

# Allegheny Highlands County Public 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 3,000 students in Allegheny County (note\*represents 2022 merger with Covington and joint funding/outcomes data available in 23/24 year) 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. Allegheny County can step up to fund our schools at levels that meet



### Budget

In the 2022-2023 school year, Allegheny County spent \$14,437 per student, ranking us 66 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Allegheny has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$1,336 or 26% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Western Virginia region decreased local per pupil spending by 8% over this time. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Allegheny spent a whopping \$1,392 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Allegheny had a strengthening economy over this time, its level of commitment and effort towards schools did not reflect this.



### 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 spent 107% above the Required Local Effort, but Allegheny County only spent 44%, which is 63 percentage points below the state average. Allegheny would need to spend \$4,518,212 more annually to be at the average state percent above the Required Local Effort (this reflects the low level of effort the division puts into per pupil spending relative to the state).

Allegheny County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Allegheny County's property tax effort is 12% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Allegheny County would raise approximately \$110,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Allegheny saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 4.9% and 13.1% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 11.6% for economically disadvantaged students. Allegheny must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Allegheny was 4.4% as of October 2023, 0.5 percentage points higher than the state average.

Allegheny had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$52,724 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$17,717 below the state average. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Allegheny is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.