

**REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY  
2022**



**VOTING DAY**  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 1ST**  
 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM  
 COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL



**CARING**



*The district partners with many community organizations including the Vermont National Guard who provides CPR and AED training to our high school students.*



There is no deadline to register to vote. You can register ahead of time or at the polls on the day of the vote.



On average, 27% of Colchester voters participate in the March election.



Voting by mail is a great option. You can request a ballot be mailed to you through the Colchester Town Clerk or the My Voter Page online at [www.mvp.sec.state.vt.us](http://www.mvp.sec.state.vt.us)

**S**INCE THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, ALL OF US, BOTH IN SCHOOL AND OTHERWISE, HAVE BEEN ANXIOUS FOR A RETURN TO NORMALCY. DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, THE COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS REMAINED FOCUSED ON PROVIDING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES.

By analyzing data, staying in tune with evolving best practices, and engaging directly with our students, we recognize and understand the social, emotional, and academic needs of our students and have strived to bring back or reimagine many beloved activities and traditions. That being said, we know both last school year and the current one have been anything but typical.

There has been considerable energy put into making in-person education safe during this pandemic. The guidance from health and education officials continues to evolve as we learn more about the virus. Those changes require our district to respond and pivot our operations on short notice. We have worked through changes in vaccine, testing, and quarantine guidance, incorporating mitigation measures like physical distancing, masking, and handwashing into daily routines, “podding” students to reduce exposure risk, developing school disinfection plans, creating new co-curricular protocols, and creating new ways to teach and support students learning in school and remotely.

We are fortunate to have dedicated, innovative and resilient employees who are creatively navigating these unpredictable times. From full in-person classrooms to hybrid or fully remote learning environments, their ingenuity has been inspiring. We have taken risks by

experimenting with new ways of teaching, adapting curriculum, and being flexible to help cover staffing shortages.

Colchester Schools not only provide strong academic experiences, they also offer a nurturing and welcoming environment where we proactively equip young learners with strategies to build social and emotional skills for school and beyond. To further one of the goals in the CSD Strategic Plan, we hired a diversity, equity and inclusion coordinator to engage with employees, students, and their families to ensure that our schools are a place where our differences are celebrated. Our equity work will continue through investments in training, materials, collaboration, and conversation to increase empathy and awareness of others. It is crucial that we do all we can to support our community, each other, and our students.

Thank you to the Colchester community for your engagement and support as we continue to navigate the pandemic. While these past two years have had incredible difficulties, please know there is still laughter and smiles behind the masks! We are not out of this yet, but the challenges we have overcome together demonstrate our resiliency and commitment to each other and the students of Colchester.

Sincerely,

*Amy Minor*

Superintendent  
of Colchester Schools



## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



*The annual CHS CARES District Food Drive was the most successful in history with more donations than any other year.*



*Last year, 246 students and 11 CSD teachers conducted their learning entirely online. The one-year virtual academy offering provided instruction to students who opted not to attend school in person for various reasons in the first year of the pandemic.*



## A PLAN FORWARD

**S**OCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) has become a major focus for the district and it is a key component of our recovery plan. SEL provides opportunities that allow students to gain knowledge and skills in order to manage emotions, achieve personal goals, develop empathy, maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

To lead this work we have established a district-wide SEL committee that assessed our current practices and will guide the work ahead. The district adopted standards to help create and implement PreK-12 SEL curriculum. Last year, we piloted the use of an SEL screening system to assess individual SEL strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. The investment in SEL standards, curriculum, and assessment tools will provide us with critical data to meet student needs and improve our school-wide systems.

From a student perspective, SEL engagement grows **FIVE KEY AREAS** that will help them be successful in all areas of life. Learning *self-awareness* enables them to recognize how emotions can impact their behavior. By developing strategies for *self-management*, they gain the ability to take control of their own thoughts, emotions, stress and actions. Students are taught how to have *social awareness* and empathy for others. To develop *relationship skills* with others, we strive

to create authentic opportunities that emphasize the importance of listening and communicating, peacefully resolving conflict, and knowing when to ask for help. Finally, students learn to weigh the consequences of their actions so that they can *make responsible decisions* that consider the well-being of others as well as themselves.

