
1 EDUCATION

2 *Education is a core aspect of Norwich's identity and sense of community. For many years, the town's*
3 *excellent school system made it a popular choice for families, both those new to the Upper Valley and*
4 *those wishing to relocate here from within the region as their children reach school age. As is true*
5 *statewide, declining enrollment in recent years poses a fiscal challenge.*

6 **Primary and Secondary Education**

7 **Background**

8 The Norwich school system ~~is made up~~consists of two school districts. The Norwich School District is
9 responsible for educating children from kindergarten through grade six at the Marion Cross School in
10 Norwich. The Dresden School District, which includes the towns of Norwich and Hanover, New
11 Hampshire, serves Norwich children from grades seven through twelve in the Richmond Middle School
12 and the Hanover High School, both in Hanover.

13 The Dresden School District was formed in 1965 and was the first interstate school district in the country.
14 Before that time, Norwich educated students through eighth grade and high school students were
15 tuitioned to other towns, primarily Hanover.

16 **Enrollment Trends**

17 The Marion Cross School ~~has seen major facility expansions, in the 1950s and most recently in 1989. The~~
18 ~~more recent addition was in response to dramatic increases in the school age population in the latter half~~
19 ~~of the 1980s as a result of the "echo baby boom."~~

20 ~~Enrollment~~enrollment peaked in 1995 when 487 students were enrolled at the elementary school, as
21 shown in Figure 7-1, and then declined sharply through the early 2000s. ~~Between 2003 and 2007,~~
22 ~~enrollment stayed fairly stable at between 300 to 310 students.~~ K-6 enrollment fell below 300 students in
23 2008 and has remained around 300 during the past decade. A pre-kindergarten program began during
24 the 2015-16 school year that has increased the number of children at the school by around 35.

25 An enrollment projection prepared by the school district in 2017 suggests that enrollment at Marion
26 Cross could fall to around 230 students over the next 10 years. Low or declining enrollment numbers
27 create a financial strain on taxpayers because state education funds returned to the town are based on
28 spending per pupil, whereas fixed expenses of operating the school cannot be reduced when the
29 enrollment drops.

1 **Educational Facilities**

2 The 1989 Marion Cross School expansion increased classroom capacity to a theoretical maximum of 420
3 students. ~~While this suggests that there is substantial excess capacity at current enrollment levels, it
4 should be noted that~~ the school is using space much differently today than it did 20 years ago.

5 ~~Interdisciplinary curricula, cooperative group learning, inclusion of students with disabilities, inclusion of
6 technology in day-to-day classroom learning (rather than solely in a computer lab), differentiation, full-
7 day kindergarten, etc.,~~ all require more space for a smaller number of students. ~~That said, it is clear
8 that~~ Nevertheless Marion Cross ~~has accommodated, and~~ could accommodate, substantially more students
9 than it does today.

10 ~~While the Marion Cross School does not participate in the federal school lunch and breakfast programs, it
11 does provide a lunch or breakfast to any student in need. In Vermont, the state legislature passed Act 22
12 in 2003, which requires that public schools participate in the National School Lunch Program and the
13 School Breakfast Program unless the school board votes to exempt the district from the requirement. The
14 purpose of the program is to ensure that all students receive healthy meals so they are better able to
15 learn. The program has many federal record-keeping requirements and would be an additional expense
16 for the school. The need for Norwich to participate in this program is evaluated annually by
17 administrators, teachers, and the School Board. In addition, the draft long-range plan for the Marion
18 Cross School includes as a sub-goal “ensure that all students’ nutritional needs are met” and the
19 subcommittee tasked with implementing this section of the long-range plan will be considering different
20 ways to meet this challenge.~~

21 While the last major renovation to the Marion Cross School was completed in 1989, investments continue
22 in maintenance and gradual improvements. ~~During the summer of 2009, the building’s exterior was
23 painted green.~~ According to Vermont’s School Energy Management Program, Marion Cross uses 35
24 percent less energy per square foot than the average school in the state (see Figure 7-2). Investments in
25 lighting, insulation and solar panels have saved money on both electricity and heating oil. Other
26 significant infrastructure improvements, such as leach field repair, have been identified.

