

# Botetourt 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 4,000 students in Botetourt 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. Botetourt 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, Botetourt County spent \$13,721 per student, ranking us 85 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$13,248 per student and Botetourt County ranks 99 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Botetourt has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$312 or 5% 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 spent 107% above the Required Local Effort, but Botetourt County only spent 96%, which is 11 percentage points below the state average. Botetourt would need to spend \$1,607,783 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).

Botetourt County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. The locality has a relatively high revenue capacity according to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts and a low level of fiscal stress. Botetourt County's property tax effort is 5% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Botetourt County would raise approximately \$400,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Botetourt saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 2.4% and 15.6% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 44.1% for English Learners and 28.4% for economically disadvantaged students. Botetourt must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

Botetourt had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$62,696 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$7,745 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$60,533. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Botetourt is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.