

# Washington 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 6,000 students in Washington 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. Washington 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, Washington County spent \$13,402 per student, ranking us 96 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Washington has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$811 or 15% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Southwest region decreased local per pupil spending by 6% 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 Washington County only spent 78%, which is 29 percentage points below the state average. Washington would need to spend \$5,057,212 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).

Washington 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. Washington County's property tax effort is 25% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Washington County would raise approximately \$460,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Washington saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 9.3% and 24.4% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 44.4% for English Learners and 25.3% for economically disadvantaged students. Washington must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The overall staffing vacancy rate was 2.7% as of October 2023.

Washington had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$52,780 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$17,661 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, Washington is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.