While these five key areas are all good skills to have on their own, students who show success in SEL also demonstrate improved academic performance, positive attitude and behavior, and increased engagement in school. Additionally, students excelling in SEL also experience less emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation. By embedding SEL into our instruction and daily routines, we are helping our youth better navigate life and any challenges they may face.



**F**UNDING THE PLAN We are incredibly fortunate that Colchester Schools have been allocated \$4.4 million dollars in federal funds to support the recovery of learning. These funds have come to the district through an application process in three waves of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.



The first round, ESSER I (\$409,289), was devoted to the emergency needs of schools including health and cleaning supplies, learning materials, food service, and temporary instructional staff.



The second round, ESSER II (\$1,611,292) was devoted to the recovery of academic, engagement, and social-emotional learning. Funds contributed to the summer program, instructional coaches, additional teachers, learning materials, devices, transportation, health and cleaning supplies, online software and subscriptions, and professional development.



The last round of funds, ESSER III (\$2,381,453) is still in the initial phase of planning.

**T**HE THEME FOR LEARNING LAST YEAR WAS FLEXIBILITY. Flexibility was needed with format, schedules, routines, space, furniture, materials, and staffing. Throughout the year our students and staff did an amazing job, but learning during a pandemic had an impact on our students.

Congress recognized the impact on schools, students, and families, and authorized funding for emergency needs and recovery of **engagement, academic, and social-emotional learning**. To receive the funding, the district needed to develop a recovery planning team, analyze data in the outlined areas, draft a recovery plan, and engage the community to provide input on the plan.

A review of the data showed lower academic achievement than previous years, larger academic achievement gaps for students in poverty and students with disabilities, limited data for social-emotional learning, and a large gap in engagement for remote learning in high school. With data in hand, the recovery planning team then gathered input from staff, students, community, and content experts to develop four overarching goals to address the impacts of COVID-19.

- Increase social emotional well-being
- Increase engagement in school and learning
- Increase overall achievement in math & literacy
- Decreased achievement gaps for students in poverty and with disabilities

Once the plan was approved by the Vermont Agency of Education, the district quickly began working to meet these goals by implementing a summer learning program, hiring math and social-emotional learning coaches, purchasing assessment software, planning curriculum, purchasing materials and more.

Our staff, parents, caregivers, and community have worked together to support the schools and each individual learner. This collaborative effort demonstrates the flexibility, resiliency, and strength of Colchester.



## EMILY BRYANT, CLASS OF 2017

Emily Bryant is an Investigator at the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General. She plans to start law school this fall and aspires to be a defense attorney.

“Throughout my eight years at the Colchester School District, I grew tremendously as a student and person. Dedicated teachers made even the duller subjects interesting and always went out of their way to help a student in need. Extracurricular activities, such as the Debate Team led by Mr. Hall, taught me essential skills that enabled me to be successful in college, as an investigator, and as a future defense attorney.

The academic and extracurricular opportunities I took advantage of while at Colchester High School changed the trajectory of my life. Before high school, I never envisioned going to college because nobody in my family had ever done so. During my sophomore year, I started taking college courses at the Community

College of Vermont for free through the dual enrollment program; this experience opened my eyes to the endless possibilities after high school and proved to me that I could succeed in college. I enjoyed the CCV courses so much that I enrolled as a full-time early college student during my senior year, and ultimately graduated high school with over a year of college completed.

After graduating from CHS, I completed my Associate Degree at CCV and went on to earn my Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Political Science at Northeastern University in 2020, becoming the first in my family to graduate college. My achievements at CHS opened the door to possibilities I never would have imagined. The most important lesson I learned is to take advantage of the opportunities you are given, and if you aren't given opportunities, go find them.”



## BRENDAN ADAMCZYK, CLASS OF 2017

Brendan is an Associate for Policy and Programs at the Product Stewardship Institute.

“When I was halfway through fourth grade, my family moved from New Jersey to Vermont, and at that moment, I never would have believed that I would fit in at school. By the time I graduated nearly nine years later, however, I couldn't have felt more at home.

