



## Rural School Aid – FY2025 Report 2

*Report to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means*

Submitted pursuant to Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2024, line item 7061-9813

April 2025

This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Patrick Tutwiler, Interim Commissioner

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April 2025

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature on Rural School Aid. The information provided in this report was compiled by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) from state budget data and survey responses submitted by aid recipients. This is the second of two reports due this fiscal year under Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2024, line item 7061-9813.

The recommendations in this report were developed by Department program staff based on their experience with the program for the past seven years.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Jessica Leitz, Director of External Partnerships at [Jessica.Leitz@mass.gov](mailto:Jessica.Leitz@mass.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick Tutwiler".

Patrick Tutwiler  
Interim Commissioner

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## Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) respectfully submits this report to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means on rural school aid pursuant to Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2024, [line item 7061-9813](#). The line item states, in relevant part:

*“...that not later than April 1, 2025, that the department of elementary and secondary education shall submit a report to the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means detailing steps that participating districts have taken in regionalization and consolidation; ...”.*

The [fiscal year 2025](#) budget authorized \$16 million for rural school aid.

## Rural school aid recipients

Eligibility for rural school aid is currently based on two criteria: per capita income and student density. School districts were [eligible for rural school aid in fiscal year 2025](#) if they had a student density of not more than 35 students per square mile and a per capita income less than the state average of \$61,935 based on Massachusetts Department of Revenue data.<sup>1</sup> After determining income eligibility, the Department calculates student densities (current foundation enrollment divided by district square mileage) and assigns districts that meet the density criteria to priority groups. In fiscal year 2025, there were three priority groups:

- Priority 1 included districts that serve less than 11 students per square mile.
- Priority 2 included districts that serve 11 and not more than 21 students per square mile.
- Priority 3 included districts that serve more than 21 and not more than 35 students per square mile.

Consistent with the line-item language, the Department allocated \$7.920 million of available funding for Priority 1 districts, \$4.752 million for Priority 2 districts, and \$3.168 million for Priority 3 districts, reflecting the same allocation percentages that were used in FY2024. For all three groups, the Department calculated the target aid amounts for each district based on current Chapter 70 aid, summed these amounts, and gave the districts in each priority group a prorated share of their target aid totals based on available funding. Priority 1 districts received a higher percentage of aid than Priority 2 districts, and Priority 1 and 2 districts received a higher percentage of aid than Priority 3 districts.

Sixty-seven school districts received rural aid in fiscal year 2025. Awards ranged from \$21,848 for Warwick to \$1,614,573 for Central Berkshire Regional School District, see Table 1 for the funding distributions for the last five years.

