

Lunenburg 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 1,000 students in Lunenburg 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. Lunenburg 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, Lunenburg County spent \$14,127 per student, ranking us 79 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Lunenburg has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$796 or 30% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Lunenburg spent \$712 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Lunenburg 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 Lunenburg County only spent 55%, which is 52 percentage points below the state average. Lunenburg would need to spend \$1,787,431 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).

Lunenburg County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Lunenburg County's property tax effort is 52% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Lunenburg County would raise approximately \$100,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Lunenburg saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 16.7% and 55.4% 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 65.7% for economically disadvantaged students. Lunenburg must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Lunenburg was 1.7% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 1.7% as of October 2023.

Lunenburg had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$56,959 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$13,482 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, Lunenburg is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.