

Voting Day

Tuesday, March 7
7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Colchester High School



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



Vote on your own schedule by requesting a ballot through the Colchester Town Clerk or visiting the My Voter Page website: <https://mvp.vermont.gov>



60 community members have subbed in our schools this year. We are always looking to grow our substitute list. To learn more, please visit csdvt.org/sub.



Over the past five years, the number of students in the Colchester School District has grown nearly 5%, for a total current enrollment of 2,184.

WELCOME FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

IT IS AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE to serve as Colchester's superintendent, especially during one of the most unprecedented times in educational history. Over the last three years we faced challenges that seemed unimaginable, and the capabilities of our facilities and operations were strained. As we transitioned from the active stage of the pandemic to recovery, it became clear that schools would never return to what we once knew. The incredible resilience demonstrated by our school community has been inspiring, but make no mistake, while the intensity of the pandemic may be over, its lasting impacts continue to affect our schools.

To move our schools forward into a new post-COVID era, we are striving to create welcoming and safe learning environments that allow strong partnerships and respectful relationships to flourish. We are fostering a culture of improvement, so teachers feel supported and encouraged to innovate, leading to better outcomes for students. We are determined to lift students and amplify their voice through leadership opportunities to induce change. We value parent and family engagement and seek opportunities to involve them in their child's learning. Every student in Colchester needs and deserves this level of support – and it is critical if we are to overcome the lingering effects of the pandemic.

We have created a district-wide, comprehensive **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**. MTSS is a framework for education that focuses on general and special education working together to improve learning for all students. A team of sixteen Colchester educators from across the district are collaborating to outline a unifying set of principles to help schools close achievement gaps for students. This is accomplished through instruction, differentiated intervention, and assessment. The framework includes a strong focus on

data-driven decision making, a universal design for learning, and layers of support for all learners.

The district's **Educational Support Team (EST)** is another way we regularly review school and district data to identify patterns in student need. The EST develops plans to ensure all students are assured equitable access to support. A primary focus includes ways to address the stress and trauma impacting students' mental health as they recover from the pandemic; a critical barrier to learning that we must overcome.

In 2019, before the pandemic gripped the world, the School Board had done significant work researching and developing a **long-term facilities plan** for our crowded and aging school buildings. They were just beginning to engage the community when they were forced to pause their work to address immediate needs related to the pandemic. With enrollment remaining strong, the board is restarting their efforts to address the complex challenges that continue to persist with some of our facilities.

I am energized and committed to reinventing what it means to provide a high-quality educational experience in a post-COVID world for our students. By working together, we can build the kind of momentum that will launch the Colchester School District into a new era of possibilities for students, families, employees, and the entire Colchester Community.



Sincerely,

Amy Minor

Superintendent of Schools

“To move our schools forward into a new post-COVID era, we are striving to create welcoming and safe learning environments that allow strong partnerships and respectful relationships to flourish.”



Superintendent Amy Minor was awarded the high distinction of being named 2022 Vermont Superintendent of the Year.



Literacy and Math Scores Hold Steady Despite Challenges of Pandemic



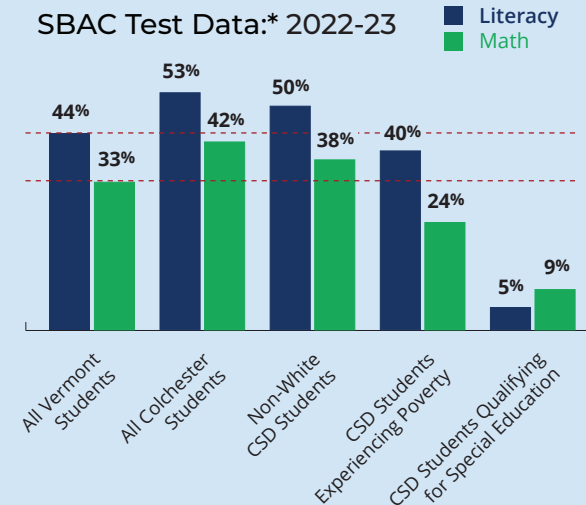
THE PANDEMIC had a negative impact on academic achievement for students across the country. The National Assessment of Educational Progress showed historic declines in literacy and mathematics scores. In Colchester however, the data shows that our students' achievement scores have held steady.