**Table 1: Rural Aid Distributions, FY2021–FY2025**

<b>Org</b>	<b>School District</b>	<b>FY21 (n=50)</b>	<b>FY22 (n=67)</b>	<b>FY23 (n=65)</b>	<b>FY24 (n=68)</b>	<b>FY25 (n=65)</b>
<b>0043</b>	Brimfield	\$63,749	\$59,851	\$82,382	\$230,706	\$281,371
<b>0068</b>	Conway	\$0	\$8,151	\$14,611	\$26,088	\$30,237
<b>0074</b>	Deerfield	\$28,966	\$28,126	\$38,525	\$97,107	\$110,666
<b>0098</b>	Florida	\$13,230	\$9,978	\$26,847	\$63,725	\$59,494
<b>0121</b>	Hancock	\$7,598	\$8,247	\$11,916	\$33,697	\$39,640
<b>0154</b>	Leverett	\$0	\$10,056	\$15,846	\$0	\$43,897
<b>0230</b>	Pelham	\$0	\$6,889	\$9,192	\$24,065	\$28,391
<b>0234</b>	Petersham	\$13,519	\$13,628	\$23,200	\$65,973	\$75,598
<b>0249</b>	Richmond	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$51,799
<b>0253</b>	Rowe	\$5,536	\$5,111	\$7,999	\$20,813	\$24,465
<b>0263</b>	Savoy	\$12,895	\$4,774	\$13,719	\$17,438	\$30,051
<b>0272</b>	Shutesbury	\$25,019	\$22,847	\$30,967	\$86,318	\$76,550
<b>0289</b>	Sunderland	\$6,997	\$15,151	\$12,536	\$53,922	\$64,798
<b>0300</b>	Truro	\$19,749	\$19,836	\$26,973	\$63,724	\$71,488
<b>0306</b>	Wales	\$49,168	\$49,205	\$75,174	\$156,814	\$170,828
<b>0312</b>	Warwick	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$51,113	\$21,848
<b>0318</b>	Wellfleet	\$10,815	\$11,216	\$19,645	\$44,604	\$45,126
<b>0327</b>	Westhampton	\$16,290	\$10,748	\$14,858	\$35,460	\$41,228
<b>0337</b>	Whately	\$0	\$9,369	\$14,898	\$41,949	\$35,076
<b>0340</b>	Williamsburg	\$0	\$37,232	\$49,533	\$109,086	\$96,451
<b>0349</b>	Worthington	\$11,821	\$10,466	\$15,442	\$43,455	\$49,901
<b>0618</b>	Berkshire Hills Regional	\$38,981	\$105,274	\$154,940	\$388,569	\$0
<b>0632</b>	Chesterfield- Goshen Regional	\$20,129	\$16,580	\$29,396	\$78,321	\$67,623
<b>0635</b>	Central Berkshire Regional	\$336,916	\$359,344	\$532,168	\$1,325,077	\$1,614,573
<b>0662</b>	Farmington River Regional	\$19,685	\$21,174	\$33,088	\$82,272	\$101,146
<b>0670</b>	Frontier Regional	\$0	\$59,129	\$88,826	\$196,954	\$215,175
<b>0672</b>	Gateway Regional	\$223,214	\$219,254	\$300,721	\$832,654	\$971,316
<b>0683</b>	Hampshire Regional	\$0	\$109,247	\$134,143	\$313,001	\$297,187
<b>0685</b>	Hawlemont Regional	\$27,643	\$24,294	\$35,130	\$140,229	\$78,035
<b>0700</b>	Marthas Vineyard Regional	\$0	\$100,134	\$0	\$531,274	\$437,549
<b>0717</b>	Mohawk Trail Regional	\$192,644	\$161,077	\$262,497	\$621,345	\$693,065
<b>0728</b>	New Salem-Wendell Regional	\$30,611	\$36,581	\$47,935	\$131,484	\$133,774

<b>0750</b>	Pioneer Regional	\$123,612	\$116,848	\$175,088	\$373,025	\$359,043
<b>0755</b>	Ralph C. Mahar Regional	\$247,192	\$260,024	\$362,430	\$904,898	\$1,057,688
<b>0765</b>	Southern Berkshire Regional	\$0	\$70,159	\$101,911	\$256,284	\$284,215
<b>0774</b>	Up-Island Regional	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$160,709
<b>0041</b>	Brewster	\$0	\$19,879	\$27,944	\$77,187	\$77,420
<b>0045</b>	Brookfield	\$31,976	\$36,780	\$46,891	\$135,329	\$122,899
<b>0063</b>	Clarksburg	\$24,222	\$32,168	\$49,869	\$120,327	\$145,906
<b>0085</b>	Eastham	\$0	\$9,423	\$13,569	\$38,925	\$37,436
<b>0091</b>	Erving	\$7,654	\$9,566	\$12,539	\$35,903	\$35,657
<b>0117</b>	Hadley	\$0	\$7,878	\$30,172	\$84,364	\$80,349
<b>0127</b>	Hatfield	\$4,371	\$15,745	\$20,656	\$56,658	\$53,920
<b>0135</b>	Holland	\$14,694	\$14,258	\$25,933	\$68,013	\$56,288
<b>0191</b>	Monson	\$29,833	\$101,995	\$132,216	\$359,323	\$366,325
<b>0223</b>	Orange	\$97,140	\$110,214	\$174,503	\$506,019	\$495,590
<b>0240</b>	Plympton	\$12,272	\$13,506	\$22,629	\$55,294	\$64,471
<b>0250</b>	Rochester	\$0	\$38,711	\$58,122	\$138,732	\$122,630
<b>0275</b>	Southampton	\$0	\$35,817	\$42,596	\$117,963	\$85,273
<b>0605</b>	Amherst-Pelham Regional	\$75,979	\$90,086	\$111,447	\$282,824	\$248,516
<b>0660</b>	Nauset Regional	\$0	\$57,890	\$81,045	\$229,717	\$222,960
<b>0715</b>	Mount Greylock Regional	\$52,303	\$71,452	\$92,683	\$286,448	\$277,630
<b>0753</b>	Quabbin Regional	\$212,420	\$261,905	\$379,603	\$1,042,092	\$1,000,205
<b>0766</b>	Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional	\$106,610	\$113,358	\$141,379	\$385,334	\$372,939
<b>0770</b>	Tantasqua Regional	\$171,748	\$208,631	\$273,669	\$779,547	\$774,762
<b>0150</b>	Lee	\$9,363	\$9,903	\$12,879	\$32,461	\$110,824
<b>0077</b>	Douglas	\$36,177	\$37,104	\$47,298	\$115,500	\$136,998
<b>0111</b>	Granby	\$0	\$24,168	\$27,375	\$71,511	\$101,598
<b>0215</b>	North Brookfield	\$25,025	\$28,805	\$39,705	\$94,188	\$126,634
<b>0287</b>	Sturbridge	\$0	\$26,086	\$35,681	\$94,437	\$143,832
<b>0331</b>	Westport	\$18,465	\$22,851	\$31,548	\$77,723	\$117,204
<b>0343</b>	Winchendon	\$66,144	\$81,258	\$110,190	\$278,866	\$400,764
<b>0603</b>	Hoosac Valley Regional	\$60,145	\$72,938	\$93,982	\$228,600	\$340,948
<b>0610</b>	Ashburnham-Westminster Regional	\$78,182	\$89,702	\$121,856	\$300,130	\$400,161
<b>0615</b>	Athol-Royalston Regional	\$97,446	\$113,416	\$163,225	\$410,639	\$598,559
<b>0674</b>	Gill-Montague Regional	\$44,973	\$48,340	\$69,708	\$156,181	\$223,903

