

West Virginia Report

A Detailed Look at West Virginia's Funding Policies

West Virginia



Funding Basics

Formula Type

West Virginia has a primarily resource-based formula. It determines the cost of delivering education in a district based on the cost of the resources, such as staff salaries and actual transportation costs, required to do so. The categories of students considered in West Virginia's funding policy are English-language learners, students with disabilities, students in sparsely populated and small districts, and students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) programs.

West Virginia expects school districts to contribute to the funding of their public schools, with the amount of the local share based on districts' property values. Districts in West Virginia are permitted to raise and keep additional local revenues for regular district operations.

West Virginia considers students in sparsely populated and small districts in the allocation of funding for staff costs. Services for English-language learners, students with disabilities, and students enrolled in CTE programs are funded through program-specific allocations.

Base Amount

The state of West Virginia uses a resource-based funding formula and therefore does not use a base per-student amount as the basis for its funding.



Local Revenue

Expected Local Share

West Virginia expects school districts to contribute revenue to the funding of public schools. The amount each district is expected to raise for its education costs is based on its property values. Each district is expected to contribute \$1.94 for every \$1,000 of assessed tangible agricultural property wealth; \$3.88 for every \$1,000 of assessed owner-occupied property wealth, including farms; and \$7.76 for every \$1,000 of other assessed local property wealth.

These rates are established annually by the state legislature. Once the state calculates the total amount of funding necessary to educate students within a district, it subtracts 85% of the expected local contribution, deducts 4% as an allowance for discounts and nonpayment, and provides the difference in the form of state education aid.

According to the Growth County School Facilities Act, any West Virginia county that has experienced an increase in second-month net enrollment of 50 or more during any three of the past five years is designated as a “growth county” and may apply an additional appraisal or valuation. The resulting property tax revenues collected are appropriated by the county board of education for construction and maintenance or repair of school facilities. These local funds are not considered as part of the computation of local share for these counties.

Property Tax Floors and Ceilings

West Virginia sets a floor and a ceiling for local property tax rates as well as a level above which voter approval is required. School districts are required to levy specific tax rates (which vary depending on the type of property), and they may levy higher rates with voter approval, up to a maximum.

School districts are required to levy \$1.94 for every \$1,000 of tangible agricultural property, \$3.88 for every \$1,000 of owner-occupied property and farms, and \$7.76 for every \$1,000 of other real and personal property. These rates are established annually by the state legislature. With the approval of a majority of voters in a referendum, school districts may levy up to a total of \$2.295 for every \$1,000 of tangible agricultural property, \$4.590 for every \$1,000 of owner-occupied property and farms, and \$9.180 for every \$1,000 of other real and personal property. These higher rates must be reapproved every five years. West Virginia provides county boards of education the opportunity to place a portion of the regular tax levy into a permanent improvement fund.

With voter approval, districts may also impose additional property taxes for specific purposes, including to pay the cost of maturing bonds and bond interest and to pay for capital improvements. School districts may issue bonds worth up to 5% of the taxable value of real and personal property within the district and may levy taxes sufficient to pay the principal and interest.

Other Local Taxes for Education

School districts in West Virginia receive local revenue only from property taxes.

Student Characteristics

Grade Level

West Virginia does not differentiate funding based on students' grade levels.

English-Language Learner

West Virginia provides increased funding for English-language learners. It does so in the form of an allocation for each English-language learner in the amount of the state's total appropriation for this purpose divided by the prior-year English-language learner count.

In FY2022, the state appropriated \$96,000 for this purpose.

Poverty

West Virginia does not provide increased funding for students from low-income households or increased funding for districts with high concentrations of low-income students.

However, many of the state's program-specific allocations consider poverty levels in the allocation of funding.

Special Education

West Virginia funds special education using a hybrid system incorporating a single student weight and partial reimbursement. It does so by providing a flat per-district amount; a flat per-pupil amount for each student with disabilities, regardless of the severity of those disabilities; and reimbursement for some costs.

The state provides each district with a flat base amount for special education. The total amount available was \$1.5 million in FY2021. There is also a high-cost reimbursement available when a student with disabilities has eligible costs greater than a threshold amount, which is set annually. When students are placed in out-of-state instruction programs because free and appropriate public education cannot be provided to them in state, districts may request reimbursement for the cost of the placement. When a student with disabilities is placed into a facility or foster home outside his or her home county by the Department of Health and Human Resources or the Department of Juvenile Services, districts may apply for reimbursement for the cost of that placement as well.

Gifted

West Virginia includes increased funding for gifted and talented students. These students are included in the number of students with exceptionalities used in the funding formula for state aid for special education.

Career and Technical Education

West Virginia provides increased funding for career and technical education (CTE) programs. It does so through a program-based allocation in accordance with a formula that takes into account several participation and performance factors.

The formula considers CTE enrollment, participation, completion, and program performance to cover program costs and equipment replacement.

District Characteristics

Concentrated Poverty

West Virginia does not provide increased funding for districts based on the concentrations of students from low-income households that they serve.

However, many of the state's program-specific allocations consider poverty levels in the allocation of funding.

Sparsity and/or Small Size

West Virginia provides increased funding for small school districts. It does so by inflating the student count in those districts to generate extra funding. The state also considers district sparsity in the specified student-to-staff ratios that generate funding for staff positions and in allocating transportation funding.

For small districts, defined as those with fewer than 1,400 students, the state inflates the student count using a formula in which the state subtracts the district's enrollment from 1,400 and multiplies the difference by a factor related to the district's student population density. The state also covers a greater proportion of transportation costs for sparse and lower density districts.

Charter Funding

Funding for charter schools in West Virginia is calculated based on a formula similar to the one used to calculate funding for traditional public schools.

Like traditional public schools, charter schools are funded using a resource-based funding formula that determines the cost of delivering education based on the cost of the resources required to do so. For each student, charter schools receive 90% of the combined local share and state aid funding. Some modifications may be allowed for student transportation.