

# Winchester City 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 4,000 students in Winchester 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. Winchester 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, Winchester City spent \$17,473 per student, ranking us 22 out of 131 school divisions in the state. Yet, when adjusted for the high cost of living, the spending power drops to \$17,181 per student and Winchester City ranks 17 out of Virginia's 131 school divisions.

Winchester has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$489 or 6% between the 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 school years (adjusted for inflation). The Northern Virginia region barely changed local per pupil spending over this time. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Winchester spent a whopping \$3,369 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Winchester had a strengthening economy over this time, its level of commitment and effort towards schools did not reflect this.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Winchester saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 7.5% and 32.5% in math - among the largest declines in the state. Yet further disparities exist, with math SOL pass rates dropping 56.3% for English Learners and 39.4% for economically disadvantaged students. Winchester 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 in the Northern Virginia region spent 132% above the Required Local Effort, but Winchester City spent , which is 6 percentage points below the Northern Virginia regional average. Winchester would need to spend \$910,375 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).

Winchester City 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. Winchester City's property tax effort is 14% below the average city rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Winchester City would raise approximately \$340,000 annually.



### Staffing

Winchester had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$69,013 in the 2023-2024 school year, which is \$3,108 below the regional average. Adjusted for the relatively high cost of living in the locality, the average teacher salary drops to \$67,858. With high salaries and lower cost of living in nearby communities, on top of a dwindling supply of graduates with teaching degrees, Winchester is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.