

# Bath 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 500 students in Bath 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. Bath 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, Bath County spent \$21,251 per student, ranking us 6 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$19,235 per student and Bath County ranks 7 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Bath has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$1,279 or 7% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Valley region decreased local per pupil spending by 3% over this time.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Bath saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 17.3% and 33.3% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 34.5% for economically disadvantaged students. Bath must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### 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 Bath County only spent 94%, which is 13 percentage points below the state average. Bath would need to spend \$511,564 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).

Bath 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. Bath County's property tax effort is 31% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Bath County would raise approximately \$90,000 annually.



### Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Bath was 1.9% as of October 2023.

Bath had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$56,086 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$14,355 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$50,765. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Bath is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.