

A New Hampshire Education Timeline

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1600s

- 1642**First school act of Massachusetts; New Hampshire towns included; parents and masters required to teach children reading, citizenship, and religion
- 1647**Massachusetts' "Great School Act of 1647"; public schooling made an obligation of all towns with fifty or more households, cost to be borne by parents or "inhabitants in general"
- 1649**Hampton hires John Legat as schoolmaster
- 1680**New Hampshire separates from Massachusetts, enacts own first school law requiring schools in all towns of fifty households or more
- 1693**Selectmen must raise money for schoolhouses by an equal tax rate

1700s

- 1708**The towns are all assessed taxes to establish a public Latin school in Portsmouth
- 1719**New Hampshire education act calling on towns to hire schoolmasters, and in the case of towns of 100 or more households, to set up a grammar school; selectmen to be fined for not doing so
- 1721**New Hampshire education act requires parishes as well as towns to have grammar schools, with the selectmen fined for noncompliance
- 1769**Founding of Dartmouth College.
- 1783**Opening of Phillips Exeter Academy
- 1784**New Hampshire State Constitution ratified; Article 83 calls for state government "to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools, to encourage private and public institutions, etc."
- 1789**First New Hampshire state school law under new constitution; all prior laws repealed; legislature sets specific budget and taxes for schools in each town; selectmen compelled to raise the money or be fined

1800s

- 1805**State law allows towns to divide into multiple districts for schools; each district may choose a committee to superintend the building and repairing of a schoolhouse; each district to have an annual meeting
- 1808**Passage of a new state comprehensive school law; town meeting to appoint three members to inspect schools; if none appointed, selectmen must inspect
- 1821**Establishment of the New Hampshire State Literacy Fund to support establishment of a college; funds come from a tax on bank capital stock
- 1827**Each town to appoint school superintending committee of three to five persons; one-person district Prudential Committee for each district to be chosen at town meeting
- 1828**Money in Literary Fund distributed to towns for support of schools
- 1830**Portsmouth opens a “public” high school in advance of state authorization
- 1833**Towns may dispense with school superintending committee’s inspection of schools
- 1834**New Hampshire Supreme Court rules that town meetings may vote additional funds to supplement the amount ordered to be raised for schools by the state legislature
- 1840**District schools allowed to divide students into “grades” if 3/4 of the voters in a district agree
- 1842**Law allows town meetings to raise more for schools than the amount required by the state legislature
- 1846**Position of Commissioner of Common Schools created; Dartmouth Professor Charles B. Haddock appointed first commissioner
- 1847**First commissioner’s report outlines conditions of common schools in New Hampshire
- 1848**Passage of the “Somersworth Law” allowing for public high schools

- 1850**Single commissioner of common schools abolished; Governor and Council to appoint a salaried “commissioner of common schools” for each county; set of county commissioners to constitute a state board of education
- 1854**Founding of the New Hampshire State Teachers’ Association
- 1855**Cities may appoint a superintendent of public instruction
- 1858**Beginning of Diocesan Schools in Manchester
- 1859**Town Superintending School Committees must be elected by ballot; one member may be appointed to visit and superintend the schools
- 1862**School districts given authority to raise money for schools
- 1866**Founding of the New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Hanover
- 1867**county commissioners of common schools abolished; Governor and Council named state “board of education”; salaried position of Superintendent of Public Instruction created
- 1868**Creation of a school fund from the sale of New Hampshire government lands
- 1870**Towns may abolish multiple districts and establish single town district; for those that choose to do this, prudential committees and superintending committee are abolished and single “board of education” is to be elected at town meeting
- 1871**Plymouth Normal School established by law
- 1872**Women given right to be members of school prudential committees and school superintending committees
- 1878**Women given the right to vote in school district meetings
- 1881**Towns may contract with private academies for schooling
- 1885**More than 2,200 school districts exist; division of towns into sub-town districts is abolished; districts made coterminous with towns; all prudential and superintending committees are abolished and each town must elect a “school board” of persons at annual school district meeting
- 1889**Founding of St. Anselm College
- 1893**New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts moves to Durham

1895School district meeting may require appointment of a superintendent of schools

1899Supervisory Unions authorized

1900s

1909Keene Normal School established; remaining authority of towns over schools, budgets, and taxes transferred to school districts; state aid to Supervisory Unions authorized

1910State child labor law establishes legal age of fourteen for school attendance

1913Age of required school attendance raised to sixteen; New Hampshire Congress of Parents and Teachers organized

1919Sweeping education reform law passed; State Board of Education established with broad supervisory and management powers over state system of schools; post of Commissioner of Education established; minimum and maximum tax rates for schools established; state aid made an entitlement based on property wealth; superintendents made state employees and required

1921School laws re-codified; 1919 financial obligation to schools modified, establishing limits on state aid

1923The University of New Hampshire established by law; appropriations for aid to school districts insufficient; new law pro-rates appropriated amount among districts

1947The state re-thinks its obligation to education, and derives a formula for the state board of education to “to equalize educational opportunities and to improve the public elementary and high schools of New Hampshire”; cooperative school districts authorized

1952first cooperative school district operates: Derry Cooperative

1963“Authorized Regional Enrollment Area” law enacted, permitting another type of multi-district school

1979“Supervisory union” changed to “School Administrative Unit”

1984New state foundation aid program with “Augenblick formula” enacted

- 1993**Claremont I: the New Hampshire Supreme Court states that education is a function of the state, and that state government must provide funding
- 1997**Claremont II: the New Hampshire Supreme Court reaffirms state responsibility for education and rules use of locally varying property tax in support of an “adequate” education to be unconstitutional
- 1999**New school aid formula enacted to provide for an adequate education funded by statewide property tax and other sources; an aspirational definition of “adequate” education enacted