

# Dudley-Charlton Regional School District

## School Budget Outlook 2018-2020

### Frequently Asked Questions



**Q: How would you describe the current state of the school district?**

*A: We are incredibly proud of our district, but we realize that as successful as we've been, we are at a turning point. Because of rapid changes in society and the economy, we need to adapt to ensure that what our students learn in school aligns more closely with the skills they will need when they enter the work force. We absolutely have to focus on this change, and we need additional resources to do so effectively.*

**Q: If the increase is supported, how will it affect the district?**

*A: If the district's increase is supported, we would be able to remain "whole," while also upgrading technology infrastructure at all our schools, and adding 2 mental health professionals at the elementary level in an attempt to provide earlier intervention, 2 foreign language teachers at the middle school level and an educator responsible for guiding our high school students toward college and careers that suit their skills and interests. We will also be able to honor the principals' requests for classroom technology and supplies for the first time in many years.*

**Q: What about if the proposed budget increase is not supported?**

*A: If this increase is not supported, the district will have to forego all newly proposed initiatives and cut an additional \$800,000 (approximate) just to come close to meeting fixed cost increases. This will necessitate large reductions in staff (estimated 12-16) and equipment for the 2018-19 school year and, as already indicated, will not enable progress toward our Strategic Plan. Providing the modern skills our students need will be tremendously difficult.*

**Q: How does our district compare to others with regard to school funding?**

*A: Currently, DCRSD is last among all state regional districts, last among all districts in Central Massachusetts and 5<sup>th</sup> from the bottom in the entire state in per pupil expenditure. In order for our district to be funded at just the state average, we would need an additional \$15.7 million annually. Yes. You read that correctly.*

**Q: How will we compare if the budget increase is supported?**

*A: Even if this budget increase is supported and were factored into the chart to the right, we would still only be 3<sup>rd</sup> from the bottom among Central Massachusetts districts, surpassing only Wachusett and Quaboag.*

**Q: What happens if the override passes in one town, but not the other?**

*A: Due to laws governing regional school district budgets, in this scenario, the district would have two options: 1) to lower its budget assessment in both towns to accommodate the town in which the override failed or 2) to ask the town in which the override failed to still fund the budget at the rate proposed despite not getting the increased tax revenue. This first option would be devastating to the district while the second option would be devastating to services in the town in which the override failed.*

Per Pupil Expenditure	District
\$ 16,003	Southbridge
\$ 15,955	State Average
\$ 15,859	Millbury
\$ 15,088	Spencer-East Brookfield
\$ 14,918	Quabbin
\$ 14,687	Webster
\$ 14,573	Uxbridge
\$ 13,873	Oxford
\$ 13,617	Sutton
\$ 13,593	Tantasqua
\$ 13,534	Leicester
\$ 13,416	Auburn
\$ 13,369	Douglas
\$12,762	<b>Dudley-Charlton (with approved override)</b>
\$ 12,322	Wachusett
\$ 12,216	Quaboag
\$ 12,002	Dudley-Charlton (PRESENT)

**Q: Why should I care if my town has a good school system?**

*A: There's so much to say here, but we'll just go with these three things: 1) The children are any community's most valuable resource – they are the community's future! The better we educate them, the higher likelihood of future success for the community 2) Good schools are a source of pride and create a better quality of life in the community. 3) Realtors consistently rate school district quality as the #1 factor in a home's ability to hold its value and resell quickly at asking price. How many things in life are good for the mind, the spirit and the bank account? Not many. But high quality schools are one.*

**Q: How did DCRSD and the towns of Dudley and Charlton end up in such a difficult budget situation?**

*A: Several factors have conspired to land us here, but the two most impactful have been the state funding formula for education and increased costs across the board. For example, in 2008, the state changed its funding formula to demand more from the towns and less from themselves. This has hit our towns and district very hard. In 2007-2008, our towns were required by the state to contribute \$11 million toward education. This year, our towns' requirement is \$16.7 million. That's an increase of \$5.6 million or 51% over 10 years. In that same time frame, state funding for DCRSD has increased by only \$1.2 million. That's an annual increase of only 0.46%!*



*Please see our district website budget information page for more specific information on cost increases.*

**Q: Why does it cost so much more to educate students than in the past?**

*A: There are many reasons, but perhaps the most prominent are the need for up-to-date technology and school districts' responsibility to educate and transport ALL students, including those who are English language learners, learning and/or physically disabled, homeless or in foster care, and those struggling with mental health issues.*



**Q: What measures has the district historically taken in order to remain competitive?**

*A: Our district had tried everything in our power to keep our schools successful while not overburdening the towns or the taxpayers. In just the past 10 years, to name but a few actions taken, we have reduced nearly 30 positions, many of them classroom teachers; we have relied on use of reserve funds; delayed important building improvements; relied heavily on school choice funds and reduced supply accounts. In fact, supply accounts were higher 10 years ago than they are today.*

**Q: How did the district arrive at the \$3 million dollar proposed increase?**

*A: This number represents what it will cost for the district to cover all fixed cost increases (salaries, health insurance, retirement, transportation, etc.) and make incremental progress toward Strategic Plan initiatives for 2-3 years. A breakdown of where the dollars will go is on our website's budget information page.*



**Q: What will be the impact on my tax bill if the override passes?**

*A: The estimated impact on the average single family tax bill would be as follows:*

- *Dudley – Average single family value is \$244,278 / Additional \$1.60 per thousand to the tax rate; \$390.85 annually or \$97.71 per quarter*
- *Charlton – Average single family value is \$279,000 / Additional \$0.98 per thousand to the tax rate; \$273.00 annually or \$68.25 per quarter*

**Q: Many people have asked if, in light of the most recent school shooting in Florida, this budget increase will have any impact on school safety.**

*A: As far as physical safety, the district has never spared expense, and we will continue to prioritize student safety above all else. However, we are trying to add mental health professionals at the elementary level in an attempt to intervene as early as possible for children who struggle with mental health, behavior challenges and emotional dysregulation, all things that can ultimately lead to acting out behaviors later in life. It would be unlikely that we could support this initiative if our budget request is not supported. So, in that regard, there could be a long-term effect on student safety.*



**Q: Where can I go to find more information about the school budget?**

*A: Our district website has a section entitled FY 2019 Budget Information exclusively dedicated to the budget situation and override. Also, there is a mechanism there where you may ask a question of the district which we will make every effort to answer within 24 hours. If all else fails, you may always contact the superintendent’s office or one of your school committee representatives.*

[www.dcrsd.org](http://www.dcrsd.org)

***Special Election – April 3, 2018 – 8:00 am to 8:00 pm***

Dudley Town Hall  
Heritage School –Charlton



***“Children...Community”***