

Alexandria City Public Schools Budget Factors

The Schools Our Children Deserve

We all want our children to attend schools that are well-resourced and able to provide reliable transportation, nutritious meals, quality instruction, and essential health services. Since the pandemic, our roughly 16,000 students in Alexandria face more challenges than ever, from staff shortages, drops in academic achievement, and additional mental health needs. When looking at our current local spending, it's clear our budget comes up short in meeting the most pressing challenges our students and schools face today. Alexandria can step up to fund our schools at levels that meet our students' needs and better reflect our capacity and commitment to our children.



Budget

In the 2022-2023 school year, Alexandria City spent \$20,948 per student, ranking us 8 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$14,912 per student and Alexandria City ranks 52 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Alexandria has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$2,221 or 12% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Northern Virginia region barely changed local per pupil spending over this time.



Capacity and Effort

Virtually every locality in the state spends beyond what the state requires it to match (referred to as Required Local Effort) because the state vastly underestimates what it actually costs to run schools. In aggregate, divisions in the Northern Virginia region spent 132% above the Required Local Effort, but Alexandria City spent 129%, which is just 3 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Alexandria would need to spend \$3,439,832 more annually to be at the average regional percent above the Required Local Effort.

Alexandria City has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. The locality has one of the top revenue capacity scores according to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts and a low level of fiscal stress.

A one penny property tax increase in Alexandria City would raise approximately \$4,550,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Alexandria saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 11.7% and 24.9% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 38.8% for English Learners and 34.9% for economically disadvantaged students. Alexandria must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Alexandria was 4.6% as of October 2023, 0.7 percentage points higher than the state average. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 7.1% as of October 2023, 2.2 percentage points above the state average, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Alexandria had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$89,336 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is only \$17,215 above the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$63,594. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Alexandria is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.