

EDITORIAL: [My Turn: Mohawk's overreach for Heath school funds](#)

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As Heath residents, we have a growing concern over the apparent belief that Heath does not pay for its children's education and other towns have to pick up the cost. This is not true.

Every town, including Heath, is responsible for paying for the education of its students by the same contractual agreement. All residential students who attend Mohawk school are paid for from three pools of money: Chapter 70, Minimum Contribution, and Above Minimum Contribution. Each town pays its portion based on the number of students they send to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District schools. For choice out students, all towns pay Minimum Contribution to Mohawk but not the Above Minimum. Mohawk is then responsible for sending payments to the receiving school choice districts.

Mohawk receives an average of about \$17,257 per child for each choice out student. This comes from the resident town and state aid. Generally, choice out students cost \$5,000. Mohawk pays each receiving school accordingly. The remaining \$12,257 does not follow those students to their choice school but stays in the Mohawk District.

Heath has a much larger percentage of choice students than other towns. The difference for Heath is that we have no school within our boundaries. In 2018 we made the difficult decision to close our school. We did this in response to concerns expressed by the Mohawk District and we recognized that the school was no longer educationally or economically sustainable. Various paths to a permanent solution to educating our children were followed. During this uncertain time many parents made the decision to choice out to schools that they thought best met their needs.

The decision to close our school brought many financial benefits to the district annually from staffing reductions, elimination of building expenses, and materials and supplies given out to other schools. The annual financial benefits from this closure do not go to Heath, but are shared across the district.

Heath sees about 9% of this savings. The other seven towns see the savings of the remaining 91%. Heath receives minimal financial benefit, suffers the loss of their school, and bears a blow to its sense of community.

Last year Mohawk proposed a change to the regional agreement that would change the language so that all towns would pay the Chapter 70 aid and the two local assessments for choice out

students. This will add another \$6,846 per child to what each Mohawk town already pays per choice student. Once again, this money will not follow the individual town's student to their choice school. It will reduce assessments for the other towns.

Heath will carry the financial burden caused by this language change. Heath has sacrificed its school and suffered a deep loss of community. We continue to save the district hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. This proposal seems like an overcharge for Heath.

We have always supported the Mohawk budget. We have always supported the Mohawk District. It is past time for these misunderstandings to be remedied. Rural school districts are struggling with rising costs and declining enrollment. We must find a better way to support each other and work together to give our children the education they deserve.

Sue Lively and Deb Porter live in Heath.

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