

EDUCATION

Early in the fall of 2021, as New Hampshire public schools returned to in-person learning, there was a rise in COVID-19 cases throughout the state. A few school districts went to remote learning on a temporary basis, but the message from the New Hampshire Department of Education was clear: in-person learning was a high priority.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown how the impact of the K-12 educational infrastructure is larger than the educational achievement of the students. The public school system is part of the social make-up of a community, from free meals to monitoring the social well-being of students. For working parents, in-person learning creates a safe and enriching space for their children to be during working hours.

As students returned to school after the holiday break in January 2022, many teachers and staff were absent due to COVID-19 illness and close-contact quarantine protocols. Nationwide as well as in New Hampshire, school administrators stepped into the classroom to help alleviate some of these staffing issues. Still, Nashua School District had to close schools on January 10 and 11, 2022, due to staffing issues.

“There is widespread acknowledgment, ... that the harms children have suffered from being out

of school are severe, cumulative, and potentially long-lasting, the most obvious among them being learning loss.” (Bokat-Lindell, *New York Times*, 1/11/2022)¹

New Hampshire Assessments of Student Proficiency in Math, Reading and Science

The New Hampshire Department of Education released assessment data for New Hampshire’s students in December 2021 on the assessments completed during the spring of 2021. There was no assessment conducted in the spring of 2020 due to the onset of the pandemic, so the assessment was compared to pre-pandemic test scores from the spring of 2019. As spring of 2021 was still in the midst of the pandemic and students had only partially returned to the classroom, it might not have been a surprise that student participation rates in all three assessment areas were substantial lower in 2021 than in 2019.

Assessment participation rates dropped from 96 percent in math and reading in 2019 to 81 percent and 80 percent, respectively, in 2021. Participation in the science assessment dropped even more, from 91 percent to 72 percent.²

| 2018-2019 ACADEMIC YEAR | LEVEL 1 | LEVEL 2 | LEVEL 3 | LEVEL 4 | ABOVE PROFICIENT (LEVEL 3 AND 4) |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Math | 22% | 30% | 28% | 20% | 48% |
| Reading | 20% | 23% | 38% | 18% | 56% |
| Science | 37% | 23% | 31% | <10 % | 40% |

| ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION |
|--------------------------|
| 96% |
| 96% |
| 91% |

| 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR | LEVEL 1 | LEVEL 2 | LEVEL 3 | LEVEL 4 | ABOVE PROFICIENT (LEVEL 3 AND 4) |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Math | 31% | 31% | 24% | 14% | 38% |
| Reading | 25% | 23% | 35% | 17% | 52% |
| Science | 41% | 22% | 29% | <10 % | 37% |

| ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION |
|--------------------------|
| 81% |
| 80% |
| 72% |

¹ Bokat-Lindell, Spencer. “How to Get Through an Omicron Winter,” *New York Times*. Jan. 11, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/11/opinion/omicron-covid-biden.html>.

² The assessment in science is only administered in fifth, eighth and eleventh grades, whereas math and reading are administered in third through eighth grades and eleventh grade.

A 2019-2021 assessment comparison shows that hybrid and remote learning had a negative impact on New Hampshire student learning. Overall, in 2019, 48 percent of students scored proficient or above in math, whereas only 38 percent of students scored proficient or above in 2021. This is a ten percentage point decline in the number of students proficient in math. The decline in the number of students proficient in reading and science were less drastic. More than half of New Hampshire students were assessed as proficient in reading, down only four percentage points. Of higher concern is that the number of students assessed at Level I in reading increased from 20 to 25 percent. This indicates that there will be a lot of remedial work and intense catch up to do for a large portion of the student population in the future. Similarly, the percentage of students assessed at Level I in science increased from 37 to 41 percent.

According to a New Hampshire-based educational assessment consultant, “... we know that the students who learned remotely fared worse than those who learned in-person. While everyone’s scores suffered nationwide, the test scores for those students who had in-person learning suffered less. This was generally the case in New Hampshire as well, especially in mathematics.”³

So why is math harder to learn remotely? It probably will take years to sort out the underlying reasons for why that might be the case. However, there are examples from the past that indicate kids missing school for an extended period of time (e.g. after Hurricane Katrina) has a detrimental effect on their learning absorption, and the loss of learning was higher in math.⁴

While useful, the statewide assessment data can mask large variances between school districts. For example, in a few school districts, the share of students assessed at proficient or above in math increased and the negative impact indicated by

the assessment spans a broad range. However, there are large differences in the size of the student population in each school district, as well as differences in the grade levels each school district administers. Also, a large decline in student participation had an impact on the scores of those students that were assessed, especially in school districts with a smaller number of students attending.