<b>0720</b>	Narragansett Regional	\$57,747	\$63,992	\$92,798	\$235,165	\$324,763
<b>0760</b>	Silver Lake Regional	\$47,952	\$58,972	\$71,203	\$173,581	\$0
<b>0778</b>	Quaboag Regional	\$54,177	\$64,586	\$82,552	\$204,945	\$252,636
<b>0224</b>	Orleans	\$0	\$8,614	\$0	\$58,559	\$0
<b>0767</b>	Spencer-East Brookfield Regional	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$226,071	\$0
<b>0089</b>	Edgartown	\$17,004	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>9999</b>	<b>State totals</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>	<b>\$4,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,500,000</b>	<b>\$15,000,000</b>	<b>\$15,840,000<sup>2</sup></b>

## Regional Efficiencies Plans

Each year rural school aid recipients must submit regional efficiencies plans (herein also referred to as plans) to the Department through an online survey. The survey requests information about districts’ regional efficiencies plans over the past three fiscal years, as well as the plans for the upcoming three fiscal years. The Department informs districts that they can use their rural school aid awards to support these activities, but that they are not required to do so. Responses to surveys by recipients of rural school aid in FY2024 and FY2025 are excerpted in the following sections.

## Regional Collaboration, Consolidation, or Other Efficiencies -Past Three Years

Districts were asked what types of activities they had undertaken in the **past** three years to increase regional collaboration, consolidation, or other efficiencies, requiring them to check off all categories that applied. Figure 1 summarizes the responses to this question and Table 2 provide specifics related to these activities, where available.

Figure 1: Activities undertaken in the past three years to increase regional collaboration, consolidation, or other efficiencies.

