

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, unfilled teaching positions rose to 2,594 in 2021-22, up from 877 during the 2018-2019 school year. Likewise, Virginia's students began the 2021-2022 school year short on instructional aides and paraprofessionals (1,367 vacancies, 771 in special education) and bus drivers (2,045 vacancies).
- The pandemic has exacerbated staff shortages and student achievement gaps that already existed. Students, especially those historically disadvantaged, will require additional supports as they recover from lost learning and other impacts potentially affecting mental health and well-being.

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

- Virginia teachers are paid, on average, just 67 cents for each dollar paid to their similarly educated peers in other professions. This is the [third biggest pay penalty in the country](#).
- In 2021, Virginia teachers were paid 10% 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 2023-24 school year will require an increase of at least 13% from estimated 2021-22 levels.
- Support staff working full-time in Virginia's public schools have average earnings of just \$32,755.

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 "D" grades in the Education Law Center's annual school funding [report](#) for combined state and local spending compared to both the cost of providing a quality education and the state's ability to pay.
- The state is providing its portion of a 5% staff salary increase this year and next, but this won't be enough to reach the national teacher pay average and may not even keep up with inflation.
- State policymakers must protect and enhance the ability of local governments to pay their share of school costs, including the local share of teacher pay increases. Some rural counties already struggle to meet their minimum required contributions to public education.