

# How Much Is Enough? The Responsible Budget

Arthur Green  
Presentation to  
Timberlane School  
District Deliberative  
Session

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2/5/2015

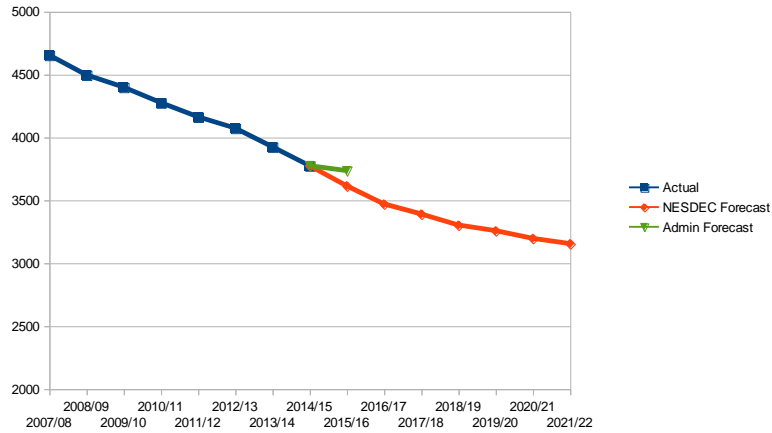
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My mission - on budget committee and in this debate - is to provide the Timberlane school district with the resources to deliver quality education at a reasonable cost to the families of our community.

At last year's deliberative, I asked the question "How much is enough?" Enrollment is declining. Spending is increasing. I have still not heard an answer from the administration or the school board - just the demand for more money.

Today I have come to say that \$64,940,900 is *more* than enough

# Declining Enrollment is a Trend



**Decrease** from 2007/08 to 2014/15: **- 18.9%**

Forecast **decrease** from 2014/15 to 2015/16:

Admin: - 40 students, - **1.1%** NESDEC: - 160 students, - **4.2%**

Forecast 5-year **decrease** from this year (2014/15): **- 13.7%**

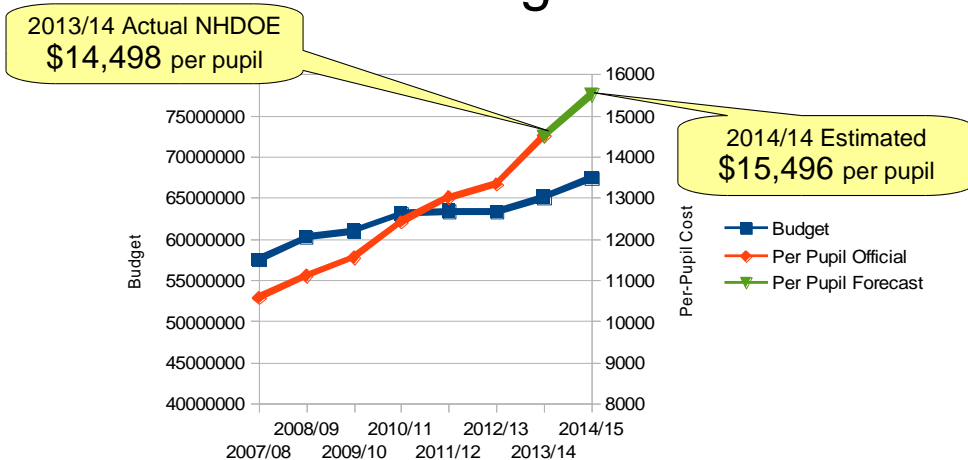
NESDEC Forecasts from report presented to Timberlane dated Oct 6, 2014

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Enrollment has dropped every year since the peak of 2007/08. This is not a blip. The district's professional forecast from NESDEC shows this continuing. We are down 19% - 880 students. By 2020, forecast is that we will be down another 600 from this year's.

## Increasing Cost



**Budget Increase** from 2007/08 to 2014/15: **17.1%**  
**Per Pupil budget increase** from 2007/08 to 2014/15: **47.0%**

Past Budget costs from Timberlane annual reports, Per Pupil costs through 2013/14 are reported by NH DOE. Per Pupil costs for 2014/15 are estimated from enrollment and budget data.

