

Shenandoah 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 5,000 students in Shenandoah 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. Shenandoah 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, Shenandoah County spent \$14,143 per student, ranking us 77 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Shenandoah has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$847 or 16% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Shenandoah spent a whopping \$5,223 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Shenandoah 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 Shenandoah County only spent 99%, which is 33 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Shenandoah would need to spend \$5,544,250 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).

Shenandoah County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. The locality has a typical revenue capacity score according to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, but does far less than most and has a lower level of fiscal stress than most localities. Shenandoah County's property tax effort is 35% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Shenandoah County would raise approximately \$600,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Shenandoah saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 13.4% and 39.5% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 65.0% for English Learners and 47.1% for economically disadvantaged students. Shenandoah must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Shenandoah was 3.9% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 3.9% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Shenandoah had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$63,316 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$8,805 below the regional average. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Shenandoah is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.