district's general fund budget up to a maximum of \$1,000,000, whichever is greater.

Excess surplus, is the amount of undesignated general fund balance in excess of 2% of the budgeted general fund for the prebudget year or \$250,000, whichever is greater. The designation for "reserved fund balance – excess surplus" is a required calculation. NJ districts are required to reserve general fund balance at the fiscal year end of June 30, if they did not appropriate a required minimum amount as budgeted fund balance in their subsequent years' budget.⁸⁸ These amounts must be appropriated in the subsequent year's budget.

Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack also have a federal impact aid reserve. These districts receive federal impact aid due to federally owned property within the district, which results in a loss of property taxes. The federal government makes up for that loss through impact aid. A board of education may appropriate federal impact aid funds to establish or supplement a reserve account in the annual district budget or through a board approved transfer between June 1 and June 30. The

⁸⁸ NJSA 18A:7F-7, as amended by P.L. 2004, c.73

board may use the funds to finance the district's general fund or to finance school facilities. These reserves are established due to the uncertainty of receiving impact aid year to year.

TABLE 107
Reserve Accounts as of June 30, 2025

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston Walpack	TOTAL
Capital	\$1,053,048	\$1,647,459	\$1,579,666	\$1,689,345	\$418,548	\$6,388,066
Maintenance		\$25,000	\$268,710	\$329,864	\$141,250	\$764,824
Impact Aid	\$1,611,851				\$604,407	\$2,216,258
Unemployment	\$197,506	\$118,482	\$134,336			\$450,324
Excess Surplus	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$580,000	\$762,000	\$769,857	\$2,611,857
TOTAL	\$3,112,405	\$2,040,941	\$2,562,712	\$2,781,209	\$1,934,062	\$12,431,329

26. Contracted Services and Tuition

Transportation Services ⁸⁹

Transportation in NJ school districts has many facets to it. The primary function of a transportation department is to provide safe, efficient, and professional student transportation for the district's students. To achieve these objectives, districts should employ a supervisor who is trained, certified, and knowledgeable in all aspects of student transportation. That supervisor develops a routing of buses for general education students. The most cost-effective routing is a triple-tiered route package, which maximizes the utilization of each school vehicle and driver. District bell schedules play a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of such a system.

Additionally, the department must provide specialized transportation for the district's special needs students. The supervisor needs the child study team to supply detailed information on each student's specific needs when arranging this type of transportation. Some students may require special accommodations, such as a vehicle capable of carrying a wheelchair. Furthermore, some students may need an aide on the vehicle, and that aide may need to be medically certified.

Another topic that is commonly discussed is the issue of courtesy busing. Districts are required to transport any child in grades K-8 if they live two miles or more from the school, or grades 9-12 students if they live two and a half miles or more from the school. Eligibility is calculated by measuring the shortest route from the home to the school. Even though a district is not required to provide transportation for students living within these limits, it is typical for students to be bused for

⁸⁹ Transportation data presented in this section is what was accessed from public records or received from request of district records

other reasons such as hazardous walking routes, out-of-district placements, and special education students with transportation needs.

The proposed regionalization would result in little to no change as far as what schools the students attend, so there would likely be no change to any of the current transportation programs unless the district chooses to seek a higher level of efficiency or revised routes.

Current Status

The Kittatinny transportation department operates with a coordinator and an assistant. The coordinator is currently completing the Rutgers supervisors certification program. The district provides services to the high school serving all constituent districts utilizing the Transfinder bus routing system. Transportation is managed through a single contracted bus company, selected through a competitive bidding process, with multi-route contracts covering 15 bus routes. Of these, three routes have been renewed three times, one route has received four renewals, and eleven routes have had 32 renewals collectively. Additionally, the district maintains contracts for three routes dedicated to transporting students to Sandyston-Walpack ES. These routes are operated by a local bus company; one is tiered with a Kittatinny route, while the remaining two run as standalone routes.

Fredon operates five single-tiered bus routes for students enrolled at its elementary school. These routes are managed under contract with the Sussex County Regional Cooperative. The cooperative is responsible for routing each bus, and the associated costs are incorporated into the administrative fee paid by the district for each of the routes.

Hampton provides transportation services to students enrolled at McKeown ES. Transportation is overseen by the business administrator and an administrative assistant. The district does not utilize a bus routing system; existing routes have remained unchanged for many years. Adjustments to these routes are made collaboratively by the principal and contracted bus providers when necessary. Hampton operates eight contracted bus routes through a local bus company, governed by a multi-route agreement. Of the eight routes, seven have been renewed 25 times, while one has seen 24 renewals.

The Stillwater superintendent and business administrator manage student transportation for the district. All students receive transportation services, in accordance with a hazardous road policy set by the board of education. This policy is implemented to maintain safety and efficiency. The district operates six bus routes, all managed under a contract with a local bus company. The contract covers multiple routes: four have been renewed 23 times, one has been renewed 27 times, and one has been renewed 30 times.

Sandyston-Walpack transports students using three bus routes operated by a local company contracted by Kittatinny. The district administers aid in lieu of transportation (AIL) payments to parents of students enrolled in charter or non-public schools, made in compliance with state codes

and statutes.⁹⁰ Sandyston-Walpack made payments for 5 charter students (\$5,585) and 14 non-public students (\$16,478).

Student Seat Time and Distance Traveled

TABLE 108
Transportation Stops per Route, Kittatinny Region, 2024-25

Stops	Kittatinny	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
4			1	
6			1	
9	1	1		
10	1	1		
11	1	1		
12	2	1		
13	2	1	2	
14	2	2	1	1
15	1			
16			1	
17	1			1
18				1
20		1		
21	1			
23	2			
24	1			
TOTAL	15	8	6	3

TABLE 109
Transportation Analysis, Kittatinny Region, 2024-25

	Kittatinny	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Efficiency Rating ⁹¹	1.207	0.934	0.998	n/a
Longest Seat Time (mins)	48	38	32	38
Average Seat Time (mins)	28	17	18	21
Average Stops per Route	15.4	12.9	11.0	16.3
Average Distance (miles)	7.4	3.8	3.7	2.9

⁹⁰ N.J.A.C. 6A:27-2 (non-public) and 6A:27-3 (charter); N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 (AIL); current AIL payment amount is \$1,177 per student

⁹¹ District Report of Transported Resident Students, 2023-24; Sandyston-Walpack does not have an efficiency rating as its routes are operated through Kittatinny

An evaluation of student transportation seat time and distance traveled was conducted for all bus services within the region as noted in Tables 108 and 109. The student ride times and distances traveled in each case are within what is reasonable for an area of this size. Kittatinny’s data is different from the elementary districts, which is to be expected as it covers the entire region of municipalities, and middle and high school students can more easily adjust to extended bus rides. Regionalization is not expected to affect student seat time or travel distance, as there are no current plans or discussions to alter the schools attended by students.⁹²

Route Costs

Tables 110 through 114 display the annual and average per route costs for regular education students. A random survey of other districts in the state shows the average per package costs to be between \$85,000 and \$95,000, so the costs here can be considered reasonable and efficient.

TABLE 110
Annual and Average per Route Costs, Regular Education, Kittatinny, 2024-25

	In-District	Vocational & Charter ⁹³	Non-Public ⁹⁴
Route Packages	15	2	40
Annual Cost	\$914,557	\$144,082	\$185,966
Average Cost	\$60,970	\$72,041	\$1,177
Per Student Cost	\$1,335	\$2,001	\$1,177

TABLE 111
Annual and Average per Route Costs, Regular Education, Fredon, 2024-25

	In-District	Vocational & Charter	Non-Public
Route Packages	5	none reported	none reported
Annual Cost	\$214,617	n/a	n/a
Average Cost	\$42,923	n/a	n/a
Per Student Cost	\$2,212	n/a	n/a

⁹² Bus routes rarely have more than 8–10 stops, but the suburban layout and student residences along busy highways lead to more home stops for student safety

⁹³ The per student rate exceeds the state-established AIL rate of \$1,177 for charter school students; according to the District Report of Transported Resident Students, there are 5 students listed as attending a charter school; the students are transported on a route that also includes 54 vocational school students; the AIL rate does not apply to vocational students, therefore the AIL rate of \$1,177 could be applied to the charter school students which would just increase the per student rate for the vocational students

⁹⁴ The per student AIL rate is \$1,177, as it pertains to non-public school students

TABLE 112
Annual and Average per Route Costs, Regular Education, Hampton, 2024-25

	In-District	Vocational & Charter	Non-Public
Route Packages ⁹⁵	8	1	13
Annual Cost	\$334,766	\$1,177	\$15,301
Average Cost	\$41,845	\$1,177	\$1,177
Per Student Cost	\$1,287	\$1,177	\$1,177

TABLE 113
Annual and Average per Route Costs, Regular Education, Stillwater, 2024-25

	In-District	Vocational & Charter	Non-Public
Route Packages	6	5	9
Annual Cost	\$266,748	\$5,885	\$10,593
Average Cost	\$44,458	\$1,177	\$1,177
Per Student Cost	\$926	\$1,177	\$1,177

TABLE 114
Annual and Average per Route Costs, Regular Education, Sandyston-Walpack, 2024-25

	In-District	Vocational & Charter	Non-Public
Route Packages	3	n/a	n/a
Annual Cost	\$149,508	n/a	n/a
Average Cost	\$49,836		
Per Student Cost	\$2,534		

Tiering Efficiency and Route Packaging

Bell schedules are a critical component of running a school, and the importance cannot be understated. They affect every aspect of operation, from instruction to contractual obligations to transportation. In fact, the schedule is the initial focus of how a district derives bid specifications, as the student's arrival times must be coordinated with the bell schedule. It is essential to evaluate various options to ensure that the bell schedule facilitates the most efficient and cost-effective transportation solutions.

⁹⁵ The vocational/charter route is a jointure with Kittatinny

TABLE 115
School Bell Schedules, 2024-25

Districts	Grade Levels	Start / End Times
Kittatinny	7-12	7:30a to 2:15p
Fredon	pK-6	8:15a to 3:15p
Hampton	pK-6	8:30a to 2:53p
Stillwater	pK-6	8:25a to 3:06p
Sandyston-Walpack	pK-6	8:25a to 3:10p

Tiering efficiency involves organizing each school's bell schedule and structuring the routes for each bus in levels or layers based on route times. Each route on a bus must be scheduled to ensure that the vehicle arrives at each school in accordance with the designated bell time for arrival. The greater the number of tiers assigned to a bus, the more efficient the bus becomes. For the purpose of bidding and contracting, each bus that has been tiered is considered one packaged bus. The total number of packaged buses constitutes a district's route packaging.

Kittatinny operates 12 single-tiered routes serving the high school and 3 double-tiered routes that provide transportation to both the high school and Sandyston-Walpack ES. Additionally, 2 routes transport 72 students to county charter and vocational schools. All in-district, charter, and vocational routes are managed under a multi-route contract with a local bus company, which was selected through a formal bidding process.

Hampton maintains 8 single-tiered route packages dedicated to serving its elementary school. The district also coordinates transportation for a charter school student through a jointure agreement with Kittatinny. Stillwater operates 6 single-tiered route packages serving its elementary school. For non-public students, neither district provides transportation; instead, parents receive compensation at the state-established AIL rate.

Special Needs Transportation

The special education routes shown in Table 116 are contracted through the Sussex County Educational Services Commission (SCESC). By contracting the routes in this way, the districts benefit from shared cost savings, as SCESC consolidates students from multiple districts who attend the same school onto common routes. It may be advantageous for the districts to consider leasing or purchasing some of their own school vehicles and employing district drivers and aides for some student transportation. This strategy has the potential to reduce costs while offering increased flexibility to address evolving transportation requirements.

TABLE 116
Transportation Costs for Special Education Students, 2024-25

	Kittatinny	Hampton	Stillwater ⁹⁶
Out of District Routes	1	1	0
Out of District Students	1	2	0
Annual Cost	\$18,695	\$31,320	
Average Cost	\$18,695	\$31,320	
Per Student Cost	\$18,695	\$15,660	
In-District Routes	1	2	0
In-District Students	10	11	19
Annual Cost	\$25,162	\$13,500	
Average Cost	\$25,162	\$6,750	
Per Student Cost	\$2,516	\$613	

Enlarging to a Grades 6-12 Regional

Looking at 2024-25 data, adding students going into Grade 6 to the existing routes for grades 7-12 would have resulted in 113 additional students to be transported: Hampton 53, Stillwater 25, Fredon 22, and Sandyston-Walpack 13. Table 117 suggests available space for an additional 125 students. While these figures demonstrate that the existing fleet could accommodate the increase in student numbers, several critical factors require consideration:

- If the majority of the new students reside in areas where buses are nearing capacity, overloading could become a concern;
- Potential increases in overall grade level enrollment may further increase the risk of exceeding bus capacities; and
- If buses servicing certain areas have room but necessitate additional stops, this could extend the time students spend in transit.

A possible solution would be to have the Kittatinny transportation supervisor input the anticipated 6th grade students into the routing system and design new bus routes to ensure balanced loads and minimal increases in seat time. Once updated, all routes should undergo a rebidding process.

⁹⁶ The district has 19 in-district special needs students; there are no additional costs for their transportation as the students are transported on the regular buses

TABLE 117
Bus Capacity and Student Loads, Kittatinny, 2024-25

Bus Routes	Capacity	Students ⁹⁷
K-3	54	49
K-4	54	55
K-6	54	39
K-8	54	45
K-10	54	31
K-11	54	39
K-14	54	49
K-15	54	50
K-16	54	58
K-17	54	41
K-19	54	52
K-20	54	55
K-21	54	43
K-27	54	32
K-28	54	47
TOTAL	810	685

Should rebidding occur, it is advisable to conduct a bell schedule study within each elementary district. At present, Kittatinny, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack operate bus routes using a single-tier system. It is recommended that districts collaborate to establish a bell schedule facilitating a double-tier route arrangement. Modifying elementary school bell times by 10 to 15 minutes could yield significant cost savings in transportation without major disruption.

Kittatinny operates 15 regular bus routes and two vocational routes, totaling 17 routes. Hampton has eight, Stillwater six, and Sandyston-Walpack three single bus routes, for a total of 17 routes among these three districts. It is important to consider that the addition of 6th grade students may require the allocation of a 16th bus for transportation, depending on their geographic distribution. If these students are situated in areas where existing buses exceed capacity, the introduction of an additional bus may be necessary to accommodate transportation needs.

These numbers support the feasibility of implementing a double-tier busing system, with Kittatinny's 17 routes forming the first tier and the 17 routes from Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack as the second tier. Adjustments to elementary bell times will be necessary to facilitate this transition. It may also be beneficial to include adjacent districts in any bell study, as their inclusion would increase the possibilities for achieving more effective tiered busing.

⁹⁷ In certain situations, bus loads may surpass the 54-passenger capacity; this is because high school students might choose to drive themselves and absenteeism is also a factor

Potential Improvements in Transportation

A primary difference between send-receive districts and a regional district is that the regional is responsible for transporting students attending the regional schools, while sending districts are responsible for transporting their students to the receiving district. The proposed regionalization would result in little to no change as far as what schools the students attend, so there would likely be no change to any of the current transportation programs unless the district chooses to seek a higher level of efficiency.

However, if the system moves from a 7-12 regional setup to a 6-12 regional one, sixth graders would start attending a different school. This could mean longer travel times and greater distances for those students.

One advantage of expanding the regional area could be the appointment of a single transportation coordinator. This position would allow for consistent review and optimization of bus stops, routes, and scheduling to boost the efficiency of busing. Although current transportation services are well managed, having a supervisor certified through the state program is advised to strengthen management. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration be given to broadening the responsibilities of the current Kittatinny transportation supervisor—who is close to completing certification—to oversee and manage transportation for all school districts within the region.

Any of the aforementioned structures would allow for better and more efficient combinations as noted. The supervisor would be aware of the needs of all schools thus allowing for identifying combining students with a route or routes together. This would improve the overall cost effectiveness of all districts. Additionally, implementing regular reviews and updates of route efficiency data could further refine the system. By utilizing advanced software for route optimization and ensuring regular communication among districts, the transportation framework could adapt dynamically to changing needs. This proactive approach would not only enhance operational efficiency but also improve service quality for students requiring specialized transportation.

Tuition

None of the districts in this region participate in a send-receive agreement with another district for regular education students. The students are educated in their elementary schools through sixth grade and then move to either Kittatinny HS or another high school. Districts that participate in send-receive relationships often do so because the sending district is not large enough to provide a thorough and efficient education to a particular age group or classification of students. In some cases, the district may maintain a grades pK-6 or pK-8 school but send its grades 7-12 or 9-12 students to another high school. In others, the small district (including non-operating districts) may choose to send all of its students to another elementary school and then to a centralized high school. There are many possible configurations.

The send-receive structure can also be used for special education students, where a particular need cannot be addressed in the student's home district. A detailed financial analysis of special education tuition is not conducted in this study due to the variable nature of student needs. The tuition calculations follow the same process as for regular education students, except that the contracts are typically for only one student. As stated in the Education & Program domain of this study, there are opportunities for shared services of personnel for the provision of special education programs.

In the event that all districts in the study go forward with a grades pK-12 regionalization, one of the issues to be resolved could be the two years of special education tuition reconciliations. Unlike regular education students in a send-receive relationship, the amounts to be reconciled for individual special education contracts are relatively small. The reconciliation process converts estimated tuition and enrollment to actual numbers two fiscal years later. Although there may be other options, the consultants see two possibilities: (a) the new regional absorbs the reconciliation; or (b) the tax levy is adjusted for the first two years as a final reconciliation for the municipalities that are involved. A grades pK-12 regionalization would share all costs across all constituent districts, and tuition would no longer be an issue.

27. Shared Services

Sharing services between school districts, local municipalities, and other governmental agencies have long been promoted by NJ as an efficiency measure. Public school contract law governs all purchasing of goods and services for public school districts in NJ.⁹⁸ These regulations are strict, and compliance is mandatory. The school business administrator frequently holds a certification as a qualified purchasing agent to address these matters. In very large districts, a separate individual and staff may be responsible for purchasing. Compliance is evaluated regularly through a district's annual audit, grant compliance reviews, and state/federal program audits. NJDOE's Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance has general oversight of regulatory programs.

There are dozens of NJ statutes and code regulations pertaining to shared services for school districts. The overarching statute states, "The boards of education of two or more districts may provide jointly by agreement for the provision and performance of goods and services for their respective districts, or one or more boards of education may provide for such provision or performance of goods or services by joint agreement with the governing body of any municipality or county."⁹⁹ A shared service is defined in code as "any educational or administrative service required to be performed by a district board of education in which the school district, with district board of education approval, is able and willing to share in the costs and benefits of that service with another district board of education, municipality, or other governmental unit, as authorized by the Uniform Shared 12 Services and Consolidation Act at N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1 et seq."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ N.J.S.A. 18A:18A

⁹⁹ N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-11

¹⁰⁰ N.J.A.C. 6A:23-1.2

A 2007 study identified nineteen state government reports and nearly as many non-government reports over the previous thirty some years dealing with shared/joint/consolidated services and cost savings for public entities.¹⁰¹ It noted, “While there is no definitive count of all the shared services arrangements in which New Jersey school districts are currently engaged, they certainly number in the hundreds, if not thousands.” A survey of 66 school districts in Bergen, Burlington, Essex, and Somerset counties found that 64 of them participated in some form of shared services. Table 118 displays the results.

TABLE 118
Popular Shared Services Opportunities ¹⁰²

Service Shared	Number of Districts Participating	Percentage of Districts Participating
Transportation	56	88%
Insurance	49	77%
Supplies	38	59%
Special Education Classes	36	56%
Related Services (OT, PT, Speech)	34	53%
Professional Development	31	48%
Other	25	39%
Child Study Team Services	20	31%
Food Services	17	27%
Facility Maintenance	16	25%
Custodial Services	9	14%
School Business Services	8	13%
Other Administration	7	11%
Other Instruction	5	8%
Textbooks	4	6%
Health Services	3	5%
Security	3	5%

The Division of Local Government Services has continued to promote such arrangements, stating in 2023 that, “Sharing services offers numerous benefits for participating communities. It reduces costs, delivers municipal services in a more efficient manner and increases value for each dollar spent while ensuring local units remain responsible stewards of the public trust.”¹⁰³ It should be noted that both a send-receive relationship between districts and school choice programs are addressed in other sections of code and statute and are not considered shared services.

¹⁰¹ Institute on Education Law and Policy. (2007). Shared services in school districts: Policies, practices, and recommendations. Rutgers University-Newark

¹⁰² Institute on Education Law and Policy, 2007; the structures of the 66 districts responding to this survey – 30 elementary, 27 all purpose, 7 secondary, 2 non-operating

¹⁰³ Local Efficiency Achievement Program Guidelines

All of the districts in the Kittatinny region participate significantly in shared services as indicated in Tables 119 and 120. It is obvious that the districts have worked hard to establish money saving and efficiency enhancing shared services. In fact, they are a model of shared services and cooperation among districts both in the regional group and outside of it.

Stillwater commented on the fantastic working relationship they have with their mayor, township council, and public works department. As examples, they cited the attention provided by public works in plowing school parking lots in a timely manner and the use of school facilities by the recreation programs in basketball, baseball, softball, and Girl Scouts.

TABLE 119
Existing Shared Personnel Services, Kittatinny Region ¹⁰⁴

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Art Teacher		Host			Recipient
Black Seal (sub)	As needed	As needed	As needed		As needed
Bus Driver	As needed to/from home and field trips		As needed		
Business Administrator					
Curriculum Coordinator	Recipient	Recipient	Recipient	Host	Recipient
Special Services Director	Host (60%)	Recipient (40%)			
Music Teacher		Host			Recipient
Nurse (sub)	As needed	As needed	As needed	Lead	As needed
PreK Instructional Coach/Intervention & Referral Spec		Rec services from Hampton	Provides services to Hampton, S/W and Stillwater	Rec services from Hampton	Rec services from Hampton
Psychologist		Host			Recipient
Security	Host	Recipient	Recipient	Lead Host	Recipient
Spanish Teacher (2)	Host		Recipient (15 pds/wk)	Recipient (15 pds/wk)	
Speech Therapist	Host				Recipient (2.5 hrs/wk)
Superintendent	Host (75%)		Recipient (25%)		

¹⁰⁴ Data gathered from business administrators and NJDOE User-Friendly Budgets

TABLE 120
Existing Shared Non-Personnel Services, Kittatinny Region

	Kittatinny	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston-Walpack
Custodial, Maintenance, and Trash Services					
Equipment & Educational Supplies					
Facilities & Fields	Pool used by all local swim teams (fee based)				
Food Service	Host KRHS				Receives lunches
Fuel	County			Township	
Liability & Property Insurance	SAIF			NJSIG-ERIC West	SAIF
Non-Public Funds & Services					
Professional Development	Host	Recipient	Recipient	Recipient	Recipient, also hosting ELA PD for elementaries
Recycling				Township	
Sand/Grit	County				
Snow Removal			Township	Township	Township
Transportation Abstracts, Bids, Quotes & Jointures	Provides admin, transportation and/or AIL services for all Charter, Sp Ed, non-public	Receives admin, transportation and/or AIL services for all Charter, Sp Ed, non-public	Receives admin, transportation and/or AIL services for all Charter, Sp Ed, non-public	JTPA KRHS, County Co-op	Receives admin, transportation and/or AIL services for all Charter, Sp Ed, non-public

Purchasing cooperatives save districts hours in pre-purchasing regulation compliance by creating bid documents, soliciting bids, and awarding bids. They also save time and money by eliminating the need for legal review and advertising fees. State purchasing regulations can, however, end up with an inferior product due to a required stipulation of it being “equal to or better than”. This requires careful attention to exactly what has been bid and awarded. Purchasing cooperatives may sometimes find it necessary to substitute a different item due to shortages in availability of the initially awarded item. The item could be better, not as good as, or simply not what was expected. Similar to their peers throughout the State, districts in this study participate in various purchasing cooperatives or educational services commissions for purchases of supplies and equipment.

Almost all NJ school districts are members of either the School Alliance Insurance Fund (SAIF) or the NJ Schools Insurance Group (NJSIG) for the purchase of liability and property insurances. Health insurance is typically procured through the state plan, or privately through a joint health insurance fund. Similarly, most districts participate in transportation cooperatives and jointures.

Shared services between school districts, or between districts and municipalities can save money, generate positive public relations, and foster good relationships. However, what is a good idea conceptually can be difficult to implement, especially if people try to, or need to, assign a financial value, and the end result can be discord among the entities. The process requires flexibility, communication, and trust.

Potential Improvements in Shared Services

As stated in Tables 119 and 120, there are many shared services occurring in the region, but the districts expressed a desire to consider the development of additional agreements. It should be noted that many of these changes would happen automatically in the event of regionalization. Before embarking on additional shared services, it is recommended that some thought be given to the feasibility of the agreement before embarking on it. Useful steps can include: ¹⁰⁵

- Establishing a clear goal – describe the service to be provided, clarify expectations, ensure all potential participants are on board;
- Describing the level of service currently being provided and how that would change in a joint operation – does it meet current needs? what are the future needs?;
- Determining the costs of providing the service currently and jointly; and
- Determining how the service will be provided – assign responsibility, identify potential problem areas.