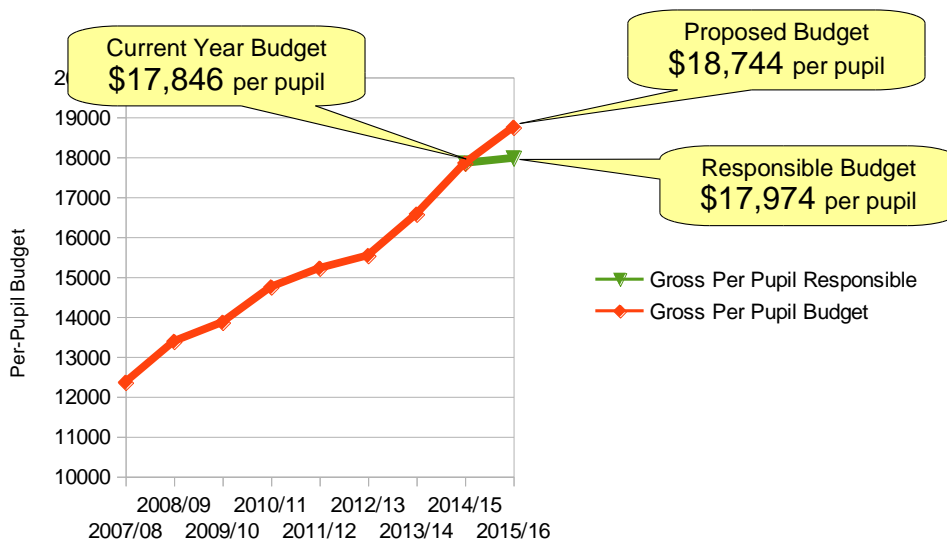
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Costs are rising. The budget is up 17% since 2007/08. But enrollment falls every year, so per-pupil cost skyrockets - up 47% to this year.

Another way to look at this is the gross per-pupil cost - budget divided by the number of students.

## Gross Per-Pupil Budget

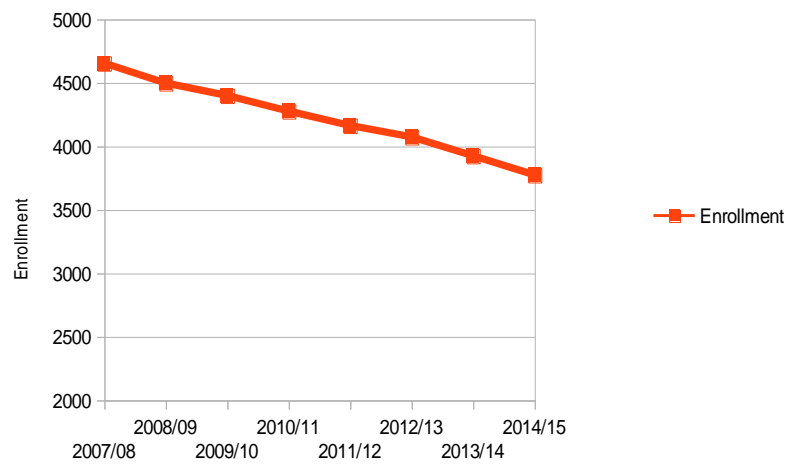


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- This current year our budget is \$17,846 per pupil
- The proposed budget is \$18,744 - \$900 per pupil more than this year.
- My Responsible budget is \$17,974 per pupil - slightly more than this year. Yet this is supposedly a catastrophe.

## Seven Consecutive Years of Declining Enrollment...

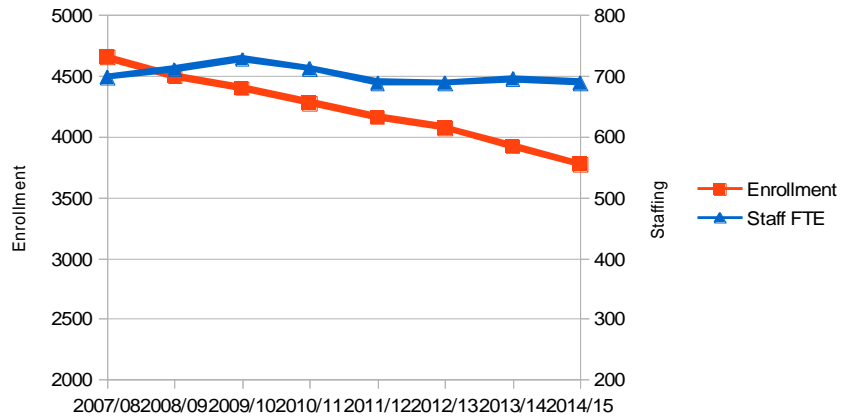


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Our staff level has barely budgeted while enrollment plummets. This slide shows the enrollment line to the current year. Keep your eye on that declining line.

