

## **EDUCATION**

### **Public Education**

#### **Current Educational Services**

The Dummerston Town School District provides public education for grades K-8 to all students that are residents of the town of Dummerston. Dummerston School's teachers provide a scholastically challenging and educationally enriched environment based on the collaboration of faculty, staff, School Board Directors, parents and community volunteers. The core curriculum is coordinated through the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union and is aligned with Vermont State Standards. There is a focus on traditional literacy (reading, writing and comprehension), mathematics, science and technological literacy. Dummerston School also has a strong arts and music program and offers a variety of sports and extracurricular activities. Some of the popular programs offered at the school include:

- The Winter Activities program has been a long standing tradition at Dummerston School that teaches life long, healthful skills to students for 6 afternoons in January and February. Past and present activities include skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, skating, bowling, gymnastics, martial arts, yoga, theatre and pottery.
- The Dummerston School Friends of the Library offers a weekly preschool story hour to welcome and introduce young children and their families to the Dummerston School.
- Girls on the Run is a program that trains girls to participate in a 3.1 mile run/walk event while emphasizing health, exercise and self-image awareness.
- Students in kindergarten through grade 4 participate in Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) Program, run by volunteers with curriculum from the Vermont Institute for Natural Science.

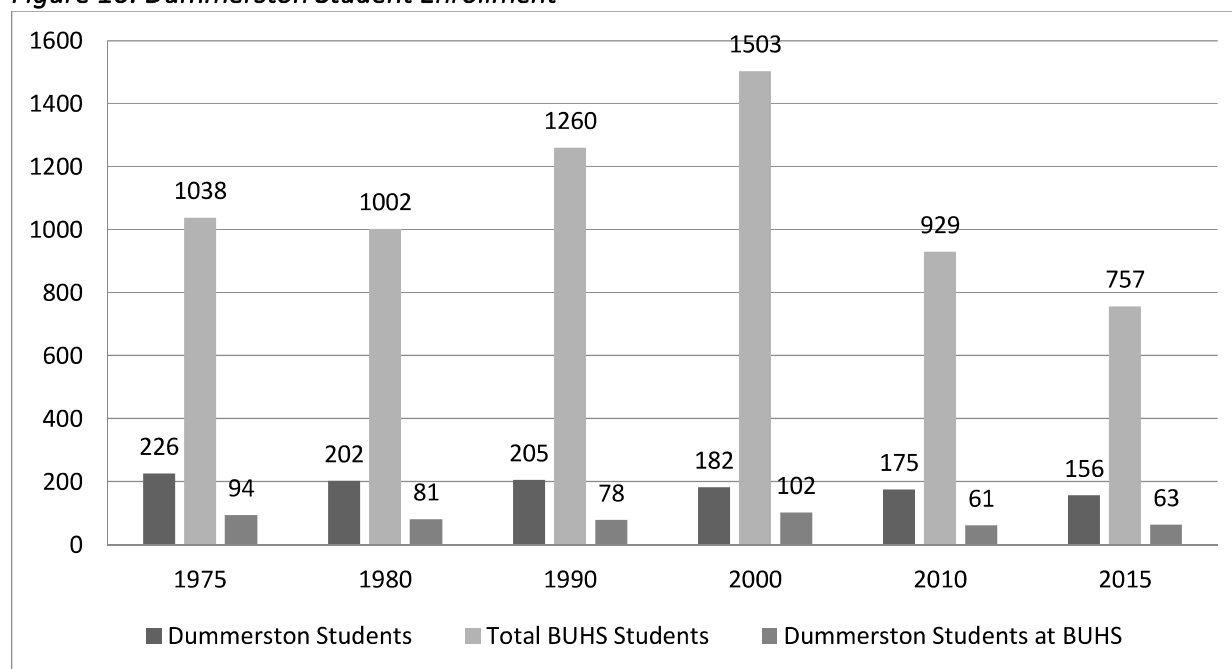
Since 2008 Dummerston School has hosted the YMCA ASPIRE program which offers affordable afterschool child care for students.

Windham Southeast Supervisory Unions Intensive District Program is located at the Dummerston School. This program assists elementary aged students (grade k-6) with multiple handicaps or disabilities in increasing functional life skills. This is the only site for this program in the Supervisory Union.

