

https://www.berkshireeagle.com/news/northern_berkshires/northern-berkshire-schools-declining-enrollment-regionalization/article_a319262a-85d2-447c-8650-47d05a679685.html

TOP STORY

Fewer students, fewer programs: Northern Berkshire County schools consider regionalization

By Jane Kaufman, The Berkshire Eagle
Sep 6, 2025

© 2025 The Berkshire Eagle. All rights reserved. This article is published under a Creative Commons license. For more information, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.



North Adams Public Schools currently has 523 students in grades 6 through 12, according to state data. By the 2034-35 school year, enrollment in those grades is projected to drop to 384 students.

GILLIAN HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

CHESHIRE — For the first time, Mount Greylock, Drury and Hoosac Valley high schools have combined football programs to play under one jersey as one united team.

It's gone smoothly so far, despite the fierce historic rivalry between Hoosac Valley and Drury, according to head coach Marshall Maxwell.



Head football coach Marshall Maxwell leads a combined team of Mount Greylock, Drury and Hoosac Valley players.

JANE KAUFMAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

"They love it," Maxwell said of the student-athletes, who officially became teammates on Aug. 15 at the first practice. "It's a small world we live in now. ... They all know each other. And co-op is not a foreign thing for the schools."

Just as the football players are learning to put rivalries aside, their schools may soon be required to do the same in the classroom.

Faced with declining population and shrinking school enrollment, school districts serving Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, Monroe, North Adams and Savoy are contemplating regionalizing at the middle and high school levels.

The districts have all expressed support to move forward with a study that would present options for a "potential reorganization" among North Adams Public Schools, the Hoosac Valley Regional School District, and the North Berkshire School Union, according to the motions of the school committees.

North Adams Public Schools and Hoosac Valley Regional School District have already voted to send representatives to an exploratory working group. North Berkshire School Union's school committee is expected to vote on Monday if it will join the working group. And Mount Greylock Regional District's School Committee will decide whether to participate at its meeting on Thursday.



Hoosac Valley Regional Middle and High School is one of a number of Northern Berkshire County schools that is considering moving forward with studying what a regionalized school district would look like.

GILLIAN HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

The exploratory working group will recommend a structure and formation of a Northern Berkshire Educational Collaborative Steering Committee and draft elements of a request for proposals to engage a vendor for a study.

Rep. John Barrett III, D-North Adams, has already secured a \$100,000 earmark to fund the study under the Fair Share Amendment. In addition, Berk12 has a \$50,000 earmark from Sen. Paul Mark, of which \$25,000 can go toward a regionalization study for Northern Berkshire County, according to educational consultant Jake Eberwein at Berk12, who has studied school enrollment and recommended regionalization in both Berkshire and Franklin counties.

Supporters of the plan say regionalization at the middle and high school levels would expand academic and extracurricular opportunities for students. It would also improve course offerings, maintain programs such as theater and industrial arts, and maximize state funding. And it could build on existing

collaborations, like shared football programs, and respond to ongoing challenges in staffing, specialized courses, and competition from charter and private schools.

ENROLLMENT PRESSURES

North Adams Public Schools currently has 523 students in grades six through 12, according to data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary Secondary Education. By the 2034-35 school year, enrollment in those grades is projected to drop to 384 students.

But where are the students going?

Enrollment for grades 6-12: 2024 actuals and 2034-45 projections

Search...

Institution	Grades Covered	2024-2025 Actual (DESE)	2034-35 Projected (Berkshire Benchmarks)
BART (Charter)	6-12	364	396*
McCann (Vocational)	9-12	514	519
Hoosac Valley Regional SD	6-12	446	400
North Adams Public Schools	6-12	523	384

* A Flourish table

Nearby Berkshire Arts & Technology Public Charter School, McCann Technical School, private schools and school choice all take a bite out of enrollment at

Valley Regional School District.

"You're taking a pie and slicing everybody's pieces smaller anytime you add something," Dean said.

Adams also has St. Stanislaus Kostka School, a Catholic school, which runs from pre-K to eighth grade.

Dean estimates that of the 1,500 students eligible to go to Hoosac Valley High School, 70 go to BART, 70 to 75 attend St. Stanislaus, and 150 attend other public schools through school choice.

Some of those school choice students actually land at Drury.

"North Adams and Hoosac Valley actually exchange students a lot," he said, and about 30 students each attend Mount Greylock and Wahconah Regional High School in Dalton. "The money follows the student."

Dean expressed a sentiment that all of the superintendents did about the advantage of regionalizing.

"I think the more we can put together in terms of programming, it's just going to be better for kids," he said, "and offer them more opportunities in one place, instead of kind of being scattered."

IMPACT ON PROGRAMS

Fewer students in the school means fewer students who can participate in various school activities, school officials say.

Take theater, for example. North Adams Superintendent Timothy Callahan said it's difficult to put on big theater productions with a small student body. But it's also hard to share a theater program with other schools, like the football program shares athletes, because some of the programming happens during the school day.



Students perform a scene from a production of "The 39 Steps, Even More Abridged," at Drury High School's black box theater on May 23. As the student population shrinks, school officials say putting on big theater productions is simply not possible.

GILLIAN HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

"That hasn't come up just because there's been enough students to run programs, but it's still not as robust," Callahan said of theater.

Fewer students in the school are also affecting what classes can be offered, Callahan said.

Classes such as home economics and industrial arts or shop aren't offered partly because students with strong interest in those areas end up at McCann Technical School and, in recent years, Drury has shifted its focus toward college prep.

