

Brad Morgan

Superintendent of Schools
bmorgan@nmrsd.org
Tel. 978-597-8713

**Gary Burboa-Reese**

Assistant Superintendent
gburboareese@nmrsd.org
Tel. 978-597-8713

**Regional School District Funding Formula Impact Statement
North Middlesex Regional School District
Townsend, MA**

The current funding formula for regional schools, especially those with little to no commercial tax base, does not come remotely close to adequately serving our students. The formula continues to be based on enrollment rather than student needs.

When looking at my district's demographics, our special education, multilingual learner, and Section 504 (Students with disabilities receiving education accommodations as outlined through the Americans with Disabilities Act) numbers are well over 30%, never mind the students with social-emotional needs. Some of these increases are still due to the fallout of the pandemic and our push to get students back on track.

In addition, my district has had to contend with the increased number of students requiring out-of-district placements and how the state has approved back-to-back tuition increases of 14% and 5%, respectively. Since the start of this school year, we are already \$1.6M over budget in this area. Although the state provides some circuit breaker reimbursement, it is too late to help this fiscal year's budget.

In the past year and a half, we have hired 25 additional staff members in the aforementioned areas because they are all mandated by state and federal regulations, yet our funding has remained stagnant. These positions include but are not limited to:

- School Psychologists
- Adjustment Counselors
- Special Education Teachers
- Behavior Technicians
- Multilingual Teachers
- Board Certified Behavior Analysts
- Speech & Language Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists

One could easily argue that public education as a whole, which is guaranteed to be "free and appropriate" for all students with disabilities, is, at best, a partially funded mandate.

Brad Morgan

Superintendent of Schools
bmorgan@nmrsd.org
Tel. 978-597-8713

**Gary Burboa-Reese**

Assistant Superintendent
gburboareese@nmrsd.org
Tel. 978-597-8713

During COVID, we received additional financial support from federal funding sources. However, post-COVID, many of the residual needs that a year and a half of disrupted education caused remain, yet the funding has dried up and disappeared.

For FY2025, we reduced our budget by \$1 million dollars in order for it to be passed by our three member communities. This reduction was accomplished by the reduction of 17 staff members from our general education staff. If the formula does not change, we will have to continue cutting from the general education area, which directly impacts class sizes and the quality of instruction that can be provided to our students. In short, our staffing increases in the areas of special education and multi-lingual education are forcing the reduction of our general education staff, which has resulted in class sizes of close to 30 students in many areas. Where special education and multi-lingual education are both federally and state-mandated, you must add in those areas to remain in compliance and reductions have become impossible due to increased numbers of qualifying students.

Where this is my seventh year in the district, overrides have become a regular request, and to be frank, our residents cannot afford the increases required for an override. Again, FY2026 requires an override in order to maintain our level-service budget from FY2025 to FY2026 presenting over a \$3.5M shortfall (\$1.6M is due to increased out-of-district placements). A reduction of this magnitude would result in class sizes in the mid-30s and a significant cut in programming, both of which would be catastrophic. In no way is this meant to take away from the challenges my member towns face, as they, too are trying to make the most out of their funding. We know that cutting town resources like police and fire not only impacts the safety of our students and residents but makes our communities less desirable for potential suitors. Like any effective school district, strong town services are needed as well.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to find money for other emergencies. Yet, the state continues not adequately to fund public education and is falling well short of meeting the needs of our children. If the state can find funds for other causes, a strong argument can be made that our children and future must be a priority.