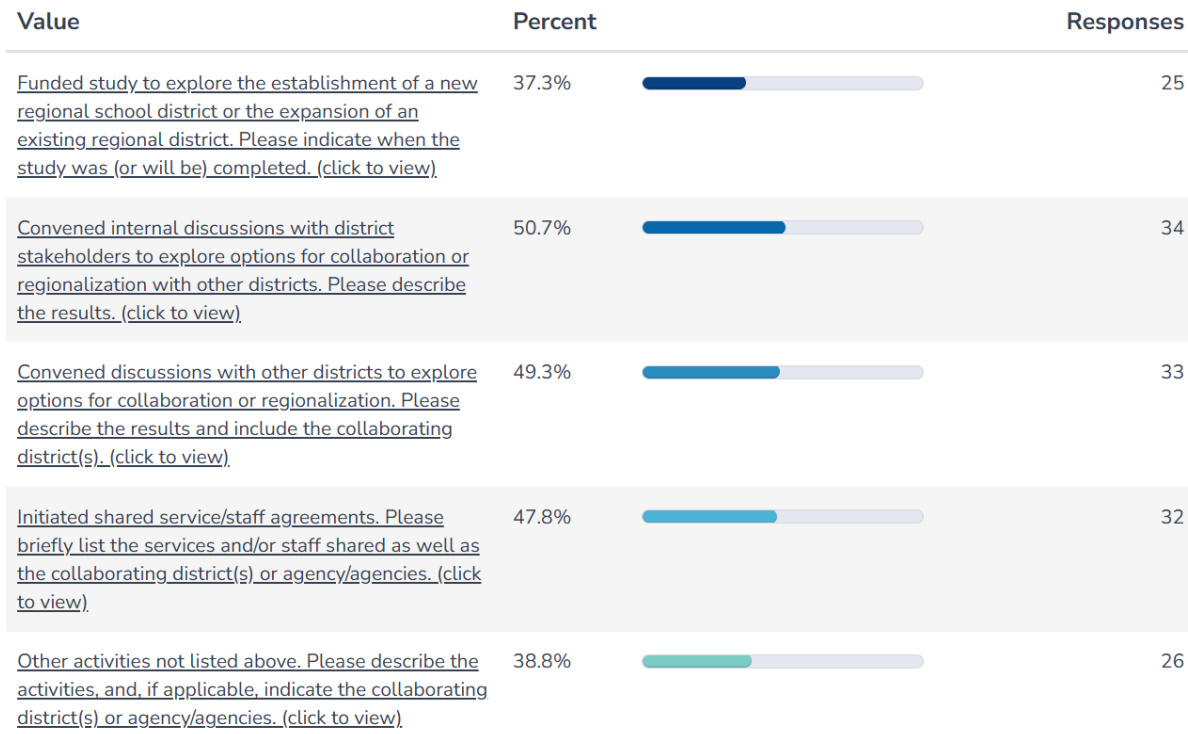


Table 2: Specific Steps Taken to Increase Regional Collaboration, Consolidation, and Other Efficiencies in the Past Three Fiscal Years

School district(s)	Steps taken
<b>Union 54: Brewster, Eastham, Orleans, and Wellfleet AND Nauset Regional*</b>	All four towns in the superintendency union are participating in a grant to look at the feasibility of regionalizing the elementary districts. The four towns have started to share special needs programs at the elementary level. Nauset further reports that the district shares OT, PT, and ST services with the four elementary districts, and that they operate a PreK program for the four elementary districts.
<b>Union 61: Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Sturbridge, and Wales AND Tantasqua Regional*</b>	Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, and Wales reported ongoing discussions about the feasibility of consolidating two to three of the smaller Union 61 districts, and professional development with the other districts in Union 61. Sturbridge and Tantasqua reported that they expanded shared English learner staff and programming, as well as expanded the special education transportation fleet.
<b>Union 43: Clarksburg, Florida, Rowe, and Savoy AND Monroe (a non-operating district)</b>	The districts reported that they are attempting to apply for needed funds to explore the Northern Berkshire County Regionalization Study. Twenty employees are shared between the four Northern Berkshire School Union districts covering technology, administration, and student services. Rowe further reported that the district has been participating in the discussions to explore the expansion of the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and that it has continued to explore options for collaboration with

	Northern Berkshire School Union partner districts as well as more collaboration and regionalization with Mohawk Trail.
<b>Union 38: Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately AND Frontier Regional*</b>	The districts report that, as a superintendency union, they are in constant discussion about regionalization and how it would make for more efficient operations of their districts.
<b>Douglas</b>	Met to look at how to collaborate with special education services.
<b>Union 28: Erving and Shutesbury AND New Salem Wendell Regional*</b>	Funded a study to explore regionalization with the Collins Center for Public Management, which was completed in September 2023. Created the Union 28 Efficiencies Subcommittee in November 2024 for Leverett, Shutesbury, Erving, and New Salem-Wendell elementary districts. All four districts share a physical therapist and Shutesbury, Erving, and New Salem-Wendell share a multilingual teacher.
<b>Granby</b>	Held professional development with other districts, specifically Hadley, Southwick Tolland Granville Regional School District, Belchertown, and Pathfinder.
<b>Hadley</b>	Shared transportation with Amherst Public Schools.
<b>Hancock</b>	Held discussions surrounding collaborative preschool options. The district shares a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAAC) with Richmond and collaborates with North Adams for their food service program. Collaborated with Richmond for shared bussing and data management services.
<b>Hatfield</b>	Explored options for regionalization but assessed per-pupil expenditures for the town and found it would be more expensive to regionalize. Combined with area districts for the development of innovation pathways. Consolidated administrative positions.
<b>Lee</b>	Held regular meetings with the school committee and subcommittees to explore regionalization options. Held meetings with fellow superintendents to discuss shared services.
<b>Monson</b>	Conversations concerning options for collaboration or regionalization are ongoing with other districts. Partnered with districts such as Palmer, Chicopee, and Berkshire Hills Regional School District to provide special education transportation. Participate in athletic co-ops with Palmer and Pathfinder.
<b>North Brookfield</b>	Explored regionalization (with Quabog); the proposal was voted down in the fall of 2024. Ongoing discussions concerning collaboration or regionalization with other districts.
<b>Orange</b>	Convened discussions on exploring collaboration or regionalization with Warwick.
<b>Pelham</b>	Discussion to regionalize with Amherst Public Schools is becoming a more real possibility, but key stakeholders are not yet on board. This was brought up at the December 2024 school committee meeting. The district is actively looking at how to make this happen, as Pelham has the most school-choice students.
<b>Petersham</b>	Conversations about consolidation or regionalization have been held but they are not moving forward. Shared services agreements in English learner programs.
<b>Plympton AND Silver Lake Regional*</b>	To increase efficiency, the districts have engaged in training on their financial software system to fully utilize capabilities. As a result of internal discussions, Silver Lake Regional reports that member towns Halifax and Kingston have moved forward with a study for full regionalization.
<b>Rochester</b>	The district updated and improved the infrastructure of the school building with emergency generator services and CAM HVAC and has installed products and equipment to assist in the management of rodents.