When shared services are well designed and developed, they can be implemented properly resulting in cost-savings. However, when shared services place undue burden on those charged with implementing those services, frequent turnover can result. Administrative changes, like those noted below and particularly in small districts like those in this study, increases the risk of errors and missed deadlines.

- The region has a diverse set of administrative structures. Kittatinny has shared a superintendent (.75 FTE) with Hampton (.25 FTE) for approximately ten years. The .6 FTE superintendent in Sandyston-Walpack joined the district in July 2025, as did the chief school administrator in Fredon. Stillwater is the only elementary district in the region to have a full time superintendent, and he was hired in July 2025 as well.

¹⁰⁵ Division of Local Government Services. (2010). Shared services working together: A guide to joint service feasibility studies and shared service agreements. NJ Department of Community Affairs

- Stillwater's school business administrator has been with the district for many years, and also serves as the director of technology. Sandyston-Walpack has a .2 FTE person in the position and also uses a business services consultant. The other three districts have hired business administrators within the last two to three years.

High turnover and administrative instability within districts hinder long-term planning and operational efficiency. When leadership positions change often, staff remain stuck in a cycle of adjustment rather than focusing on cost-saving measures or district goals. Furthermore, in a one- or two-person business office, it is nearly impossible to establish proper internal controls or a system of checks and balances. This is not a reflection of staff performance, but rather a structural limitation of small-scale operations.

While current operations are being managed productively and result in good audits, the districts might benefit from a well-staffed regional business office model. By maintaining a central hub while keeping essential support staff at the individual school level, a business office could be developed that would provide depth, specialization, and continuity among its staff members. This model would still require duplication of reports for multiple districts.

In a regional business office, the following operations would happen for a single district instead of five separate entities: audit; payroll; human resources; transportation; purchasing/accounts payable; entitlement funds, competitive grant writing, and grant administration; software licenses and support; food service management companies/directors and software; facilities management; compliance reporting; budget preparation; and school treasury services.

A regional business office could not only handle these required day-to-day functions, but also allow time to explore grants, alternative funding, purchasing co-operatives, joint insurance, and other money saving options. While this may occur sometimes in smaller districts, it is very difficult to meet all state deadlines and handle daily issues as well. In small districts, one or two people are expected to be an expert in all areas. In a larger office, the expertise of individuals in a particular area could be strengthened and should eventually save the districts time and money.

Similarly, the centralized administrative and educational reports are done by many different individuals, where a single office could have individuals who become more experienced in, and familiar with, processing the reports. Some examples of these are:

- Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)
- School Safety Data System (SSDS)
- Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (NJSLEDS)
- Application for State School Aid (ASSA)
- Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Accountability Report
- Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)
- Open Public Records Act (OPRA) Requests
- Fall Enrollment Report

- Certified and Non-Certified Staff Reports
- School Performance Reports
- State Budget Submission

Beyond a joint business office, other possible areas for expansion or exploration include: ¹⁰⁶

- Counseling – The availability of counselors is more important now than ever. Smaller schools often struggle to employ full-time staff in this area. Acting as a region, some counseling positions may be shared across schools, reducing the financial burden on one district while offering continuity of services within the region. Although many districts share resources during a crisis, a core group of counselors may be able to provide specialization in specific areas of concern.
- Facilities – A single facilities director could be another useful shared employee, planning projects and identifying facilities that could be done jointly, as well as establishing economies of scale for purchasing and personnel distribution.
- Food Services – All the districts use a single company for food service management. Facility capacity for food services could be investigated to see if it would be more efficient and effective to consolidate that activity in one district under a single food service management company with the other districts becoming satellite locations; this would be an expansion of the existing arrangement between Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack.
- Special Education – Kittatinny and Fredon share a special services director; this arrangement could be expanded across the region, similar to the shared curriculum coordinator. This could provide opportunities to better understand the needs of the students in the region at an early age and create programs to be offered locally to meet those students' needs. While each of the districts offer multiple in-district programs, efficiencies may be found in consolidating one or more of these programs into one or two of the elementary schools. Other potential exists for joint operation among child study teams and related service providers.
- Special Subject Teachers – Art, music, and world language teachers are becoming increasingly difficult to find and hire into part-time positions. Although some of these staff members are already being shared, continuing budget issues may drive an increased number of shared staff. Sharing the services of full-time teachers versus part-time positions may increase the likelihood that these teachers are attracted to and stay in the districts, as well as providing continuity within the program.
- Transportation – A regional transportation coordinator can find efficiencies in an area where costs are growing dramatically. This individual would be aware of the needs of all schools, thus allowing the combining of student routes more productively, improving the overall cost effectiveness. By utilizing advanced software for route optimization and ensuring regular

¹⁰⁶ There is more detail on the education related areas in that domain of this study

communication among districts, the transportation framework could adapt dynamically to changing needs. This proactive approach would not only enhance operational efficiency but also improve service quality for students requiring specialized transportation.

Shared Services versus Regionalization

While personnel sharing offers distinct advantages, it is not suitable for every position. Unlike leaders in a regionalized district who report to a single board, shared administrators manage two or more entirely separate entities. In the case of a two-district agreement, this effectively doubles their workload, requiring them to navigate multiple budgets, distinct employee agreements, and a significantly higher volume of evening meetings and compliance tasks. Furthermore, differences in workplace culture and collective bargaining rules between districts can complicate these arrangements. Consequently, these roles require a high level of commitment, creating a stressful environment that can lead to burnout and frequent turnover.

It is important to note that while services can be shared among separate districts, the duplication of activities and reports would still be occurring. With regionalization, the operations and reports described above would happen for a single district instead of three separate entities, creating a significant reduction in hours needed for compliance activities. It is clear that regionalized districts can realize all of the benefits described in shared services while simultaneously reducing duplication of efforts in many areas of operation and providing staff with time for program development, research, innovation, cost savings and focus on student achievement.

28. State Aid

This section examines the state aid implications of the restructuring scenarios for Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack. The analysis draws upon financial data from each participating district and publicly available state data to identify potential benefits and implementation challenges. While detailed supporting data appears in the accompanying tables, this narrative will highlight key findings and their meaning for each scenario. There is an appendix at the end of this report that outlines key assumptions used in this study's state aid and local tax modeling and analysis. It also provides some background knowledge on NJ's school funding formula and local tax apportionment methods which may aid in interpreting this analysis.

The regionalization scenarios will be referenced by numbered options in this section as follows.

Option 1: Expansion of the limited purpose, grades 7-12 Kittatinny Regional into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional including the districts of Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack.

Option 2: Expansion of the limited purpose, grades 7-12 Kittatinny Regional into a grades 6-12 regional.

These two options will be compared to the status quo with the existing district governance structures with Kittatinny remaining as a limited purpose, grades 7-12 regional, and Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack remaining as separate grades pK-6 districts.

The projections in this study are estimates based on the latest available data and reasonable assumptions about future trends. Actual aid allocations will depend on annual state appropriations, future policy decisions, and demographic changes that cannot be predicted with certainty. Readers should interpret the results as indicators of relative differences between configurations rather than as precise forecasts of future aid amounts.

The detailed analysis that follows is organized into three parts. First, it reviews the historical state aid trends in each participating district. Second, it projects future aid under the status quo scenario. Finally, it analyzes projected aid under each of the regionalization options, including the effects of hold harmless protections provided for in statute.¹⁰⁷

State Aid History in the Region

Before projecting future state aid, it is important to understand how aid has evolved in recent years and what factors have driven each district's funding trajectory. This historical context is useful for interpreting the projections that follow and for understanding how regionalization might alter each district's treatment by the state funding formula. The following analysis examines state aid trends from FY 2022 through FY 2027, a period that encompasses the final years of the S2 phase-in, the achievement of full SFRA funding in FY 2025, and the methodology changes first introduced in FY 2026. For each district, the analysis identifies the primary factors that have shaped its aid trajectory.

Regional Overview

TABLE 121
Actual State Aid by District, FY 2022-2027 (in millions)¹⁰⁸

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	5-year % change
Kittatinny	3.70	2.66	2.03	1.87	2.00	1.97	-47%
Fredon	.37	.32	.29	.31	.32	.34	-7%
Hampton	.80	.62	.58	.72	.75	.80	0%
Stillwater	.96	.66	.51	.54	.57	.61	-36%
Sandyston-Walpack	.35	.33	.44	.59	.58	.56	+59%
TOTAL	6.18	4.60	3.85	4.03	4.23	4.28	-31%

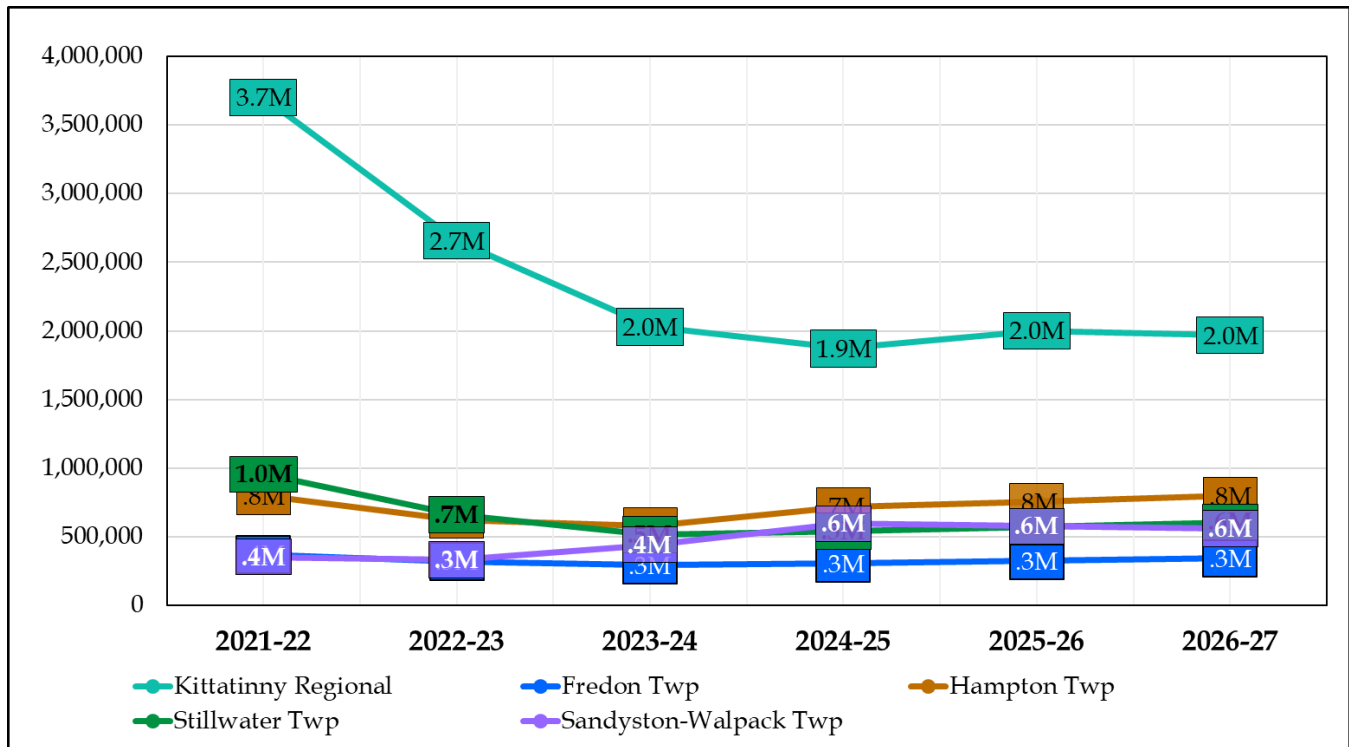
Table 121 and Chart 19 summarize actual state aid received by each district from FY 2022 through FY 2027. While individual district trajectories have varied, total aid in the districts declined from

¹⁰⁷ N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-32

¹⁰⁸ Figures include SFRA equalization, categorical aids, and school choice aid; debt service aid is discussed separately below; federal aid is excluded as it is allocated through separate formulas unaffected by regionalization; FY 2027 was considered actual aid at the time of this analysis, as new aid figures had been released and typically remain unaltered

FY 2022 through FY 2024 but has since stabilized, fluctuating between \$4 million and \$4.3 million in the three years since.

CHART 19
Actual State Aid in the Region, FY 2022-2027



Over the past six years, the five districts have experienced different aid trajectories. Kittatinny and Stillwater have seen significant reductions in state aid. Fredon and Hampton experienced early declines with recent increases. Sandyston-Walpack saw early increases but has recently experienced reductions. These trends reflect differences in each district's demographic and economic factors.

In Kittatinny, declining enrollment coupled with increased local wealth factors pushed local fair shares higher while limiting adequacy budget growth and reducing the amount of equalization aid the state provides. Kittatinny saw state aid decline from \$3.7 million to \$2.0 million from FY 2022 to FY 2027 (-47%).

Fredon experienced consistent aid declines from FY 2022 to FY 2024, with total aid falling from approximately \$370,000 to \$290,000. Despite enrollment increases over the period and annual statewide formula adjustments for inflation, both of which work to increase the adequacy budget, the state incrementally reduced aid as rising local wealth factors shifted more education funding responsibility from the state to the district's taxpayers. The district experienced aid increases in FY 2025, 2026, and 2027 driven by enrollment growth and its proportional effect on categorical aid (i.e., special education, transportation, security).

Hampton saw a u-shaped decline and rise in its state aid allocation from FY 2022 through FY 2027. The early year declines occurred for the same reasons as Fredon, with aid falling from \$798,000 to \$720,000 (-28%) between FY 2022 and FY 2024. Since then, however, the district has seen aid rise back to \$798,000 driven by increasing student enrollment as well as increasing counts of classified special education students and low income students, all of which lead to increased funding under the SFRA formula.

Stillwater saw its state aid decline over the period, falling from \$956,000 in FY 2022 to \$607,000 in FY 2027 (-36%). Like Fredon and Hampton, Stillwater also saw enrollment increases over the period, but local wealth factors increased the district's local fair share and shifted funding responsibility from the state to local taxpayers.

Sandyston-Walpack experienced annual state aid increases through FY 2025 with aid rising to \$595,000. Since then, the district has seen state aid fall to \$560,000 (-6%). While local wealth factors increased in the consolidated district in the early years, inflationary adjustments in the funding formula outpaced the growth in local wealth and drove higher aid to the district. However, by FY 2026, declining enrollment limited adequacy budget growth, which resulted in lower aid with the district receiving the maximum allowable reduction of 3% in both FY 2026 and FY 2027.

Implications for Regionalization

The historical trends described above have several implications for the regionalization analysis.

- Only Stillwater currently receives an allocation of equalization aid. This leaves an expanded regional susceptible to the effects of blended wealth factors. If the combined equalized property values and aggregate incomes of the constituent municipalities produce a local fair share that exceeds the regional's adequacy budget, the regional could lose eligibility for equalization aid entirely. This risk does not equally exist under the status quo where each district is evaluated independently by the SFRA formula.
- Sandyston-Walpack's relatively lower local wealth factors could be an asset in a regional configuration, as blending its equalized valuation with higher property wealth municipalities could help offset the regional's overall local fair share calculation.
- Hampton and Stillwater's growing population of classified special education students is a potential asset under the SFRA formula. Classified students carry weight in the formula's adequacy budget calculation. In a regional configuration, these student demographics could potentially generate higher aid than the sum of the separate districts would receive independently.

Projected State Aid for the Status Quo

This subsection presents projected state aid for each district under the status quo configuration which assumes that the existing districts continue to operate independently. The projections use the financial model described in the Appendix and explore both the capped aid scenario (in which the

FY 2026 and FY 2027 methodology changes continue) and the uncapped aid scenario (in which standard SFRA formula calculations resume in FY 2028). For each district, the analysis presents projected aid by category, explains the key factors driving the trajectory, and highlights differences between the capped and uncapped scenarios.

Before examining each district individually, Table 122 provides an overview of projected aid across all five districts under the capped aid scenario. FY 2027 actual aid is included as a starting point. Total aid across five districts is projected to increase, ranging from \$4.28 million to \$4.85 million over the studied period and is generally consistent with what one would expect in districts receiving most of their aid through categorical aid. The individual district projections all represent continuations of recent historical trends. Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater all see continued increases in aid. Sandyston-Walpack experiences steady reductions.

TABLE 122
Projected State Aid by District, FY 2027-2032 (in millions) ¹⁰⁹

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	5-year change
Kittatinny	1.97	2.05	2.05	2.09	2.14	2.2	11.9%
Fredon	.34	.36	.39	.41	.42	.42	23.8%
Hampton	.80	.85	.90	.92	.92	.93	15.9%
Stillwater	.61	.64	.68	.72	.77	.81	33.8%
Sandyston-Walpack	.56	.54	.53	.51	.50	.48	-14.1%
TOTAL	4.28	4.44	4.54	4.65	4.74	4.84	13.3%

TABLE 123
Projected State Aid, Kittatinny, FY 2028-2032

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation Aid	526,055	508,298	480,027	488,728	516,549	541,039
Special Education Aid	853,099	910,705	933,472	952,142	962,513	990,608
Security Aid	107,858	104,217	98,421	100,205	105,909	110,930
Choice Aid	481,130	522,099	539,622	547,776	552,447	559,386
Total Capped Aid ¹¹⁰	1,968,142	2,045,318	2,051,542	2,088,850	2,137,418	2,201,963
YoY Difference (%)	-1.7%	3.9%	0.3%	1.8%	2.3%	3.0%
Uncapped Aid ¹¹¹	1,968,142	2,045,318	2,051,542	2,088,850	2,137,418	2,201,963

¹⁰⁹ Figures include SFRA equalization, categorical aids, and school choice aid; debt service aid is discussed separately below; federal aid is excluded as it is allocated through separate formulas unaffected by regionalization; FY2027 amounts in this table and others afterward are actual as a reference point for the projections that follow

¹¹⁰ Total includes school choice aid which is not subject to the annual aid cap

¹¹¹ Figures include school choice aid for comparability; school choice aid is not part of the uncapped aid formula

Kittatinny is projected to receive no equalization aid throughout the study period, as its local fair share continues to exceed its adequacy budget. Aid growth is driven entirely by categorical aids, primarily special education and school choice, with transportation and security aid contributing to a smaller degree. Capped and uncapped aid projections are identical for Kittatinny, as the projected annual aid increases (excluding choice aid) are within the cap limits. Total aid is projected to grow from \$1.97 million to \$2.2 million over the period, a 12% increase.

TABLE 124
Projected State Aid, Fredon, FY 2028-2032

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation Aid	99,215	112,566	118,558	124,945	125,235	125,112
Special Education Aid	216,769	220,382	234,572	249,569	260,139	265,342
Security Aid	26,762	30,363	31,980	33,703	33,781	33,748
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Capped Aid	342,747	363,312	385,110	408,217	419,154	424,201
YoY Difference (%)	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	2.7%	1.2%
Uncapped Aid	399,670	402,145	410,499	417,162	419,154	424,201

Fredon is projected to receive no equalization aid during the study period. Under the capped scenario, the district's aid grows at the 6% annual cap limit through FY 2030, after which growth slows as the district approaches its formula target. Uncapped aid runs higher through FY 2030 and is driven by rising enrollment. Once Fredon's capped aid catches up to its uncapped aid amount, the district will see aid fluctuate modestly each year. Total capped aid is projected to grow from \$343,000 to \$424,000 over the period (+23.8%).

TABLE 125
Projected State Aid, Hampton, FY 2028-2032

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation Aid	323,056	348,290	371,320	380,722	371,970	370,433
Special Education Aid	423,273	441,882	465,920	476,071	485,592	495,304
Security Aid	51,744	55,786	59,475	60,981	59,579	59,333
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Capped Aid	798,073	845,957	896,715	917,774	917,141	925,070
YoY Difference (%)	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	2.3%	-0.1%	0.9%
Uncapped Aid	878,718	887,313	898,285	917,774	917,141	925,070

Hampton is projected to receive no equalization aid during the study period. Like Fredon, the district's capped aid grows at the 6% annual cap limit through FY 2029 until capped and uncapped aid converge in FY 2030. Hampton's categorical aid growth is driven by its increasing projected

enrollment. Total capped aid is projected to grow from \$798,000 to \$925,000 over the period (+15.9%).

TABLE 126
Projected State Aid, Stillwater, FY 2028-2032

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	119,789	88,536	211,976	302,710	286,922	356,216
Transportation Aid	156,376	182,906	165,263	153,759	174,301	166,997
Special Education Aid	302,078	338,343	274,394	238,199	273,044	258,374
Security Aid	28,741	33,618	30,375	28,260	32,036	30,694
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Capped Aid	606,984	643,403	682,007	722,927	766,303	812,281
YoY Difference (%)	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%
Uncapped Aid	1,015,813	989,613	1,325,799	1,651,273	1,557,509	1,779,596

Stillwater is the only district in the region that is currently receiving equalization aid and projected to receive it over the study period. The district's capped aid runs significantly below its full uncapped formula aid. This is because its adequacy budget outpaces its local fair share, generating equalization aid eligibility that the 6% annual cap prevents it from fully receiving. While capped aid will grow at 6% annually, uncapped aid grows substantially faster, driven generally by projected enrollment increases and reaching \$1.78 million by FY 2032. By FY 2032, this represents a difference of over \$967,000 annually. The caps are significantly suppressing Stillwater's aid, and whether those caps continue will have substantial implications for Stillwater's aid expectations, and, by extension, for the regional under the studied configurations.

The superintendent noted the aid cap as a significant challenge for the district. As a result of the ongoing loss of state aid year after year, the district has been forced into difficult choices such as having art, media, world language, STEM, child study team, and some support staff working part time hours. Limits have also been placed on maintenance and capital improvements.

TABLE 127
Projected State Aid, Sandyston-Walpack, FY 2028-2032

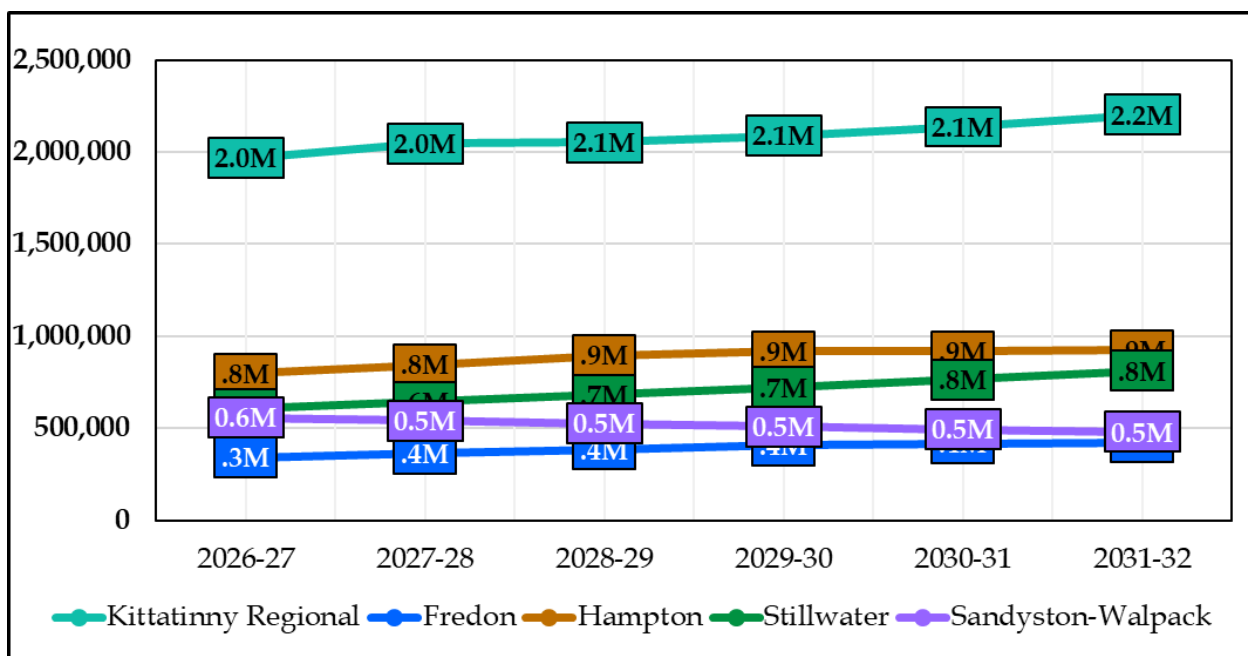
	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation Aid	196,845	184,329	179,802	171,341	167,435	160,042
Special Education Aid	320,911	319,298	308,503	302,965	292,380	286,482
Security Aid	41,772	39,116	38,155	36,360	35,531	33,962
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Capped Aid	559,528	542,742	526,460	510,666	495,346	480,486
YoY Difference (%)	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%
Uncapped Aid	289,222	290,252	298,682	300,917	308,506	311,521

Sandyston-Walpack is projected to receive no equalization aid during the study period. It shows an inverse of Stillwater’s trend, with the annual cap on aid reductions providing a floor rather than a ceiling, and limiting annual decreases to 3% rather than constraining increases. Capped aid declines steadily at 3% per year, falling from \$560,000 to \$480,000 by FY 2032 (-14.1%). Without cap protections, Sandyston-Walpack’s aid would fall to approximately \$290,000 in FY 2028, roughly half its current level, and recover only modestly to \$312,000 by FY 2032. The caps are providing the district with substantial protection from a much steeper formula-driven decline.