27 Major capital programs at both the Richmond Middle School and Hanover High School were completed in
28 the 2000s. The Richmond Middle School, which was formerly located on the same campus as the high
29 school, moved to a new building on Lyme Road in 2005. ~~The facility, which cost \$18 million, is just one
30 reason why the Richmond school is widely recognized as one of the best middle schools in New England.
31 Last year, Richmond Middle School was selected as a spotlight school for the New England League of
32 Middle Schools. This designation is based on test scores, academics, the overall atmosphere of the school
33 and a number of other criteria and is awarded based on a review by peer educators.~~

1 A \$24 million renovation of Hanover High School was completed in 2007. This renovation effectively
2 resulted in a new school, with a new auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria, library and classroom spaces.
3 ~~Hanover High School is widely regarded as one of the best public high schools in the country.~~

4 **School Missions and Philosophy**

5 Marion Cross School

6 ~~“The Marion Cross School Community values a tradition of educational excellence and is committed to~~
7 ~~nurturing the whole child in a climate of respect. We promote excellence and encourage a love of~~
8 ~~learning; we demonstrate and encourage mutual respect among students, parents, faculty and~~
9 ~~community members; we provide opportunities for every child to develop his/her full potential; and we~~
10 ~~cherish our traditions and our school’s place in the community.”~~

11 Richmond Middle School

12 ~~“Our mission is to provide a challenging, comprehensive and developmentally appropriate education for~~
13 ~~all of our students. Our broad goal during these three years is to ensure that our students are provided~~
14 ~~with the skills to become successful and thoughtful adults in a highly competitive and complex world. It is~~
15 ~~the task of our middle school to bridge the growth gap between childhood and adulthood, from~~
16 ~~dependence to independence, and from understanding the world in a simple and concrete manner to~~
17 ~~comprehending it in its multifaceted, multi-layered configuration. The educational community~~
18 ~~represented by the Dresden Board, parents and community members, and the Richmond staff has~~
19 ~~identified important concrete goals which guide our school in its pursuit of the effective and~~
20 ~~compassionate education of children in their middle years.”~~

21 Hanover High School

22 ~~“Hanover High School is an active learning community that provides broad academic and co-curricular~~
23 ~~programs. We engage students’ minds, hearts, and voices so that they become educated, caring, and~~
24 ~~responsible adults. All students are given the opportunity and encouragement to use their:~~

- 25 ~~● Minds to pursue excellence, academic challenge, and personal success.~~
- 26 ~~● Hearts to respect and care for the emotional and physical well being of themselves and others,~~
27 ~~and for the environment.~~
- 28 ~~● Voices to contribute to the democratic process and the common good.”~~

29 **Cost of Education**

30 Costs related to the education of Norwich children are borne directly by the taxpayers of Norwich, in full
31 for the Marion Cross School and in proportion to the number of Norwich children for the middle and high
32 schools.

1 In recent years the proportion of Norwich students at the Richmond Middle School and Hanover High
2 School has dropped, from more than 40 percent to currently about one-third. Accordingly, Norwich's
3 assessment for the cost of the middle and high schools has been reduced in recent years. This proportion
4 is not expected to change materially in the next five years.

5 ~~Costs for Marion Cross grew between 1999 and 2003, but have moderated in recent years. In 1999, the~~
6 ~~per-pupil cost as defined by Vermont's "allowable tuition" (current per-pupil expenditures excluding~~
7 ~~tuition, transportation, debt and special education) was \$6,382 and Norwich ranked 56th in the state by~~
8 ~~this measure (with the school ranked first having the highest per pupil expenditures). By 2003 the per-~~
9 ~~pupil cost was \$9,579 and Norwich ranked 21st in the state (out of more than 200 elementary schools).~~
10 ~~Five years later, in 2008, the per-pupil cost had increased to \$10,042 and Marion Cross ranked 98th in the~~
11 ~~state.~~ Over this five-year period, the rate of increase was less than one percent per year. For 2017-18,
12 Norwich had a budget of approximately \$18,799 per pupil.

