

Southampton 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 2,000 students in Southampton 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. Southampton 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, Southampton County spent \$14,194 per student, ranking us 76 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$14,074 per student and Southampton County continues to rank 76 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Southampton has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$173 or 4% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Southampton spent \$869 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Southampton had a strengthening economy over this time, its level of commitment and effort towards schools did not reflect this.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Southampton saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 17.5% and 48.2% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 64.6% for economically disadvantaged students. Southampton must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



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 Southampton County only spent 80%, which is 27 percentage points below the state average. Southampton would need to spend \$1,752,640 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).

Southampton 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. Southampton County's property tax effort is 9% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Southampton County would raise approximately \$150,000 annually.



Staffing

The overall staffing vacancy rate was 5.6% as of October 2023, 0.7 percentage points above the state average, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Southampton had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$58,814 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$11,627 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$58,319. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Southampton is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.