Status Quo Projection Summary

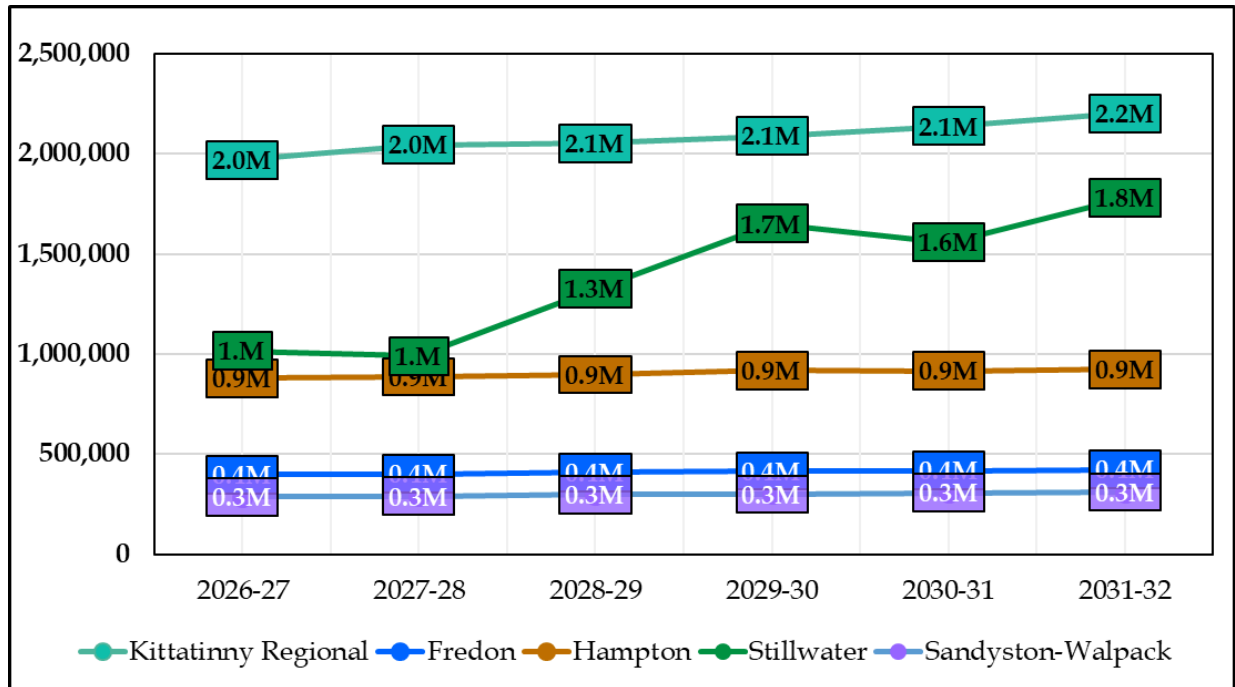
Having examined each district individually, it is useful to consider the aggregate picture. The charts below illustrate total projected aid across all five districts under both the capped and uncapped status quo scenarios. Under the capped scenario, Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater all see continued aid increases, while Sandyston-Walpack declines steadily at the 3% annual floor.

CHART 20
Projected Capped Aid in the Region, Status Quo, FY 2027-2032



Under the uncapped scenario, the aggregate picture changes significantly for two districts. Stillwater’s aid rises sharply and nearly doubles by FY 2032 due to growing equalization aid currently suppressed by the cap. Sandyston-Walpack, by contrast, experiences a much steeper decline, falling to roughly half its current aid level by FY 2028 without cap protections. The other three districts see only modest differences between the capped and uncapped scenarios, as their aid is driven primarily by modest changes in categorical aids which all fall within the cap limits.

CHART 21
Projected Uncapped Aid in the Region, Status Quo, FY 2027-2032



The status quo projections establish a baseline against which regionalization configurations can be compared. The following subsections examine projected state aid under the regionalization options and analyze how regionalization alters the formula's determination of aid. It determines which districts would benefit or face challenges and how incentive provisions in state law would affect the prospective regional.

Projected State Aid for Option 1

Having presented estimated state aid under the status quo scenario for each participating district in the prior subsection, this subsection presents projected aid for an enlarged, all purpose Kittatinny Regional that includes all districts as constituent members. Under this configuration, a single regional would serve all students in grades pK-12 across the five municipalities. The projections use the same assumptions and model as the status quo scenario in order to isolate the impact of regionalization and enable direct comparison.

How Regionalization Affects State Aid Calculations

Regionalization changes how the SFRA formula calculates state aid. Generally, a regional's adequacy budget will be approximately equal to the sum of the separate district budgets, with minor differences stemming from the application of multipliers in the formula. Its local fair share is calculated using the combined equalized property values and aggregate incomes of all constituent municipalities. This blending can produce substantially different results from the status quo. When the blended local fair share remains below the regional's adequacy budget, the regional qualifies for

equalization aid. Categorical aid is calculated per pupil and equals approximately the sum of what separate districts would receive.

Projected State Aid

Table 128 summarizes the projected aid for the expanded regional under the capped scenario, with uncapped figures shown for comparison. Choice aid is not subject to the cap but is traditionally included in a district's aid total. Therefore, it is included in the total figures.

TABLE 128
Projected State Aid, Option 1, FY 2028-2032 ¹¹²

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Equalization Aid	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation Aid	1,371,758	1,385,861	1,429,966	1,459,506	1,496,897
Special Education Aid	2,203,580	2,250,335	2,312,344	2,375,934	2,414,608
Security Aid	267,850	270,604	279,216	284,984	292,285
Choice Aid	522,099	539,622	547,776	552,447	559,386
Total Capped Aid	4,365,286	4,446,422	4,569,302	4,672,871	4,763,175
YoY Difference (%)	0.3%	1.9%	2.8%	2.3%	1.9%
Uncapped Aid	4,365,286	4,446,422	4,569,302	4,672,871	4,763,175

Under regionalization to an all purpose grades pk-12 district, total SFRA aid is projected to increase from roughly \$4.4 million in FY 2028 to \$4.8 million in FY 2032. The regional under this configuration will not be eligible for equalization aid as its blended wealth factors cause its local fair share to surpass its adequacy budget. Instead, it will rely on categorical aid and choice aid to supplement its local school taxes. This differs from the individual district dynamics present in the status quo, where Stillwater would be expected to continue receiving equalization through FY 2032. With Stillwater's equalization aid projected to range between \$89,000 to \$356,000 over the period, this represents a material adverse impact of regionalization. Because annual aid increases remain below the 6% cap, the regional will receive its full uncapped aid amount under the formula.

Effect of Hold Harmless Protections

As described in the methodology section of the Appendix, state law provides for regionals to receive supplemental aid for a period of five years following regionalization. For Option 1, the hold harmless floor amount – the combined FY 2027 equalization aid of Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack – is \$119,789. This amount is multiplied annually by a transition weight that declines from 1.0 in year 1 to 0.2 by year 5. The regional would receive nearly \$360,000 in cumulative supplemental aid over the five-year protection period (FY 2028-2032). Table 129 presents the annual amounts that would be received under the state's formula.

¹¹² The first year of operation of the enlarged regional is assumed to be the 2027-28 school year; this assumption is needed to determine the regional's eligibility for hold harmless protection

TABLE 129
Regional Incentive Hold Harmless Aid, Option 1, FY 2027–2029

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	Cumulative
Regional Formula Aid (capped)	4,365,286	4,446,422	4,569,302	4,672,871	4,763,175	-
Hold Harmless Minimum	4,485,075	4,542,253	4,641,175	4,720,786	4,787,133	-
Supplemental Aid	119,789	95,831	71,873	47,915	23,958	359,366

Expected State Aid After Protections

Putting everything together by combining formula aid with hold harmless protections and adding choice aid, the regional’s expected aid is presented in Table 130. The expected aid trajectory is positive, showing modest annual increases in aid over the period.

TABLE 130
Expected State Aid, Option 1, FY 2027–2031

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Regional SFRA Aid	3,843,187	3,906,800	4,021,526	4,120,424	4,203,789
Hold Harmless Aid	119,789	95,831	71,873	47,915	23,958
Choice Aid	522,099	539,622	547,776	552,447	559,386
Total Expected Aid	4,485,075	4,542,253	4,641,175	4,720,786	4,787,133

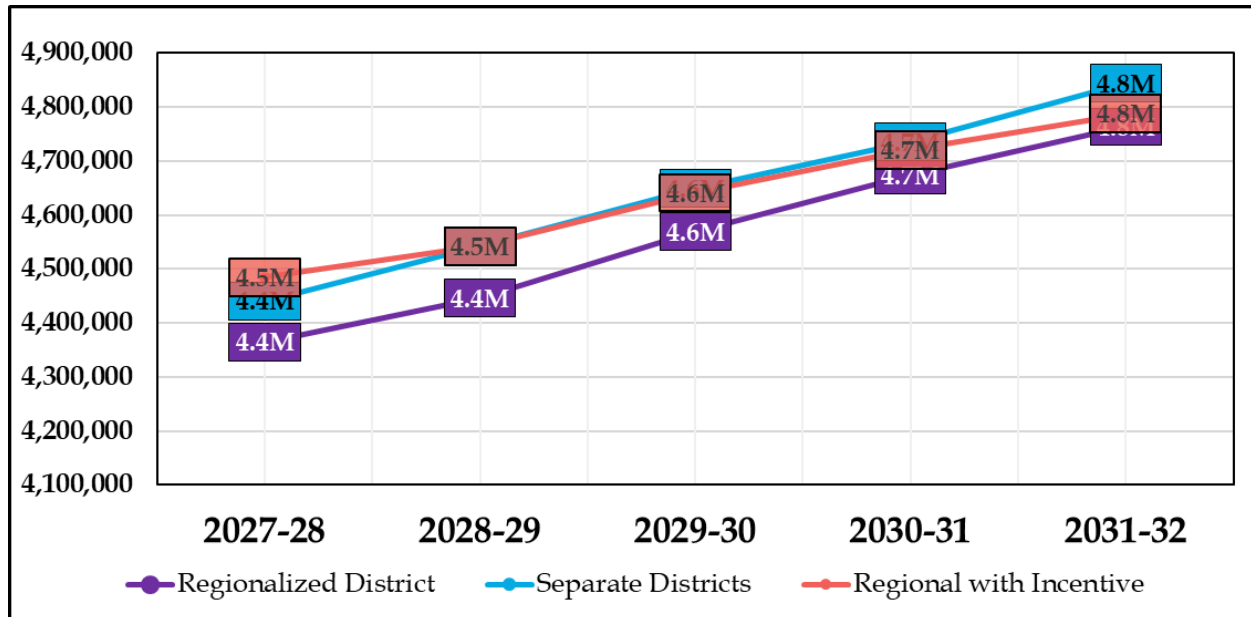
Comparison with Status Quo

The central question in our analysis is whether the regional would receive more or less state aid than the districts would receive if they remained separate. Table 131 compares the two scenarios and Chart 22 compares the regional’s aid with hold harmless protections (red) to total aid in the separate districts (blue) and regional aid without protections (purple). With supplemental hold harmless aid, the regional runs modestly ahead of the separate districts in the first two years. Beginning in year three, as protections diminish, separate district aid begins to surpass regional aid. By year five, the separate districts total \$4.8 million, \$57,000 more than the protected regional. Without any protections, the regional lags an average of \$79,000 below separate district aid over the five-year period.

TABLE 131
State Aid Comparison, Option 1 vs. Status Quo, FY 2028-2032

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Regional District Aid	4,485,075	4,542,253	4,641,175	4,720,786	4,787,133
Separate District Aid	4,440,732	4,541,834	4,648,434	4,735,362	4,844,000
Difference	44,343	419	-7,259	-14,576	-56,868

CHART 22
Comparison of State Aid, Option 1 vs. Status Quo, FY 2027–2031



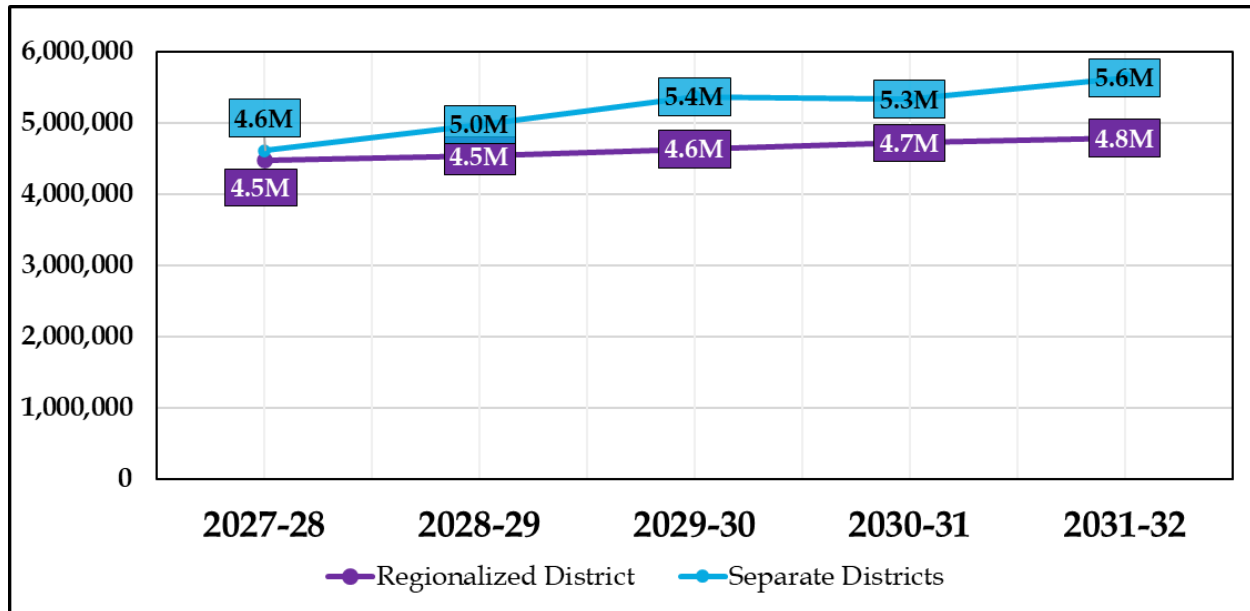
While the regional under Option 1 would receive less state aid, the difference is relatively small, amounting to around a tenth of one percent of the regional’s total operating budget. Total aid in the separate districts is driven by Stillwater’s projected equalization aid which represents the singular major difference between regionalization and the status quo. Overall, the effect of state aid fluctuations is negligible relative to the districts’ total operating budgets.

Capped versus Uncapped Scenarios

The analysis above uses the capped scenario. Under an uncapped scenario, the dynamics shift considerably to the benefit of remaining separate; again, driven primarily by Stillwater and its continued eligibility for equalization in the status quo. Due to Stillwater’s rising enrollment, but for the caps limiting annual aid increase, the district would see larger annual gains. The uncapped scenario shows what those gains would look like. Chart 23 provides a visual comparison of regional aid (with hold harmless protections) in purple and total uncapped aid in the separate districts in blue.

Under uncapped aid, the regional’s FY 2032 total aid would reach \$4.8 million, approximately \$855,000 less than aid as separate districts (\$5.6 million). If the state returns to full SFRA funding, the regional configuration under Option 1 would yield lower state aid than remaining separate. The hold harmless protections provide some assistance but not enough to keep the regional’s aid on pace.

CHART 23
Comparison of Uncapped State Aid, Option 1 vs. Status Quo, FY 2028–2032



Final Considerations and Findings for Option 1

From a state aid perspective, Option 1 represents a slight unfavorable configuration under capped aid and a firmly less favorable configuration under uncapped aid. The regional is projected to receive approximately \$34,000 less in cumulative state aid from FY 2028-2032 under capped aid and \$2.7 million less cumulatively than the separate districts under uncapped aid. Hold harmless protections are expected to provide approximately \$359,000 in cumulative supplemental aid over the five-year protection period. After protections expire, enrollment-driven formula growth works to continue modest aid increases. However, the regional is never better off than the status quo under this configuration.

Projected State Aid for Option 2

This subsection examines how state aid would be affected by an expansion of Kittatinny into a grades 6-12 limited purpose regional. Under this configuration, 6th grade operations would shift from the individual grades pK-6 districts in Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack to Kittatinny, with the constituent elementary districts becoming grades pK-5 districts.

Unlike Option 1, a full quantitative model of state aid under this configuration was not prepared. Grade level enrollment and expenditure data at the granularity required to precisely model aid flows between the regional and each elementary district were not available in a form that would support reliable projections. Instead, this section identifies the key factors that would influence state aid under Option 2 and describes the likely direction of their effects. Readers should treat this as a qualitative framework for understanding the state aid dynamics of this configuration rather than a precise aid forecast.

Aid Reallocation Between Districts

The most direct state aid effect of Option 2 is a reallocation of categorical aid between the regional and the elementary districts proportional to the movement of sixth grade students. Under the SFRA formula, categorical aids for transportation, special education, and security are calculated on a per-pupil basis. As 6th grade enrollment shifts to the regional, the aid associated with those students shifts as well. The regional would gain between approximately 100 and 135 students annually under this configuration and would see a corresponding increase in categorical aid. Each of the four elementary districts would see proportionally reduced aid reflecting their smaller enrollment as pK-5 districts. Across the region as a whole, this is a reallocation of existing categorical aid rather than a change in total aid received.

It is worth noting that 6th grade students carry a modestly higher per pupil weight in the state's adequacy formula than other elementary grade students. This would increase the regional's adequacy budget slightly. However, because the regional is not expected to qualify for equalization aid under this configuration (or under Option 1), this added weight would not translate into additional equalization aid. Its effect on actual dollars received would be minimal.

Wealth Factors and Apportionment Effects

Option 2 also changes how equalized property valuation is apportioned among the regional and elementary districts, which has downstream effects on each community's share of school costs. Under the state's apportionment rules, each municipality's share of the regional's total equalized valuation is determined in part by its resident enrollment in the regional. As 6th grade students from each sending district enroll in the regional, a portion of each municipality's total equalized valuation shifts from the elementary district to the regional. The elementary districts retain the valuation associated with their remaining pK-5 enrollment.

The shifts in equalized valuation will impact each district's local fair share determination under the formula. Lower equalized valuations generally translate into reduced local fair shares. However, these lower local fair shares will be of a reduced adequacy budget due to lower enrollment. Shifts in equalized valuation alone are not expected to affect equalization aid eligibility for Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, or Sandyston-Walpack, none of which currently receive equalization aid.

The interplay of these effects is particularly nuanced in the case of Walpack Township. Because Walpack has no resident students, the state's formula for consolidated school districts allocates 100% of Walpack's approximately \$6 million in equalized valuation to the Sandyston-Walpack district. Under Option 2, as a portion of Sandyston Township's equalized valuation moves to the regional with its 6th graders, Walpack's fixed valuation would represent a modestly larger share of Sandyston-Walpack's remaining total. Theoretically, this could increase Walpack's proportional share of the elementary district's costs. However, the total costs being apportioned within the elementary district would decrease simultaneously as 6th grade salaries and operating expenses shift to the regional. These two forces work in opposite directions, and without grade level expenditure data, it is not possible to determine which effect dominates for Walpack specifically. This dynamic

is worth monitoring if Option 2 is pursued, and a more detailed analysis using actual grade level cost data would be warranted during the implementation planning process.

Formula Eligibility and Overall Effect

The central question from a state aid perspective is whether Option 2 changes the equalization aid eligibility of any district in the region. Based on this analysis, it does not. As noted above, Kittatinny would remain ineligible for equalization aid under the blended wealth factors of the five municipalities even with the addition of 6th grade students.

Findings for Option 2

Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 configuration is not expected to materially alter the aggregate state aid picture for the region. The primary change is a reallocation of categorical aid from the elementary districts to the regional proportional to the movement of 6th grade students, not a net gain or loss for the region as a whole. The more complex valuation and apportionment effects described above would require grade level data to model with precision, but are not expected to be large enough to change any district's formula eligibility or produce significant changes in total aid received. If this option is seriously considered by the districts, the financial analysis should be focused primarily on the operational implications of the grade reconfiguration rather than on state aid as a significant factor.

Federal Impact Aid

Federal impact aid through Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is directed to districts that are financially burdened by a federal presence in their communities. These are situations where the federal government has removed property from the local tax base or where children of federal employees attend local public schools. The districts in this region that receive federal impact aid are Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated, which educates grades pK-6 students from its townships, and Kittatinny Regional, which educates grades 7-12 students from those townships as well as from Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater. The two districts are eligible for impact aid due to the sizable acreage in Sandyston and Walpack Townships taken up by the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, which encompasses a total of 67,210 acres in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.¹¹³

Since these districts cannot collect property taxes on federal land, the U.S. Government compensates them through impact aid to offset the lost local revenue. Districts that receive federal impact aid include those with:

- Federal lands (Section 7002) — properties that are tax-exempt because they are owned by the federal government;

¹¹³ National Park Service, retrieved from https://www.nps.gov/dewa/getinvolved/upload/DEWA_FD_2014_508_compliant.pdf

- Military installations (Section 7003) – families living on federal military bases (e.g., near Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst);
- Children of federally connected parents (Section 7003) – such as parents employed on federal property; and
- Native American lands (Section 7004) – children living on Indian lands

A local educational agency (LEA) is generally eligible for Section 7002 assistance if it meets the following basic requirements:

- The United States has acquired ownership of real property within the school district since 1938;
- Such property was not acquired by exchange for other federal property that the federal government owned before 1939; and
- The assessed valuation of such property represented 10 percent or more of the total assessed valuation of all real property in the LEA at the time or times of federal acquisition.

Sandyston-Walpack and Kittatinny meet these requirements, including the 10% criterion, as calculated in Table 132.

TABLE 132
Acreage Calculation, Section 7002

	Federal Land Acreage ¹¹⁴	Municipal Land Acreage ¹¹⁵	Federal % of Municipal
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	22,404	41,965	53.4%
Kittatinny Regional	22,404	86,209	26.0%

The calculation of impact aid seems fairly straightforward:

In calculating the amount that a local educational agency is eligible to receive for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall apply the current levied real property tax rate for current expenditures levied by fiscally independent local educational agencies, or imputed for fiscally dependent local educational agencies, to the current annually determined estimated taxable value of such acquired Federal property.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ There was no accurate reporting found of the exact delineation of the Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area by state, county, or municipality; an estimate of the NJ portion was based on Wikipedia noting that the land “is roughly divided between the two states”; it was estimated that roughly 1/3 of the New Jersey portion of the recreation area is in Hardwick Township in Warren County and 2/3 is in Sandyston and Walpack Townships

¹¹⁵ Wikipedia, provided in square miles and converted to acres

¹¹⁶ Section 7002(a)2

To determine the taxable value for eligible federal property:

(A) IN GENERAL. In determining the estimated taxable value of such acquired Federal property for fiscal year 2010 and each succeeding fiscal year, the Secretary shall –

(i) first determine the total taxable value for the purpose of levying property tax for school purposes for current expenditures of real property located within the boundaries of such local educational agency;

(ii) then determine the per acre value of the eligible Federal property by dividing the total taxable value as determined in clause (i) by the difference between the total acres located within the boundaries of the local educational agency and the number of Federal acres eligible under this section; and

(iii) then determine the total taxable value of the eligible Federal property by multiplying the per acre value as calculated under clause (ii) by the number of Federal acres eligible under this section.

(B) SPECIAL RULE. In the case of Federal property eligible under this section that is within the boundaries of 2 or more local educational agencies that are eligible under this section, any of such agencies may ask the Secretary to calculate (and the Secretary shall calculate) the taxable value of the eligible Federal property that is within its boundaries by—

(i) first calculating the per-acre value of the eligible Federal property separately for each eligible local educational agency that shared the Federal property, as provided in subparagraph (A)(ii);

(ii) then averaging the resulting per-acre values of the eligible Federal property from each eligible local educational agency that shares the Federal property; and

(iii) then applying the average per-acre value to determine the total taxable value of the eligible Federal property under subparagraph (A)(iii) for the requesting local educational agency.¹¹⁷

Currently, Special Rule B applies to Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack as separate districts with overlapping claims to impact aid for the same federal land. They split the aid calculated for the federal land as shown in Table 133.

