

# CHAPTER IV

## EDUCATION & LEARNING

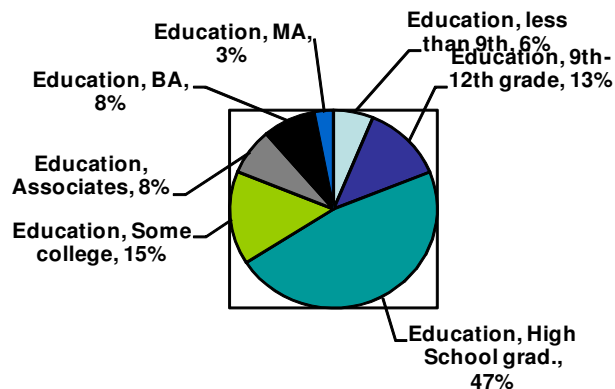
### A. Overview

Education is the process by which people pass knowledge and values to each other. Education gives people new ways of looking at the world and prepares young people for adult roles. Education also prepares adults for new roles. A lack of education opportunities limits an individual's job opportunities and reduces their ability to provide for basic needs like health-care, housing, and transportation. This is especially true in today's society with its increasing dependency on technology. Quality education is vital to our town's quality of life, now and in the future. Every one of our residents has something to teach and something to learn. This plan seeks to find creative ways to increase opportunities to help residents share their knowledge with their neighbors.

### B. Education Levels

The town education levels are an excellent indicator of our economy and quality of life. While high school graduates are the majority of our town's population, Williamstown's overall education levels lag behind the Region and the State, especially with respect to higher learning.

**Figure C**  
**Williamstown Education Levels**



**Figure D**  
**Educational Attainment Levels**  
**(2000 Census)**

	<b>Williamstown</b>	<b>Orange Co.</b>	<b>Vermont</b>
<b>Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	6%	5%	5%
<b>9-12 grade, no diploma</b>	13%	11%	9%
<b>High school or equiv.</b>	47%	38%	32%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	16%	16%	20%
<b>Associate's degree</b>	7%	8%	7%
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	8%	14%	17%
<b>Grad. Or Prof. degree</b>	3%	9%	10%

## C. Schools

### History

The *History of Williamstown, Vermont, 1781-1991* (Williamstown Historical Society) reports, “Williamstown has, over the years, had 17 school districts.” A list of those school districts is as follows: Clogston District School (Stone Road), Martin School (originally Graniteville Road moved to McGlynn Hill Road), South Hill School (Graham Road), Lynde School (sharp corner of Hebert Road), Baptist Street School (Baptist Street), Cram School (corner of Northfield Road and Clark Road), Woolcut School (Boyce Street), Quarry School (corner of Tower and McCarty Road), Adams School (Flint Road), Toad Hollow or Gale School (Williamstown-Barre Road) Briggs School (off Chelsea Road), Hatch School (South Hill Road), Alfred Smith School (Weir Road), and the Village School (Construction Hill, Town Hall).

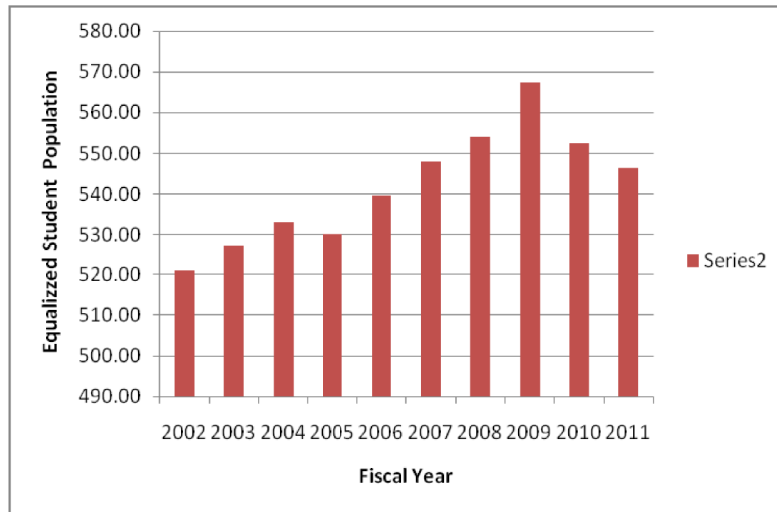
Town officials designed the current schools to be located in the Village. The Williamstown Elementary School was built in 1962 on Brush Hill Road, just down the street from the High School. The school has the capacity to serve between 300-350 students in grades K-5. The Williamstown Middle/High School, built in 1973 on Hebert Road, educates students from grades 6 through 12 and has a capacity of 400-450 students. See **Map 3** for the school locations.

In 2004, the School Board adopted the following mission statement: “*to provide an education that fosters the development of responsible and successful individuals who will practice good citizenship in their local and extended communities*”. In order to meet this challenge, school officials agreed to; build and sustain a safe school system that cultivates academic excellence and life-long learning, recognize the role of parents in the education of their children, and value a working relationship with the community at large. The schools plan to foster positive connections between adults and the schools by offering public educational opportunities. In addition, they plan to remain accountable to families and the community for both educational results and fiscal responsibility.

