

# Henry 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 7,000 students in Henry 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. Henry 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, Henry County spent \$12,966 per student, ranking us 106 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Henry has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$363 or 14% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Western Virginia region decreased local per pupil spending by 8% over this time. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Henry spent a whopping \$2,879 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Henry 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 Henry County only spent 28%, which is 79 percentage points below the state average. Henry would need to spend \$9,503,326 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).

Henry County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Henry County's property tax effort is 33% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Henry County would raise approximately \$300,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Henry saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 8.0% and 45.1% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 75.0% for English Learners and 54.4% for economically disadvantaged students. Henry must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The overall staffing vacancy rate was 3.2% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Henry had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$59,754 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$10,687 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, Henry is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.