¹¹⁷ Section 7002(a)3B

TABLE 133
Federal Impact Aid ¹¹⁸

	Actual FY 2024	Revised FY 2025	Proposed FY 2026
Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated	\$417,004	\$350,000	\$450,000
Kittatinny Regional	\$513,977	\$400,000	\$326,793
TOTAL	\$931,981	\$750,000	\$776,793

If regionalization between the districts should occur, General Rule A should prevail, such that the individual amounts noted in Table 133 would be brought together as totaled. Therefore, the proposed regionalization should have no effect on the amount of federal impact aid received.

Federal Title Funds

In addition to state aid, the districts in the Kittatinny region receive federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as “title” funding. These allocations support a variety of programs including services for economically disadvantaged students, educator development, English language learner instruction, and student enrichment activities. Table 134 presents the FY 2026 ESEA allocations for each district in the region.

TABLE 134
FY 2026 ESEA Allocation Table

	Title I-A	Title I-D	Title II-A	Title III	Title III Imm	Title IV-A	TOTAL
Kittatinny	\$35,998	\$0	\$14,239	\$323	\$0	\$10,000	\$60,560
Fredon	\$14,875	\$0	\$4,686	\$0	\$0	\$10,000	\$29,561
Hampton	\$30,747	\$0	\$5,880	\$323	\$0	\$10,000	\$46,950
Stillwater	\$27,605	\$0	\$4,295	\$0	\$0	\$10,000	\$41,900
Sandyston-Walpack	\$0	\$0	\$1,831	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,831
TOTAL	\$109,225	\$0	\$30,931	\$646	\$0	\$40,000	\$180,802

The region receives a combined total of approximately \$181,000 in annual federal title funding across six categories. Title I-A represents the largest share of the region total at \$109,225, followed by Title IV-A and Title II-A at \$40,000 and \$30,931, respectively. Title I-D is zero across all districts because there are no state-run institutions or juvenile facilities within the constituent

¹¹⁸ User-Friendly Budget, FY 2026

communities and, similarly, no district in the region meets the enrollment threshold that would trigger the Title III Immigrant supplemental grant.

TABLE 135
2024 Census Poverty Data by Local Educational Agency

	Ages 5–17 Poverty	Ages 5–17 Population	Ages 5–17 Poverty %
Kittatinny	41	1,018	4.03%
Fredon	12	249	4.82%
Hampton	16	334	4.79%
Stillwater	11	287	3.83%
Sandyston-Walpack	4	128	3.13%
TOTAL	84	2,016	4.17%

The region served a combined population of 2,016 children between the ages of 5 and 17, of whom 84 (4.17%) are identified as living in poverty in the 2024 US Census data. Poverty rates across the individual districts range from 3.13% in Sandyston-Walpack to 4.82% in Fredon and show the similar socioeconomic profiles of the constituent communities. These poverty counts and rates are the primary basis for each district’s Title I-A allocation.

Impact of Regionalization on Federal Title Funding

Regionalization under Option 1 would shrink the current region of five districts into a single all purpose regional, which has implications for federal funding eligibility and allocation amounts. The general conclusion is that regionalization does not change the underlying aggregate student population characteristics, whether it be poverty counts, enrollment, or multilingual learner populations, and therefore, does not affect the fundamental basis on which most federal allocations are calculated. The consultants do not expect regionalization to produce meaningful changes in federal aid eligibility or aggregate aid amounts under Title I-A, Title II-A, or Title III.

Title IV-A is an exception. The program carries a statutory minimum grant of \$10,000 per LEA, which currently produces an aggregate allocation of \$40,000 across four eligible districts.¹¹⁹ Under Option 1, the expanded district would receive a single Title IV-A allocation calculated on its combined enrollment rather than four separate minimum grants. Because Title IV-A allocations are proportional to prior-year Title I-A allocations, a review of NJ districts with Title I-A allocations similar to the region total of \$109,000 identified 34 comparable districts, all of which received Title IV-A allocations of \$10,000. It is therefore likely that a single all purpose regional would receive a Title IV-A allocation of \$10,000, representing a reduction of roughly \$30,000 from the current aggregate allocation of \$40,000. While modest in the context of total district revenues, this reduction is a direct consequence of regionalization under the Title IV-A minimum grant structure.

¹¹⁹ Title IV-A allocations are proportional to prior-year Title I-A allocations; Sandyston-Walpack, with 4 students aged 5-17 in poverty, did not meet eligibility thresholds for Title I-A, and therefore, did not receive an allocation of Title IV-A

Sandyston-Walpack currently receives no Title I-A allocation despite having 4 school-age children living in poverty. This is because the district falls below a minimum eligibility threshold as a standalone LEA. Under full regionalization, Sandyston-Walpack's poverty-eligible students would be incorporated into the expanded district's poverty count, where they would be fully weighted in the allocation formula. This could modestly increase the aggregate Title I-A allocation under regionalization relative to the current region total, but likely would not fully offset the Title IV-A reduction described above.

In aggregate, federal title funding is not expected to be a material factor in the financial analysis of either of the regionalization configurations studied. The total allocation of approximately \$181,000 represents less than 0.5% of combined district revenues, and the net change under regionalization is expected to be modest and within a range that cannot be projected with precision given the formula complexity and annual variability inherent in federal allocations.

Insights

Having examined state aid under the status quo and each regionalization configuration in detail, the following summarizes the key conclusions drawn from the analysis.

Status Quo

- The status quo is financially stable but not without risk. Under current conditions, four of the five districts are projected to see modest aid increases through FY 2032, driven primarily by categorical aid growth tied to enrollment and student demographics. Sandyston-Walpack is the exception, facing steady annual declines capped at 3% per year. Without the cap, its decline would be far steeper. Meanwhile, Stillwater represents the most consequential variable in the region as it is the only district receiving equalization aid, and the gap between what formula calculations indicate it should receive and what the caps allow it to receive is growing substantially. Whether aid caps continue beyond their current authorization will have a meaningful effect on both Sandyston-Walpack's and Stillwater's financial outlook.

Regionalization Options

- Option 1 produces a modest state aid disadvantage relative to the status quo because an all purpose grades pK-12 regional would not be eligible for equalization aid. This is primarily because the combined wealth factors push the regional's local fair share above its adequacy budget. As a result, the regional would forgo the equalization aid that Stillwater currently receives and is projected to continue receiving. Under the capped scenario, this difference is small with the regional receiving approximately \$34,000 less in cumulative aid than the separate districts over five years, a difference of less than a tenth of a percent of the regional's total operating budget in any given year. Under the uncapped scenario, the gap is considerably larger, reaching \$855,000 less per year by FY 2032 if the state returns to full formula funding.
- Under state law, a newly expanded regional is entitled to supplemental aid in the five years following regionalization, equal to the difference between the regional's formula equalization aid

and the combined equalization aid its constituent districts received prior to consolidation, multiplied by a transition weight that declines from 100% in year one to 20% in year five. This protection provides approximately \$359,000 in cumulative supplemental aid over five years, declining from approximately \$120,000 in the first year to approximately \$24,000 in the final year. These protections cushion, but do not eliminate, the aid difference. Once protections expire, the regional's aid will be determined entirely by the formula.

- Option 2 does not materially alter the state aid picture. Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 regional would redistribute aid between the regional and the elementary districts as 6th grade students and their associated funding shift to the regional. However, none of the underlying formula dynamics would change enough to generate equalization aid eligibility for any district, or to meaningfully improve or worsen the region's aggregate aid totals. The impact of this option on state aid is best categorized as a reallocation rather than a change in total funding.
- The differences in projected state aid between regionalization and the status quo are relatively modest compared to the districts' total operating budgets. The singular driver of the disadvantage under regionalization is Stillwater's equalization aid eligibility, which would be absorbed into a regional that does not qualify for equalization. This should be weighed against potential administrative savings, education benefits, and other non-aid factors analyzed elsewhere in this study when evaluating each option's overall impact.

Other Considerations

- Existing choice students in Kittatinny are expected to remain in place through graduation in an enlarged, all purpose regional or an expanded limited purpose regional. Any new choice program enrollment or program expansion in the regional may require approval from the NJDOE.
- Both Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack receive sizable appropriations of federal impact aid due to the amount of tax exempt properties in the districts owned by the federal government. Since local districts cannot collect property taxes on federal land, the U.S. Government compensates them through impact aid to offset the lost revenue. Under regionalization, all federal land currently generating impact aid will remain within the region, and therefore, it is the consultants' expectation that the enlarged regional under either option would continue to receive impact aid proportional to the federal land in the district, subject to congressional appropriations and confirmation of eligibility under the federal impact aid formula for the newly constituted district.
- In addition to the standard SFRA formula calculations described above, recent legislation enacted in 2021 created significant financial protections for school districts that regionalize following the completion of an SREP-funded feasibility study.¹²⁰ These protections do not extend to the regionalization configurations examined in this study, as it was requested under the terms of a LEAP grant, not an SREP grant. It is unclear to the consultants why the type of grant

¹²⁰ P.L.2021, c.402

applied for should impact a regional district's hold harmless protections under the law, but there is indeed precedent for excluding districts from benefits afforded under P.L. 2021, c.402 based on grant type.¹²¹

29. Local Tax Levies with Potential Cost Savings

This section examines the local tax implications of the regionalization scenarios described earlier in this study for the municipalities of Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township. The analysis evaluates how school tax burdens would change for taxpayers in each community under each regionalization configuration compared to the status quo, taking into account identified cost savings, projected property values, enrollment trends, and the apportionment method used to distribute costs among constituent municipalities.

The analysis finds that the tax impact of regionalization to each community depends heavily on the apportionment method selected. No permanent apportionment ratio produces tax savings for all constituent municipalities under the configuration studied, however, several ratios exist which produce a nearly equal tax picture to the status quo, with only minimal tax increases. Still in each case, at least one community would see higher school tax levies under regionalization than in the status quo. The choice of apportionment method (whether costs are shared based on property wealth, student enrollment, or some combination) will require careful consideration and is a consequential decision affecting individual taxpayers.

The section begins with an identification of the potential for cost savings in each of the proposed regionalization scenarios. We then review the historical and projected property values and enrollment patterns that drive each community's share of costs. Next, the analysis examines the tax impacts under each of the three regionalization configurations, including the full range of apportionment scenarios and each configuration's reference ratio. It concludes with a discussion of transitional apportionment methods authorized under P.L.2021, c.402 and a summary of key findings.

Readers should interpret the results as indicators of relative differences between regionalization and the status quo rather than as precise predictions of future tax levies. Actual tax levies will depend on annual budget decisions made by the board of education of any regional, and the figures presented assume that identified cost savings are applied as tax relief, a decision that must ultimately be weighed against the educational programming needs of students.

Potential Cost Savings

All Purpose Regional Grades pK-12

Table 136 presents specific cost savings that could be anticipated if the districts decided to regionalize. The estimated cost savings of \$885,800 would come primarily from consolidating

¹²¹ Board of Education of Henry Hudson Regional School District v. Onat, Docket No. 402-25 (Commissioner of Education, August 12, 2025).

administrative functions and reducing duplication across the districts. However, these savings are partially offset by investments in both existing positions that assume more responsibility, and a new position (i.e., assistant business administrator) to serve the enlarged regional created by restructuring.

TABLE 136
Potential Cost Savings ¹²²

Items	Savings (Cost)
Superintendents (2.6 to 1.0)	\$235,400
Chief School Administrators (1.0 to 0.0)	\$0
Asst Superintendent (XX to XX)	\$0
Business Administrators (4.0+ to 1.0) *	\$387,700
Asst. Business Administrators (0.0 to 1.0)	(\$110,000)
Special Education Directors (1.0 to 1.0) ¹²³	\$0
Transportation Directors (0.5 to 1.0)	(\$35,600)
Technology Directors (2.0+ to 1.0) *	\$55,700
Directors of Curriculum & Instruction (1.0 to 1.0)	\$0
Facilities Directors (3.0+ to 1.0) *	\$168,400
Principals (CSA becomes principal, no other change)	\$0
Vice Principals (CSA replaces vice principal)	\$80,000
Treasurers of School Monies (5.0 to 1.0)	\$16,400
Consolidation of Clerical Personnel (+/-X.X FTE)	\$0
Reduction in Audit and Legal Costs	\$0
Consolidation of Budget Software Costs	\$0
Dues & Fees	\$0
Health and Other Non-Salary Benefits	\$158,400
Default Salary Guide Alignment	(\$70,600)
Total Estimated Cost Savings	\$885,800

* Consultants are being used to provide additional services and are not calculated as cost savings

The projected savings are intentionally conservative. Even with the cost savings identified and presented in the table, all existing programs are anticipated to be maintained. As has been noted elsewhere in the study, all decisions regarding staffing and budget would be the responsibility of the new board of education; the items listed here are possible options for cost reduction.

¹²² Split positions within a single district are counted solely in the primary position; for example a superintendent also serving as a district's director is counted only as the superintendent

¹²³ Responsibilities in other districts are being performed by a principal

The primary area identified for specific cost reduction calculations is administrative staffing. The Projected Staffing Needs subsection in the Education and Program domain and the Shared Services section in this domain provide additional support for these projections, particularly with regard to staff consolidation. It should be noted that the job protection clause in the statute specifically excludes superintendents only. Therefore, where a chief school administrator is currently providing services, that position can be eliminated and the person filling that position is assumed to transition to a principalship in the enlarged regional. Due to the size of the elementary districts, most principals are serving in additional roles (e.g., director of curriculum, director of special education) and that also impacts savings. The new board of education would evaluate the needs of the district as a whole, and make decisions that would most likely generate further savings.

Although there are five districts, the current structure and use of personnel generates cost savings calculations that might be different from what one might anticipate. For instance, the Kittatinny superintendent is shared with Hampton, Sandyston-Walpack's superintendent is a .6 FTE position, and the only full time superintendent for an individual district is in Stillwater. The Fredon chief school administrator position would likely transition into the role of a principal. This reduces the 2.6 FTEs to 1.0 and generates a salary only savings of \$235,400 in spite of potentially increasing the salary of a replacement superintendent to reflect additional responsibilities. It is possible that the shifting of responsibilities may change principal/assistant principal staffing, particularly in Fredon where the savings of an assistant principal salary of \$80,000 is anticipated.

The personnel that are already shared across the region or personnel that have multiple roles also reduce savings that would typically be expected. A director of curriculum provides services to all five districts, with each district sharing in the cost. A director of special services is shared between Kittatinny (60%) and Fredon (40%). In the other three districts, supervision of special services is done by a principal. Since each school would still need a principal, no salary is included in the cost savings.

An unusual feature in this region is the use of consultants where employees typically exist. For instance, Sandyston-Walpack has an agreement with a facilities manager (\$20,800) and a business consultant (details not available). Hampton budgets \$18,000 for a third party person to assist with technology. These situations are due to a variety of reasons, but since they were not employees of the district, they were not included in the cost savings calculations for personnel. It can be very difficult for small districts to hire and retain specialized employees. In any case, these issues would be more easily addressed in an enlarged regional. A regional business office staff and facilities director would eliminate the need for those consultants; a larger district would find it easier to hire qualified personnel to be utilized across the region.

Aligning the salary guides for teaching staff creates an offset to the savings as noted in the table. P.L.2021, c.402 outlines the conditions of regional district formation, among those being provisions for the main collective bargaining agreements. The statutes are specific when studies are funded through an SREP grant, but unclear as to whether the interpretation might be different if a regional is formed following analysis by a LEAP grant, through which this study is being conducted. The

consultants have assumed that the SREP statutes will be followed, but board counsel should be consulted. If the enlarged regional does not reach a successor agreement within three years, interpretation of the law suggests that grades pK-6 would be governed by the Hampton agreement; Kittatinny would continue to follow the existing grades 7-12 salary guides. The approximate additional costs for this guide alignment would be \$70,600.

Aside from personnel suggestions in the table, other administrative areas would be expected to generate cost savings in a regional district. For example, the total annual audit cost for all five districts for the 2024-25 fiscal year was \$120,196; consultants estimate savings in this one expense line could range from \$65,000-\$75,000. Likewise, district consolidation would be expected to generate savings for legal services (e.g., unified contract negotiations), architects (e.g., long range facilities plans), and software/internet/technology infrastructure as important examples.

It is important to note that these cost savings do not include the potential financial efficiencies and educational benefits that could occur from consolidating and coordinating operations such as curriculum and textbook purchases, in-district special education programs, student transportation, district office functions, and the potential for self-insured health benefit plans that might be viable in an enlarged regional. Each of these would require further exploration and consideration by a regional board of education and administration or joint actions by the districts as currently structured. As a point of interest, a four year average of employee benefits as a percentage of compensation was calculated for each district; they range from 28% to 39% with a combined average of 34.8%.

Limited Purpose Regional Grades 6-12

The consultants examined a scenario where 6th grade students would move from their current elementary districts into Kittatinny, making for a larger middle school program. While the grades 6-12 configuration does not yet exist in NJ, this approach could potentially create efficiencies through consolidated staffing, more productive deployment of specialized staff (e.g., art, music, language, etc.), and reduced curriculum and materials costs. The enlarged regional would face increased operational costs and additional staffing needs to accommodate the expanded student population. While adding grade 6 to Kittatinny may create some efficiencies, the elementary districts could experience increased inefficiencies through diseconomies of scale as the remaining grades pK-5 programs spread fixed costs and administrative overhead across fewer students. Additionally, taxes being redirected to Kittatinny would at least partially offset any operational savings in the elementary districts.

It is the considered judgment of the study team that cost savings for this option would likely be minimal. Any potential cost savings would likely be secondary to other benefits such as expanded program offerings and enhanced educational opportunities that could come from operating a single, larger, middle school program. Without a comprehensive analysis of current program-level costs and detailed implementation planning (an undertaking beyond the scope of this study), the consultants cannot definitively determine the exact costs or savings of this option. The operational

complexities and interconnected cost implications suggest that the primary motivation for pursuing such a configuration should be educational rather than financial.

Local Tax Levies

Understanding tax distribution among participating communities represents a critical aspect of every regionalization study as the fundamental question underlying all apportionment calculations is how tax responsibility will be shared among local taxpayers in each community.

The purpose of this analysis is to: (1) evaluate the tax impact of regionalization on each municipality; (2) identify tax apportionment methods that minimize aggregate costs while distributing burden fairly among participating communities; (3) assess the feasibility of achieving universal tax benefits across constituent districts; and (4) identify potential barriers to regionalization and possible mitigation strategies. This analysis is conducted in accordance with LEAP and SREP grant guidelines, which require careful consideration of the tax impact on constituent municipalities as part of any regionalization effort.

Before comparing regionalization to the status quo, it is important to establish what the status quo tax baseline represents for each community. For Fredon, Hampton and Stillwater, the status quo baseline is the combined total of each community's independent grades pK-6 levy and its proportionate share of the Kittatinny regional levy. Their combined obligations across both levels of schooling form their status quo baseline. For Sandyston and Walpack, the calculation is similar but involves the Sandyston-Walpack consolidated district rather than independent elementary districts. Each community's status quo baseline is the sum of its obligations to both Sandyston-Walpack and Kittatinny. All tax impact comparisons throughout this section are made against these full combined status quo baselines, which ensures that the analysis captures each municipality's total school tax burden, not just its Kittatinny share.

The detailed analysis that follows provides a foundation for informed decision making about the most appropriate approach for the proposed regional and allows stakeholders to understand the full range of possible outcomes under regionalization rather than being limited to a single apportionment assumption. The narrative identifies which apportionment scenarios would provide the greatest aggregate financial benefit to the participating municipalities, while also revealing how different scenarios might affect individual communities differently.

Current Tax Levies

Before analyzing how regionalization would change tax responsibility, it is important to understand how school taxes are currently distributed among the five communities and what trends are responsible for each municipality's current levy amounts. Table 137 presents each municipality's total school tax levy and tax rate in use for FY 2026.

TABLE 137
Calendar Year Total School Tax Levies and Rates by Municipality, FY 2026 (in millions)

	Total School Tax Levy	Total Net Valuation Taxable	School Tax Rate
Fredon	8,887,002	434,706,300	2.044
Hampton	12,782,348	607,938,700	2.103
Stillwater	9,749,264	409,131,300	2.383
Sandyston	4,928,511	226,024,200	2.181
Walpack	0	5,600,800	0.000
TOTAL	36,347,125	1,683,401,300	2.159

Total school tax rates vary in Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston, ranging from \$2.044 per \$100 of assessed value in Fredon to \$2.383 in Stillwater. This variation reflects differences in local assessment and grades pK-6 spending practices in the communities. For context, the statewide average school tax rate is approximately \$1.36 per \$100 of assessed value while the Sussex County average school tax rate is higher at \$1.764. The four communities all have rates between \$0.28 and \$0.62 above the county average.

Walpack's tax rate is zero because it does not levy school taxes in the traditional sense. Given its unique situation with high federal property ownership and only a handful of full time residents, it fulfills its school cost obligations instead through payments from its municipal government. Its FY 2026 obligation to Sandyston-Walpack for grades pK-6 was \$28,840. If it levied school taxes, its effective rate would be \$0.515 per \$100 assessed value. It does not share costs for Kittatinny.

Under regionalization, these distinct funding mechanisms would be replaced, in whole or in part depending on the configuration, by a single apportionment formula applied to the prospective regional's total tax levy. The shift from separate levies to unified apportionment is one of the main structural factors that drives the tax impacts analyzed in the following subsections.

Property Values

Two factors determine each municipality's share of costs in a regional district: property values and student enrollment.¹²⁴ Table 138 presents the historical equalized property valuations (EPVs) for each community in the region.

¹²⁴ See the "Understanding Tax Apportionment Methods and Methodology" section in the Appendix for more information on regional cost apportionment methods

TABLE 138
Historical EPVs by Municipality, FY 2021-2026 (in millions)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fredon	430.9	437.7	451.1	491.6	553.0	596.8
Hampton	677.6	677.4	733.3	796.4	893.3	989.3
Stillwater	464.2	471.1	506.6	570.1	624.0	680.1
Sandyston	251.6	255.4	288.7	319.3	325.9	371.3
Walpack	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	6.0
Total	1,826.8	1,844.1	1,982.3	2,180.0	2,398.9	2,643.5

EPVs across all five municipalities have risen significantly over the past five years. Total EPV across the region grew from \$1.8 billion in FY 2021 to \$2.6 billion by FY 2026, an increase of 45%. Hampton currently represents the largest share of total property wealth at approximately 37%, followed by Stillwater at 26%, Fredon at 23%, Sandyston at 14% and Walpack at 0.2%.

Property values are almost universally projected to continue growing in each community through FY 2032, reaching a combined total of approximately \$3.9 billion. The exception is Walpack with its unique dynamics, which is expected to flatten then decline. Given the consistency of this dynamic, detailed projected EPV tables are provided in the Appendix without narrative.

Communities whose property values grow faster than the regional average will see their share of EPV-based regional costs increase over time. Hampton, whose EPV has grown most rapidly in absolute terms, has the most exposure to this dynamic under EPV-weighted apportionment methods.

Analysis of Current Property Value Allocations

In a similar manner to the tax rates described earlier, each community has its total EPV split between its elementary and regional districts according to their respective shares of grades pK-6 and 7-12 enrollment.

TABLE 139
Property Valuations by Municipality, FY 2026

	pK-6	7-12	Total	pK-6 Share	7-12 Share
Fredon	322.2	274.6	596.8	54.0%	46.0%
Hampton	556.4	432.9	989.3	56.2%	43.8%
Stillwater	381.6	298.5	680.1	56.1%	43.9%
Sandyston	200.8	170.5	371.3	54.1%	45.9%
Walpack	6.0	0.0	6.0	100.0%	0.0%
Total EPV	1,467.0	1,176.5	2,643.5	-	-

Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston all have similar distributions of property values split between their elementary districts and Kittatinny with between 54% and 56% of students in the

elementary grades and 44% to 46% in middle-high school grades. Walpack is again the exception, with 100% of its equalized valuation allocated to Sandyston-Walpack. This appears to be a quirk of the allocation formula used for consolidated school districts when one of the municipalities has no students, a very rare occurrence. Because Walpack has no resident students, the formula allocates all property values to the elementary district and none to the regional. As a result, Walpack maintains a small cost obligation to Sandyston-Walpack and no current cost obligation to Kittatinny.

Enrollment

The second allowable method for sharing costs in a regional is student enrollment (ENR). Table 140 presents the historical ENR by average daily enrollment (ADE) for each community in the region. Total ENR across the four municipalities has declined from FY 2021 to 2026. Within each municipality, however, the trends differ. Fredon and Hampton experienced declining ENR from FY 2021 through 2026. Stillwater experienced a decline from FY 2021 to 2023 but has since seen ENR rise to around 455 students. Sandyston has seen ENR fluctuate modestly higher and lower over the period, with ENR settling at 233 in FY 2026. Walpack had no resident school age children over the period. Because Walpack has no resident students, it would bear no cost responsibility under any apportionment method that uses enrollment.