Statewide achievement scores from Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia (SBAC) show our students scored close to achievement marks from the previous year, and well above the statewide averages in literacy and math. The SBAC tests are not the same as assessments that students see frequently in their classroom; they are rigorous exams, similar in style to the SAT, that are developed with a wide range of challenging questions and tasks to measure how well students understand and are able to apply the skills and knowledge required by the state standards.

On the SBAC, Colchester students scored 9 points above the state average in math and 7 points above the state average in literacy. While we are pleased with these statistics, we are acutely aware of the varying achievement gaps for students experiencing

poverty, students qualifying for special education services, and non-white students. Efforts to improve achievement scores and decrease gaps are well underway. Federal funds are bolstering instructional coaching, professional development, and providing staffing for additional support in literacy and math.

And while state assessment scores are an important reference point when evaluating student outcomes, they are not the only benchmark used to measure student growth and achievement. Colchester's local assessment plan uses multiple data points to illustrate a more robust and extensive picture of individual student achievement and learning needs. This comprehensive assessment system provides data that is used to strengthen instruction and build systems of support that aim to increase achievement and create equitable outcomes for our students.



*Statewide disaggregated data was not available at the time of printing.

Boosting Students' Mental Health

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE on Mental Illness reports that one in five Americans suffer from a mental health condition, with 50% starting to show symptoms by age 14. To combat these statistics, school districts across the nation have focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which gives students the skills they need for their educational and emotional well-being.

Here in Colchester, we've adopted Second Step, an SEL curriculum for grades PK-8. Our classroom teachers give weekly Second Step lessons and include daily extensions that integrate the lesson into other areas of the student's school day. Our high school also uses an instructional SEL framework that is appropriate for teenagers and creates responsive opportunities for learning.

As part of the SEL curriculum plan, the district regularly gathers and assesses data that provides a holistic understanding of an individual student's strengths and areas of need. Using this platform, the district can analyze data at various levels to inform greater success across our student body.

Our data shows that students as a whole are performing at 60% or higher in many areas, which is on par with the national norm. However, drilling into specific categories, we see that just 13% of our students meet the expectation in goal setting, part of the self-awareness category. Knowing a data point like this is imperative so that we can effectively use our resources to target specific improvements. As our students grow their SEL skills, they are more likely to develop lifelong personal skills to help them become productive members of our community.

Improving SEL skills leads to higher academic achievement, an increase in school attendance and engagement, and a decrease in problem behaviors and mental health needs throughout adulthood.





KATELYNN DUCHAINE, *Class of 2011*



Katelynn Duchaine is a Radiologic Technologist at the University of Vermont Medical Center.

BB GROWING UP, I came and went from the Colchester School District a few times. I started out my schooling at Porters Point and Malletts Bay, eventually venturing to a new school in a new district where many challenging obstacles threw themselves at me. Nervously, I returned sophomore year to Colchester High School.

The lasting impact that my fellow students had on me made my return seamless. With some of my old friends from elementary school, it was as if no time had passed at all! When it came time to start thinking about my future, I was overwhelmed and unsure. I remember sitting in my guidance counselors office, telling him I wanted to do some sort of healthcare, but was at a complete loss. That's when he told me about "traveling healthcare" and

suddenly, my decision became crystal clear. Immediately upon graduation, I went to a technical college for Radiologic Technology in Scranton, Pennsylvania. I could not be happier with this decision and career path.

Today, I am 10 years into this field, and it has allowed me to have an impactful, positive, and helpful effect on the lives of others. With this degree and experience, my healthcare advances are endless. Returning to CHS was one of the best decisions my young self could have made. I truly don't think I would be where I am today without the guidance and compassion of all my teachers, counselors, peers, and friends from CSD. Next time you're in need, I'll see you at UVMHC for your X-ray!"

MAXWELL BRAULT, *Class of 2017*

BB FROM PORTERS POINT to Colchester High, I benefited from the excellent guidance and resources made available to me. When, in 4th grade, I first expressed interest in attending the United States Military Academy at West Point, it was Mrs. Chittenden who encouraged me to learn more about the U.S. Army. In 5th grade, Mr. Galati refined my strategic prowess on the checkerboard.

