

# Dickenson 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 2,000 students in Dickenson 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. Dickenson 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, Dickenson County spent \$14,418 per student, ranking us 67 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Dickenson has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$986 or 25% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Southwest region decreased local per pupil spending by 6% over this time. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Dickenson spent \$407 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Dickenson 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 Dickenson County spent 112%, which is just 5 percentage points above the state average.

Dickenson County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Dickenson County's property tax effort is 25% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Dickenson County would raise approximately \$130,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Dickenson saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 20.5% and 33.7% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 42.9% for economically disadvantaged students. Dickenson must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Dickenson was 3.4% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 4.7% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Dickenson had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$47,701 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$22,740 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, Dickenson is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.