## ... with Minimal Adjustment to Staffing Level



FTE Staffing numbers from NH DOE

Here's staffing. In 2007/08 the district had 698 staff. This year - 688. Enrollment plummets, staffing hardly changes. The proposed budget removes a total of four and a half ACTUAL positions - AFTER closing Sandown Central. My Responsible budget calls for 649 positions. I am using Full-Time Equivalent staff numbers as reported by the NH DOE.

By the way, Mr. Collins and tonight Mrs. Steenson claimed that over the years we have reduced the number of teachers by 12%. This is a shell game, which I flattened in my Dec 7 presentation at our Sandown town hall meeting, which is online. Remember that the total staffing number is hardly changing: the so-called "reduction" is a cosmetic relabeling of staff so that as the number of teachers goes down, other categories such as "non-teaching professionals" go up. The staffing figures published by NH DOE are the gold standard in this matter, and tell the full story.

By comparison with other districts our staff and costs are out of line.

Other comparable districts are delivering better results with less staff and at a lower cost. I've made this argument in public and shared my research online, including comprehensive rebuttal of objections raised by Mr. Collins.

# Leading Cohort Results

Five Districts of similar size achieved higher 2014 NECAP scores in **BOTH** Reading and Math at the Grade 11 level

District	NECAP G11 Reading Meets or Exceeds	NECAP G11 Math Meets or Exceeds
Bedford	94	67
Hudson	80	37
Keene	81	40
Merrimack	83	44
Salem	79	39
<b>Average of Leading Cohort</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Timberlane</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>33</b>

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The five comparables are Bedford, Hudson, Keene, Merrimack, and Salem. Each achieved higher than Timberlane in BOTH Reading and Math G11 NECAP. Each has lower staffing than Timberlane.

# Leading Cohort Resources

Five districts with a similar profile to Timberlane are producing better results on both NECAP measures.

Every single district in the superior cohort has more students per teacher.

Four out of five districts in the superior cohort have a lower cost per pupil

Leading Districts	Student Teacher Ratio	Cost per pupil 2012/13	Cost per pupil 2013/14	Change % year over year
Bedford	14.5	\$11,539	\$11,809	2.3%
Hudson	15.8	\$10,204	\$10,771	5.6%
Keene	11.5	\$14,975	\$15,223	1.7%
Merrimack	12.7	\$13,440	\$14,462	7.6%
Salem	12.4	\$12,383	\$13,301	7.4%
<b>State Average</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>\$13,459</b>	<b>\$14,001</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
<b>Avg of Leading Districts</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>\$12,508</b>	<b>\$13,113</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
<b>Timberlane</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>\$13,329</b>	<b>\$14,498</b>	<b>8.8%</b>
<b>Timberlane exceeds average per-pupil cost of leading comparable districts by</b>		<b>6.6%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	

All numbers from NH DOE

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Let's compare Timberlane staffing and cost per pupil versus these districts.

- Timberlane's Student/Teacher ratio of 11.3 means every single one of these districts operates with lower staff.
- Timberlane's cost per pupil is over 10% higher than the average of these districts, and higher than all but Merrimack.
- And Timberlane's cost per pupil jumped almost 9% last year, more than any of the others and far more than average.

We who are paying the bills for the district do not accept that we must pay high and rising costs when similar neighboring districts are able to accomplish better results at a lower cost.

The district's proposed budget - on it's face, a modest increase of less than 1%,

BUT

- We are closing a school and still demanding more money. Do we have another school to close next year?
- Taxes will go up for all four towns. The budget increase of a half percent can result in tax increases of 2.5% for Plaistow, 3.8% for Danville
- Expenditures are being planned out of this year's surplus, which will further increase taxes
- Huge \$900 increase in cost per pupil

My Responsible budget

- Includes every penny requested by the administration for non-salary expense items
  - Transportation
  - Athletics
  - Academic programs, including AP
  - Arts and music programs
  - The single exception is reduction of \$18,000 for an unnecessary public relations consultant position which was awarded to the wife of the budget committee chair
  - will result in a modest tax decrease for all four towns
- Staffing impact:
  - includes all Special Ed staffing
  - includes all Kindergarten staffing
  - provides sufficient staff to support current maximum class sizesI have demonstrated publicly that the district can operate with a reduction of 76 staff, and still have a higher staffing level than comparable districts which are delivering better results.
  - The Responsible budget is not calling for 76 staff cuts, but 39. With this reduction, Timberlane will still have a higher staffing level than all but one of the comparable districts delivering better results. About 20 of the 39 reductions are regular program teachers.