A turning point came about in 7th grade when I received a "C" in Mr. Phillips' science class. I recall him saying, "Well Max, maybe you should try doing your homework from time to time." These honest words resonated with me, and from that point forward I committed myself to do better. Many people reflect on their high school years as a period of care-free fun, for me it was a time to buckle down and attain my goals. I put my all into every academic assignment,

and as Mr. Warren, Mr. Richey, and Mr. Lang will likely recall, my short answer test questions were never short and sweet. Coach Perry, Coach Ose, and Coach Greg went to great lengths in developing me as an athlete. The principles they promoted inspired me to earn an All-American title with the Army Powerlifting team just last year. Taking responsibility of my success, even if it meant burning the midnight oil at times, has paid dividends in the years following graduation. At West Point, I met cadets who came from very privileged backgrounds with high regard for their private educations. I was equally proud of my CHS diploma, which prepared me well to face the rigorous course structure at the academy. I am grateful to the great staff and faculty members I had the pleasure of learning from. Growing up in the Colchester School District made me the man I am today. Thank you.



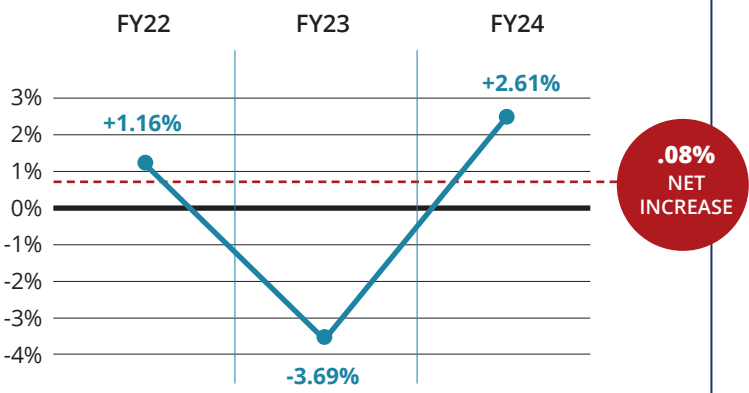
Second Lieutenant Maxwell Brault is an Officer-in-Training with the 1-145th Aviation Regiment at Fort Rucker, Ala., where he's completing U.S. Army flight school.




2023-24 BUDGET INFORMATION

On Jan. 17, the Colchester School Board approved a budget of \$52,401,407 for fiscal year 2024. This represents an increase of 7.90% over the current year's spending plan and translates to an estimated 2.61% educational tax increase. 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.

Tax Impact of School Budget: Three-Year Average



 If this year's budget is approved, Colchester taxpayers will have a net educational tax increase of just 0.08% over three years.

How Would This Proposed Increase Affect You?



If your household makes less than \$134,800

Approximately 70% of Colchester households make less than \$134,800 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. **The proposed budget would result in a tax DECREASE for the majority of Colchester taxpayers.**

Household Income	FY 2023 Taxes Current Year	FY 2024 Taxes Proposed Budget	Annual DECREASE
\$50,000	\$1,032	\$1,019	(\$13)
\$60,000	\$1,238	\$1,223	(\$15)
\$70,000	\$1,445	\$1,426	(\$19)
\$80,000	\$1,651	\$1,630	(\$21)
\$90,000	\$1,857	\$1,834	(\$23)
\$100,000	\$2,064	\$2,038	(\$26)
\$110,000	\$2,270	\$2,242	(\$28)