Students in grades 9-12 are served by the Brattleboro Union High School District #6 (BUHS #6) which oversees Brattleboro Union High School and the Windham Regional Career Center located at a common site on Fairground Road in Brattleboro. BUHS #6 provides public high school education to students from Dummerston, Brattleboro, Putney, Vernon, and Guilford and accepts tuition students from other towns.

#### **Enrollment History**

The following figure shows how enrollment has varied over time in the Dummerston School and in Brattleboro Union High School (BUHS/WRCC).

**Figure 16: Dummerston Student Enrollment**

Source: WSESU

The trend of declining enrollment is expected to continue in the region and across the state. It is not known when it will stabilize or reverse.

### Facilities

The Dummerston School building is located on School House Road off Route 5. It was originally built in 1951 as a three-room building. The most recent addition to the building occurred in 1994, when the district closed its school building in West Dummerston Village and consolidated all grades in the one building. The building has been well maintained and is in excellent condition. The West Dummerston School is now the Dummerston Community Center. The Transportation and Community Facilities map shows the locations of these buildings.

The school gymnasium is a multipurpose space, used for lunch, physical education, after-school sports and activities, and large group events. It is also a valuable asset to the town as it is used for community events, sports, as a polling place, and for town meeting. The school also has excellent playing fields that are used both by the school and the greater community for a variety of sports activities.

### School Governance

The Dummerston Town School Board (DTSB), consisting of five elected members, is responsible for many aspects of the school operation including fiscal oversight, budget preparation, maintenance, and negotiating classified staff wages and the administrator's contract.

Similarly, the BUHS #6 Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing the budgets and administration of the High School and Career Center. There are 9 seats on the board, of which Dummerston has one seat. This seat is filled by election at Town Meeting for a three-year term.

The Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) is a union of several school districts representing the towns of Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, Putney, and Vernon. WSESU has the administrative responsibility for the school districts of BUHS #6 and the towns listed above.

Board members from each school district make up the WSESU board. The DTSD board has three voting members on the WSESU board. The WSESU board approves the budget which is then funded by assessments from each member district.

At the time of this writing, school districts in the WSESU are deciding how they will meet the requirements of Act 46. Some other Supervisory Unions have merged into a single school district and this is one option for WSESU. This would lead to significant changes in governance.

### **Education Funding**

As is typical for Vermont towns, the largest portion of the property taxes raised goes to funding education. Education funding is distributed on a per-pupil basis from Vermont's education fund. Money for the fund comes principally from a state-share education property tax that is assessed on both residential and non-residential properties. The base tax rate is set by the state but, while the non-residential rate is uniform across the state, school districts may increase their tax rate by exceeding a per-pupil spending threshold (also set by the state) in their budgets. The more the per-pupil spending exceeds the threshold, the more the education tax rate for the residents of that district is increased.

Dummerston has consistently been one of the schools with the highest per pupil education spending in the state. As a community, Dummerston residents value and support the education of its students in a rural, smaller school setting despite external pressures from legislation and realize that the arbitrary spending threshold used by the state does not reflect the true cost of educating our children.

Bus service is provided for all students in the WSESU. The WSESU contracts the bus service and the DTSD pays for the costs in its assessment to WSESU. Many administrative functions are provided by the WSESU offices. The WSESU also administers Special Education services in all member districts. The cost for these services is covered by WSESU's assessment to DTSD, which is included in the DTSD budget.

Support for the Brattleboro Union High School is raised via direct taxation to residents of the five member towns. The district's education tax rate is split; with a portion allocated to the Dummerston School (DTSD) and a portion allocated to the Brattleboro Union High School (BUHS #6).

**Figure 17: Education Expenditures and Tax Revenue**

	1990	2000	2010	2015
DTSD Total Expenditures	\$1,131,892	\$2,277,484	\$3,294,482	\$3,293,670
Education Tax Revenue to DTSD	\$855,233	\$1,390,360	\$1,802,685	\$2,588,230
Education Tax Revenue to BUHS #6	\$428,595	\$632,592	\$1,161,770	\$1,079,330

*Source: Dummerston Annual Reports*

Dummerston School Endowment, Inc., a non-profit corporation, was set up to enrich the education opportunities of students attending Dummerston School. Its purpose is to supplement academic programming at the Dummerston School in areas such as foreign language and technology instruction.

