

PITTSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT REPORT, AUGUST 14, 2025

Agenda Additions:

Non-Public under RSA 91-A:3 (c) – Personnel Request (2 items)

Staff Nomination:

Cara Lynn Torey - .6 Social Studies

Chris Dzengelewski – move from .7 to full-time

Non-Public under RSA 91-A:3 (c) – Nominated Personnel (2 nominations)

Policy Revisions

The following policy revisions are included in your packet for review:

GD - Support Staff: Removes benefits and the salary schedule from policy, placing them in stand-alone documents updated annually. This allows timely adjustments while maintaining transparency.

JFAB - Admission of Non-Resident Students: Revised policy, vetted by Drummond & Woodsum, addresses funding and liability issues, aligns with New Hampshire law, and protects Pittsfield's fiscal interests.

JFAB-R - Non-Resident Tuition Agreement: Establishes procedures, documentation, and contractual requirements for admitting non-resident students, ensuring legal clarity, fiscal protections, and consistency. While JFAB states the district's position and authority, JFAB-R outlines the specific procedures, documentation, and contractual agreements required when admitting non-resident students. It ensures:

- A formal, legally binding agreement between districts or with parents for tuition payment.
- Clear delineation of special education cost responsibilities and related service provisions.

McKinney-Vento Supports

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires every school district to designate a liaison to identify and support students experiencing homelessness, ensure immediate enrollment, and remove barriers to full participation in school. This includes coordinating transportation, securing school supplies, facilitating access to meals, and connecting families with community resources.

At present, Pittsfield does not have a designated liaison, which limits our ability to fully meet these obligations and provide the wraparound support our most vulnerable students need. Without a liaison, there is a greater risk of noncompliance with federal law, delayed enrollment, gaps in services, and lost instructional time for eligible students.

Given the economic challenges many families are facing, and the increasing number of students in transitional housing situations, a trend seen both locally and statewide, this position is critical. A dedicated liaison would ensure compliance, improve access to basic needs and educational stability, and strengthen connections between schools, families,

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and community partners, ultimately supporting better attendance, engagement, and academic outcomes for affected students.

Why the Role Matters

- Students in transition face higher rates of absenteeism, academic decline, and emotional stress.
- The liaison bridges school, family, and community, ensuring that urgent needs, such as transportation, meals, supplies, and stable support, are met quickly.
- Compliance avoids potential state/federal corrective actions and protects eligibility for certain grant funding.

Current Status in Pittsfield

- No designated liaison in place at this time.
- Duties are being addressed informally but without a single point of contact, which increases the risk of:
- Non-compliance with federal law.
- Delays in enrollment and service coordination.
- Missed opportunities for early intervention.

Action Steps

- Designate and train a McKinney-Vento liaison immediately until a dedicated role can be established.
- Explore Title I and/or Title IV funds to support a stipend for this role.
- Provide training to all staff on identification and referral procedures.

Enrollment

Updated enrollment figures are in principal reports.

NHDOE Federal Grants Fiscal Audit

Pittsfield has been selected for FY 2024 - 2025 federal grants audit in October. Scope: Title I, II, IV, IDEA compliance. Review will cover applications, budgets, expenditures, payroll, procurement, inventory, program evidence, and comparability documentation.

Next Steps: The District will prepare required records; DOE will conduct on-site audit for 4 days in October; DOE will issue formal findings.

Transportation & Special Education Costs

Jerrica Smith has successfully managed to achieve meaningful reductions in out-of-district transportation costs. This is a positive step toward managing expenses in a challenging area. While special education costs can fluctuate based on student needs and placements, these savings position us well to respond proactively to any future change.

Facilities & Capital Improvements

The Principals and I are preparing for the September 8th CIP meeting. We are reviewing immediate needs and exploring facilities audit for long-term planning. Our goal is present an accurate picture of the state of our facilities and needs.