The ability for students to be successful at learning remotely could also have been impacted by the availability and access to broadband internet services.⁵ Another factor that impacted the success of the student was whether their parents or other adults were present during the day, including parents who worked remotely, and therefore were able to monitor and assist with remote learning.

Another gauge of New Hampshire students’ educational achievements is test scores from the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). It is interesting to note that the scores of New Hampshire students taking the SAT improved between the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 academic years, especially in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing portion (the average scores improved from 531 to 540). This improvement is likely skewed higher due to participation rates dropping from 93 percent in 2019-2020 to 71 percent in 2020-2021.⁶ With lower levels of test participation both nationally and in New Hampshire, the predominance of using the SAT as an entry exam for college admission became a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges with testing during the pandemic accelerated colleges’ decision to go test (SAT) optional.⁷

Home Schooling Enrollments are Up in the Pandemic Era

The COVID-19 pandemic created a shift toward home-schooling and enrollment of students in private school. The uncertainty of the impact of the COVID-19

³ News release from NH Department of Education. <https://www.education.nh.gov/news/nh-assessment-results-align-nationwide-trend>

⁴ Jay Caspian Kang. “Our Kids Are Behind in School. Here’s How to Help Them”, New York Times. January 10, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/10/opinion/covid-school-closures.html>

⁵ Pierce, Meghan. “Lebanon set to complete broadband project”, New Hampshire Union Leader. January 31, 2022. https://www.unionleader.com/news/local/lebanon-set-to-complete-broadband-project/article_dc7976e1-a5a3-53e2-a909-2fb052114135.html.

⁶ The SAT are normally taken in the fall of a senior’s high school career, as the deadline for most colleges are due in early January. In this case, there was no impact on the academic year 2019-2020.

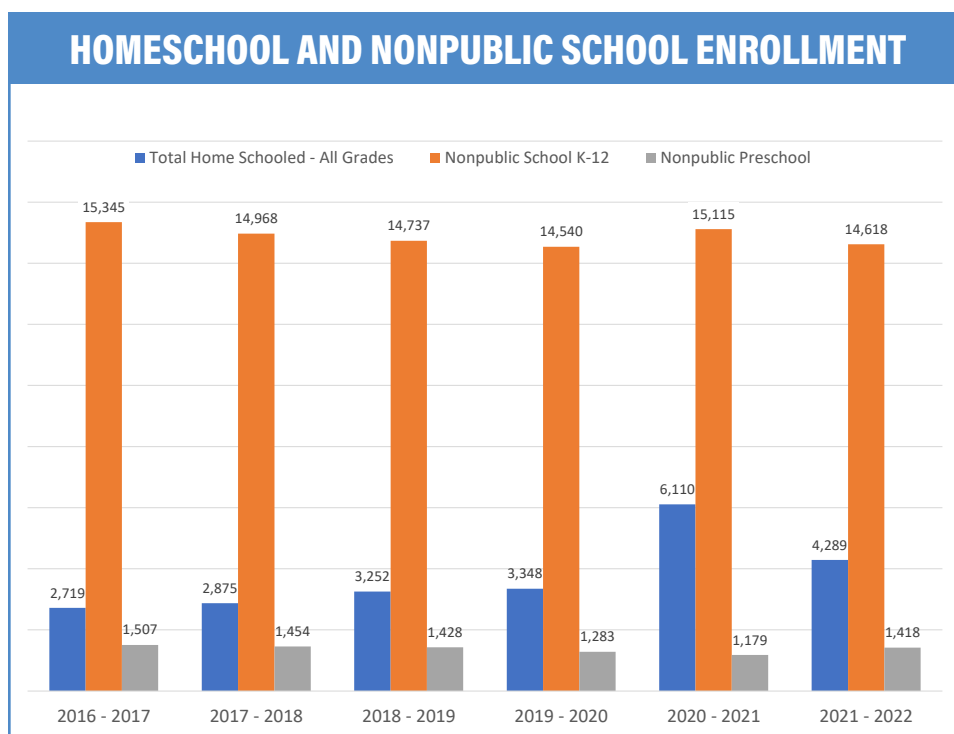
pandemic had on the delivery of a public school education drove many parents to enroll their children in either private or home school.

Prior to the 2020-2021 academic year, there had been a decline in enrollment for both public as well as non-public student enrollment. Opposite to this trend was a slight increase, year-over-year, in the number of students enrolled in home-schooling. From the 2019-2020 school year to the 2020-2021 school year, enrollment in nonpublic K-12 grades increased from 14,500 to more than 15,000, whereas nonpublic preschool enrollment dropped by about 100. Moving forward to the 2020-2021 school year, non-public preschool enrollment increased to more than 1,400, whereas nonpublic K-12 enrollment returned to a pre-pandemic level. In contrast, the count of home-schooled students increased by more than 80 percent from the school year 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, and, despite some decline in 2021-2022, current home-school enrollments are substantially higher than the pre-pandemic level.

