

# Westmoreland 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 1,000 students in Westmoreland 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. Westmoreland 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, Westmoreland County spent \$17,264 per student, ranking us 24 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$16,975 per student and Westmoreland County ranks 21 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Westmoreland has seen an increase in local per student spending of \$783 or 13% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation).



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Westmoreland saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 15.7% and 57.5% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 81.1% for English Learners and 60.8% for economically disadvantaged students. Westmoreland 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 Westmoreland County only spent 27%, which is 80 percentage points below the state average. Westmoreland would need to spend \$6,272,117 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).

Westmoreland 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. Westmoreland County's property tax effort is 22% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Westmoreland County would raise approximately \$310,000 annually.



### Staffing

Westmoreland had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$61,571 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$8,870 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$60,539. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Westmoreland is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.