

# Fairfax County and City 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 175,000 students in Fairfax County/City 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. Fairfax County/City 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, Fairfax County/City spent \$18,842 per student, ranking us 14 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$15,562 per student and Fairfax County/City ranks 39 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Fairfax County/City has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$382 or 3% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Northern Virginia region barely changed local per pupil spending over this time.



### Capacity and Effort

Virtually every division 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 Fairfax County/City only spent 117%. Fairfax 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 Fairfax County would raise approximately \$29,560,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Fairfax County/City saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 9.9% and 29.1% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 67.2% for English Learners and 52.1% for economically disadvantaged students. Fairfax County/City must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Fairfax County/City was 3.5% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 3.7% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Fairfax County/City had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$87,093 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is only \$14,972 above the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$71,931. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Fairfax County/City is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.