TABLE 140
Historical ADE by Municipality, FY 2021-2026¹²⁵

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fredon	431.0	398.5	377.5	360.0	361.0	344.5
Hampton	581.0	568.0	541.5	555.0	547.0	537.0
Stillwater	476.5	463.0	448.5	449.0	443.0	454.5
Sandyston	237.5	233.0	241.5	249.0	247.0	233.0
Walpack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total ENR	1,726.0	1,662.5	1,609.0	1,613.0	1,598.0	1,569.0
Fredon Share	25.0%	24.0%	23.5%	22.3%	22.6%	22.0%
Hampton Share	33.7%	34.2%	33.7%	34.4%	34.2%	34.2%
Stillwater Share	27.6%	27.8%	27.9%	27.8%	27.7%	29.0%
Sandyston Share	13.8%	14.0%	15.0%	15.4%	15.5%	14.9%
Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Examining total ADEs in the region, Hampton has the largest share at 34% followed by Stillwater at 29%, Fredon at 22% and Sandyston at 15%. These relative ENR shares become important under regionalization as they will help determine each district's tax responsibility under apportionment methods that use or partially use ENR.

¹²⁵ ADE represents the average number of students enrolled over the course of a school year, calculated by dividing the total number of days all students are enrolled by the number of days school is in session, values may be fractional; figures exclude choice students, which are not considered for tax apportionment in the regional; figures are prebudget year amounts which are used in the tax apportionment formulas, for example amounts shown for 2026 represent enrollment from the 2024-25 school year

TABLE 141
Projected Prebudget Year ADE in an Enlarged Regional, FY 2027-2032

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	359.2	363.3	353.5	361.2	366.4	371.7
Hampton	536.5	537.7	531.2	538.9	542.1	548.9
Stillwater	455.1	466.3	494.6	519.7	529.2	550.1
Sandyston	227.7	222.1	219.7	219.2	225.6	227.4
Walpack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total ENR	1,578.5	1,589.3	1,599.0	1,639.0	1,663.3	1,698.1
Fredon Share	22.8%	22.9%	22.1%	22.0%	22.0%	21.9%
Hampton Share	34.0%	33.8%	33.2%	32.9%	32.6%	32.3%
Stillwater Share	28.8%	29.3%	30.9%	31.7%	31.8%	32.4%
Sandyston Share	14.4%	14.0%	13.7%	13.4%	13.6%	13.4%
Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Despite the historical declining trend, total enrollment is projected by the study's demographer to increase in the region.¹²⁶ While overall growth is projected, it is not consistent in each year of the studied period. Enrollment in Fredon and Hampton rises modestly, by roughly 12 students each through FY 2032, while Sandyston remains essentially flat. Stillwater, however, is set to see large enrollment growth, with it projected to go from 455 students in FY 2027 to 550 by FY 2032 (+21%).

The enrollment growth trends create small, but significant shifts in community ENR shares with Fredon and Sandyston declining roughly one percentage point each to 21.9% and 13.4%, respectively, by FY 2032. Hampton's share declines nearly two percentage points from 34% in FY 2027 to 32.3% while Stillwater's share increases nearly four percentage points from 28.8% in FY 2027 to 32.4%.

Implications for Tax Apportionment

The differences between property wealth and student enrollment across the four municipalities are the primary factors driving the tax impact results. However, because each regionalization configuration creates a different grouping of constituent municipalities, the relative shares differ by option. Each option's analysis begins with a comparison of EPV and ENR shares for the municipalities in that configuration, which then explains the apportionment dynamics that follow.

Under Option 1, the elementary districts currently operated by Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack would be dissolved. All grade levels from pK-12 would be consolidated into a single regional, and each community's entire equalized property valuation would become part of the regional's apportionment base. This changes the tax apportionment calculation fundamentally

¹²⁶ The financial analyst uses ADE projections done by the State in its formula calculations instead of the exact numbers produced in this study's demographic projections; however, the financial analysis does use this study's demographic trajectory; due to the different timings of analysis, the demographic projections went through the 2029-30 school year, while the financial projections went out to FY 2032; to accomplish this, the financial analyst used the demographer's projection trajectory for an additional two years

because the total equalized property value base expands significantly. Under the status quo, Kittatinny's EPV base consists of only a portion of each community's total property values. Under Option 1, each town's full EPV would enter the regional's apportionment base. Using FY 2026 figures, that would mean expanding the total from approximately \$1.2 billion to \$2.6 billion.

Total cost savings identified for this configuration are approximately \$886,000 annually, primarily from the consolidation of administrative positions and professional service costs. As described in the Key Assumptions portion of the Appendix, these savings are assumed to be applied as tax relief in the projections that follow.

EPV and ENR Shares

Table 142 compares each municipality's average share of total property wealth against its average share of total enrollment in the expanded regional over the projection period (FY 2028 to FY 2032). The difference between these two shares and how they each impact apportionment under different ratios is the primary driver of the apportionment results that follow. Detailed year-over-year EPV and ENR shares are provided in the Appendix.

TABLE 142
Comparison of Average EPV and ENR Shares, Option 1, FY 2028-2032

	Avg. EPV Share	Avg. ENR Share	Difference
Fredon	24.4%	22.2%	2.2%
Hampton	40.0%	33.0%	7.0%
Stillwater	22.8%	31.2%	8.4%
Sandyston	12.6%	13.6%	1.0%
Walpack	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%

Fredon accounts for approximately 24% of total property wealth but 22% of total enrollment, a 2 percentage-point gap that means Fredon would pay more under EPV-based apportionment than under ENR-based methods. Hampton shows a similar pattern, projected to comprise 40% of the total EPV share, while only sending 33% of the students, a 7-point difference. Stillwater shows the opposite pattern as it holds 23% of the property wealth but sends 31% of the students. This 8-point gap means Stillwater pays more under ENR-based methods but benefits significantly from EPV-weighted methods.

Sandyston has a slightly higher enrollment share (13.6%) than property wealth share (12.6%), a modest one-point gap that means it pays marginally more under ENR-based methods. Unlike Stillwater, where this dynamic produces significant tax increases at ENR-heavy ratios, Sandyston's small gap means ENR weighting has a comparatively limited effect on its tax position.

Walpack has no resident students attending school so it would pay nothing under ENR-based methods, however its modest EPV represents 0.2% of the EPV total, meaning it would share in some of the regional's costs under EPV-based apportionment.

Tax Impact Across Apportionment Scenarios

Table 143 presents the average annual tax impact for each municipality under selected apportionment ratios over the projection period. Positive values indicate tax increases relative to the status quo and negative values indicate tax savings. The table uses smaller increments in the range where the greatest variation in tax impacts occurs. The full range of scenarios in five percentage point increments is provided in the Appendix.

TABLE 143
Average Annual Tax Impact by Municipality, Selected Apportionment Ratios
Option 1, FY 2027-2032 ¹²⁷

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston	Walpack
100% EPV / 0% ENR	-205,513	871,151	-964,260	-620,551	33,102
90% EPV / 10% ENR	-280,093	594,075	-646,732	-579,896	26,576
80% EPV / 20% ENR	-354,673	316,998	-329,205	-539,241	20,049
75% EPV / 25% ENR	-391,963	178,460	-170,441	-518,913	16,786
70% EPV / 30% ENR	-429,253	39,922	-11,677	-498,586	13,523
69% EPV / 31% ENR	-436,711	12,214	20,076	-494,520	12,870
65% EPV / 35% ENR	-466,543	-98,616	147,087	-478,258	10,259
60% EPV / 40% ENR	-503,833	-237,154	305,851	-457,931	6,996
55% EPV / 45% ENR	-541,123	-375,692	464,615	-437,603	3,733
50% EPV / 50% ENR	-578,413	-514,231	623,379	-417,276	470
45% EPV / 55% ENR	-615,702	-652,769	782,142	-396,948	-2,794
0% EPV / 100% ENR	-951,312	-1,899,612	2,211,017	-214,001	-32,163

It is important to note that the model assumes tax levies to increase annually in both the status quo and regionalization scenarios and that any potential tax savings or increases indicated in the following tables represent the difference between regionalization and maintaining separate districts in each given year, not changes from current tax levels. The results presented here should be interpreted as comparative outcomes between the governance structures rather than predictions of absolute tax increases or reductions.

Fredon benefits under every apportionment ratio tested with savings ranging from approximately \$206,000 under pure EPV to \$951,000 under pure ENR. By contrast, Hampton benefits only from ENR-heavy methods. Hampton would experience average annual savings of \$1.9 million under pure ENR apportionment, but sees its savings erased at ratios weighting property values at 69% or higher. At these ratios, Hampton's tax savings turns to increases that grow to approximately \$871,000 at pure EPV-based apportionment.

¹²⁷ Tax impact is the difference in tax levies between the regional configuration and the status quo; the boldfaced row is the reference ratio identified by the model, explained in detail below

Stillwater stands to benefit the most from EPV-based methods, saving approximately \$964,000 under pure EPV apportionment with savings turning to increases at 69% EPV / 31% ENR. Increases grow to more than \$2.2 million relative to the status quo under pure ENR apportionment.

Like Fredon, Sandyston benefits under all apportionment ratios, but prefers those that weigh property values more. Sandyston would see average annual savings of approximately \$621,000 using pure EPV apportionment. As the enrollment weighting increases, savings shrinks to \$214,000 at pure ENR.

Walpack prefers ENR-based apportionment and would see average annual savings of \$32,000 under pure ENR apportionment, effectively reducing its cost to zero. Its savings flip to increases at 50% EPV / 50% ENR, and grow to \$33,000 under pure EPV-based apportionment.

While no one ratio can produce tax savings for all communities, the 69% EPV / 31% ENR weighting does produce savings for two of the five municipalities with only slight increases to the remaining three. With increases of roughly \$12,000 and \$20,000, respectively, Hampton and Stillwater have an effectively neutral tax impact as total tax levies remain north of \$15 million and \$10 million. The differences represent 0.08% and 0.20% of the total tax levy in each community, respectively.

At this ratio, Walpack represents an interesting conundrum. Its increase is similar in size, just \$13,000, however with just 7 municipal residents, as the household-level table below shows, this translates to approximately \$524 per year on an average assessed home.¹²⁸ This challenge is addressed in the transitional method of apportionment presented later in this analysis.

Reference Ratio

This analysis identified a reference ratio for each regional configuration. This ratio is the apportionment weighting that minimizes the maximum adverse tax impact to any single municipality. It selects the ratio where the hardest hit community is impacted the least and guards against a scenario where one community bears a disproportionate burden to produce benefits for others. The reference ratio is not a recommendation for the permanent apportionment formula, which is a policy decision to be made by the participating communities. Instead, it provides a grounded starting point for that discussion.

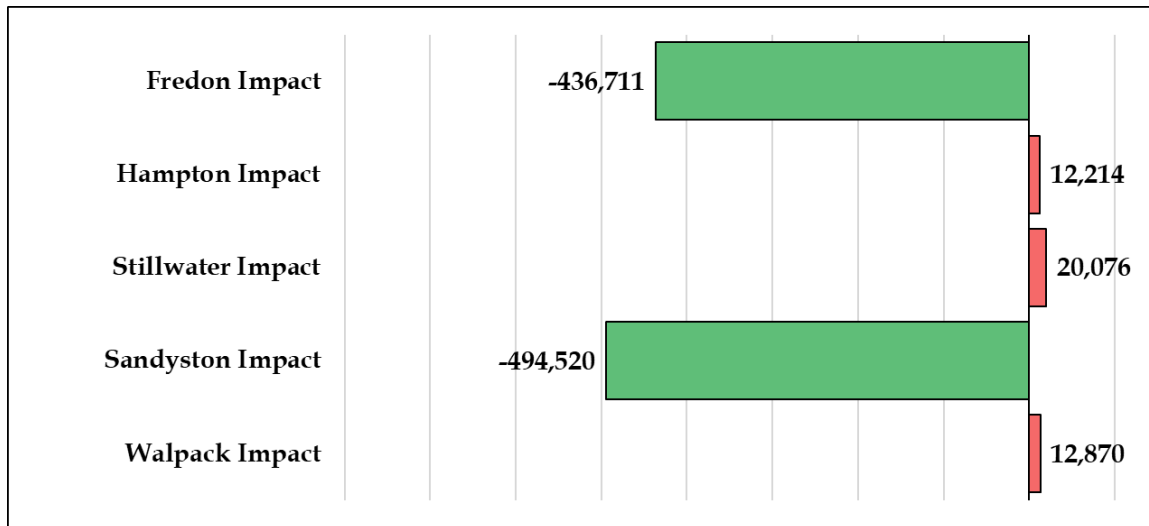
Under Option 1, the reference ratio is 69% EPV / 31% ENR. At this ratio, the tax impacts are:

- Fredon: average annual *savings* of approximately \$436,711
- Hampton: average annual *increase* of approximately \$12,214
- Stillwater: average annual *increase* of approximately \$20,076
- Sandyston: average annual *savings* of approximately \$494,520
- Walpack: average annual *increase* of approximately \$12,870

¹²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. RACE. Decennial Census, DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171), Table P1, <https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALPL2020.P1?g=060XX00US3403776640>; accessed April 2026

CHART 24

Average FY 2028-2032 Tax Impact at 69% EPV / 31% ENR, Expanded Regional (Option 1)



Two municipalities see savings and three see very small increases in total tax levy. The reference ratio balances the adverse impacts on Hampton (\$12,200), Stillwater (\$20,000) and Walpack (\$13,000), so that no community bears a disproportionately larger increase than another. At any ratio above 69% EPV, Hampton's increase grows while Stillwater's shrinks; at any ratio below 69% EPV, the reverse occurs. The 69/31 ratio is the point where these two adverse impacts are as close to equal as the allowed apportionment methods can achieve.

Translated to household terms, the reference ratio produces the following impacts on an average assessed home in each community.

TABLE 144
Tax Change per Average Assessed Home at Reference Ratio (69% EPV / 31% ENR)
Option 1, FY 2028-2032

	Impact on Average Assessed Home
Fredon	-341
Hampton	5
Stillwater	10
Sandyston	-479
Walpack	524

At the household level, the reference ratio provides Sandyston (-\$479 per average assessed home) and Fredon (-\$341) with substantial tax advantages. It produces nearly identical small increases on the average homeowners in Hampton (+\$5) and Stillwater (+\$10).

Due to Walpack's extremely small resident population and household count, the additional \$13,000 in total tax levy has a disproportionate effect. Since Walpack's municipal government pays school tax obligations through its limited municipal budget, this increase would not actually be felt at the household level at \$524 per household but instead through larger municipal payments to the regional. These larger payments, while modest in comparison to the other municipalities in the region, could introduce long term budgetary pressure on Walpack. The transitional apportionment methodology presented later in this analysis attempts to address this issue and provide more stability during the initial transition into the regional structure by providing tax savings to all districts for the first five years before transitioning to a permanent ratio.

Alternative Fairness Criteria

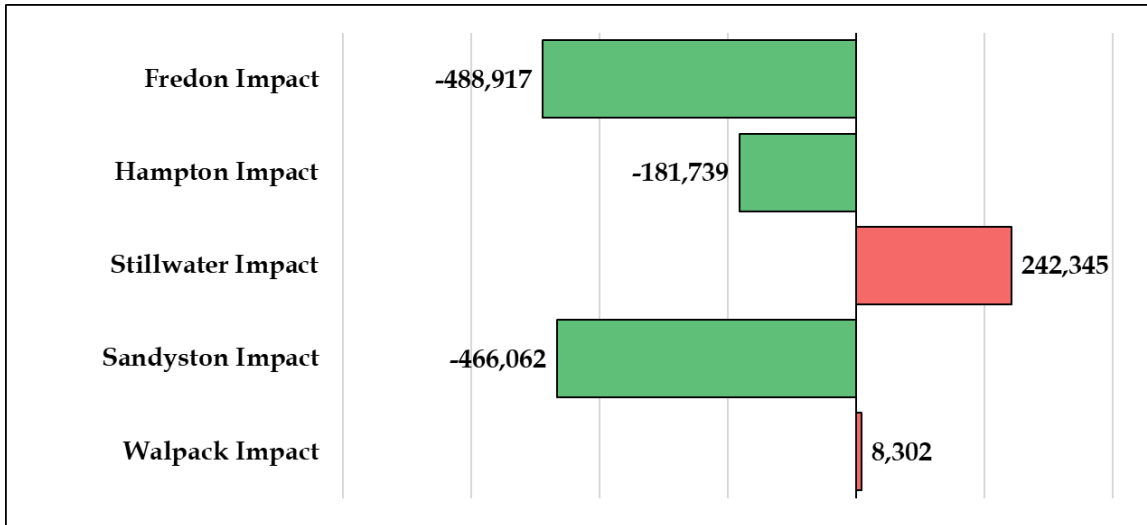
The reference ratio minimizes the worst case outcome, but other definitions of fairness point to different ratios. To test the robustness of the analysis, the model was evaluated against sixteen alternative fairness criteria spanning two categories: criteria that seek to balance the evenness of impacts across communities; and criteria that seek to make impacts proportional to each community's historical share of property wealth or enrollment. Each criterion independently identifies the ratio that best achieves its objective. Criteria include measures such as minimizing the variance in tax rate changes, targeting historical levy share distributions, and equalizing impacts across various factors.

Every alternative criterion selects a ratio between 49% and 71% EPV, a relatively narrow band which encompasses the 69% EPV reference ratio. Eight of the sixteen criteria select ratios between 69% and 71% EPV. The remaining eight would choose ratios between 49% and 57% EPV. The full results are presented in the Appendix.

The differences between the reference ratio (69% EPV) and the larger multi-criteria range (49% - 71% EPV) reflects the difference in analytical objectives. The multi-criteria measures optimize mostly for evenness and proportionality by distributing impacts as uniformly as possible across communities or targeting historical distributions between communities. At most ratios between 49% and 71% EPV, three of the five municipalities see savings while two face an increase. The distribution can be uneven (i.e., one community absorbs most of the adverse impact), but the number of communities that benefit is maximized. In contrast, the minimax reference ratio distributes adverse impacts more equally between the communities that face increases at the cost of shifting Hampton or Stillwater (depending on the ratio) from savings to an increase.

To illustrate this tradeoff, Chart 25 shows the average tax impacts at 62% EPV / 38% ENR, the average ratio across the sixteen criteria. At 62/38, three municipalities see savings instead of two. Fredon would see savings of \$489,000, Hampton would see savings of \$182,000, and Sandyston would save \$466,000. Stillwater absorbs the entirety of the adverse impact, seeing an approximate increase of \$242,000 which is roughly \$222,000 higher than its impact at the 69/31 reference ratio.

CHART 25
Average FY 2028-2032 Tax Impact at 62% EPV / 38% ENR, Option 1



Translated to household terms, this ratio produces the following impacts on an average assessed home in each community. Impacts at the reference ratio presented earlier are also included for comparison.

TABLE 145
Tax Change per Average Assessed Home at 62% EPV / 38% ENR
Option 1, FY 2028-2032

	Alternative Fairness Impact	Reference Ratio Impact
Fredon	-382	-341
Hampton	-70	5
Stillwater	126	10
Sandyston	-451	-479
Walpack	338	524

The choice between these ratios comes down to a policy judgment. The communities must decide whether it is preferable to concentrate adverse impacts on two communities (benefiting three) or distribute them more evenly (benefiting two, while effectively minimizing increases to three). This analysis presents both to inform that decision.

Year-over-Year Tax Impact at Reference Ratio

While the preceding analysis presents impacts averaged across the projection period, the year-over-year trajectory reveals how each municipality's position evolves over time.

TABLE 146
Annual Tax Impact by Municipality at Reference Ratio (69% EPV / 31% ENR)
Option 1, FY 2028-2032

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	-454,859	-441,550	-486,978	-430,802	-369,364
Hampton	178,935	103,419	15,467	-71,114	-165,635
Stillwater	-324,189	-139,712	116,716	203,644	243,921
Sandyston	-307,455	-423,825	-542,693	-595,119	-603,508
Walpack	20,451	15,172	11,105	9,098	8,523

Fredon's savings remain relatively stable across the period, fluctuating between approximately \$369,000 and \$486,000 without a clear directional trend, but ending the period on its lowest point. Sandyston's savings grow over the five years, increasing from approximately \$308,000 in FY 2028 to \$604,000 by FY 2032, driven by continued reductions in both its EPV share and ENR shares relative to the other towns.

Hampton experiences early increases immediately following regionalization, but the increases turn to savings by year four which grow into year five and reflect declining shares of its EPV and ENR relative to the other towns. Stillwater experiences the opposite pattern, seeing savings in the first two years following regionalization before crossing into increases in FY 2030 that grow steadily through FY 2032 as enrollment growth raises its ENR share.

Hampton's beneficial transition over time and Stillwater's disadvantageous one are two sides of the same dynamic. Stillwater's projected 21% enrollment growth through FY 2032 increases its ENR share of the regional's costs annually, while Hampton's flat-to-declining enrollment reduces its share. At a 69/31 EPV/ENR ratio, this enrollment shift progressively benefits Hampton while increasing Stillwater's costs.

Walpack is projected to experience increases relative to the status quo in all years, however the increases decline over time as its EPV remains relatively static relative to the other towns, reducing its share of the regional's costs. By year five, increases decline by over half and settle at levels that may be manageable to the municipality.

As mentioned previously, the transitional apportionment methodology presented later in this analysis attempts to provide even more stability during the initial transition into the regional structure by providing tax savings to all districts for the first five years before transitioning to a permanent ratio.

Regionals that assign moderate to substantial weight to student enrollment in their apportionment formulas may experience considerably larger year-over-year shifts in community tax obligations when their constituents have varying ENR growth patterns. It is important to monitor enrollment trends in any future regional closely, if ENR based methods are chosen.

Tax Rate Implications

The following table presents the average school tax rate over the projection period under the status quo and under Option 1 at the reference ratio.

TABLE 147
School Tax Rates, Status Quo vs. Option 1 at Reference Ratio (69% EPV / 31% ENR)
FY 2028-2032 (per \$100 assessed value)

	Status Quo Rate	Option 1 Rate	Difference	Average Assessed Home Impact
Fredon	2.311	2.210	-0.101	-\$341
Hampton	2.519	2.521	0.002	+\$5
Stillwater	2.542	2.546	0.004	+\$10
Sandyston	2.567	2.349	-0.219	-\$479
Walpack ¹²⁹	0.574	0.804	0.230	+\$524

Under the status quo, four of the five communities' projected school tax rates range from \$2.31 (Fredon) to \$2.57 (Sandyston), a spread of \$0.26 per \$100 of assessed value. Under Option 1 at the reference ratio, rates occupy a modestly wider band, ranging from \$2.21 (Fredon) to \$2.55 (Stillwater), a spread of \$0.34. This widening is not coincidental, it reflects the same redistribution dynamic that runs throughout this analysis. Sandyston's rate falls meaningfully (-\$0.219) as its share of regional costs declines under the formula, while Stillwater's rises (+\$0.004) as its growing enrollment increases its share. Regionalization does not necessarily equalize tax rates across communities. Instead, it reallocates who bears what burden.

Sandyston sees the largest rate reduction (-\$0.219), dropping from the highest rate among the four communities to second lowest, a decrease of \$479 on the average assessed home. Fredon also sees a meaningful reduction (-\$0.101), a decrease of \$341 on the average assessed home. Hampton's and Stillwater's rates increase such that the impact on an average assessed home is \$5 and \$10, respectively, representing an effectively neutral impact in each community under regionalization.

Walpack's average rate increases by \$0.23 per \$100 assessed under regionalization, mirroring similar trends observed in impacts to average assessed homes discussed earlier. Again, however, since Walpack does not actually levy school taxes on its residents, its tax rate increases are presented for analytical comparison only and reflect the increased municipal payment obligation rather than a change in residential tax bills.

For context, the statewide average school tax rate is approximately \$1.360 per \$100 of assessed value while the Sussex county average school tax rate is higher at \$1.764. Under Option 1 at the

¹²⁹ In Walpack, homes are not assessed school taxes directly, but it is made as a payment by the municipality

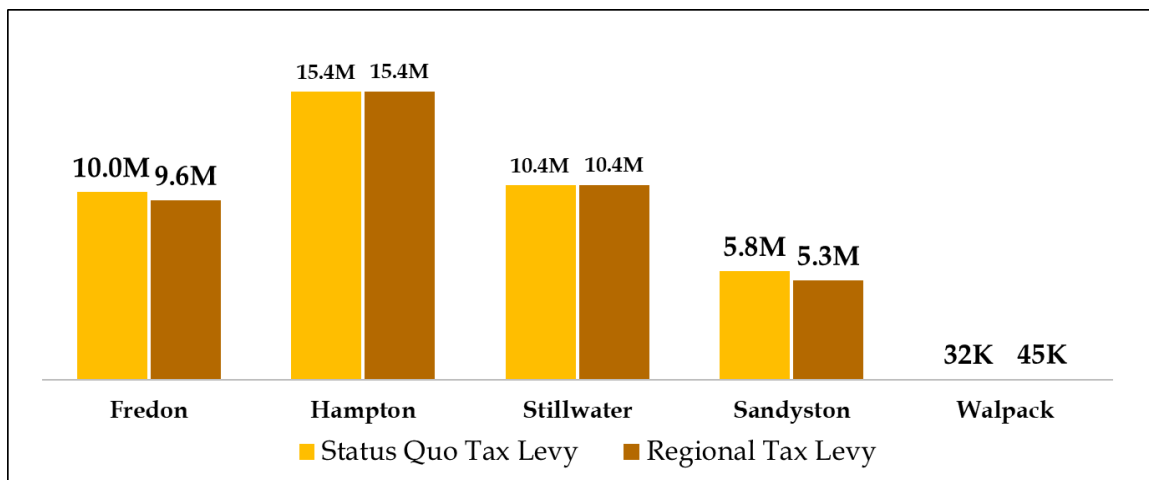
reference ratio, four communities would continue to have school tax rates above both rates while Walpack would remain substantially below.