As COVID-19's disruption to the educational system has lessened, the strong initial interest in private education faded, though a growing interest in home-schooling continued. The continuing decline overall in the number of children in New Hampshire over the last couple of decades has contributed to the long-term decline in the number of students in both public and private schools.⁸

In addition to the pandemic-related renewed interest in home-schooling and non-public schooling, a new Education Freedom Account program was established for the 2021-2022 school year. More than 1,600 students were enrolled in the program in its first year. Families enrolled in this program can be reimbursed with public funds for expenses related to educating their children.⁹ Data from the New Hampshire Department of Education indicated that “70% of participants either left their public school prior to the pandemic or have never enrolled in public school.”¹⁰ The majority of participants were already included in the pre-pandemic count of students enrolled in non-public or home-schooling, or were new students altogether, such as those moving to New Hampshire or enrolling in kindergarten for the first time.

– Annette Nielsen



7 Knutson, Ryan. "Is this the end of the SAT?" WSJ Podcast. February 1, 2022. <https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/the-journal/is-this-the-end-of-the-sat/f1b3913c-06cc-4232-85d1-65efa9a15a5c>
 8 NH Population Under Age 20, Estimated and Projected. <https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/chartroom/documents/chart22.pdf>
 9 Children's Scholarship Fund NH, NH Education Freedom Accounts. <https://nh.scholarshipfund.org/apply/nh-education-freedom-accounts/>.
 10 Gibson, Sarah. "State says over 1,600 students enrolled in new 'Education Savings Account' program," New Hampshire Public Radio. November 9, 2021. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2021-11-09/state-says-over-1-600-students-enrolled-in-new-education-savings-account-program>.

| FALL ENROLLMENTS, NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total public school enrollments (includes preschool) | 181,339 | 179,734 | 178,328 | 177,365 | 176,168 |
| Total nonpublic school enrollments | 17,042 | 16,852 | 16,422 | 16,165 | 15,835 |
| Total, all elementary and secondary enrollments | 198,381 | 196,586 | 194,750 | 193,530 | 192,003 |
| Annual percent change, all enrollments | -1.4% | -0.9% | -0.9% | -0.6% | -0.8% |
| First grade enrollments, total public | 12,377 | 12,678 | 12,351 | 12,501 | 11,675 |
| First grade nonpublic enrollments | 762 | 758 | 699 | 643 | 775 |
| Total first grade enrollments | 13,139 | 13,436 | 13,050 | 13,144 | 12,450 |
| Annual percent change, first grade all enrollments | -3.9% | 2.3% | -2.9% | 0.7% | -5.3% |
| Twelfth grade enrollments, total public | 13,338 | 13,235 | 13,073 | 13,188 | 13,131 |
| Twelfth grade nonpublic enrollments | 2,096 | 1,984 | 1,931 | 1,975 | 1,997 |
| Total twelfth grade enrollments | 15,434 | 15,219 | 15,004 | 15,163 | 15,128 |
| Annual percent change, twelfth grade all enrollments | -2.0% | -1.4% | -1.4% | 1.1% | -0.2% |

Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, ELMI Analysis. Last Update 9/28/2021

| SCHOLASTIC ASSESSMENT TEST | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| SAT Scores of College-Bound Seniors^a | | | | | |
| Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (formerly Critical Reading) | | | | | |
| New Hampshire | 532 | 535 | 533 | 531 | 540 |
| United States | 533 | 536 | 531 | 528 | 533 |
| Math | | | | | |
| New Hampshire | 520 | 528 | 526 | 524 | 526 |
| United States | 527 | 531 | 528 | 523 | 528 |
| Percent of high school graduates taking the SAT | | | | | |
| New Hampshire | 96.0% | 96.0% | 95.0% | 93.0% | 71.0% |
| United States | 48.0% | 58.0% | 60.0% | 60.0% | 41.0% |

Source: The College Board and National Center for Educational Statistics. Last Update 9/28/2021

^a Reflects mean score for all graduates from an academic year who took the SAT at any point during high school. If a student took the SAT more than once, only the most recent result is included in mean score.

| GRADUATES, NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC ACADEMIES | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total number of graduates (standard and non-standard diplomas, and GED) | 13,847 | 13,511 | 13,301 | 13,179 | 12,950 |
| Annual percent change | 0.2% | -2.4% | -1.6% | -0.9% | -1.7% |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Postsecondary Intentions of Graduates | | | | | |
| Entering a four-year college or university | 50.2% | 50.0% | 52.3% | 50.8% | 51.8% |
| Entering a postsecondary instruction other than four-year | 22.8% | 22.3% | 20.2% | 20.5% | 16.6% |
| Not entering a postsecondary institution: | | | | | |
| Enlisting in the Armed Forces | 3.2% | 3.1% | 3.3% | 3.0% | 2.7% |
| Employment | 17.1% | 17.5% | 17.8% | 17.9% | 18.3% |
| All other | 6.7% | 7.1% | 6.4% | 7.8% | 9.7% |

Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, ELMI Analysis. Last Update 9/28/2021

| NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPENDITURES AND REVENUE | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Current operating expenses, elementary and secondary schools ^b (\$ millions of current dollars) | \$2,845.3 | \$2,934.5 | \$3,004.3 | \$3,054.0 | |
| Annual percent change | 1.9% | 3.1% | 2.4% | 1.7% | |
| Average daily membership, public elementary and secondary schools | 167,394 | 166,321 | 165,130 | 163,597 | |
| Annual percent change | -1.0% | -0.6% | -0.7% | -0.9% | |
| Cost per pupil, current operating expenses ^b (current dollars) | \$16,998.00 | \$17,643.00 | \$18,194.00 | \$18,668.00 | |
| Annual percent change | 2.9% | 3.8% | 3.1% | 2.6% | |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Average salary of teachers, public elementary and secondary schools (in current dollars) | \$57,522 | \$58,278 | \$59,198 | \$59,624 | \$61,849 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Total net revenue (\$ millions of current dollars) | \$3,096.4 | \$3,166.1 | \$3,239.5 | \$3,355.5 | |
| Annual percent change | 1.8% | 2.3% | 2.3% | 3.6% | |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|
| Percent of total school district revenues from: | | | | | |
| State funds | 32.5% | 31.6% | 31.2% | 31.4% | |
| Local and other funds | 61.9% | 63.1% | 63.7% | 63.7% | |
| Federal funds | 5.6% | 5.3% | 5.1% | 4.8% | |

^b Includes tuition and transportation

Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, ELMI Analysis. Last Update 3/3/2022

| NEW HAMPSHIRE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Fall enrollments, public and private degree-granting institutions (students age 18 years and over) | 123,508 | 133,159 | 149,184 | 160,750 | 169,338 |
| By attendance status: | | | | | |
| Full-time students | 69,034 | 70,777 | 68,251 | 72,697 | 75,319 |
| Part-time students | 54,474 | 62,382 | 80,933 | 88,046 | 94,019 |
| By gender: | | | | | |
| Male | 49,994 | 52,338 | 57,797 | 61,200 | 64,105 |
| Female | 73,514 | 80,821 | 91,387 | 99,543 | 105,233 |
| Degrees conferred by public and private degree-granting institutions in NH | | | | | |
| Degree Awarded: ^c | 23,166 | 26,634 | 31,389 | 33,553 | 34,885 |
| Associate's degrees | 3,079 | 3,699 | 4,190 | 4,566 | 5,086 |
| Bachelor's degrees | 12,629 | 14,869 | 17,198 | 19,005 | 21,154 |
| Graduate degrees, including doctorates | 7,458 | 8,066 | 10,001 | 9,982 | 8,645 |
| By selected academic majors, Associate's and higher degrees: ^c | | | | | |
| Biological and Biomedical Sciences | 614 | 633 | 630 | 643 | 674 |
| Business, Management, Marketing, and Support | 6,116 | 7,071 | 8,979 | 9,869 | 9,744 |
| Communication and Journalism | 648 | 766 | 926 | 920 | 990 |
| Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services | 1,418 | 1,823 | 2,053 | 1,703 | 1,819 |
| Education | 1,370 | 1,436 | 1,505 | 1,468 | 1,289 |
| Engineering and Engineering Technologies | 819 | 963 | 975 | 992 | 939 |
| English Language and Literature | 1,101 | 1,231 | 1,397 | 1,403 | 1,312 |
| Health Professions and Clinical Sciences | 3,013 | 3,537 | 4,253 | 4,944 | 5,188 |
| Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities | 1,385 | 1,909 | 2,023 | 2,188 | 2,480 |
| Natural Resources and Conservation | 310 | 385 | 444 | 555 | 636 |
| Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies | 535 | 529 | 630 | 628 | 534 |
| Psychology | 1,385 | 1,665 | 2,107 | 2,242 | 2,373 |
| Security and Protective Services | 615 | 808 | 1,053 | 1,327 | 1,376 |
| Social Sciences | 988 | 1,041 | 1,118 | 1,208 | 1,125 |
| Visual and Performing Arts | 554 | 610 | 684 | 759 | 884 |
| ^c Data exclude awards for second majors, awards for postsecondary study of less than two years, and post-baccalaureate and post-master's certificates. | | | | | |
| Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Last Update 3/3/2022 | | | | | |
| Prepared by: New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau | | | | | |
| www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi (603) 228-4124 | | | | | |