

Competitive Compensation for Educators

Invest in evidenced-based approaches to improve student outcomes

Why Compensation Matters

- Effective teachers are the most important school-based determinant of student educational performance. Low pay in Virginia is contributing to teacher and other school staff shortages.
- Higher pay attracts high-achieving young people to enter the teaching profession and helps keep teachers from leaving the profession. Teachers gain critical experience and skills over the first few years of their careers and experienced teachers play a critical role as mentors for new colleagues.
- Shortages of teachers and support staff are creating challenges across Virginia. Statewide, there were 4,104 unfilled teaching positions at the start of the 2023-24 school year, up from 731 in 2018-19. Likewise, Virginia's students began the 2022-23 school year short on instructional aides and paraprofessionals (1,555 vacancies, 971 in special education) and bus drivers (1,515 vacancies).
- A 2023 [JLARC survey](#) found 43% of licensed teachers who left teaching in Virginia public schools indicated they might return for better pay. Fifty-five percent of those who left for personal reasons or because they were unhappy cited inadequate salary as one of their reasons for leaving.

Teacher Pay in Virginia is Low Compared to Other States and Professions

- Virginia teachers are paid, on average, just 68 cents for each dollar paid to their similarly educated peers in other professions. This is the <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2022/>.
- In 2023, Virginia teachers were paid 9% less than the U.S. average, even before adjusting for Virginia's typically high wages for other professions. As salaries elsewhere grow, catching Virginia's teacher pay up to the national average by the 2024-25 school year will require an increase of at least 8% from estimated 2023-24 levels or a 10% increase over the next two school years.
- Support staff working full-time in Virginia's public schools have average earnings of just \$32,835.

Virginia Can Do More

- Virginia is a high-capacity state with high median incomes and a strong economy, yet it does less than most other states to fund an adequate education. Virginia received an "D" grade in the Education Law Center's annual school funding [report](#) for funding effort, the amount of funding allocated to support public education relative to the state's ability to pay.
- A major [JLARC study of the state's K-12 funding formula](#) confirmed what advocates have long known: Virginia is underfunding education. School divisions in other states receive on average 14% more per student than divisions in Virginia. This equates to about \$1,900 more per student.
- Every locality in the state routinely exceeds its required local share of education costs. State policymakers must ensure the state pays its share of costs, which in turn would bolster local governments' ability to pay their share, including the local share of teacher pay increases.

Competitive Compensation for Educators

Invest in evidenced-based approaches to improve student outcomes

Note on National Teacher Pay Average Methodology

- For more than four decades, the most reliable source of data for state-by-state and national teacher pay averages has come from the annual surveys conducted by the National Education Association and reported annually in their Rankings and Estimates report.
- Through Republican and Democrat presidential administrations, federal official statistics have been based on the National Education Association average teacher pay estimates - including the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).
- The state of Virginia has used the National Education Association's state-by-state average teacher salary comparisons for decades, including in their annual [Virginia Compared to the Other States reference guide provided for lawmakers](#).
- The data is considered the gold standard for average teacher pay and there is no comparable dataset produced in the public or private sector.

Youngkin's Budget Further Reduces Real Teacher Pay Average

When adjusted for inflation, Youngkin's 1% state bonus for teachers over the next school year and 2% pay raise the following year would leave Virginia further behind pre-pandemic average pay levels and the national average



Source: VEA Analysis of NEA Rankings and Estimates Adjusted to 2023 dollars with CPI Consumer and July 2023 CBO data

*Assumes localities meet full state match in FY24-26

