

# Sussex 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 900 students in Sussex 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. Sussex 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, Sussex County spent \$23,840 per student, ranking us 2 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Sussex has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$123 or 1% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Central Virginia region increased local per pupil spending by 5% over this time.



### 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 Sussex County spent 183%, which is 76 percentage points above the state average.

Sussex County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Sussex County's property tax effort is 45% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Sussex 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 Sussex saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 27.3% and 55.6% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 63.3% for economically disadvantaged students. Sussex must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Sussex was 4.4% as of October 2023, 0.5 percentage points higher than the state average. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 2.4% as of October 2023.

Sussex had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$58,607 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$11,834 below the state average. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Sussex is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.