Comparison with Status Quo

Under Option 1 at the reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR, Fredon and Sandyston would see lower school tax levies than under the status quo, while Hampton, Stillwater, and Walpack would see slightly higher levies. The combined total tax levy across all five municipalities under regionalization is lower than the combined status quo total and reflects the approximately \$886,000 in annual cost savings. The chart below highlights the relatively minimal impacts to the adversely affected communities. The bars for Hampton and Stillwater are effectively flat and reflect the nearly neutral impact of the reference ratio on both communities. The bars for Fredon and Sandyston are visibly lower under regionalization, indicating meaningful savings. Walpack's bars are not visible since they are so small in absolute terms, but the labels show the increase under regionalization.

Regionalization does not substantially change the total amount of money raised through local taxes. It changes who pays how much, and that change is governed almost entirely by the apportionment method selected.

CHART 26
Total School Tax Levy, Status Quo vs. Option 1 at Reference Ratio (69% EPV / 31% ENR)
FY 2028-2032



Final Considerations for Option 1

No permanent apportionment formula can simultaneously produce tax savings for all five municipalities under Option 1. The reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR comes as close as any available formula can by delivering meaningful savings to Fredon and Sandyston while holding Hampton, Stillwater, and Walpack to increases so modest that two of the three are effectively neutral.

That said, even small increases may present political and practical obstacles to regionalization. The transitional apportionment methodology presented in the following section is designed to address this directly. By temporarily adjusting each municipality's share of the regional levy during the initial years, the transitional plan ensures that all five communities realize genuine tax savings compared to the status quo for at least the first five years. This provides a meaningful runway for the regional to establish itself, build trust among constituent communities, and demonstrate the educational and operational benefits of consolidation before the permanent apportionment formula takes full effect.

Tax Impacts for Option 2

Under Option 2, Kittatinny would expand to include 6th grade and transition from its existing configuration as a limited purpose grades 7-12 regional into a limited purpose grades 6-12 regional. This change is more nuanced than Option 1 because it does not result in a single regional replacing the existing five district structure. Instead, it shifts the grade span boundary between the existing elementary districts and Kittatinny, which leaves both intact while reallocating students, costs, and property values between them. The tax implications of the change flow from how property values are reallocated across school districts rather than from a change in the number of resulting districts.

Since Kittatinny currently apportions its costs based solely on equalized property valuations, the primary driver of tax impact under this configuration is the reallocation of EPV that would occur when 6th grade moves from the independently operated elementary districts into the regional. Under current law, when a municipality operates its own elementary district and also participates in a regional for the remaining grades, its total equalized property value is divided between the two systems in proportion to how many students attend each. Moving 6th graders from the local elementary districts into the regional increases the share of each town's total EPV allocated to Kittatinny and reduces the share remaining with the independent elementary districts. This reallocation changes each municipality's proportionate share of the regional's total costs, even though the underlying property wealth of each community has not changed at all.

The size of this shift will vary by community depending on the relative size of their 6th grade cohorts. Since 6th grade represents between 14% and 16% of total enrollment across the constituent districts, the reallocation of EPV into the regional is expected to be broadly similar across communities. As a result, this configuration is not expected to produce dramatic shifts in relative cost burden among the constituent municipalities.

Because of its unique circumstances, Walpack has additional considerations within this configuration that warrant attention. Because Walpack has no resident students, the state's apportionment rules for consolidated districts allocate 100% of its property values to Sandyston-Walpack and none to Kittatinny. For Kittatinny's tax apportionment purposes, Walpack comprises zero percent of the regional's equalized valuation and zero percent of its enrollment. It therefore does not currently bear any of the regional's costs. However, it does pay a small portion of Sandyston-Walpack's costs.

Under Option 2, as 6th grade moves to the regional and more of each community's EPV is allocated to Kittatinny, two things happen: Walpack's share of the regional's costs would increase; and Walpack's share of Sandyston-Walpack's remaining property values would also increase, increasing its share of the consolidated district's now reduced costs. It remains unclear if the municipal payments Walpack currently makes to support the consolidated district would decline enough to offset its increased regional levy obligations.

If the expanded grades 6-12 regional chooses apportionment methods that weight student enrollment in lieu of or in combination with the existing EPV-only formula, the dynamics described above would shift. Under ENR-weighted methods, districts with growing enrollment (particularly Stillwater, which is projected to see substantial enrollment growth through FY 2032) would face higher shares of the regional's costs relative to the status quo, while communities with flat or declining enrollment would see their shares reduced. How sensitive each community is to ENR weighting under this configuration will mirror the dynamics described in detail under Option 1, and the same directional conclusions apply.

In addition to the EPV reallocation, the regional's total costs to be apportioned would increase as it assumes responsibility for educating students in 6th grade. These additional costs would include instructional staff salaries and benefits for 6th grade teachers, classroom operational expenses, instructional materials, technology, and transportation for the additional grade level. While the consultants did not have the level of data specificity required to determine the expanded regional's precise costs with confidence, these additional expenditures would be distributed among the constituent municipalities according to whichever apportionment formula is chosen. Because 6th grade enrollment is proportionally similar across the communities, the addition of these costs is not expected to shift relative cost burdens significantly among the districts, with each absorbing roughly its existing proportionate share of the new expense.

It is worth noting that the communities' elementary districts would simultaneously see costs reduced as 6th grade is removed from their operations. These savings would partially, or perhaps fully, offset the increased regional levy obligation for each community. The degree of offset would vary depending on salary guides, facility configurations, and the extent to which positions and resources can be reallocated rather than eliminated.

As discussed in the state aid section of this analysis, the transition of 6th grade to the regional would also have direct consequences for the aid received by both the elementary districts and the expanded regional. Shifting equalized valuations directly impacts each district's determination of local fair share under the State's funding formula, while shifting enrollment impacts each district's adequacy budget. These factors determine the amount, if any, of equalization aid each district is eligible to receive. While grade level average daily enrollment data would be required to model state aid with certainty, the consultants do not expect the shifts to be large enough to change any district's equalization aid eligibility or to produce significant changes in total aid received by the districts in the region.

Transitional Methods of Apportionment

That no permanent apportionment ratio produces tax savings for all constituent municipalities under either of the regionalization configurations studied is a consequence of the differences between property wealth shares and enrollment shares across the municipalities, and is compounded by the differences in current tax rates.

However, P.L.2021, c.402 provides a mechanism to help address this challenge. The law permits a regional's board of education to establish a transitional apportionment methodology, not to exceed ten years, that differs from the permanent formula adopted by voters. The transitional methodology must be agreed to by all participating districts. This provision was specifically designed to facilitate regionalization in cases where standard apportionment methods create financial disparities among participating municipalities during the consolidation period.

This transitional methodology works by temporarily adjusting each municipality's share of the regional tax levy so that all communities experience savings relative to the status quo during the transition period. Communities that benefit most under the permanent formula will see smaller savings during the transition, while communities that see the largest increases receive temporary relief. By the end of the transition period, the permanent apportionment formula takes full effect.

The following transitional plan has been developed for Option 1. Transitional apportionment schedules are modeled over a ten year period to ensure a predictable phase-in from current levy shares to the permanent regional apportionment ratios. The permanent apportionment ratio is fully implemented by year ten of the transitional period.

TABLE 148
Transitional Apportionment Shares and Tax Impacts, Option 1

	Years 1-5: Savings					Years 6-9: Phase-in				Permanent 69% EPV 31% ENR
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Transitional Shares										
Fredon	23.0%	23.2%	23.9%	24.5%	24.9%	24.1%	24.2%	24.4%	24.5%	24.6%
Hampton	36.7%	37.3%	37.9%	37.9%	37.8%	37.5%	37.5%	37.6%	37.6%	37.6%
Stillwater	26.3%	25.8%	24.7%	24.4%	24.1%	25.1%	25.1%	25.0%	24.8%	24.7%
Sandyston	13.9%	13.7%	13.5%	13.2%	13.1%	13.3%	13.1%	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%
Walpack	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Annual Tax Impact										
Fredon	-290,174	-303,898	-277,879	-268,720	-222,578	-674,840	-605,608	-313,622	-268,149	-210,536
Hampton	-182,002	-176,722	-32,934	-44,358	-99,812	-258,022	-319,539	-444,835	-527,521	-582,325
Stillwater	-207,537	-97,737	-244,918	-191,447	-193,248	+357,136	+467,119	+522,201	+572,664	+635,758
Sandyston	-196,954	-291,792	-309,607	-371,215	-363,673	-284,777	-410,103	-563,209	-663,522	-736,225
Walpack	-10,450	-16,347	-21,045	-8,553	-6,752	-25,708	-17,604	-8,661	+706	+7,507

Insights

Having described in detail the projected tax impacts of regionalization, a summary of the conclusions drawn from the presentation above is warranted.

Option 1

- Cost savings from consolidation are estimated at \$886,000 and represent approximately 2.3% of the current \$39 million combined total tax levy in the region. While substantial, these savings are not evenly distributed amongst the constituent towns.
- The apportionment method selected determines who pays how much, and the variation it produces outweighs the cost savings effect. For example under Option 1, shifting from pure EPV to pure ENR swings Hampton's annual tax impact by nearly \$2.7 million and Stillwater's by \$3.2 million. The selection of the apportionment ratio is, in practical terms, the decision that matters most for individual taxpayers in the communities. The right answer depends on the communities' collective values, not the data alone.
- While there is no permanent apportionment formula that produces universal tax savings, the reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR provides a viable option for consideration. It holds all three adversely affected communities to increases of less than \$21,000 in average annual levy, less than two-tenths of one percent of each community's total levy.
- Stillwater's rising projected enrollment (21% enrollment growth through FY 2032) will increase its share of the regional in both the status quo and as configured under Option 1 at the reference ratio and ratios that give weight to ENR.
- Walpack's \$13,000 aggregate levy increase seems manageable in total dollar terms but has an outsized per household impact due to the small number of residents. The transitional methodology permitted under P.L.2021, c.402 partially addresses this by allowing for a temporary method apportionment for up to ten years; however, this may remain a structural challenge after the transitional period ends.
- The transitional apportionment plan presented guarantees savings for all five communities in each of the first five years to provide a period of stabilization before the permanent formula takes effect before beginning a phase-in to permanent apportionment by formula by year ten.
- The figures in this analysis are projections based on statistical forecasts of property values, demographic projections of enrollment, and the assumption that cost savings are applied as tax relief. Actual tax levies will depend on annual budget decisions made by the board of education of any regional district. The tax impact is just one component of a regionalization decision that also must consider impacts to state aid, educational programming, operational efficiencies, and governance; considerations addressed elsewhere in this study.

Option 2

- Moving 6th grade into the regional shifts a portion of each community's equalized property valuation from the elementary districts to Kittatinny's apportionment base and changes each municipality's share of regional costs even though underlying property wealth is unchanged.
- Because 6th grade enrollment is proportionally similar across all constituent districts, the EPV reallocation is expected to be generally uniform. Dramatic shifts in relative cost burden among the municipalities are not anticipated under EPV-only apportionment.
- As members of both the Sandyston-Walpack and Kittatinny districts, both Sandyston and Walpack have additional unique dynamics to consider. Sandyston's obligations would increase at the regional level as more of its EPV enters Kittatinny's formula. However, its obligations within Sandyston-Walpack would also shift as that district contracts. Since Walpack's EPV will remain 100% allocated to the consolidated district, whether these changes offset one another cannot be determined without detailed modeling of both districts simultaneously.
- If ENR-weighted apportionment methods are adopted, Stillwater faces the same enrollment-driven cost pressure identified under Option 1. Growing enrollment increases Stillwater's share of regional costs over time under any formula that weights ENR.
- Option 2 is not expected to substantially alter each community's share of the regional's costs. While each community would contribute a higher amount due to the regional's increased costs, it would simultaneously experience reduced costs in its independent elementary district. The offset may not be one-to-one, but it is not expected to shift each district's relative tax position in comparison to the status quo.

30. Financial and Operational Impact

The consultants performed a comprehensive review and analysis of historical state aid, tax levies, property values, incomes, audits, enrollments, and other financial records, in order to analyze district operations, project future values, and estimate the financial impact of regionalizing for each participating district and municipality. The projections and analyses presented here are based on current data, trends, and assumptions. Actual outcomes may vary based on future economic conditions, policy decisions, and other factors that could impact school funding and operations. As such, this report should serve as a guide for informed decision making, with the understanding that ongoing monitoring and potential adjustments may be necessary if the regionalization process moves forward.

A review of the main collective bargaining agreements provides a comparison of key aspects to help with potential negotiations if the districts decide to regionalize. As can be expected, the CBAs contain some differences from district-to-district, including expiration dates, recognition clauses, length of school day and year, and salary guides. Each of these differences would need to be

addressed and resolved in a new regional CBA. Because this study was funded through a LEAP grant, there is some question as to whether the SREP guide transition statutes would be followed; the consultants make the assumption that it would, and refer the boards to legal counsel in the event the regionalization occurs. If a successor agreement were not reached within three years, the Hampton contract is projected to govern all certified teaching staff for grades pK-6; the Kittatinny contract would continue for grades 7-12. This review may be used simply as points for comparison and synthesis in future negotiations on the separate agreements.

Budgetary costs per student were examined comparing district spending priorities and efficiency to peers across the state. All five districts spend above the state median budgetary cost per pupil. Although there are many shared personnel in the region, additional sharing of positions in the areas of curriculum development and special services may help all districts in the region reduce spending. Economies of scale tend to favor larger entities. Kittatinny is the 7th smallest of its 46 peer districts. Sandyston-Walpack (7th smallest) and Fredon (16th smallest) have among the lowest enrollments of their 58 peer districts, while Stillwater (29th) and Hampton (30th) are more towards the middle of the group. Taken together, the dynamic around higher per pupil costs would be difficult to change without the larger enrollment that an enlarged regional would provide.

Administration is often identified by the public as an area to realize potential efficiencies. Kittatinny's \$2,326 per student sits well above the state median of \$2,078, and all of the grades K-6 districts spend considerably above the state median of \$1,968 per student. Experienced administrators are in demand and cost more than those with less experience, and regionalization may be a useful consideration in seeking efficiencies here.

It is clear that all five districts prioritize direct spending on students in terms of the percentage of dollars allocated to classroom instruction. This is a positive indicator as it provides direct student academic experiences, and therefore should receive primary attention and commitment in the budget. Four of the five are above the state median. Fredon is well above the state median for support services, speaking to identified needs that required funds to be spent in that area. Because any new regional would involve the same schools in some combination, we would expect a new board to continue to emphasize spending on classroom instruction.

Unless there are negotiated changes as permitted by law, any debt would become the debt of the enlarged or new regional. Fredon is the only district with current debt. Debt consolidation can be a contentious aspect of the regionalization process, but the consultants emphasize that a holistic view of the condition of facilities and future needs should inform these discussions. Rather than viewing existing debt in isolation, communities should consider both the immediate and shared benefits of recently improved facilities and the long term capital needs across all buildings that the regional will ultimately need to address.

There are four types of reserve accounts used by these districts: capital, maintenance, emergency and unemployment; excess surplus is significant, so is included in the data. In the event of regionalization, these funds would be consolidated into the budget.

The proposed regionalization does not result in students changing schools, so transportation would largely remain as it is. A student transportation seat time and distance travel evaluation was conducted based on the existing regional and the constituent districts. The student ride times and distances traveled are within what is reasonable for an area of this size. A regional director is recommended to identify potential transportation efficiencies throughout the region, regardless of whether regionalization occurs or not.

Shared services are permitted by statute and are promoted by the state as a cost saving measure, although their effectiveness can vary. The districts in this region participate in many shared services, including personnel, purchasing cooperatives, insurance, non-public funds, and administration. The districts already share quite a few district personnel. A key strength of this region is the curriculum coordinator that is shared by all districts. There are also agreements between some of the districts for shared superintendent; child study team director; psychologist; speech, art, music and Spanish teachers; and preschool staff. It is important that the districts pay close attention to the longevity of staff in shared positions, as the challenges associated with these positions often result in frequent turnover due to increased workload.

Consolidating districts would significantly reduce redundant administrative duties, allowing leadership to pivot their focus toward student achievement and cost efficiency. By aligning regional financial programs under the largest district's guidance, a shared business office could deploy experienced staff more strategically.

Under current conditions, four of the five districts are projected to see modest state aid increases through FY 2032, driven primarily by categorical aid growth tied to enrollment and student demographics. Stillwater represents the most consequential variable in the region as it is the only district receiving equalization aid, and the gap between what state formula calculations indicate it should receive and what the caps allow it to receive is growing substantially.

Option 1 produces a modest state aid disadvantage relative to the status quo, because an all purpose grades pK-12 regional would not be eligible for equalization aid. This is primarily because the combined wealth factors push the regional's local fair share above its adequacy budget. As a result, the regional would forgo the equalization aid that Stillwater currently receives and is projected to continue receiving. Under the capped scenario, this difference is small with the regional receiving approximately \$34,000 less in cumulative aid than the separate districts over five years, a difference of less than a tenth of a percent of the regional's total operating budget in any given year. Under the uncapped scenario, the gap is considerably larger, reaching \$855,000 less per year by FY 2032 if the state returns to full formula funding.

Under state law, a newly expanded regional is entitled to supplemental aid in the five years following regionalization, equal to the difference between the regional's formula equalization aid and the combined equalization aid its constituent districts received prior to consolidation, multiplied by a transition weight that declines from 100% in year one to 20% in year five. This protection provides approximately \$359,000 in cumulative supplemental aid over five years, declining from approximately \$120,000 in the first year to approximately \$24,000 in the final year. These

protections cushion, but do not eliminate the state aid difference. Once protections expire, the regional's aid will be determined entirely by formula.

Option 2 does not materially alter the state aid picture. Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 regional would redistribute aid between the regional and the elementary districts as 6th grade students and their associated funding shift to the regional. The impact of this option on state aid is best categorized as a reallocation rather than a change in total funding.

The differences in projected state aid between regionalization and the status quo are relatively modest compared to the districts' total operating budgets. The singular driver of the disadvantage under regionalization is Stillwater's equalization aid eligibility, which would be absorbed into a regional that does not qualify for equalization. This should be weighed against potential administrative savings, education benefits, and other non-aid factors analyzed elsewhere in this study when evaluating each option's overall financial impact.

Existing choice students in Kittatinny are expected to remain in place through graduation in an enlarged, all purpose regional or an expanded limited purpose regional. Any new choice program enrollment or program expansion in the regional may require approval from the NJDOE.

Both Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack receive sizable appropriations of federal impact aid due to the amount of tax exempt properties in the districts owned by the federal government. Under regionalization, all federal land currently generating impact aid will remain within the region, and therefore, it is the consultants' expectation that the enlarged regional under either option would continue to receive impact aid proportional to the federal land in the district.

Modest cost savings of \$885,800 have been projected. These savings would come primarily from consolidating administrative functions and reducing duplicative services across the current constituent districts. They include the projected higher cost of moving staff to the appropriate default salary guides as identified by statute. There are other opportunities for savings that are not included in the calculations such as consolidation of audits, curriculum and textbook purchases, in-district special education programs, student transportation, technology infrastructure, district office functions, unified contract negotiations, and the potential for self-insured health benefit plans that would be viable in an enlarged or newly formed regional.

Despite these cost savings, the consultants assume all existing programs would be maintained. The actual implementation and allocation of any cost reductions would ultimately be determined by the regional board of education, ensuring that decisions about resource allocation will be made with consideration of the region's specific needs and priorities in mind. The cost savings detailed in the study represent potential tax savings, as the actual impact on future tax levies in each municipality will depend on decisions made by a future board. The board will need to balance potential tax relief against the educational programming needs of the students.

With respect to taxes in the communities, the apportionment method selected for the expanded regional district will determine who pays how much. The variation in tax impact the various

methods produce completely outweigh the cost savings effect. For example under Option 1, shifting from pure EPV to pure ENR swings Hampton's annual tax impact by nearly \$2.7 million and Stillwater's by \$3.2 million. The selection of the apportionment ratio is, in practical terms, the decision that matters most for individual taxpayers in the communities. The right answer depends on the communities' collective values, not the data alone.

While there is no permanent apportionment formula that produces universal tax savings, the reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR provides a viable option for consideration. It holds all three adversely affected communities to increases of less than \$21,000 in average annual levy, less than two-tenths of one percent of each community's total levy.

The transitional apportionment plan presented guarantees savings for all five communities in each of the first five years to provide a period of stabilization before the permanent formula takes effect before beginning a phase-in to permanent apportionment by formula by year ten.

The figures in this analysis are projections based on statistical forecasts of property values, demographic projections of enrollment, and the assumption that cost savings are applied as tax relief. Actual tax levies will depend on annual budget decisions made by the board of education of any regional district. The tax impact is just one component of a regionalization decision that also must consider impacts to state aid, educational programming, operational efficiencies, and governance; considerations addressed elsewhere in this study.

Under Option 2, moving 6th grade into the regional shifts a portion of each community's equalized property valuation from the elementary districts to Kittatinny's apportionment base and changes each municipality's share of regional costs even though underlying property wealth is unchanged. Because 6th grade enrollment is proportionally similar across all constituent districts the EPV reallocation is expected to be generally uniform. Dramatic shifts in relative cost burden among the municipalities are not anticipated under EPV-only apportionment.

Option 2 is not expected to substantially alter each community's share of the regional's costs. While each community would contribute a higher amount due to the regional's increased costs, it would simultaneously experience reduced costs in its independent elementary district. The offset may not be one-to-one, but it is not expected to shift each district's relative tax position in comparison to the status quo.

FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this feasibility study was to examine relevant data in order to provide recommendations on the feasibility of consolidating operations to: (a) enlarge the current limited purpose, grades 7-12, Kittatinny Regional into one all purpose, grades pK-12 including Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack; or (b) enlarge Kittatinny to add grade 6. Concurrently, the study investigated opportunities to share services more effectively and efficiently among the five districts. Note: Any referendum or vote to regionalize that does not include the options as designed for this study would completely change the analysis and findings produced herein.

The study considered perspectives from governance and law, education and program, demography and facilities, and finance and operations. After analysis of the data gathered in each of these domains, the consultants have produced a series of findings and urge the boards of education of the Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater School Districts to consider the recommendations offered below (note: Sandyston-Walpack chose not to participate actively in this study).

A key conclusion of this study is that an enlarged regional school district moving to either grades pK-12 or grades 6-12 would provide opportunities for a more effective and efficient educational program. The districts in the Kittatinny region have done an outstanding job in coordinating curriculum for many years. In particular, the districts have employed a single shared coordinator, and have developed common curricula in several core content areas. There remain opportunity areas where consolidation or greater coordination has the potential to improve student outcomes. Namely, this study identifies diverging elementary assessment results, varied assessment analytical practices, and different lengths of school day as some areas for consideration. Enlarging the preschool program would be easier in a consolidated district where available facilities could be utilized. Extracurricular activities could be broadened to include 6th grade students in a larger middle school program.

Given the prospects for improving academic and extracurricular programs, **the financial analysis revealed some modest challenges that may be worth the educational advantages.** An all purpose grades pK-12 regional produces a limited state aid disadvantage relative to the status quo. Under the capped scenario, this difference is approximately \$34,000 less in cumulative aid than the separate districts over five years, a difference of less than a tenth of a percent of the regional's total operating budget in any given year. Under the uncapped scenario, the gap is considerably larger, reaching \$855,000 less per year by FY 2032 if the state returns to full formula funding. However, state law provides for regionals to receive supplemental state aid for a period of five years following regionalization. The regional would receive nearly \$360,000 in cumulative supplemental aid over the period from FY 2028 to 2032.

While there is no permanent apportionment formula that produces universal tax savings for the grades pK-12 regional, the reference ratio of 69% EPV / 31% ENR provides a viable option for

consideration. It holds all three adversely affected communities to increases of less than \$21,000 in average annual levy, less than two-tenths of one percent of each community's total levy.

Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 regional would redistribute aid between the regional and the elementary districts as 6th grade students and their associated funding shift to the regional. **Moving 6th grade into the regional is not expected to substantially alter each community's share of the regional's costs.** It shifts a portion of each community's equalized property valuation from the elementary districts to Kittatinny's apportionment base and changes each municipality's share of regional costs even though underlying property wealth is unchanged.

