**Employee Compensation**



Current Reality: According to the National Education Association, the average teacher pay in the 2022-23 school year was estimated to be $68,469 in the United States. Teacher longevity and a commitment by the Roanoke City School Board to make compensation a top priority of the 2022-23 budget resulted in an impressive increase in average teacher pay in SY 22-23 to $59,263. This made Roanoke City much more competitive locally, but still far below the national average. A less substantial, but still higher than typical 5% average raise was budgeted for 2023-24, resulting in average teacher pay of $63,784. Preliminary estimates for 2024-25, after a 3.5% raise, project average teacher pay in Roanoke City will be $65,083. Undoubtedly the national average has continued to rise from the 2022-23 projection, so we are likely just as far behind.

Also concerning is the reduction in years of teaching experience factored into RCPS projected average salary for 2024-25. Despite a 3.5% raise, the average is only projected to be 2% higher than the prior year, illustrating that increasing numbers of teachers are early career and fall at the lower end of the salary scale.

Roanoke City Public Schools’ efforts to improve employee pay have helped tremendously in attracting and retaining staff but have not been sufficient to reverse what has become the new normal: starting each school year with unfilled vacancies. Fewer people are choosing to enter the teaching profession. There are multiple factors, including increasing extra expectations on teachers, but policymakers must confront the fact that teachers are losing buying power year over year as state salary increases are not enough to reach the national average, much less keep pace with inflation. **Even factoring in the significant investments in compensation in recent years, RCPS teachers today have $2,810 less buying power than they did 15 years ago.**



Inflation adjusted figures are based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers data table that can be accessed at <https://data.bls.gov/data/>.

Legislative Recommendation: Virginia must recognize the importance of having quality education in our state to prepare our future leaders for success, and to show businesses that Virginia has an educated workforce ready and eager to work when they open for business in the Commonwealth. To accomplish that, we need to compensate teachers and other school staff at a level that is commensurate with the importance and value of the service they provide.

The General Assembly is urged to establish a goal of improving teacher compensation to at least the national average that includes both a timeline and how progress toward the goal will be measured.