13 ~~Figure 7-3 shows the tax paid or projected to be paid on a house with a value of \$410,000 in 2005. In the~~
14 ~~initial year, the tax paid was \$5,894. For 2010, the tax had increased to \$6,289. By 2014, the end of the~~
15 ~~five-year planning period, the tax is projected to be \$6,611. However, it should be noted that~~
16 ~~approximately 30 percent of Norwich taxpayers receive some reduction in their tax bill based on their~~
17 ~~income level.~~

18 **Private Schools and Home Study**

19 Private schools in the area include The Waldorf School, Crossroads Academy, Willow School, Cardigan
20 Mountain School, Mid-Vermont Christian, Sharon Academy, and Kimball Union Academy. A handful of
21 Norwich students are home-schooled.

22 **Issues**

23 ~~The following issues are likely to be faced by the educational system in the near future:~~

- 24 ~~• State and federal requirements concerning facilities and special needs are likely to continue to~~
25 ~~increase. This will require modifications to the building to accommodate special needs students~~
26 ~~as well as more space for fewer students.~~
- 27 ~~• State and federal requirements concerning employment of Special Educators.~~
- 28 ~~• Need to remain current in technology.~~
- 29 ~~• Rising cost of employee benefits.~~
- 30 ~~• Continuing local and regional decline in enrollment.~~

1 **Long-Range Planning**

2 ~~The Norwich School Board has engaged in a long-range planning process to look at educational goals and~~
3 ~~ensure that students have an excellent education that meets the future needs of society. This plan deals~~
4 ~~with such concerns as maintaining high academic standards, an excellent faculty, appropriate building~~
5 ~~space for an outstanding curriculum, a commitment to the growth and development of the individual~~
6 ~~student, a positive attitude toward change, and a sound financial management program.~~

7 **Post-Secondary & Adult Education**

8 Vermont Technical College, The Community College of Vermont, Granite State College and Lebanon
9 College--the latter two in New Hampshire--have programs in technical and post-secondary education.
10 Dartmouth College in Hanover provides opportunities for adult education through its MALS (Master of
11 Arts in Liberal Studies) and ILEAD (Institute for Lifelong Education At Dartmouth) programs.

12 **Childcare**

13 The majority of Norwich parents are employed and depend on childcare services for preschool-age and
14 older children after school, during holidays and summer vacations. According to the 2011-15 American
15 Community Survey, only 8 percent (55 of 687) of school-age children and 49 percent (50 of 102) of
16 preschool-age children live in a household that includes a parent who is out of the labor force.

17 The Marion Cross School began offering a full-day kindergarten program for all school-age children
18 beginning in the 2009-10 school year. Marion Cross School also provides special education services to
19 children starting at age three.

20 There are several childcare providers located in Norwich and many more in neighboring communities.
21 The Childcare Center in Norwich serves children aged six weeks to six years. The Norwich Nursery School
22 has programs for toddlers and preschoolers during the school year. The Marion Cross school also houses
23 an after-school program for students operated by the Child Care Center in Norwich. The Child Care
24 Project, housed at Dartmouth College, is available to assist all Norwich parents in finding childcare.

25 **Goals, Objectives and Actions**

26 **Goal D**

27 Provide cost-effective educational facilities suitable for supporting quality education for Norwich
28 students.

1 ~~Objective D.1 Monitor population changes closely and thoroughly investigate available options on~~
2 ~~an ongoing basis to allow the community time to react to future needs for both the Norwich and~~
3 ~~Dresden School District schools.~~

4 Action D.1.a Schedule and publish an annual review of all pertinent statistics and updated
5 projections relative to changes in future school populations of both Norwich and Dresden
6 that might have significant tax implications for Norwich.

7 Action D.1.b Evaluate annually any long-range needs for the Norwich School District that
8 pertain to projected enrollments, future land needs and future capital expenditures.

9 Action D.1.c Explore whether the present arrangement is still the fairest manner to
10 apportion Dresden School District costs between Hanover and Norwich.

11 ~~Action D.1.d Collaborate with TRORC to help assure the availability of safe and affordable~~
12 ~~childcare and integrate childcare issues into the planning process.~~

13 Objective D.2 Continue to pursue sustainability and reduced energy usage in the operation of
14 school facilities and programs.

15 *Note: Goals from the long-range plan will be added when that plan is adopted.*