## **Other Educational Services**

### **Childcare**

Safe and affordable child care is important to local residents. Dummerston's Zoning Bylaw provides for both family child care homes and child care facilities. There are a variety of state-regulated child care facilities, both family-and center-based located in Dummerston and in nearby towns. As this Plan is being drafted, the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division, Bright Futures Child Care Information System lists three Registered Homes and one Licensed Provider available in Dummerston.

The local demand for childcare services is difficult to measure. In 2002, the Windham Regional Commission conducted a county-wide needs assessment. Among the findings are the following, which are still relevant in Dummerston in 2017:

- Even though there has been a decrease in the number of children under the age of 5 between 1990 and 2000, state and national trends suggest that there may have been an increase in the number of working parents resulting in an increased need for child care.
- There is a particular need to increase the availability of high-quality child care for infants and toddlers (from birth to 2 years old).

### **Early Education**

Dummerston School District participates in Vermont's Public Preschool Partnerships Program and collaborates with qualified preschool programs in the area, though none of them are in Dummerston. Under this program, children participating in one of the qualified preschool programs are counted towards the resident student count (average daily membership) under the school financing formula. Seventy percent of the funds received are passed on to the preschools while the remaining funds are retained by the school district. Per the contract, the funds that are passed on must be used in three ways tuition reduction, program development, and/or staff development.

Early Education Services in Brattleboro operates an Early Head Start program. Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. The income eligibility of families is 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

### **Home Schooling and Private Schools**

Home schooling is an option used by some families. The exact number of students being home schooled is not known so it is difficult to track changes. Parents interested in home schooling their children must have a plan approved by the state. Although the town school district does not receive funding to help educate home-schooled students, Dummerston School works to assist their efforts through access to services and resources such as music, the library, and extracurricular activities.

There are a number of both primary and secondary private schools in the region, although none are in Dummerston. Some Dummerston students attend these schools, but the number is not known.

### **Colleges and Adult Education**

The Community College of Vermont (CCV) has a campus in Brattleboro which offers Associate degree programs and workshop. Several private and public colleges and universities are located within commuting distance of Dummerston.

Opportunities for adult education include:

- various programs offered through community libraries and individual groups;
- career-related certificate programs and non-credit programs offered through CCV;
- work readiness and literacy programs available through Adult Learning in Brattleboro; and
- learning opportunities for people 50 and older at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

### **Education Vision**

The educational programs and facilities in Dummerston are important components of Dummerston's social and economic well-being. Dummerston will continue to provide a solid educational foundation for its students to ensure educational and personal success. All young children in Dummerston will have access to affordable, quality child care and educational experiences.

### **Goals, Policies, and Action Steps**

**Goal 1 — Provide quality education for all people in Dummerston.**

**Policy 1.1 Maintain or enhance the level of excellence in our schools.**

**Policy 1.2 Seek creative methods to improve public education without increasing expenditures.**

*Action Steps*

- c. Evaluate on an ongoing basis the transportation Policy for Dummerston students. (School Board)
- d. Encourage community involvement and seek funding sources for the newly created Dummerston School Endowment, Inc. (School Board)
- e. Develop a Policy for long term energy management at Dummerston School. (School Board and Dummerston Energy Committee.
- f. Evaluate desirability of shared programs with neighboring schools.

**Policy 1.3 Continue to make school facilities available to community groups for evening or weekend programs, for recreational programs, and for adult educational programs throughout the year.**

*Action Step*

- a. Maintain effective communication between School Board and Selectboard.

**Policy 1.4 Promote lifelong learning.**

*Action Step*

- a. Support Dummerston Conservation Commission educational programs.

**Policy 1.5 Continue administration of Miller Fund for needy children of Dummerston.**

<b>Goal 2 — Ensure that high quality, affordable child care is accessible to all children.</b>
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**Policy 2.1 Support the provision of safe and affordable child care.**

*Action Step*

- a. Maintain an inventory of all child care programs in the town and their capacity.  
(Emergency Management Director)

**Policy 2.2 Ensure that land use regulations do not place unreasonable limitations on child care homes and facilities.**

*Action Step*

- a. Consider permitting child care facilities as an accessory use for education institutions, churches, and places of employment. (Planning Commission)