

Chapter 5 Education and Child Care Facilities

Education Facilities

School districts in Vermont began a process of consolidation after the passage of Act 46 in 2015. Chester is currently a member of the Green Mountain Union School District with the towns of Andover, Baltimore and Cavendish. The Green Mountain School District is a member of the Two Rivers Supervisory Union along with the Ludlow Mount Holly Unified Union School District. There are 6 directors from Chester on the 11-member Green Mountain Union School District board. The Town of Chester has two school buildings. Chester-Andover Elementary School on Main Street houses grades K-6 and Green Mountain Union High School on Route 103 south of the center houses grades 7-12.

Historically, the number of students enrolled in the Chester-Andover Elementary School has ranged between a high of 373 students in 1960 to a low of 260 in 2016-2017. Enrollment has gradually decreased in recent years.

The Green Mountain Union High School (7-12), which was built in 1971, has students from the Towns of Andover, Cavendish, and Chester and, since 2000-2001, tuition students from the Towns of Baltimore, Grafton, Londonderry, and Weathersfield.

Since 1980 the enrollment has fluctuated between a high of 479 in 1980 to a low of 313 in 2016-2017.

Green Mountain Union High School students may receive vocational and technical training at the Howard Dean Educational Center, in Springfield, VT. Continuing education programs are offered through Community College of Vermont and Johnson State College External Degree Programs in Springfield. The Head-Start Program is being offered at Green Mountain Union High School. Opportunities in Learning, an alternative educational program, is offered at Cavendish Town Elementary School, in Proctorsville, VT.

Capital needs are currently being studied and addressed by the Town and the School Trustees.

Homeschooling in Chester is overseen by the Vermont State Board of Education, Home Study Program. Most of the information needed to set up a homeschool in Vermont can be found on the Home Study website at <http://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/school-operations/home-study>. Home Study Enrollments and Evaluations, also known as End of Year Assessments (EOYA,) must be received by August 1 each year. In accordance with State Board of Education, AOE accountability goals, and Vermont law, the home study program works to ensure that all students enrolled in home study programs have access to a quality education. When required, the program provides technical assistance to improve the quality of a home study program. Homeschooled students are also able to participate in extracurricular sports and arts/theater programming at the Chester-Andover Elementary School and the middle and high

schools at Green Mountain Union High School, as well as up to 3 of the core classes. Additionally, students that are enrolled in the public school in Chester are entitled to participate in home study of up to 3 core courses. The number of homeschooled students has been increasing in recent years, up from 14 in 2013 – 2014 to 20 in 2015 – 2016.

There are a variety of classes and programs available in Chester to enrich the homeschool experience. Several homeschool groups meet on a regular basis in the region, and at least one evaluator lives in Andover, part of the Two Rivers Supervisory Union. The Whiting Library in Chester, the Springfield Town Library, and Phoenix Books Misty Valley Bookstore in Chester all offer children's programming throughout the year. Country Treasures in Chester offers quilting classes. Art, pottery and painting classes are offered at Endless Creations in Chester, and at Main Street Arts in Saxtons River. Music and dance classes are available through the Community Art Center, Springfield Dance Factory, and the Chester Recreation Department. There are two outdoor wilderness programs for youth in neighboring Andover, O.W.L.S. and Dancing Moon Girls. Several yoga classes are available in Chester. The Nature Museum in Grafton hosts programming throughout the year in Grafton and at the NewsBank building and Whiting Library in Chester.

The Vermont Home Study Team is very active in helping homeschoolers in their educational pursuits. An email list with opportunities is sent out on a regular basis by Alicia Hanrahan of the Vermont Home Study Team. She can be reached at Alicia.Hanrahan@vermont.gov. Other useful list serves are SoVtHomeschoolers@googlegroups.com for Southern Vermont and groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/cvt_homeschoolresource/info for Central Vermont. Chester is on the edge of these two regions.

Child Care Facilities

Child care is an important consideration for employers and families with young children. In 2018, Chester has two licensed child care providers including:

- Chester Community Preschool at Green Mountain Union High School
- Chester-Andover Elementary School After School Program.

There are also two registered family child care homes in town, according to the Vermont DCF Bright Futures child care information [website](#). There are many additional licensed providers and registered homes in the surrounding towns. Child care facilities are allowed for under Chester's Unified Development Bylaws in accordance with Section 3.10.

Goals and Policies

Education and Child Care

1. The Town should continue to provide high quality, cost effective educational opportunities and amenities to all students residing in Chester, as well as those attending Chester schools, who reside in other Towns.
2. Any new development which results in significant increases in the number of school-age children should not place a significant burden on Chester's taxpayers or existing school facilities.
3. Support the development and operation of child care facilities within the town.