The key findings and recommendations that follow pertain to each domain of the study and can be referenced in context at the page numbers as noted.

Governance and Law

1. The authority to convert a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional is found in N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33.2. The law requires that the proposal be submitted to the voters of *each of the constituent districts* of the regional (emphasis added), instead of to the voters of the regional at large. If a majority of the voters in a majority of the constituent districts that constitute the limited purpose regional vote to expand it into an all purpose regional, then the proposal is considered adopted. In this case, a proposal would be submitted to the voters of the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack school districts. If voters in three of the four districts agree, Kittatinny would be enlarged into an all purpose, grades pK-12 regional. (p. 26)
2. The study team believes the expansion of Kittatinny to include Grade 6 would require petitioning the Commissioner of Education, since this grade level configuration is not recognized as a limited purpose district under the current law. If the Commissioner agreed that Kittatinny could be expanded to add education of the 6th graders from the existing constituent districts, a referendum would be required to ask voters of those districts to approve such a change. (p. 27)
3. If a proposal does not move forward to expand Kittatinny from a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional or to add the 6th grade, a discussion would be encouraged among district leaders and boards of education to maximize opportunities for shared services among the districts. Thereafter, the development and approval of specific contracts would be necessary to design and adopt shared services agreements between the schools and districts. (p. 28)
4. The law requires that board membership be apportioned based upon the proportional number of pupils enrolled from each constituent district that was part of the limited purpose regional. However, limited purpose constituent districts are permitted to apportion board members, as nearly as may be, according to the number of each of their inhabitants. (p. 29)
5. In either case, the permanent board of an all purpose regional would be structured the same as the current Kittatinny Regional board: three members from Hampton; three from Stillwater; two from Fredon; and one from Sandyston-Walpack. (p. 31)

6. Districts are prohibited from consolidating, regionalizing, or withdrawing from a regional district if it will increase or exacerbate the segregation of students by racial, socioeconomic, disability or English language learner status.¹³⁰ In this case, the statute is not applicable since all students in the communities currently attending the limited purpose regional would remain in attendance with their peers in the all purpose regional. (p. 33)
7. Each district scored admirably in its most recently completed cycles. Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack were recognized as high performing districts, while Kittatinny was deemed high performing in all areas but one. Additional alignment through a consolidation of the boards of education could aid in strengthening those scores in a more universal manner while reducing the time spent on completing the self evaluation and review. That time may then be redirected toward students, staff, and program development. (p. 34)
8. Stakeholder input was gathered largely through a series of surveys. Responses to prompts on benefits and concerns of regionalization were received from 16 board members, 170 parents, and 96 staff members. Tenth grade students were also surveyed with 106 responses to questions regarding elementary school academic preparation. More details on questions and responses are contained in the body of the report. (p. 49)

Education and Program

9. The region is to be complimented for the sustained joint curricular work done over many years. The Kittatinny Regional Consortium established content area committees in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies to develop a shared curriculum for implementation across the five regional schools. This curriculum was revised in the summer of 2024 through a collaborative process that included representatives from each of the schools. The work was guided by the regional curriculum coordinator, a literacy consultant, and instructional supervisors from Kittatinny. (p. 55)
10. Key strengths of this model include the use of a shared curriculum across districts, common assessment tools, a centralized curriculum coordination structure, and ongoing collaboration with high school staff. In particular, there is strong alignment in core programs, especially in ELA and Math, which supports continuity in student learning. In addition, there is significant coordination in regard to instructional times allocated to core content. (p. 55-56)
11. Variability in some supplemental resources and program implementation may lead to differences in instructional quality and student outcomes, despite the presence of a shared core curriculum. Differences in instructional delivery models—such as departmentalized versus self-contained classrooms—may further influence instructional depth and teacher expertise within specific content areas. Greater alignment in how assessment data is analyzed and used to inform instructional practices could further enhance consistency and improve student outcomes across the region. (p. 56)

¹³⁰ N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.11

12. With regard to specials (art, music, world language, etc.), students enter Kittatinny with varying levels of readiness, confidence, and prior experience. These disparities may impact students' ability to fully engage in elective offerings, participate in extra curricular programs, and pursue advanced coursework. (p. 57)
13. While the districts have worked extremely well together, a regional curriculum office serving grades pK-12 could provide even more cohesive direction, consistent support, and streamlined coordination of curriculum and instructional practices across all grade levels. (p. 61)
14. The five districts met the ELA and Math federal proficiency standards in all ten measures, which is a strong indicator of academic success. Growth is significant too, as it is more under the locus of school control. Fredon, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack exceeded the Math growth target, while Hampton met its expectation. Fredon also exceeded the ELA targets, while the other elementary districts met theirs. These results are reflective of the longstanding efforts made by teachers, administrators, and a shared regional coordinator to align elementary curriculum in this region. Disaggregated results by student groups show that 42 of the 52 federal proficiency standards were met or exceeded, which speaks well of the successful work on the part of these schools and their staff members to reduce achievement gaps. (p. 62)
15. An overview of the past three years of NJSLA data shows that 46 of the 57 ELA, 36 of the 60 Math, and 16 of the 18 Science results met or exceeded state averages. That said, there remain disparities among the four elementary district assessment scores at various grade levels. Stillwater's Math scores most often rank highest, while there is more of a balance among the ELA results. (p. 69)
16. Districts achieving growth scores between 40.0-59.5 are considered as having met the federal accountability standard. The 32 elementary scores in this dataset indicate that student growth met or exceeded that standard with only two exceptions that were each one point below the target. In short, the Fredon, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack schools are consistently assisting their students' academic growth to a successful level. Kittatinny's 7th and 8th grade students have struggled more in reaching the state standard. The differences in these results provide an opportunity for district leaders, working within a regional setting, to examine the programs and instructional practices that are yielding the highest levels of student growth in ELA and Math. A grades pK-12 regional and/or a unified grades 6-8 middle school program can improve connectivity and provide targeted support to the teachers preparing students to meet or exceed academic standards as they enter high school. (p. 73)
17. In SAT Reading and Writing over five years, Kittatinny students scored consistently above, and had a strong percentage of students well above, the college readiness benchmarks as compared to the state average. Math showed similarly strong results. Kittatinny students have increased their enrollment and performance in advanced coursework over time, and in some cases significantly, over the five year period. The disaggregated data reveal that Kittatinny student enrollment and performance by disaggregated groups is also regularly well above state averages. (p. 73-75)

18. The high school had higher graduation rates, in some cases by several points than the state average over the four year time period. Notably, the school is doing quite well in preparing its students with disabilities to meet their graduation requirements and earn their diplomas. In terms of postsecondary enrollment, Kittatinny was well above the state average in all four of the years studied, and all disaggregated groups with sufficient numbers have been well represented at the postsecondary level. (p. 75-76)
19. The total number of preschool students in the Kittatinny region during the 2024-25 school year was 119. The realistic preschool universe was 205 students, meaning that 58% of that universe was being served. It is worth noting that Stillwater is doing an excellent job in providing classroom instruction to 96% of its preschool population. To get to 90% in the other districts, Fredon would need at least 2 additional classrooms, Hampton would need 3, and Sandyston-Walpack would need 2. (p. 81)
20. The data on students in separate special education programs (more commonly known as “out-of-district placements”) show that each district in the region educates at least 96% of its students within their own schools, notably with Stillwater educating all of its students in-district. This is not only good for students, it is efficient financially as out-of-district tuition and transportation regularly approach \$100,000 and above. This is a place where districts can work together by sharing or regionalizing self-contained programs. (p. 82)
21. Of those special needs students educated in-district, more than 70% are in regular education classes for more than 80% of their day in four of the five districts, showing a strong commitment to inclusive education for classified students. The exception is Hampton at just under 50%, which is an area for further examination. (p. 83)
22. The districts within the Kittatinny region demonstrate a commitment to supporting diverse student needs through MTSS, multilingual services, and gifted and talented programming. While there are clear strengths in shared frameworks and collaborative efforts, the structure, staffing, and consistency of implementation vary across districts, resulting in differences in student access and support. (p. 85)
23. The extracurricular and athletic programs at Kittatinny reflect a strong commitment to providing students with opportunities for engagement, leadership, and skill development beyond the classroom. At the elementary level, all districts provide access to extracurricular activities; however, there is notable variability in both the number and type of offerings. Expanding and standardizing offerings—particularly in areas such as the arts, STEM, leadership, and athletics—would strengthen student engagement and better prepare students to take full advantage of the extensive opportunities available at Kittatinny. (p. 86-87)
24. Kittatinny’s overall staffing level shows a student to staff ratio of 9.0 to 1, nearly one and a half points below the state model. Among the 46 grade 7-12 or 9-12 school districts across the state, Kittatinny has the 7th smallest enrollment. A basic principle of economics is that economies, or

efficiencies, can be found the larger the scale of operations gets. Kittatinny's smaller enrollment makes finding such staffing efficiencies challenging. (p. 89)

25. Similar to the high school comparison, the region's elementary schools are all smaller than the state model of 400 students, although Hampton and Stillwater are closer than Fredon. As with Kittatinny, the smaller enrollments of each district make greater staffing efficiencies elusive. (p. 89)
26. A consolidated grades pK-12 system would enable the board and leadership to streamline staffing. With school-level staff remaining relatively constant, the opportunities for efficiency will be more available by combining some positions on district office staffs. Administrative tasks currently duplicated across five districts could be folded into single processes. (p. 94-95)
27. Moving the 6th grade students from the elementary districts to Kittatinny would be more of a school level change versus a district reorganization. In this scenario, school level staffing could undergo some consolidation due to scheduling efficiencies, though most of the 6th grade teachers would likely be employed in a new location. It is difficult to project any support staff and administration relocations given the movement of just one grade level. (p. 95)

Demography and Facilities

28. Births in the region have been averaging 119 per year and trending -1.0 births each year over the last 6 years. Stillwater, at 0.48%, had the largest increase in births relative to population in the region, while births in Hampton and Sandyston had similar moderate increases (0.09 to 0.16%) relative to population, and Fredon had a -0.16% decrease relative to population. (p. 102-103)
29. Research indicates that there are no planned major housing developments above the recent averages in any of the five municipalities that might impact school enrollment significantly at this time. Affordable housing mandates for Round Four have recently been issued for present and prospective need obligations and are at a combined level of 257 units for the five municipalities with Hampton's need the largest at 81. If, when, and how the mandates will be met is unknown at this time. Compliance with the obligations needs to be monitored on a municipal and project basis. (p. 105)
30. Enrollments for the combined region of school districts were decreasing over the six years of actual enrollment by 98 students from an initial high of 1,768 students to a period low of 1,653 in school year 2023-24. In the projection period from 2025-26 to 2029-30, enrollments are projected to increase by 101 students over the end of the actual period, an aggregate increase of 6.0% or about 1.2% per year and a material average change of approximately 7.2 students per grade over 14 grade levels. (p. 108)
31. The overall growth in grades pK-6 enrollment in the region over the next five years is projected to be 86 students from the 2024-25 actual enrollment of 951 students, an aggregate increase of 9.1% or about 1.8% per year and a material average change of approximately 10.8 students per grade over 8 grade levels. Grade 7-12 enrollments peaked in 2019-20 at 890 students, leading to

a loss of 171 students during the actual enrollment period. The projected grades 7-12 enrollment gains 21 students up to 740 in 2029-30. An enlargement of the current limited purpose regional into an all purpose regional would not alter the overall enrollment projections growth in any way. (p. 110)

32. Given that the scenario contemplated would not change the composition of districts in this region, there is expected to be no impact on racial and other demographic groups from a full grades pK-12 regionalization. However, increases in the number of students of Hispanic (from 11.6% to 16.4% of the total enrollment) and Multiracial (from 1.9% to 2.2%) backgrounds provide an opportunity to evaluate the equity of access to resources and programs in the schools for these traditionally underserved groups. (p. 116)
33. The analysis of facilities utilization indicates the potential for 8 available rooms at Kittatinny in 2029-30, allowing for consideration of moving the region's 6th grade students to Kittatinny. In 2025-26, the four 6th grades were projected to have 157 students in 8 classrooms, but drop to 126 by 2029-30. Combining the 6th grades and using the state class size guideline of 24 would require 7 classrooms in 2025-26, dropping to 6 by 2029-30. (p. 119)
34. The reality is that high schools like Kittatinny offer a broad spectrum of courses to address student interests, and many of those classes are scheduled with fewer students than the state guidelines would suggest. Changing that dynamic is an important curricular consideration that would need to be decided in order to provide the number of classrooms needed by a combined 6th grade. A more targeted classroom use study would need to be done to determine exactly how rooms are being utilized currently. Core facilities such as the media center, cafeteria, and gymnasium would also need to have their capacities considered to provide for the needs of an additional 120 to 160 students. (p. 119)
35. At the elementary level, Fredon and Hampton show decreasing student projections moving from a need of 2 rooms to a need of just 1 each. However, both districts are still projected to need this additional classroom space. Stillwater is projected to increase by 78 students causing the school to use up all of its 3 currently available spaces. Moving 6th grade students to Kittatinny could help alleviate the space needs for elementary students in all three districts. (p. 119)
36. Given a future need for elementary classrooms due to projected enrollment increases across the region, an option to consider for preschool expansion could be leasing space to create a joint preschool center in another facility. Lease costs are an approved use of preschool expansion aid, and a combined setting would allow for some economies of scale. This would have the added benefit of freeing up elementary classrooms to address the anticipated need for additional space, especially in Stillwater. (p. 120)

Finance and Operations

37. Negotiations on a new agreement are expected to begin shortly after public approval of a regionalization. The law allows a period of three years for that negotiation to be successfully

concluded before imposing the contract of the largest constituent district made up of only the identical grade levels. (p. 122)

38. One issue with the statutory references is that they are clearly applicable to districts pursuing regionalization using the SREP grant; however, Kittatinny and its partners have been approved for a LEAP grant, which is an earlier and broader consolidation program. Do the 2021 statutes now apply to all who pursue regionalization? The statute does not state so, and no official agency has come forward with a ruling. However, the consultants believe this is the legislative intent and that other related decisions have leaned in the direction of favoring the 2021 SREP statutes as guiding regionalization moving forward. (p. 121)
39. As expected, there are some important differences among the various aspects of the contract that would have to be coordinated through that negotiation. Of particular importance are the recognition clauses, working conditions, salaries, and benefits. For example, regional entry level salaries (BA Step 1) show notable variance. While Fredon, Hampton and Stillwater remain within approximately \$1,350 of each other, Sandyston-Walpack is \$4,883 below the highest grades pK-6 district (Hampton). Kittatinny's starting salary is \$4,670 above Hampton, and \$9,553 above the lowest grades pK-6 district (Sandyston-Walpack). Kittatinny remains distinctively higher through mid-career steps and at the top of the guide. (p. 122-131)
40. In terms of direct spending on students reflected as a percentage of dollars allocated to classroom instruction, Kittatinny spends 57.9% on instruction, slightly above the state median of 57.6%. The state median for grades K-6 districts is 58.8%, which Fredon (46.9%) and Sandyston-Walpack (54.4%) are below. This indicator provides direct student academic experiences, and therefore should receive primary attention and commitment in the district budget. This is not easily accomplished as smaller districts have to spend more of their limited monies on more fixed costs such as administration, operations, and maintenance. (p. 133)
41. An evaluation of student transportation seat time and distance traveled was conducted for all bus services within the region. The student ride times and distances traveled in each case are within what is reasonable for an area of this size. Kittatinny's data is different from the elementary districts, which is to be expected as it covers the entire region of municipalities, and middle and high school students can more easily adjust to extended bus rides. Regionalization is not expected to affect student seat time or travel distance, as there are no current plans or discussions to alter the schools attended by students. (p. 140)
42. Adding students going into Grade 6 to the existing routes for grades 7-12 would have resulted in 113 additional students to be transported: Hampton 53, Stillwater 25, Fredon 22, and Sandyston-Walpack 13. The analysis suggests available space for an additional 125 students. While these figures demonstrate that the existing fleet could accommodate the increase in student numbers, several critical factors require consideration: the geographic distribution of the new students – if the majority reside in areas where buses are nearing capacity, overloading could become a concern; potential increases in overall grade level enrollment may further

increase the risk of exceeding bus capacities; and if buses servicing certain areas have room but necessitate additional stops, this could extend the time students spend in transit. (p. 143)

43. A possible solution would be to have the Kittatinny transportation supervisor input the anticipated 6th grade students into the routing system and design new bus routes to ensure balanced loads and minimal increases in seat time. Once updated, all routes should undergo a rebidding process. (p. 143)
44. Should rebidding occur, it is advisable to conduct a bell schedule study within each elementary district. At present, Kittatinny, Hampton, Stillwater, and Sandyston-Walpack operate bus routes using a single-tier system. It is recommended that districts collaborate to establish a bell schedule facilitating a double-tier route arrangement. Modifying elementary school bell times by 10 to 15 minutes could yield significant cost savings in transportation without major disruption. (p. 144)
45. All of the districts in this study participate in significant shared services. It is obvious that the districts in the Kittatinny region have worked hard to establish money saving and efficiency enhancing shared services. In fact, they are a model of shared services and cooperation among districts both in the regional group and outside of it. (p. 148)
46. While current operations are being managed productively and result in good audits, the districts might benefit from a well staffed regional business office model. By maintaining a well-staffed central hub while keeping essential support staff at the individual school level, a staff could be developed that would provide depth, specialization and continuity. This model would still require duplication of reports for multiple districts. Beyond a joint business office, other possible areas identified for exploration included counseling, facilities, food services, special education, special subject teachers, and transportation. (p. 151-152)
47. Total state aid across the five districts under the capped aid scenario is projected to increase, ranging from \$4.28 million to \$4.85 million over the studied period and is generally consistent with what one would expect in districts receiving most of their aid through categorical aid. The individual district projections all represent continuations of recent historical trends. Kittatinny, Fredon, Hampton, and Stillwater all see continued increases in aid. Sandyston-Walpack experiences steady reductions. (p. 157)
48. Stillwater is the only district in the region which is currently receiving equalization aid and projected to receive it over the study period. The district's capped aid runs significantly below its full uncapped formula aid. This is because its adequacy budget outpaces its local fair share, generating equalization aid eligibility that the 6% annual cap prevents it from fully receiving. (p. 159)
49. Under the uncapped scenario, the aggregate picture changes significantly for two districts. Stillwater's aid rises sharply and nearly doubles by FY 2032 due to growing equalization aid

currently suppressed by the cap. Sandyston-Walpack, by contrast, experiences a much steeper decline, falling to roughly half its current aid level by FY 2028 without cap protections. (p. 160)

50. With supplemental hold harmless aid, the regional runs modestly ahead of the separate districts in the first two years in the capped scenario. Beginning in year three, as protections diminish, separate district aid begins to surpass regional aid. By year five, the separate districts total \$4.8 million, \$57,000 more than the protected regional. While the grades pK-12 regional would receive less state aid, the difference is relatively small, amounting to around a tenth of one percent of the regional's total operating budget. (p. 163)
51. Under uncapped aid, the regional's FY 2032 total aid would reach \$4.8 million, approximately \$855,000 less than aid as separate districts (\$5.6 million). If the state returns to full SFRA funding, the grades pK-12 regional would yield lower state aid than remaining separate. The hold harmless protections provide some assistance but not enough to keep the regional's aid on pace. (p. 164)
52. Expanding Kittatinny to a grades 6-12 configuration is not expected to materially alter the aggregate state aid picture for the region. The primary change is a reallocation of categorical aid from the elementary districts to the regional proportional to the movement of sixth grade students, not a net gain or loss for the region as a whole. (p. 167)
53. Both Kittatinny and Sandyston-Walpack receive sizable appropriations of federal impact aid due to the amount of tax-exempt properties in the districts owned by the federal government. Under regionalization, all federal land currently generating impact aid will remain within the region and therefore, it is the consultants' expectation that the enlarged regional under either option would continue to receive impact aid proportional to the federal land in the district. (p. 167-170)
54. An estimated cost savings of \$885,800 would come primarily from consolidating administrative functions and reducing duplication across the districts. The projected savings are intentionally conservative. They include the projected higher cost of moving staff to the appropriate default salary guides as identified by statute. Even with the cost savings identified and presented in the table, all existing programs are anticipated to be maintained. There are other opportunities for savings that are not included in the calculations such as consolidation of audits, curriculum and textbook purchases, in-district special education programs, student transportation, technology infrastructure, district office functions, unified contract negotiations, and the potential for self-insured health benefit plans that would be viable in an enlarged or newly formed regional. (p. 175-177)
55. In the grades 6-12 configuration, it is the considered judgment of the study team that cost savings would likely be minimal. Any potential savings would likely be secondary to other benefits such as expanded program offerings and enhanced educational opportunities that could come from operating a single, larger, middle school program. (p. 177)

56. The tax analysis identified a reference ratio for each regional configuration. This ratio is the apportionment weighting that minimizes the maximum adverse tax impact to any single municipality. It selects the ratio where the hardest hit community is impacted the least and guards against a scenario where one community bears a disproportionate burden to produce benefits for others. The reference ratio is not a recommendation for the permanent apportionment formula, which is a policy decision to be made by the participating communities. Instead, it provides a grounded starting point for that discussion. (p. 185)
57. While no one ratio can produce tax savings for all communities, the 69% EPV / 31% ENR reference ratio weighting does produce savings for two of the five municipalities (Fredon and Sandyston) with only slight increases to the remaining three. With increases of roughly \$12,000 and \$20,000, respectively, Hampton and Stillwater have an effectively neutral tax impact as total tax levies remain north of \$15 million and \$10 million. The differences represent 0.08% and 0.2% of the total tax levy in each community, respectively. (p. 185)
58. Due to Walpack's extremely small resident population and household count, the additional \$13,000 in total tax levy has a disproportionate effect. Since Walpack's municipal government pays school tax obligations through its limited municipal budget, this increase would not actually be felt at the household level but instead through larger municipal payments to the regional. These larger payments, while modest in comparison to the other municipalities in the region, could introduce long term budgetary pressure on Walpack. (p. 187)
59. Sandyston sees the largest rate reduction (-\$0.219), dropping from the highest rate among the four communities to second lowest, a decrease of \$479 on the average assessed home. Fredon also sees a meaningful reduction (-\$0.101), a decrease of \$341 on the average assessed home. Hampton's and Stillwater's rates increase such that the impact on an average assessed home is \$5 and \$10, respectively, representing an effectively neutral impact in each community under regionalization. (p. 190)
60. Moving 6th grade into the regional shifts a portion of each community's equalized property valuation from the elementary districts to Kittatinny's apportionment base and changes each municipality's share of regional costs even though underlying property wealth is unchanged. This is not expected to substantially alter each community's share of the regional's costs. While each community would contribute a higher amount due to the regional's increased costs, it would simultaneously experience reduced costs in its independent elementary district. The offset may not be one-to-one, but it is not expected to shift each district's relative tax position in comparison to the status quo. (p. 192-193)
61. The law permits a regional's board of education to establish a transitional apportionment methodology, not to exceed ten years, that differs from the permanent formula adopted by voters. The transitional apportionment plan presented guarantees savings for all five communities in each of the first five years to provide a period of stabilization before the permanent formula takes effect before beginning a phase-in to permanent apportionment by formula by year ten. (p. 194)

APPENDIX

This appendix outlines key assumptions of this study's state aid and local tax modeling and analysis. It also provides some background knowledge on NJ's school funding formula and local tax apportionment methods. Finally, it presents state aid and local tax tables that provide greater depth and context to supplement those in the main body of those sections.

Key Assumptions

The financial modeling and analysis in this study are based on a set of general, financial, operational, and legal assumptions. These assumptions are consistent across both the state aid and local tax impact analyses and establish the framework used by the consultants for comparing the status quo and regionalization scenarios.

General Assumptions

- The tax levies and rates projected in the analysis are for the purposes of studying the differences between the status quo and the regionalization scenario and are not intended to serve as predictions of future actual tax levies and rates.
- Estimates of participating district enrollment in school years 2027-28 through 2031-32 were used in the determination of state aid and in the allocation of both equalized valuations and tax levies. Enrollment estimates are based on the projections of the study's demographer and, where unavailable, other standard forecasting methods.
- Where a starting date is required for analysis, it is assumed the enlarged regional would begin operation on July 1, 2027 (the 2027-28 school year).
- It is the view of the consultants that voters in Fredon Township, Hampton Township, Sandyston Township, Stillwater Township, and Walpack Township would be most likely to support regionalization if it demonstrates the potential for tax savings or only minimal increases offset by educational benefits. This premise informs the overall framing of the study but does not affect the technical calculations.

Financial Assumptions

- Future tax levies are assumed to reflect the maximum two percent annual increase permitted under state law. No banked cap is assumed to be utilized to increase levies beyond two percent.
- There is considerable uncertainty about whether methodology changes first introduced in FY 2026 and continued in FY 2027 that limit annual aid increases to 6% and reductions to 3%, will continue in future years. This analysis assumes they will continue. The distinction matters because aid amounts may differ significantly depending on which policy the state adopts going forward.

