

Raising Teacher and Staff Pay in Virginia

Invest in evidenced-based approaches to improve student outcomes

Why Teacher and Staff Pay Matters

- Effective teachers are the most important school-based determinant of student educational performance. Low pay in Virginia is contributing to teacher and other staff shortages.
- High-quality teachers can offset a substantial portion of the disadvantages for students with barriers related to family economic and social circumstances.
- 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 teaching careers and experienced teachers play a critical role as mentors for new colleagues.
- Shortages of teachers, substitute teachers, and bus drivers are creating challenges across Virginia. Statewide, unfilled teaching positions rose to 1,420 in 2020-2021, up from 877 during the 2018-2019 school year.

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 biggest pay penalty in the country.
- In 2020, 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 FY24 will require an increase of at least 13% from estimated FY22 levels.
- Starting salaries are lowest in some rural areas with many students in low-income households who need the most support. Starting salaries for licensed classroom teachers with bachelor's degrees are under \$35,000 in Buchanan and Russell counties and in Buena Vista City.

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.
- Raising teacher and staff salaries by 5% each year is an important step. Additional increases are needed to catch Virginia up with the national average, which will continue to increase.
- 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.