

Portsmouth 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 12,000 students in Portsmouth 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. Portsmouth 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, Portsmouth City spent \$14,044 per student, ranking us 80 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$13,568 per student and Portsmouth City ranks 90 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Portsmouth has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$1,291 or 28% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Tidewater region decreased local per pupil spending by 6% over this time. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Portsmouth spent a whopping \$2,266 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Portsmouth 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 Portsmouth City only spent 85%, which is 22 percentage points below the state average. Portsmouth would need to spend \$5,299,973 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).

Portsmouth City has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools.

A one penny property tax increase in Portsmouth City would raise approximately \$790,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Portsmouth saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 18.6% and 54.1% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 67.9% for English Learners and 64.2% for economically disadvantaged students. Portsmouth must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Portsmouth was 13.4% as of October 2023, 9.5 percentage points higher than the state average. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 17.6% as of October 2023, 12.7 percentage points above the state average, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Portsmouth had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$68,397 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$2,044 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$66,080. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Portsmouth is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.