- The provisions of P.L.2021, c.402 governing state aid calculations for regionals created or expanded following SREP-funded feasibility studies are not necessarily assumed to apply to the participating districts or to an enlarged regional because this study was commissioned under a LEAP grant.
- Debt service aid for the enlarged regional would equal the sum of the constituent districts' debt service aid allocations.
- Existing assets and debt among the former separate districts would become the shared assets and debt of the regional.
- Costs related to school building conditions, including educational adequacy, planned expansions, and maintenance would be assumed by the enlarged regional but are not factored into this analysis.
- Equalized property values in each community are projected based on historical trends from FY 1985-2026. These trend patterns reflect cyclical increases, peaks, and declines in equalized valuation over multi-decade long cycles.

Operational Assumptions

- Existing shared services agreements between the constituent districts would terminate upon consolidation.
- The operating budget for the enlarged regional would be an aggregate of the district budgets less the net cost savings outlined earlier in this study.
- Any cost reductions to the budget, including personnel outlined in this study, would require approval by the board of education of the enlarged regional.
- While the consolidation of choice districts is not explicitly addressed under current law, the continuity of education for choice students is emphasized throughout the statutes and choice students are generally allowed to continue their education through the choice district's terminal grade, even under conditions of program termination. Therefore, choice students currently enrolled in Kittatinny's schools through the interdistrict public school choice program are assumed to be eligible to remain in the district's schools through their terminal grade.

Legal Assumptions

- P.L.1995, c.294, s.2 (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-31.4) provides a specific transition mechanism for employee contracts when a regional is formed. An estimate of costs stemming from aligning the existing district salary guides was calculated and is included in the cost savings calculations used in the model.

- P.L.1996, c.138, s.32; amended 2007, c.260, s.33. (N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-32) states that, “For a period of five years following regionalization, each regional school district formed ... shall be eligible to receive supplemental State aid equal to the difference between the regional district’s equalization aid ... for the budget year and the sum of equalization aid received by each constituent district of that regional school district in the year prior to regionalization, multiplied by the transition weight. ... the transition weight shall equal 1.0 for the first year following regionalization, .80 for the second year following regionalization, .60 for the third year following regionalization, .40 for the fourth year following regionalization, and .20 for the fifth year following regionalization.” Estimates of supplemental aid are provided in the State Aid section of this study.

Key Terms

Adequacy Budget: The estimated cost of providing a “thorough and efficient” education in a school district, as calculated under SFRA.

Capped Aid: State aid calculated with annual increase limits (6%) and decrease limits (3%), as introduced in FY 2026.

Categorical Aid: Per-pupil state funding for specific purposes (e.g., transportation, security, special education) provided to all districts regardless of wealth.

Equalization Aid: State aid provided when a district’s local fair share falls short of its adequacy budget.

LEAP (Local Efficiency Achievement Program): A state grant program that provided direct support to advance the efforts of shared services in all local governments.

Local Fair Share: The amount a district is expected to raise locally through property taxes based on its equalized property values and aggregate resident income.

NJDOE: The New Jersey Department of Education.

P.L.2021, c.402: State law that created incentives to encourage regionalization and removed statutory impediments. The law established the SREP grant program to reimburse feasibility study costs to support districts considering regionalization.

S2 (Senate Bill 2): Legislation in 2018 that established a six-year phase-in schedule for full SFRA funding; completed in FY 2025.

SFRA (School Funding Reform Act of 2008): New Jersey’s primary K-12 education funding formula. It calculates state aid based on each district’s adequacy budget (amount needed to provide a thorough and efficient education) and local fair share (required local contribution, i.e. school taxes).

SREP (School Regionalization Efficiency Program): A state grant program that funds feasibility studies for potential school district consolidations.

Uncapped Aid: State aid calculated under the standard SFRA formula without annual limits.

State Aid Calculations and Methodology

To estimate future state school aid under both the status quo and regionalization configurations, the consultants developed a model that approximates the SFRA formula using the most recent fiscal year as a baseline. The model uses FY 2026 as its baseline year and incorporates statutory provisions, recent policy adjustments, and projected demographic and property data to generate consistent, comparable estimates for FY 2028 through FY 2032.

The model relies on the following data sources:

- Enrollment projections developed by the study’s demographer;
- Equalized property valuations from the NJ Division of Taxation, with future values projected based on 40-year historical trend patterns;
- Aggregate income data from NJDOE; and
- Actual state aid allocations from school district annual State School Aid Summaries.

Model outputs have been compared against actual NJDOE aid allocations for recent fiscal years to validate the model’s accuracy. Its estimates align with actual aid figures received.

Background on SFRA and the Path to Full Funding

Enacted in 2008, the SFRA formula calculates state aid by comparing each district’s educational funding needs (its “adequacy budget”) against its ability to raise local revenue (its “local fair share”). When a district’s local fair share falls short of its adequacy budget, the state provides equalization aid to close the gap.

From its inception through FY 2018, the SFRA formula was never fully funded in any annual state budget. Rather than receiving the full aid amount calculated by the formula, districts received adjusted amounts based on their prior year allocations. The persistent underfunding led to significant legislative updates known as the S2 legislation enacted in 2018. S2 provided a six-year phase-in schedule for the state to achieve full funding of the SFRA formula by FY 2025. However, in the following year, NJDOE introduced significant methodology changes that moved away from full funding.

The FY 2026 state budget introduced three changes to how state aid is calculated. First, rather than using a single year’s data, the formula now uses three-year averages of equalized property values and aggregate district income to calculate local fair share. This smooths year over year volatility but also makes the formula less responsive to changes in district wealth. For a district with rapidly rising property values, averaging provides temporary relief from increased local contribution

requirements, however, for a district with declining values, it delays the benefit of reduced local fair share. Second, a change was made to how special education funding is provided. Rather than providing aid based on a static classification rate and assumed special education enrollment, the State based aid on actual district counts of special education and speech-only students. Districts with higher than average special education populations may see increased aid, and those with lower populations may see reduced aid. Third, the State restricted the amount each district's aid could change relative to the prior year with increases capped at 6% and decreases at 3%. This effectively returns K-12 funding to an "off-formula" model in which aid is tied to prior year allocations rather than full formula calculations.

All of the factors discussed above were implemented through budgetary language provisions, and therefore apply only to FY 2026 and FY 2027; they are not permanent changes. Despite not being permanent, it is the consultants' belief that these policies are more likely to be continued than not, as they greatly reduce and stabilize the amount of additional aid required in subsequent budget years and have broad support from education stakeholders.

The aid caps have meaningful implications for the districts examined in this study. Given the uncertainty about whether caps will be continued, this study analyzes state aid under two scenarios:

- Capped aid: where the FY 2026 and FY 2027 changes (including caps) are assumed to continue into the future for all years in the study period; and
- Uncapped aid: where the changes are assumed to only apply to FY 2026 and FY 2027 with subsequent years reverting back to the default mechanisms in the statutory SFRA funding formula without caps.

Both scenarios are presented throughout the analysis to illustrate how future state policy decisions could affect each district and regionalization configuration.

Model Components

For the purpose of estimating state aid in both the status quo and regionalization scenario, the consultants constructed a financial model approximating the SFRA funding formula. Aid estimates for future years are based on the enrollment, demographic, property value, and aggregate income trends in each participating school district and municipality.

The model first determines each participating district's:

- adequacy budget – the estimated cost of providing a "thorough and efficient" education;
- local fair share – the district's expected local contribution based on its property wealth and income; and
- equalization aid – the difference between a district's adequacy budget and its local fair share, when positive.

Next, it calculates estimates for additional aid in categories for special education, security, and transportation, which are provided to all districts on a per pupil basis regardless of property wealth or income, as well as for non-SFRA funding streams like school choice and debt service. Federal aid received through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is excluded from this analysis, as it is allocated through separate federal formulas and is not greatly affected by regionalization decisions.

State Aid Incentives for Regional Districts

In addition to the standard SFRA formula calculations described above, recent legislation enacted in 2021 created significant financial protections for school districts that regionalize following the completion of an SREP-funded feasibility study.¹³¹ These protections do not necessarily extend to the regionalization configurations examined in this study, as it was commissioned under the terms of LEAP grant, not an SREP grant. It is unclear to the consultants why the type of grant applied for should impact a regional's hold harmless protections under the law, but there is indeed precedent for excluding districts from benefits afforded under P.L. 2021, c.402 based on grant type.¹³²

The 2021 law provides a “hold harmless” protection such that a regional is prevented from receiving less aid through FY 2029 than the total of its constituent districts prior to regionalization. Effectively, it establishes a funding floor for the first years of the regional's operation. This is referred to as the “locked aid” benefit in this subsection.

If the protections of the 2021 legislation do not apply, previous state law provides for regionals to receive supplemental state aid for a period of five years following regionalization.¹³³ The amount of supplemental aid that a district is eligible to receive is equal to the difference between the amount of uncapped equalization aid that would be received by the regional and the aggregate amount of equalization aid received by the separate districts in the year prior to regionalization, multiplied by a declining transitional weight.

Additionally, the 2021 law created a mechanism that allows regionals to retain a modest amount of aid that may otherwise be removed under certain conditions. This is referred to as the “slower phase-out” benefit in this subsection. For the same reason described above in the “locked aid” section, any regional district in this region would not be eligible for the slower-phase benefits under the 2021 law.

Understanding Tax Apportionment Methods and Methodology

In a regional district, each constituent municipality is responsible for the financial support of the regional. In order to determine each municipality's share of the total costs, an apportionment method must be chosen. Current law provides that taxes may be apportioned on the basis of the portion of each municipality's equalized property valuation (EPV) allocated to the regional; the

¹³¹ P.L.2021, c.402

¹³² See *Bd. of Educ. of Henry Hudson Regional Sch. Dist. v. Onat*, Dkt. No. 402-25 (Comm'r of Educ. Aug. 12, 2025)

¹³³ N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-32

number of students enrolled (ENR) in the regional from each municipality; or any combination of apportionment based on EPV and ENR.

EPVs are assessments of property values used to ensure fair distribution of tax burdens and state aid across municipalities. The equalization process standardizes assessed property values by compensating for differences in local assessment practices and market conditions across the state. The process generally involves comparing the assessed values of recently sold properties with their sale price and using that data to broadly adjust the community's aggregate assessed values. Using EPVs rather than local assessed values, the state can more accurately compare the relative wealth of different communities. For example, if two identical houses are assessed at different values in different municipalities due to varying assessment practices, the equalization process adjusts these values to reflect their true market value and ensures fair comparisons across district lines.

These two methods reflect fundamentally different approaches to sharing costs. EPV apportionment distributes expenses based on each community's ability to pay and operates on the principle that wealthier communities should contribute proportionally more to support education. By contrast, ENR apportionment allocates costs according to each community's usage of the regional, where communities contribute based on how many students they send to the district. State law also permits any combination of these two methods and allows communities to negotiate apportionment formulas that balance ability to pay with service utilization. This flexibility creates a spectrum of possible tax distributions, each producing different impacts on participating communities.

The fairness of tax apportionment methods in regional districts has long been debated in NJ. At its core, the debate pits EPV methods, which benefit districts with lower property wealth, against ENR-based approaches, which tend to favor wealthier areas. This tension between apportionment strategies has been a recurring theme in district regionalization since the original regionalization law was adopted in 1931 and reflects competing philosophies about fairness and community responsibility that extend far beyond technical formula considerations.

The flexibility in combining apportionment methods creates extensive analytical possibilities. Since each method can be weighted anywhere from zero to one hundred percent, this analysis examined one hundred and one different apportionment scenarios in whole number increments. These scenarios range from pure property value apportionment on one end to pure enrollment apportionment on the other, and every possible combination in between. For example, one scenario might weight EPVs at 60% and ENR at 40%, while another might reverse these weightings. Each combination produces a unique distribution of tax responsibilities across the participating communities that reflect different balances of wealth and enrollment.

Historic State Aid Category Tables

TABLE A1
Actual State Aid, Kittatinny, FY 2022-2027

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Equalization Aid	2,006,434	891,793	222,832	34,772	0	0
Transportation Aid	630,048	630,048	630,048	630,048	541,430	526,055
Special Education Aid	691,576	691,576	691,576	691,576	875,600	853,098
Security Aid	86,912	86,912	86,912	86,912	112,876	107,858
Adjustment Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choice Aid	285,131	355,940	397,670	428,948	471,614	481,130
Total Aid	3,700,101	2,656,269	2,029,038	1,872,256	2,001,520	1,968,141
Prior Year Aid	4,628,664	3,700,101	2,656,269	2,029,038	1,872,256	2,001,520
YoY Difference (\$)	-928,563	-1,043,832	-627,231	-156,782	129,264	-33,379
YoY Difference (%)	-20.06%	-28.21%	-23.61%	-7.73%	6.90%	-1.67%

TABLE A2
Actual State Aid, Fredon, FY 2022-2027

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Equalization Aid	127,096	78,033	49,269	49,269	0	0
Transportation Aid	33,235	33,235	33,235	33,235	90,281	99,215
Special Education Aid	183,763	183,763	183,763	196,640	206,610	216,769
Security Aid	25,900	25,900	25,900	25,900	26,455	26,762
Adjustment Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Aid	369,994	320,931	292,167	305,044	323,346	342,746
Prior Year Aid	438,138	369,994	320,931	292,167	305,044	323,346
YoY Difference (\$)	-68,144	-49,063	-28,764	12,877	18,302	19,400
YoY Difference (%)	-15.55%	-13.26%	-8.96%	4.41%	6.00%	6.00%

TABLE A3
Actual State Aid, Hampton, FY 2022-2027

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Equalization Aid	357,774	184,845	136,876	136,876	0	0
Transportation Aid	167,978	167,978	167,978	187,758	306,470	323,056
Special Education Aid	239,718	239,718	239,718	359,838	396,547	423,273
Security Aid	32,162	32,162	32,162	35,732	49,882	51,744
Adjustment Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Aid	797,632	624,703	576,734	720,204	752,899	798,073
Prior Year Aid	966,039	797,632	624,703	576,734	720,204	752,899
YoY Difference (\$)	-168,407	-172,929	-47,969	143,470	32,695	45,174
YoY Difference (%)	-17.43%	-21.68%	-7.68%	24.88%	4.54%	6.00%

TABLE A4
Actual State Aid, Stillwater, FY 2022-2027

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Equalization Aid	559,428	265,727	118,533	118,533	0	119,789
Transportation Aid	151,123	151,123	151,123	151,123	196,276	156,376
Special Education Aid	211,181	211,181	211,181	236,765	337,070	302,078
Security Aid	33,792	33,792	33,792	33,792	39,280	28,741
Adjustment Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Aid	955,524	661,823	514,629	540,213	572,626	606,984
Prior Year Aid	1,270,940	955,524	661,823	514,629	540,213	572,626
YoY Difference (\$)	-315,416	-293,701	-147,194	25,584	32,413	34,358
YoY Difference (%)	-24.82%	-30.74%	-22.24%	4.97%	6.00%	6.00%

TABLE A5
Actual State Aid, Sandyston-Walpack, FY 2022-2027

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Equalization Aid	257,285	237,943	237,943	311,539	4,186	0
Transportation Aid	5,430	5,430	45,558	108,012	204,628	196,845
Special Education Aid	87,136	87,136	142,839	158,329	323,173	320,911
Security Aid	2,651	2,651	14,577	16,793	44,846	41,772
Adjustment Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choice Aid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Aid	352,502	333,160	440,917	594,673	576,833	559,528
Prior Year Aid	450,578	352,502	333,160	440,917	594,673	576,833
YoY Difference (\$)	-98,076	-19,342	107,757	153,756	-17,840	-17,305
YoY Difference (%)	-21.77%	-5.49%	32.34%	34.87%	-3.00%	-3.00%

Equalized Property Values and Average Daily Enrollment Tables

TABLE A6
Projected EPVs by Municipality, FY 2028-2032 (in millions)

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	757.5	853.1	937.9	992.9	1,005.3
Hampton	1,324.3	1,469.0	1,538.4	1,554.7	1,544.2
Stillwater	810.7	845.3	874.3	862.8	842.4
Sandyston	445.6	469.9	477.2	471.8	467.3
Walpack	6.0	5.9	5.6	5.6	5.5
Total	3,344.1	3,643.2	3,833.3	3,887.9	3,864.7

TABLE A7
Historical Allocation of EPV, Kittatinny Regional, FY 2022-2027 (in millions)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Fredon	243.3	234.8	259.5	278.8	274.6	304.5
Hampton	313.6	341.9	344.4	383.8	432.9	477.2
Stillwater	230.0	252.4	259.0	271.9	298.5	302.0
Sandyston	116.2	123.7	151.3	146.5	170.5	184.0
Walpack	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Total EPV	903.0	952.9	1,014.1	1,080.9	1,176.5	1,267.7
Fredon Share	26.9%	24.6%	25.6%	25.8%	23.3390%	24.0%
Hampton Share	34.7%	35.9%	34.0%	35.5%	36.7977%	37.6%
Stillwater Share	25.5%	26.5%	25.5%	25.2%	25.3703%	23.8%
Sandyston Share	12.9%	13.0%	14.9%	13.6%	14.4930%	14.5%
Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

TABLE A8
Projected Allocation of EPV, Kittatinny Regional, Status Quo, FY 2028-2032 (in millions)

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	327.6	352.8	391.0	425.1	433.6
Hampton	529.2	564.0	588.0	619.2	622.3
Stillwater	312.6	293.5	291.0	295.6	284.7
Sandyston	201.6	203.1	210.2	211.0	212.4
Walpack	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Total EPV	1,370.9	1,413.3	1,480.1	1,550.9	1,553.0
Fredon Share	23.9%	25.0%	26.4%	27.4%	27.9%
Hampton Share	38.6%	39.9%	39.7%	39.9%	40.1%
Stillwater Share	22.8%	20.8%	19.7%	19.1%	18.3%
Sandyston Share	14.7%	14.4%	14.2%	13.6%	13.7%
Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

TABLE A9
Projected ADE, Kittatinny Regional, Status Quo, FY 2028-2032

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Kittatinny	157.1	146.2	150.6	156.8	160.3
Fredon	214.9	203.9	206.0	215.9	221.2
Hampton	179.8	171.7	172.9	181.3	185.9
Stillwater	100.5	94.9	96.5	100.9	103.4
Sandyston-Walpack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total ADE	652.0	616.6	625.9	654.8	670.6
Kittatinny Share	24.1%	23.7%	24.1%	24.0%	23.9%
Fredon Share	33.0%	33.1%	32.9%	33.0%	33.0%
Hampton Share	27.6%	27.8%	27.6%	27.7%	27.7%
Stillwater Share	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%
Sandyston-Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

TABLE A10
Projected Allocation of EPV, Option 1, FY 2028-2032 (in millions)

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	757.5	853.1	937.9	992.9	1,005.3
Hampton	1,324.3	1,469.0	1,538.4	1,554.7	1,544.2
Stillwater	810.7	845.3	874.3	862.8	842.4
Sandyston	445.6	469.9	477.2	471.8	467.3
Walpack	6.0	5.9	5.6	5.6	5.5
Total EPV	3,344.1	3,643.2	3,833.3	3,887.9	3,864.7
Fredon Share	22.7%	23.4%	24.5%	25.5%	26.0116%
Hampton Share	39.6%	40.3%	40.1%	40.0%	39.9567%
Stillwater Share	24.2%	23.2%	22.8%	22.2%	21.7983%
Sandyston Share	13.3%	12.9%	12.4%	12.1%	12.0917%
Walpack Share	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1417%

TABLE A11
Projected ADE, Option 1, FY 2028-2032

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon	363.3	353.5	361.2	366.4	371.7
Hampton	537.7	531.2	538.9	542.1	548.9
Stillwater	466.3	494.6	519.7	529.2	550.1
Sandyston	222.1	219.7	219.2	225.6	227.4
Walpack	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total ADE	1,589.3	1,599.0	1,639.0	1,663.3	1,698.1

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Fredon Share	22.9%	22.1%	22.0%	22.0%	21.9%
Hampton Share	33.8%	33.2%	32.9%	32.6%	32.3%
Stillwater Share	29.3%	30.9%	31.7%	31.8%	32.4%
Sandyston Share	14.0%	13.7%	13.4%	13.6%	13.4%
Walpack Share	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Tax Impact Tables

TABLE A12
Average Tax Impact, Option 1, FY 2028-2032¹³⁴

	Fredon	Hampton	Stillwater	Sandyston	Walpack
100% EPV / 0% ENR	-205,513	871,151	-964,260	-620,551	33,102
95% EPV / 5% ENR	-242,803	732,612	-805,496	-600,223	29,839
90% EPV / 10% ENR	-280,093	594,075	-646,732	-579,896	26,576
85% EPV / 15% ENR	-317,383	455,536	-487,969	-559,568	23,312
80% EPV / 20% ENR	-354,673	316,998	-329,205	-539,241	20,049
75% EPV / 25% ENR	-391,963	178,460	-170,441	-518,913	16,786
70% EPV / 30% ENR	-429,253	39,922	-11,677	-498,586	13,523
69% EPV / 31% ENR	-436,711	12,214	20,076	-494,520	12,870
65% EPV / 35% ENR	-466,543	-98,616	147,087	-478,258	10,259
60% EPV / 40% ENR	-503,833	-237,154	305,851	-457,931	6,996
55% EPV / 45% ENR	-541,123	-375,692	464,615	-437,603	3,733
50% EPV / 50% ENR	-578,413	-514,231	623,379	-417,276	470
45% EPV / 55% ENR	-615,702	-652,769	782,142	-396,948	-2,794
40% EPV / 60% ENR	-652,993	-791,307	940,906	-376,621	-6,057
35% EPV / 65% ENR	-690,283	-929,845	1,099,670	-356,293	-9,320
30% EPV / 70% ENR	-727,572	-1,068,383	1,258,434	-335,966	-12,583
25% EPV / 75% ENR	-764,862	-1,206,921	1,417,198	-315,639	-15,847
20% EPV / 80% ENR	-802,152	-1,345,460	1,575,962	-295,311	-19,110
15% EPV / 85% ENR	-839,442	-1,483,998	1,734,726	-274,984	-22,373
10% EPV / 90% ENR	-876,732	-1,622,536	1,893,490	-254,656	-25,636
5% EPV / 95% ENR	-914,022	-1,761,074	2,052,254	-234,329	-28,900
0% EPV / 100% ENR	-951,312	-1,899,612	2,211,017	-214,001	-32,163

¹³⁴ The bold faced row in Table A12 is the reference ratio

Model Sensitivity Table

TABLE A13
Summary of Alternative Fairness Criteria Ratios ¹³⁵

Fairness Criterion	Description	Option 1	Option 2
Evenness of % Impact	Balances the percentage savings relative to total savings in each community.	70/30	NA
Evenness of \$ Impact	Balances the dollar savings in each community.	70/30	NA
Evenness of Tax Rate Impact	Balances the tax rate impact relative to the status quo in each community.	55/45	NA
Evenness of Equalized Tax Rate Impact	Balances the equalized tax rate impact relative to the status quo in each community.	50/50	NA
Evenness of Increase/Decrease Relative to Status Quo	Balances the percentage increase or decrease relative to the status quo in each community.	49/51	NA
Impact Proportional to FY26 Community EPV Share	Produces savings proportional to each community's FY 2026 share of total equalized valuations.	71/29	NA
Impact Proportional to 5yr Historical Avg Regional EPV Share	Produces savings proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 share of existing regional equalized valuations.	71/29	NA
Impact Proportional to 5yr Historical Avg Regional ENR Share	Produces savings proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 share of total enrollment in the existing regional.	71/29	NA
Impact Proportional to 5yr Avg Historical Community EPV Share	Produces savings proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 share of total community equalized valuations.	71/29	NA
Impact proportional to 5yr Avg Historical Community ENR	Produces savings proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 share of total community enrollments.	71/29	NA
Tax Rate Impact Proportional to 5yr Historical Avg Community EPV	Produces tax rate impacts proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 equalized valuations.	55/45	NA
Tax Rate Impact Proportional to 5yr Historical Avg Community ENR	Produces tax rate impacts proportional to each community's average FY 2022-2026 enrollments.	54/46	NA
Evenness of Tax Per \$100K Assessed	Balances the tax impact per \$100,000 of assessed value relative to status quo.	55/45	NA
Evenness of Tax Per Avg Assessed Home	Balances the tax impact on the average assessed home relative to the status quo.	55/45	NA
Minimax of \$ Tax Impact	Identifies the ratio with the least adverse impact to any one community's aggregate tax levy.	69/31	NA
Minimax of Avg Assessed Home	Identifies the ratio with the least adverse tax impact to any one community's average assessed home.	57/43	NA
Average of Fairness Ratios		62/38	NA

¹³⁵ Option columns are presented as EPV% / ENR%