"Those kinds of things would have been more likely to have been sustained if we had a larger enrollment," Callahan said.

With a declining student enrollment, sometimes what's disappeared in academics is actually the middle. At Drury, honors-level English disappeared at the junior year level in favor of Advanced Placement, Callahan said.

"That encouraged more students to take more advanced courses," Callahan said. "By streamlining, we were able to convince students they could take on more challenges than they originally thought, and they proved to be successful in those more advanced courses."



Students from Mount Greylock, Drury and Hoosac Valley high schools play together as the Hurricanes for the first time this year. Practice has gone smoothly, said head coach Marshall Maxwell, with no signs of vestigial rivalry from players of opposing schools.

JANE KAUFMAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

And sometimes the struggles in providing robust programming aren't always related to enrollment: They're related to the labor shortage in Berkshire County.

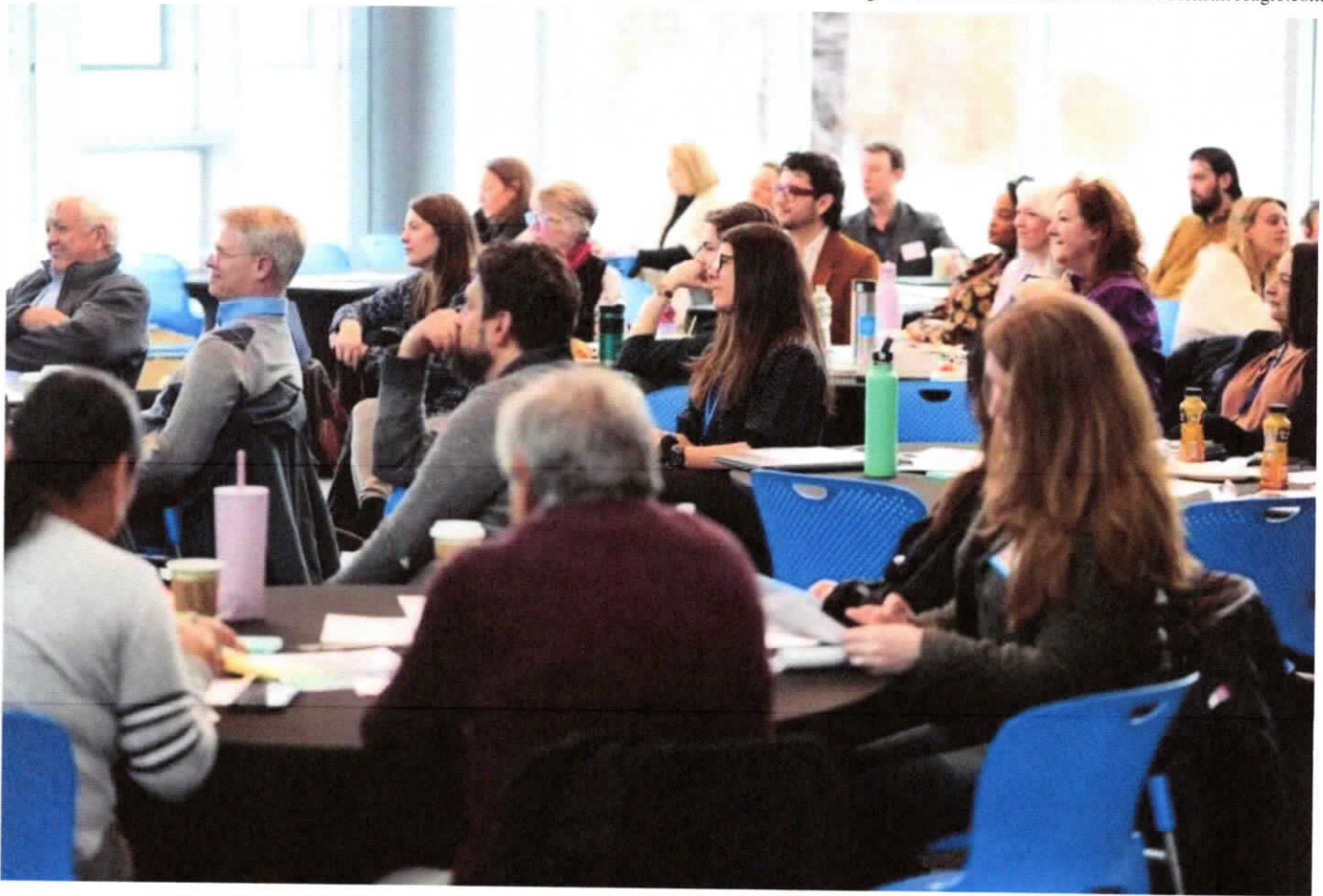
When he arrived in North Adams 28 years ago, Callahan remembers that Latin, French, Italian and Spanish were all offered. Now, the school offers French and Spanish, but for several years it only offered Spanish because it couldn't find a teacher qualified in more than one foreign language.

Regionalization could offer the best path forward for both students' education and taxpayers' wallets, according to Dean.

"The writing is on the wall," he said. "The resources aren't always going to be there."

Jane Kaufman is Community Voices Editor at The Berkshire Eagle. She can be reached at jkaufman@berkshireeagle.com or 413-496-6125.

MORE INFORMATION



How's Portrait of a Graduate working at Berkshire County schools? Students provided the answers



Tags

- DRURY
- NORTH ADAMS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- ADAMS
- SAVOY
- FLORIDA
- CLARKSBURG
- CHESHIRE
- HOOSAC VALLEY
- NORTH ADAMS
- REGOINALIZATION

Jane Kaufman

Community Voices Editor