Throughout my time in the Colchester School District, I consistently found teachers and staff who supported my growth while also challenging me to raise the expectations for myself. These extraordinary individuals, coupled with student communities like the high school debate and tennis teams, undeniably shaped the person I am today. Indeed, I owe much of my success in college at the University of Oregon to the Advanced Placement classes I took at Colchester High School, which not only taught me valuable research and writing skills but also enabled me to graduate in three years.

Today, I work as a policy analyst for a national environmental nonprofit focused on passing legislation to reduce pollution and increase recycling, and I constantly find myself using the skills I developed while in the Colchester School District. In particular, I wanted to thank some of my influences from Colchester High School: Madame Loiseau (French); Mrs. Albright, Ms. Hughes, and deLa (English); Mr. Richey (Chemistry), Mr. Sharkey (Tennis Coach); and Mr. Hall (Debate Coach). Ultimately, Colchester School District has created a rare academic culture that fosters success and encourages students to pursue their dreams, and I am very grateful for my time spent there.”



# THE FY2023 BUDGET



There are currently 2,154 enrolled students in the district - up 23 students from last year. According to a recent report by Mckibben Demographics, enrollment is projected to continue to rise through 2025.

## FY'22 SPENDING PER EQUALIZED PUPIL BY DISTRICT

Remaining fiscally conservative is important to the school board. The Colchester School District spends **less per pupil** than any other district in Chittenden County.



**Colchester • \$15,608**

Milton • \$16,083

Chittenden County Average • \$16,674

Mt. Mansfield Modified • \$16,731

Champlain Valley • \$16,791

South Burlington • \$16,797

Essex Westford • \$16,910

Winooski • \$17,130

**Statewide Average • \$17,207**

Burlington • \$17,346

**O**N JANUARY 18, THE COLCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD APPROVED A BUDGET OF \$48,563,209 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023.

This represents an increase of 4.03% over the current year's spending plan. When calculated in the state formula, this translates to an estimated **DECREASE** of 0.537% in educational taxes. Approval of this budget by voters would permit the school board and administrators to advance academic planning, support student needs, and maintain the district's facilities and grounds used by students and the Colchester community.



## HOW WOULD THIS PROPOSED DECREASE AFFECT YOU?



### YOUR HOUSEHOLD MAKES LESS THAN \$136,900

Approximately 70% of Colchester households make less than \$136,900 a year and meet eligibility requirements to qualify for a property tax credit. This allows them to pay their taxes based on their household income, instead of the value of their home.



### YOUR HOUSEHOLD MAKES MORE THAN \$136,900

Approximately 30% of Colchester households make more than \$136,900 a year and pay their taxes based on property value.

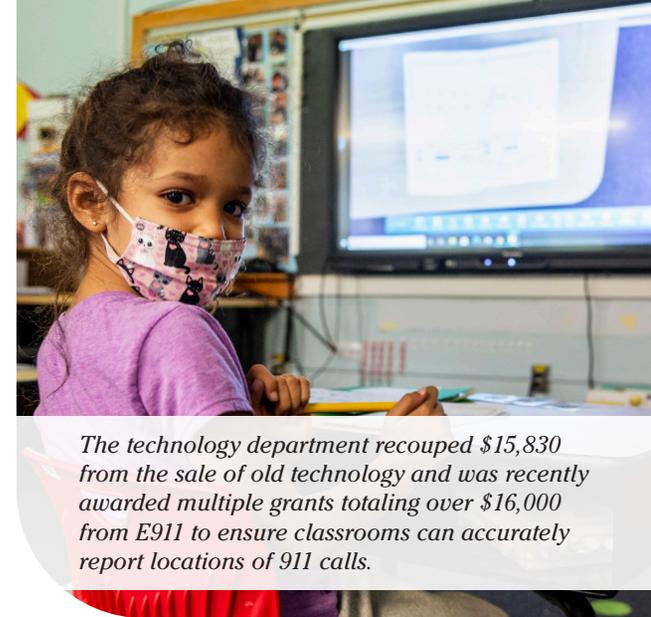
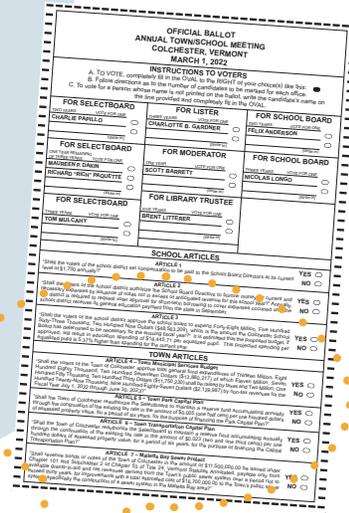


