

Falls Church 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 3,000 students in Falls Church 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. Falls Church 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, Falls Church City spent \$23,118 per student, ranking us 3 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$19,093 per student and Falls Church City ranks 8 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Falls Church has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$384 or 2% 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 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 Falls Church City spent 173%, which is 41 percentage points above the Northern Virginia regional average.

Falls Church City 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 Falls Church City would raise approximately \$520,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Falls Church saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 1.1% and 7.7% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 21.2% for English Learners and 32.9% for economically disadvantaged students. Falls Church must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

Falls Church had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$82,326 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is only \$10,205 above the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$67,994. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Falls Church is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.