

PITTSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT REPORT, JULY 31, 2025

1. Adequacy Funding and Embargoed Data – FY26 Preliminary Review

Overview of State Adequacy Aid

New Hampshire provides state education aid, known as adequacy aid, to public school districts based on a statutory formula designed to support equitable access to education. The total aid allocation is primarily calculated using:

- Average Daily Membership – Resident (ADM-R): The number of students who reside in the district and attend public school.
- Additional Weighted Factors: Students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, receive special education services, are English Language Learners, or do not meet grade-level reading proficiency by third grade.

It is important to note that state adequacy aid is provided only for students for whom the district is financially responsible. Students attending charter schools, private schools (by parent placement), or another district without Pittsfield's explicit approval should not be counted toward our ADM-R or included in our state aid allocation.

What Is Embargoed Data?

Each year, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHED) releases embargoed adequacy data in the summer for district review. These preliminary reports include calculated funding projections for the upcoming fiscal year and are intended for internal district validation before public release.

Embargoed data allows districts to:

- Confirm enrollment counts and weighted student categories
- Identify any discrepancies in student coding or responsibility
- Flag errors before the funding becomes final

While embargoed reports are shared confidentially with each district, the embargo period is a standard and transparent part of the state funding process, designed to ensure accuracy.

Current Concern: FY26 Adequacy Data Dispute

Pittsfield School District has reviewed the FY26 embargoed adequacy report and identified an area of concern. The report includes several students whose enrollment appears to be attributed to Pittsfield, despite the fact that:

- These students are currently attending out of district public high school
- They were not placed or approved by Pittsfield to attend that school
- Pittsfield does not have a financial obligation for their tuition or services

Our district's Student Information System (SIS) does not include these students in its uploads. It appears their association with Pittsfield was generated externally, likely through another district's submission to the state's data system (NHED's iNHDEX).

This inclusion inaccurately **increases** our reported ADM-R and may misrepresent both our funding eligibility and our district's responsibility.

Actions Taken

In response to this concern, Pittsfield has:

- Submitted a formal letter of dispute to NHED leadership, including the Director of the Division of Education Analytics and Access and the Director of School Finance.
- Engaged our SIS team to review October 1 enrollment records and confirm internal reporting accuracy.
- Consulted with legal counsel to ensure the district's position is documented and protected.
- Notified appropriate stakeholders that we do not accept or verify the current version of the FY26 adequacy report due to this unresolved discrepancy.

We are awaiting further clarification from NHED and will update the Board once a final resolution is reached.

Summary

Pittsfield remains committed to protecting the integrity of its student data and financial reporting. Ensuring that adequacy funding is based on accurate and lawful enrollment figures is essential to both our budgeting and public accountability.

Disclaimer: The information referenced in this report reflects embargoed data released by the NH Department of Education for district review. These data are considered preliminary and confidential until publicly finalized by the Department.

2. Capital Improvement Plan

The district has previously participated in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee. We look forward to re-engaging with the Town moving forward. I will be attending the next Select Board meeting and am looking forward to fostering these new relationships.

The last CIP report for the Pittsfield School District was completed in 2022 and outlined work completed at PES, including the PES boiler and roofline adjustments/awnings at PES and the SAU office. Notably, the last time the roof at PES was resurfaced was in 1999. It is now due for resurfacing and will be a priority item I will discuss as we collaborate with the Town.

3. Financial Audit

Our work has continued with our CPA, Mr. Greg Colby. Mr. Colby has reviewed the FY23 draft audit report, which did not indicate any significant financial abnormalities. However, the district was delinquent in completing Time and Effort documentation for work hours paid through federal funds. Upon notification in the draft report, we immediately began this corrective process.

Time and Effort Reporting refers to the documentation required to verify that employees paid with federal grant funds are actually working on the activities and objectives supported by those funds. It ensures compliance with federal regulations by providing evidence of the time spent on allowable grant-related duties. This reporting takes the form of periodic certifications or detailed personnel activity reports, depending on whether an employee works on a single federal program or multiple cost objectives.

We anticipate receiving an FY23 audit letter in the coming weeks, along with the full version of the report from Plodzik and Sanderson. Mr. Colby and the firm have already begun collaborative efforts in reviewing FY24, which encompassed the 2023–2024 school year. Initial reviews suggest this is the period during which financial spending went awry and needs to be reconciled.

I will continue to update the Board and our community as information is received and as we work toward reconciling the deficits that were created.

4. Manifest Signing

The Board will need to formally appoint two members to be responsible for signing manifests. In order to preserve the confidentiality of names and specific services that may contain personally identifiable information, all manifests must be signed in person at the SAU office.

While all Board members are welcome to review and sign manifests, two individuals, one of whom must be the Board Chair, should be designated to ensure consistent and timely processing of payments.

Additionally, any Board member who accesses or signs a manifest will be required to sign a confidentiality disclosure acknowledging the sensitive nature of the information contained therein. Attached to this report is the confidentiality document for Board members to complete.

5. Handbooks

Our building principals are in the process of completing their student handbooks for the 2025–2026 school year. These updated handbooks will include new policies required by state law, including specific guidance on student cell phone usage. We anticipate that the handbooks will be finalized and available to students and families by mid-August.