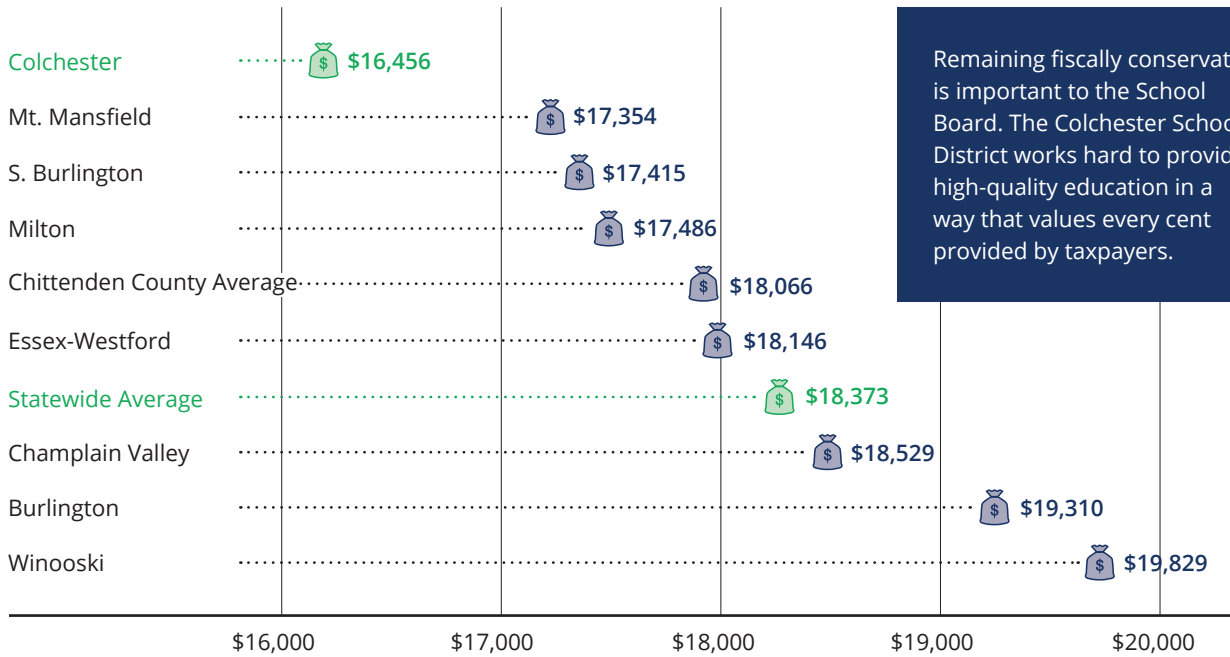


If your household makes more than \$134,800

Approximately 30% of Colchester households make more than \$134,800 a year and pay their taxes based on property value.

Property Value	FY 2023 Taxes Current Year	FY 2024 Taxes Proposed Budget	Annual Increase
\$200,000	\$3,078	\$3,159	\$81
\$250,000	\$3,848	\$3,948	\$100
\$300,000	\$4,618	\$4,738	\$120
\$350,000	\$5,387	\$5,528	\$141
\$400,000	\$6,157	\$6,318	\$161
\$450,000	\$6,926	\$7,107	\$181
\$500,000	\$7,696	\$7,897	\$201

FY23 Spending Per Equalized Pupil by District

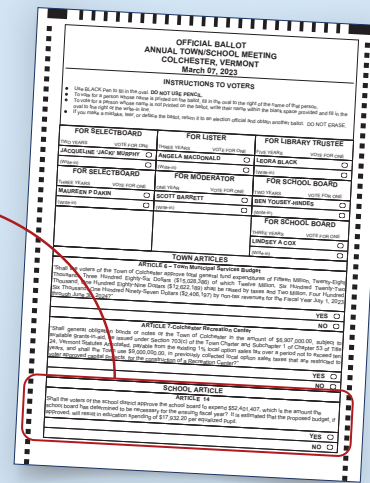


Remaining fiscally conservative is important to the School Board. The Colchester School District works hard to provide high-quality education in a way that values every cent provided by taxpayers.



Understanding the Ballot When You Vote

SCHOOL ARTICLE	
ARTICLE 14	
Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$52,401,407, which is the amount the 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 \$17,932.20 per equalized pupil.	
YES	<input type="radio"/>
NO	<input type="radio"/>



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 weighting is that it costs more to educate students in certain categories.

\$52,401,407 operates a total of seven buildings and provides transportation and education for over 2,100 students.

LEARN MORE: csdvt.org/budget









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Colchester School District partnered with USPS to deliver these reports for only 11¢ a household.



Colchester School District added this \$50K wheelchair-accessible van to our fleet, at no cost to taxpayers. This is one example of how the district actively seeks and applies for grant funds to better serve our students and offset taxpayer costs.



The middle school created a 3-week Summer Exploration Program to help students build relationships year round. Nearly 100 students came for hands-on learning activities in a camp-like atmosphere, forming connections with other students and staff.