<b>Union 66: Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg AND Chesterfield Goshen Regional (CGRSD) AND Hampshire Regional (HRSD)*</b>	Cohesive use of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and integration of strategic objectives into school improvement plans and educator goals (2024-2025). Consortium Grant writing (2023-2025.) Common use of educator evaluation platform (2025-2026). Coordinated school calendars for shared PD dates (2024-2025 and 2025-2026). Coordinated Curriculum adoption for grades 6-8 (2024-2025), math curriculum updates K-5 and 6-12 (2024-2025) for all schools. Coordinated five mandatory school year trainings, first aid, crisis, and student care trainings for all schools (2024-2025). Coordinated nurse professional development and wellness in all schools. August All Administration workdays, and monthly All Administration meetings with site-based and central office leadership (2024-2025 and 2025-2026).
<b>Truro</b>	School committee encourages collaboration, but not regionalization.
<b>Warwick</b>	An ongoing large six-town regional study and discussion would potentially impact and include Warwick. Tuition agreement for grades 7-12 with Pioneer Valley Regional; joint transportation agreement with multiple districts; collaboration to participate in more regionalized services with neighbor districts; and collaboration with Bay State Franklin for specialized services. Collaboration with Mahar and Pioneer Regional Districts; often discuss ways to share staff and professional learning opportunities and sometimes share materials as a cost savings for all. Intra-municipal agreement with the town to realize many efficiencies (e.g., HR, accounts payable, facilities management).
<b>Westport</b>	Collaboration with Freetown-Lakeville and Swansea around English learner programs to elevate the teaching and learning in all districts. Collaboration with Bourne as the district applies for Innovation Career Pathway designation to ensure staffing is used in ways that support all learners.
<b>Winchendon</b>	There is interest in regionalization among multiple stakeholder groups. There is concern that it would not be a cost-effective option for the town.
<b>Worthington</b>	Collaboration with local districts with professional development. Tuition agreement with local middle and high school for students.
<b>Amherst-Pelham Regional</b>	Discussion to make changes to the regional agreement is in the works. Current talks to regionalize the Amherst Elementary schools with this regional and middle high school district, however, Leverett and Shutesbury are not interested. There are discussions of Amherst and Pelham regionalizing at the elementary levels.
<b>Ashburnham-Westminster Regional</b>	The district has had discussions with nearby districts.
<b>Athol-Royalston Regional</b>	Collaboration with other districts – still ongoing.
<b>Berkshire Hills Regional</b>	Used a grant to explore merging with another regional district. Unfortunately, after about 18 months of work, the project did not result in the two districts merging. Teachers work together to develop professional development that can include personnel from other districts. Regional professional development at least once a year. The superintendent, director of student services, and business administrator belong to regional roundtables for their specific positions, and all three roundtables continually look for ways to collaborate, such as shared special education transportation and professional development. The result is stronger relationships between districts and more open communication between districts. BHRSD and Richmond have a shared services agreement for business administrator services. Previously, the shared services included the superintendent, as well, but Richmond now has its own superintendent. BHRSD is a member of a joint purchasing group for health and dental insurance.
<b>Central Berkshire Regional</b>	Meet regularly with the student services director to explore options for the district to collaborate with other districts in the county in the areas of special education and multilingual programs.