# Sample Comparisons

	<b>Enrollment same as</b>	<b>2013/14 FTE Staff</b>	<b>Timberlane Staff</b>	<b>Timberlane Has More Staff</b>
Hudson District	Timberlane District	494	678	<b>184</b>
Alvirne HS, Hudson	TRHS	173	197	<b>24</b>
Memorial MS, Hudson	TRMS	110	158	<b>48</b>
Woodbury School, Bedford	Pollard	66	105	<b>39</b>

All numbers from NH DOE

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Reality Check: how can we be sure that a reduction of 39 staff is reasonable? Here are some sample comparisons using DOE 2013/14 staffing and enrollment:

- Hudson district has the same enrollment as Timberlane. Their staff: 494. Our staff: 678 - 184 more
- Alvirne HS in Hudson - same enrollment as TRHS, but we have 24 more staff. Not a huge difference, but more than 10%. We are about to close a school to get a reduction of 7.
- Memorial MS in Hudson - Same enrollment as TRMS, but TRMS has 48 more staff - a 44% difference
- Woodbury school in Bedford. Same enrollment as Pollard, but Pollard has 39 more staff.

There is no doubt that 39 reductions can be found in our system - without harming quality of education

Objections - Dire consequences

- Threats of transportation and activity fees are obviously fictitious. There are zero cuts to any expense items - in fact all requested increases are preserved
- Threats to AP are fictitious. I have been maliciously or ignorantly attacked for my opinions on AP programming, but regardless of my opinion, the Responsible budget fully funds the administration's requests
- What about staff support for programs like AP, arts and music at the reduced staff level?
  - The comparable districts all deliver these programs. The comparable districts have more students graduate with AP credits than Timberlane.

- Fictitious doubling of the staff cut
  - Most of the cut can be achieved through attrition. Last summer alone, the SB approved more than 60 staff replacement hires, and those are only the professional positions.
  - The admin presented staff cuts and the budget for the Sandown Central closure with zero impact on unemployment insurance costs. Clearly the administration is capable of managing staff reductions without triggering one-for-one layoff notices.

Supporters of the current staffing say that we are beginning to see improving SAT and AP scores - and that a budget cut would undermine this progress.

We agree that there have been some improvements.

## Improving Timberlane SAT Results

<b>SAT Combined out of 2400</b>	
2008	1512
2009	1513
2010	1510
2011	1474
2012	1455
2013	1478
2014	1515

Here are Timberlane SAT results over recent years. This year is clearly an improvement.. although in line with the scores from a few years ago.

# Improving Timberlane AP Results

**Percent of Timberlane graduating seniors who have earned one or more qualifying AP credits (score 3 or above)**

<b>2011</b>	12%
<b>2012</b>	7%
<b>2013</b>	10%
<b>2014</b>	15%

**Source:** Timberlane HS Guidance Department

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Here are AP results - the number of graduating seniors who have earned one or more AP credits. Agreed, a definite improvement which we support.

## .. In Context with Comparable Districts

	SAT 2014	AP 2012
	Cumulative Score out of 2400	% Grade 12 with One or More Qualifying AP Credits
<b>Bedford</b>	1,623	28%
<b>Hudson</b>	1,539	17%
<b>Keene</b>	1,538	22%
<b>Merrimack</b>	1,553	14%
<b>Salem</b>	1,478	23%
<b>Average – Leading Districts</b>	<b>1,546</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Timberlane</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>7% (15% in 2014)</b>

**Source for SAT:** College Board Summary by High School for NH Public Schools, provided by the NH Department of Education

**Source for AP:** US News and World Reports 2014 Best High Schools

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But comparison with other districts shows that improvement does not demand more money, just because Timberlane is spending more money.

- SAT - Four of the five comparable districts have higher SAT scores,
- AP - the comparable districts on average have over 20% of graduating seniors with AP credits.

Every single one of these districts has lower staffing, and all but one spend less than Timberlane per pupil.

If we want excellence, we need to be honest about ourselves.

## The Responsible Budget \$64,940,900

- ✓ Fully funds requested non-salary expense budget
- ✓ Funds all special ed staffing
- ✓ Funds all Kindergarten staffing
- ✓ Staffing level continues higher than comparable districts
- ✓ Sufficient staff to support current class size policy
- ✓ More money per pupil than the current year budget
- ✓ Modest tax decrease for all four towns

**\$64,940,900 – *More Than Enough***

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The Responsible budget gives the school district everything it has asked for in non-salary expenses, together with a staffing level higher than the comparable districts.

- The Responsible budget gives the district more money per pupil than this year's budget
- The responsible budget protects special ed staffing
- The responsible budget provides sufficient staffing to support current maximum class sizes
- It will result in a modest tax decrease for all four towns in the district

How much is enough? \$64,940,900 is more than enough.