

Frederick 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 14,000 students in Frederick 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. Frederick 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, Frederick County spent \$14,233 per student, ranking us 75 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$13,995 per student and Frederick County ranks 77 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Frederick has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$722 or 11% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Frederick spent a whopping \$4,026 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Frederick had a strengthening economy over this time, its level of commitment and effort towards schools did not reflect this.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Frederick saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 13.5% and 38.0% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 67.3% for English Learners and 52.2% for economically disadvantaged students. Frederick 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 in the Northern Virginia region spent 132% above the Required Local Effort, but Frederick County spent 116%, which is 16 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Frederick would need to spend \$7,292,752 more annually to be at the average regional percent above the Required Local Effort (this reflects the low level of effort the division puts into per pupil spending relative to neighbors).

Frederick 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. Frederick County's property tax effort is 43% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Frederick County would raise approximately \$1,500,000 annually.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Frederick was 3.1% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 3.1% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Frederick had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$64,914 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$7,207 below the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$63,828. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Frederick is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.