<b>Farmington River Regional</b>	Funded a study to explore the establishment of a new regional school district or the expansion of an existing regional district. Discussions with other districts to explore options for collaboration or regionalization happen annually to explore and commit to shared services agreements. Cooperating districts are Lee PS, Berkshire Hills RSD (BHRSD), and (FY25) Gateway RSD. Regionalization options are currently explored only at the superintendent level with Lee PS and BHRSD. The district has grade 7-12 tuition agreements with Lee PS and BHRSD.
<b>Gateway Regional</b>	Convened discussions with other districts to explore options for collaboration or regionalization: Discussion with Hampshire Regional to share services for special education. It was not the right time. Applied for the PRISM (Partnership for Reading Success) grant with Farmington River and will move forward with working with them on that.
<b>Gill-Montague Regional</b>	Ongoing study with Pioneer Valley Regional School District towns ends this fiscal year. Shared transportation coordinator with Greenfield Public Schools, school resource officer, Franklin Council of Governments, and other collaboratives for seeking bids on various projects.
<b>Hawlemont Regional AND Mohawk Trail Regional*</b>	The districts are working with BERK12 on a sustainability/regionalization study, looking at potentially combining the two districts. The districts continue to look at ways to continue to share costs and regionalize. The districts share administrative expenses.
<b>Hoosac Valley Regional</b>	Discussion with local superintendency union, Northern Berkshire School Union, as well as district town member personnel; working towards an agreement. There has been a tuition agreement in place for their students for high school, which was extended to include grade eight. Currently engaged in two shared services contracts with the City of North Adams and the North Adams Public Schools for a facilities director and a data specialist.
<b>Martha's Vineyard Regional</b>	Funded a regional study/review this year, which is wrapping up in June 2025. Convening a discussion across all island districts. Each of the elementary/middle schools is its own district, so the superintendency union is convening as a group to talk about combining resources and efforts to promote regionalization. Collaborated on transportation and used funds to buy and lease buses.
<b>Mount Greylock Regional</b>	District is continually exploring the possibility of sharing special education services, looking at ways to offer courses that they are unable to find due to lower-than-optimal enrollment, and sharing athletic and co-curricular programming. Geographic distance is the largest barrier, though virtual programs are improving possibilities. Shared physical therapy services with Northern Berkshire School Union, a new effort this year.
<b>Narragansett Regional</b>	Internally discussed with the Facilities/Finance Sub-Committee and Leadership Team the potential and benefits of the regionalization of services with a neighboring district. Due to turnover at the Superintendent level at the neighboring district, a formal conversation with the districts' leadership teams has not occurred but is expected to be forthcoming. Narragansett currently collaborates with both Gardner and Winchendon Public Schools on the Investigating History Grant. Narragansett is also part of the MVP program that provides our students with vocational training and opportunities with Montachusett Technical Vocational High School.
<b>Pioneer Valley Regional</b>	Shared professional development resources with other districts; for example, shared the cost of professional development with another district and allowed their staff to attend their PD. Collaborated with the Warwick district. Invested in programming to enhance the number of students that select the district as a tuition destination.
<b>Quabbin Regional</b>	Reached out to area schools to offer a partnership with the program they would like to implement for alternative learning. They have reached out to Palmer, Ware, Quabaog, North Brookfield, Athol-Royalston, Ralph C. Mahar, Narragansett, and Ashburnham-Westminster.

<b>Quaboag Regional</b>	Funded study to explore the establishment of a new regional school district or the expansion of an existing regional district, which is still ongoing as the district works with a neighboring town to potentially collaborate.
<b>Ralph C. Mahar Regional</b>	Held conversations with district stakeholders on collaboration or regionalization with other districts, but they are not moving forward. Convened discussions with Warwick. Shared services agreement with Orange Elementary School for Board Certified Behavior Analyst services.
<b>Southern Berkshire Regional</b>	Completed a four-year feasibility study with Berkshire Hills Regional around merging the districts; the merger was voted down in the fall of 2024. The district shares a physical therapist with Berkshire Hills Regional School District; Community Care Coordination Team.
<b>Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional</b>	Working with their educational collaborative, the district has created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position shared by seven districts.

\*Districts that share a superintendent and administrative staff

As noted, the survey also requests that districts report on the steps they will take to increase regional collaboration, consolidation, or other efficiencies over the **next** three fiscal years, checking all of the following areas that applied.

**Figure 2: Activities planned in the next three years to increase regional collaboration, consolidation, or other efficiencies**

