

Warren 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 Warren 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. Warren 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, Warren County spent \$13,223 per student, ranking us 103 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$13,144 per student and Warren County ranks 102 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Warren has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$570 or 11% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Warren spent a whopping \$5,532 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Warren 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 Warren County only spent 74%, which is 58 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Warren would need to spend \$9,891,424 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).

Warren 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. Warren County's property tax effort is 27% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Warren County would raise approximately \$500,000 annually.



Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Warren saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 13.5% and 36.4% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 44.6% for English Learners and 43.5% for economically disadvantaged students. Warren must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



Staffing

The teacher vacancy rate in Warren was 2.1% as of October 2023. The overall staffing vacancy rate was 2.1% as of October 2023.

Warren had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$60,312 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$11,809 below the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$59,953. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Warren is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.