## Enrollment Trends

Student enrollments in both the elementary and middle/high schools have varied since 1995. Orange North Supervisory Union enrollment figures show that Williamstown's student population reflects the overall state trend of a steady decline in its school-age population. According to the School Construction Report, the equalized pupils sorted by growth rates shows that Williamstown's average annual change from fiscal year 2000 to 2002 decreased by -3.4%.

Enrollment projections for the State suggest the numbers will fall for the rest of the decade and possibly longer.



**Figure E** *Equalized Pupils: This figure is not an actual count, but is a weighted number. It is close to the actual students enrolled. The weighing is based on kids in preschool, grades 1-6, and grades 7-12. Younger kids count less and older kids count more.*

## Funding Challenges

Today, our school officials are grappling with a number of funding challenges including:

- The number of full-time public classroom teachers, instructional aides, and other teachers has increased while the enrollment has been declining. Despite the drop in enrollments, the federal *No Child Left Behind Law* makes it difficult to reduce staffing, because the schools are expected to meet annual progress goals or be penalized
- Teacher's salaries are increasing somewhat and rising health care cost pose significant challenges to the school system
- Residents are finding it difficult paying the increasing taxes

In 1999, for the purposes of providing a financing system that provided equal opportunity in public education, State officials enacted *Act 60*. Under this program towns received an equalized amount of money from the state for every student they enrolled. State officials based the state block grant formula on two variables: equalized pupils (not an actual headcount) and compared it to the statewide average.

In 2003 a new state education funding law, Act 68, amended Act 60. This law changed the way towns compiled their grand list for the statewide property tax. The Act took effect in 2005 and the new changes will eliminate the property sharing pool where per pupil spending links to the town's tax rates. Towns will split the grand list between residential properties (houses, mobile homes, or farms) and non-residential property, such as commercial, industrial, camps, vacation homes, open land (not used as a primary residence for more than six months of each year). Under the new law, non-residential property is subject to a higher statewide education property tax rate than residential property. Under the changes in the education financing formula, Williamstown school taxes have decreased.

The following is a history of the Williamstown Schools tax rate history:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
School	1.69	1.79	1.51	1.30	1.17	1.19	1.19	1.18	1.25	1.35	1.40

**Physical Condition/Location**

The middle and high school both recently underwent significant renovations. 8.9 million dollars was spend to updating and modernizing the building to include an energy efficient wood chipped fired boiler housed in a separate building.

**Community Mapping Program**

In 2004, the High School, in partnership with the Planning Commission, applied for a mini grant through the Community Mapping Program, (Orton Foundation, Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences) to explore how maps can help Williamstown examine local issues and plan for their future. The High School's long-term vision is to sustain the work they have they begun with their community.

However, the 2003, Economic Development Committee Survey reported that residents felt it was important to have a school system within their community. In fact some reported that having a school in the Village was the primary reason they moved to Williamstown and if the schools were located outside of the Williamstown village it would divert community activities away from its town center. School consolidation increases travel times and transportation costs. Having the school located in the village reinforces that location as the core for community life. When our children walk to schools it saves transportation costs.

**D. Adult Education**

Research in adult education increasingly shows that adults are more likely to learn in an informal way, as they do not always have the time to leave work and take formal courses. Adults in Williamstown who want help with learning basic reading, writing, math, and English (as a second language) can receive help through a free program of instruction provided by the Central Vermont Basic Education Program located in Barre. They also have the opportunity to study for their high school equivalency exam or the adult diploma program. Students and teachers meet in on-to-one and small group sessions and design an individual learning program to suit the requirements of each adult student. Volunteers from the community help make this service accessible to Williamstown residents.

**EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

<b>GOALS</b>	<b>POLICIES &amp; TASKS</b>
<p><b>To strive for schools that foster community-learning opportunities where students and adults learn together.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and encourage community-school partnerships.</li> <li>• Continue the Williamstown High School GIS mapping program</li> </ul>
<p><b>To create a learning community.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the mission of the Williamstown School District</li> <li>• Support efforts to broaden access to adult and senior educational opportunities.</li> <li>• Support vocational education opportunities.</li> <li>• Secure funds for space that could be used for public education opportunities on issues of concern to the community.</li> <li>• Support home schooling, GED, and other non-traditional learning options.</li> </ul>
<p><b>To remain accountable, both educationally and fiscally, to school families and community at large.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The School Board should work with the community to review funding and standards data to improve the quality of the schools and student performance.</li> <li>• Encourage schools to employ capital budgeting and programming as a means to anticipate and plan for the payment of capital improvements.</li> <li>• Ensure that Williamstown’s schools remain in the Village as they are vital to the community’s vitality and identity.</li> <li>• Support incremental investment in the school’s short-term renovation needs to support the long term needs of our neighborhoods and children.</li> </ul>