

# Wise 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 Wise 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. Wise 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, Wise County spent \$13,527 per student, ranking us 93 out of 131 school divisions in the state.

Wise has seen a drop in local per student spending of \$1,030 or 28% 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. Compared to the regional average for local per student spending, Wise spent \$774 less in the 2022-2023 school year. While Wise had a strengthening economy over this time, its level of commitment and effort towards schools did not reflect this.



### 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 spent 127% above the Required Local Effort, but Wise County only spent 24%, which is 103 percentage points below the state average. Wise would need to spend \$9,494,436 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).  
\*Data from 2021-22 school year when division last submitted to VDOE

Wise County has capacity to do more to raise adequate revenue for its schools. Wise County's property tax effort is 13% below the average state rate.

A one penny property tax increase in Wise County would raise approximately \$200,000 annually.



### Outcomes

Many students lost significant ground on state academic achievement between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 school years. Students in Wise saw a drop in pass rates on the reading SOL test of 8.1% and 20.4% in math. Yet these total numbers mask worrisome disparities, with math SOL pass rates dropping 27.5% for economically disadvantaged students. Wise must do more for its students who face significant barriers to education.



### Staffing

Wise had an average budgeted teacher salary of \$51,425 in the 2021-2022 school year (most recent year it provided data to VDOE), which is \$19,016 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, Wise is not in a strong position to compete for high-quality educators in the future.