

Prince William 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 88,000 students in Prince William 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. Prince William 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, Prince William County spent \$15,189 per student, ranking us 49 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$14,422 per student and Prince William County ranks 67 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Prince William has seen a slight increase in local per student spending of \$62 between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Prince William spent a whopping \$5,074 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Prince William 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 in the Northern Virginia region spent 132% above the Required Local Effort, but Prince William County only spent 99%, which is 33 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Prince William would need to spend \$94,793,994 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).

Prince William 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.

A one penny property tax increase in Prince William County would raise approximately \$8,090,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Prince William saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 8.9% and 34.9% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 62.3% for English Learners and 47.3% for economically disadvantaged students. Prince William must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Prince William was 5.4% as of October 2023, 1.5 percentage points higher than the state average. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 7.3% as of October 2023, 2.4 percentage points above the state average, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Prince William had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$81,085 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is only \$8,964 above the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$76,989. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Prince William is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.