

# Arlington County 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 27,000 students in Arlington 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. Arlington 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, Arlington County spent \$23,029 per student, ranking us 4 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$16,345 per student and Arlington County ranks 27 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Arlington has seen a slight increase in local per student spending of \$218 between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation).



### 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 Arlington County spent 183%, which is 51 percentage points above the Northern Virginia regional average.

Arlington County 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 Arlington County would raise approximately \$8,740,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Arlington saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 7.2% and 25.3% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 65.1% for English Learners and 51.4% for economically disadvantaged students. Arlington must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

Arlington had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$102,939 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$30,818 above the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$73,060. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Arlington is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.