

Surry 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 700 students in Surry 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. Surry 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, Surry County spent \$24,935 per student, ranking us 1 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$23,761 per student and Surry County ranks 2 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Surry has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$1,880 or 11% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation).



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 Surry County spent 126%, which is 19 percentage points above the state average.

Surry County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. The locality has one of the top revenue capacity scores according to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts and a low level of fiscal stress. Surry County's property tax effort is 17% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Surry County would raise approximately \$120,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Surry saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 15.4% and 37.0% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 47.4% for economically disadvantaged students. Surry must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Surry was 11.0% as of October 2023, 7.1 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.

Surry had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$53,760 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$16,681 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$51,228. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Surry is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.