Household Income	FY 2022 Taxes Current Year	FY 2023 Taxes Proposed Budget	Annual Decrease
\$50,000	\$1,135	\$1,062	(\$73)
\$60,000	\$1,362	\$1,274	(\$88)
\$70,000	\$1,589	\$1,486	(\$103)
\$80,000	\$1,816	\$1,699	(\$117)
\$90,000	\$2,043	\$1,911	(\$132)
\$100,000	\$2,270	\$2,124	(\$146)
\$110,000	\$2,497	\$2,336	(\$161)

Property Value	FY 2022 Taxes Current Year	FY 2023 Taxes Proposed Budget	Annual Decrease
\$100,000	\$1,598	\$1,590	(\$8)
\$150,000	\$2,397	\$2,384	(\$13)
\$200,000	\$3,196	\$3,179	(\$17)
\$250,000	\$3,996	\$3,974	(\$22)
\$300,000	\$4,795	\$4,769	(\$26)
\$350,000	\$5,594	\$5,564	(\$30)
\$400,000	\$6,393	\$6,358	(\$35)

# UNDERSTANDING THE BALLOT

Normally, the residents of Colchester are welcomed to Colchester High School on the evening before voting day to share a meal and hear presentations from both the town and school district. Following the presentations, residents in attendance vote “from the floor” on several housekeeping items. Due to COVID-19, there will be no Town Meeting this year and subsequently, the school district has added two articles to the ballot for voter approval.



The technology department recouped \$15,830 from the sale of old technology and was recently awarded multiple grants totaling over \$16,000 from E911 to ensure classrooms can accurately report locations of 911 calls.

## SCHOOL ARTICLES

### ARTICLE 1

“Shall the voters of the school district set compensation to be paid to the **School Board Directors** at its current level of \$1,700 annually?”

**NEW**

### ARTICLE 2

“Shall the voters of the school district authorize the School Board Directors to **borrow money** for current and necessary expenses by issuance of notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for this school year?” Annually, the district is required to request voter approval for short-term borrowing to cover expenses occurred until the school district receives its general education payment from the state in September.

**NEW**

### ARTICLE 3

“Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend Forty-Eight Million, Five Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand, Two Hundred Nine Dollars (**\$48,563,209**), which is the amount the Colchester School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?” It is estimated that the proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$16,445.71 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is **5.37%** higher than spending for the current year.

**YES**  **NO**

Board members meet twice a month for school board meetings. In addition to preparing and attending regular meetings and making decisions regarding the school district, they also negotiate union agreements, participate in related training, and engage in special project work sessions.

When residents pay their town’s educational taxes, the money actually goes to the State and is held in the general education fund. The State then pays each school district their allotted amount. This process takes time and while the district waits for their payment from the state, they must temporarily borrow money to continue operating.

\$48,563,209 operates a total of 7 buildings, and provides transportation and education for over 2,100 students.

Source: Public Assets Institute

This does not represent the estimated change in taxes. Taxes are actually estimated to decrease this year by 0.537%.

When calculating spending per student, Vermont uses “equalized pupils” rather than an actual headcount. The formula gives less weight to pre-kindergarten pupils and extra weight to students in secondary schools, those from economically deprived backgrounds, and those whose first language is not English. The principle behind the weighting is that it costs more to educate students in certain categories.



During the three school vacations last year, the CSD Food Service team prepared 18,326 meals for families to ensure they had food on the table while schools were closed.



Details online at: [www.csdvt.org/budget](http://www.csdvt.org/budget)



**COLCHESTER  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER  
COLCHESTER, VT 05446**

**CSDCOMMUNITY**   
**COLCHESTER\_SCHOOLS**   
**COLCHESTERSCHOOLDISTRICT** 



*Colchester School District partnered with USPS to deliver these reports for only 9 cents a household.*