6. PMHS Schedule

At Pittsfield Middle High School (PMHS), staff and administration have been actively revising the master schedule to address staffing shortages. We are encouraged by the spirit of collaboration among faculty and leadership, and we are grateful for the flexibility and dedication of our team. Everyone is working together to ensure that schedule changes prioritize the needs and success of our students.

7. Recruitment Efforts

We continue our efforts to recruit educators to join our dedicated teams. The following positions are currently open:

Elementary Special Education
Middle School English Language Arts (ELA)
High School English Language Arts (ELA)

All positions are regularly updated on EdJobsNH.com and also appear on our School District webpage. Dr. Anderson has also listed the openings on LinkedIn, and our team members are actively engaging in outreach through professional and personal networks. We have been fortunate to interview several strong candidates and look forward to bringing forward our nominations as contract discussions are finalized.

8. NHRS Payment Plan and RAN Update

On Wednesday, July 16, a payment plan proposal was submitted to the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS). At this time, we have not received a response. The NHRS was also notified of our efforts to secure a Revenue Anticipation Note (RAN), similar to the Town's Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). In the event that the RAN is not secured, we have requested a four-payment plan aligned with the timing of our adequacy revenue receipts.

I will continue to keep the Board informed as we receive updates regarding both the NHRS response and the progress on the RAN application.

9. McKinney-Vento & Family Services Coordinator

As part of our continued efforts to support student success and family engagement, I am recommending a grant-funded McKinney-Vento & Family Services Liaison position. This role would address growing needs among students experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and other barriers to school participation, while ensuring compliance with federal requirements under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Title I.

Rationale

The number of students and families facing housing instability, chronic absenteeism, and hardship has grown in recent years.

The District is required to designate a McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison and ensure that eligible students are immediately enrolled, transported, and supported academically and socially.

Currently, these duties are distributed across multiple staff members, resulting in inefficiencies and, at times, lack of compliance with federal expectations. A centralized liaison would increase efficiency, ensure accountability, and provide targeted support to at-risk students and families.

This recommendation also arises from preliminary findings during our internal audit. The town, rightly so, is concerned about spending gone awry. I am concerned. You, the Board, are concerned. As we dig into this work, we are identifying areas where we are not meeting federal requirements, which is why some activities were ultimately not funded by the grants they were assigned to. In several instances, we do not have clearly defined roles, or we have assigned responsibilities to individuals who are not appropriately qualified, resulting in missed opportunities to secure cost-effective services for students and families and contributing to significant overspending.

The proposed position would consolidate oversight of essential services, including the 68 Hours of Hunger backpack program, the school-based food pantry, and broader family resource coordination. Having a qualified and dedicated staff member in this role will not only improve service delivery and compliance, but also ensure grant funds are appropriately applied.

Position Summary

- Title: McKinney-Vento & Family Services Liaison
- Requirements: Bachelor's degree; experience in education, social work, or human services
- Funding: To be supported through Title I and/or Title IV grant funds, including the McKinney-Vento homeless set-aside
- Start Date: 2025–2026 school year (pending approval and grant confirmation)

This proposal appears as an agenda item for discussion at this evening's meeting. If supported, a formal motion may be made to approve the position contingent upon the availability of grant funds. I welcome your questions and feedback during that discussion.

10. Paraeducator II Certification Requirements

Another area of concern that has come to my attention is the certification status of our paraeducators. As a Title I Schoolwide District, we are federally required to ensure that all paraeducators meet one of the following qualifications:

- Possession of Paraeducator II certification through the NH Department of Education
- Completion of two years of post-secondary education (48 credit hours)
- An associate degree or higher

- Successful completion of a state- or locally-administered academic assessment aligned with Title I requirements

Following an internal review, it has been determined that approximately one-third of the district's paraeducators do not currently meet any of the required qualifications. As such, these individuals are not eligible to return to work until they have fulfilled one of the allowable options. Continuing to employ unqualified paraeducators would place the district in violation of federal regulations and put our entire Title I funding allocation at risk, a loss that would have significant academic and financial consequences.

All affected paraeducators are being formally notified and provided with clear instructions for how to meet the requirements prior to the start of the school year. The district has developed a locally-administered, ParaPro-aligned assessment and portfolio process as an accessible pathway for those who choose not to pursue the state certification or alternate credentials.

Because many of these individuals are directly tied to the implementation of required IEP services, their return is critical to maintaining compliance with IDEA and ensuring continuity of student support. It is vitally important that we uphold these standards and timelines to safeguard funding and uphold our obligations to students.

11. Other Agenda Items

Nomination: I recommend the Board accept the nomination of Tina Gelinas for the position of Special Education Case Manager for the 2025-2026 school year.

Nomination: I recommend the Board accept the nomination of Gabby Champagne for the position of Elementary School Teacher for the 2025-2026 school year.

Resignation: This morning, July 31, 2025, the District received a resignation from Melissa Catauro, Special Education Case Manager, Pittsfield Elementary School. Any discussion regarding this resignation **must** take place in non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II(c).

Motions and votes will take place when public session resumes.

Additional Non-Public Item: Manifest Educational Hardship Request RSA 91-A:3, II(c)