

# Williamsburg and James City Public 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 11,000 students in Williamsburg-James City County 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. Williamsburg-James City County can step up to fund our schools at levels that meet our students' needs and better reflect our capacity and



### Budget

In the 2022-2023 school year, Williamsburg-James City County spent \$14,413 per student, ranking us 68 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$13,357 per student and Williamsburg-James City County ranks 97 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Williamsburg-James City County has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$1,184 or 13% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Tidewater region decreased local per pupil spending by 6% over this time.



### Capacity and Effort

Virtually every division 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 state spent 107% above the Required Local Effort, but James City County only spent 77%. Williamsburg and James City County have capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for their schools. Williamsburg and James City County have capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for their schools. The localities have relatively high revenue capacity according to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts and low levels of fiscal stress. James City County's property tax effort is 14% and Williamsburg 35% below the average regional rate.

A one penny property tax increase would raise approximately \$1,400,000 in James City and \$220,000 in Williamsburg annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Williamsburg-James City County saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 9.9% and 30.2% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 60.3% for English Learners and 49.3% for economically disadvantaged students. Williamsburg-James City County must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

The overall staffing vacancy rate was 3.4% as of October 2023, adding pressure for all staff to cover shortage areas.

Williamsburg-James City County had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$65,509 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$4,932 below the state average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$60,711. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Williamsburg is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.