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Back to School Message - K-12 Collaboration and Community

The 2025 - 2026 school year will kick off a strong start with new teacher orientation on August 18th and 19th. I want to express my sincere gratitude for the dedication of our teachers, support staff, administrators, and educational partners. We have faced significant challenges in recent years, but the collective commitment to Pittsfield's students remains unwavering.

This year, a key focus will be strengthening collaboration across all grade levels. We are actively working to align expectations, practices, and communication from kindergarten through high school, ensuring students experience consistency and a shared sense of community throughout their educational journey in Pittsfield.

Promoting Consistency and Professional Presence

As part of our work to restore structure, stability, and professional consistency, we will be clarifying expectations regarding teacher presence during the school day. We look forward to having all staff on campus for the entire instructional day, every day.

To support our goal of building a unified K-12 culture, we are also changing the format of our annual Back to School BBQ. In the past, this event has been held in separate 30-minute segments for different grade levels. This year, we are inviting all K-12 educators to come together for a full 60 minutes to share food, conversation, and, weather permitting, fresh air and sunshine.

These small changes are steps toward reestablishing high expectations and shared responsibility, and a sense of community. Presence - physical, professional, and collaborative - will be central to our success this year.

Consistency in staff presence supports our educational goals through:

- Stronger cross-grade communication and planning.
- Improved student support through availability for collaboration, interventions, and family engagement.
- A unified school culture that models accountability and commitment to our students.

Open Enrollment Compliance

Responded to records request regarding a student without a tuition agreement; reinforced that Pittsfield has no tuition responsibility without statutory requirement or court order.

Open Enrollment Legislative Developments

NH Legislature considering RSA 194-D changes to mandate open enrollment, removing local authority from sending districts.

The Pittsfield School District supports locally determined enrollment decisions. Local control ensures equity, fiscal responsibility, and responsiveness to community needs.

Why This Matters for Pittsfield

Pittsfield serves a vibrant, diverse population. Close to half of our students receive specialized support services, including 504 plans, IEPs, and McKinney-Vento services. As a rural district,

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transportation and access to out of district education present unique challenges. The economic instability resulting from the financial constraints of mandated open enrollment could significantly impact programming offered in-district to Pittsfield students.

Statewide Position Alignment

NHSAA Resolutions: #16 - Support local control over enrollment; oppose universal open enrollment. #8 - Protect local decision-making; encourage voluntary collaboration.

NHSBA Resolutions: Oppose mandatory open enrollment; uphold board authority; require state funding for mandates.

Proposed Alternatives

1. Voluntary Tuition Agreements - Based on space, fit, and mutual agreement.
2. Incentives for Regional Collaboration - State support for shared services.
3. Equity Safeguards - Prevent demographic or fiscal harm.
4. Fiscal Protections - Fully fund mandates; prohibit unfunded mandates.

The District will continue to support efforts to retain local control, promote collaboration, and foster local financial stability.

Pittsfield Youth Workshop Visit

On August 13, 2025, Erik, Melissa, and I visited the Pittsfield Youth Workshop (PYW) to meet with staff and tour the facility. The visit provided an opportunity to learn more about the programs, services, and activities PYW offers to support our community's youth outside of school hours. We discussed potential collaborative opportunities between PYW and the District to further engage students, provide enrichment activities, and connect families with available resources. The administrative team will collaborate to review current transportation capacity and evaluate the feasibility of providing bus service for middle school students, as the intersection by Rite Aid presents safety concerns. I appreciated the warm welcome from staff and their strong commitment to creating a safe, supportive environment for our students.

Attendance at Pittsfield Select Board Meeting – August 12

I attended the August 12 Pittsfield Select Board meeting to meet more community members, to stay informed on town matters that intersect with the School District and to maintain open lines of communication with municipal leadership. The meeting included discussion on FY27 budget considerations and facility updates impacting the District. This ongoing engagement supports collaboration between the District and the Town in addressing shared priorities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandie MacDonald
Superintendent