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## Education

# State spending on K-12 education relatively flat last year

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Posted: Monday, December 8, 2014 10:30 pm

By ZACHARY REID Richmond Times-Dispatch

Funding for public education in Virginia was relatively flat for the year that ended June 30, according to a state review presented Monday to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission.

Virginia spent \$5.27 billion on the 1.2 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade, an increase of 0.2 percent from the year before.

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The per-pupil allocation of \$4,290 was 0.4 percent less than the year before.

The change in state spending on education in fiscal year 2014, which ran from July 1, 2013, until June 30, was the smallest in a decade.

The relatively flat funding, the report said, represents “stability compared to years prior to, during and after the most recent recession.”

Sen. John Watkins, R-Powhatan, the chairman of the commission, said flat funding was not sustainable in the long term and that who pays for education, and who

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pays how much, "is something we're going to have to keep an eye on."

He said the recent trend meant it was likely that local governments were paying a larger portion of the cost of educating children. But with federal spending cuts likely, it was a "tough time" to be thinking about how the state would fund schools in the near future.

Locally, Chesterfield County received the most money per student at \$4,507, followed by the city of Richmond (\$4,414), Henrico County (\$4,380) and Hanover County (\$4,321).

Statewide, Fairfax County received the most money, \$534.97 million, but its per-pupil average of \$3,036 placed it among the lower funded of the state's 132 school systems.

On a per-pupil average, the best-funded school systems were those in the most rural places and with the lowest enrollments. Lee County, the westernmost locality in the state, received the most funding, at \$6,827 per student.

The city of Buena Vista (\$6,160) and the counties of Charlotte (\$6,060), Scott (\$6,043) and Brunswick (\$5,917) rounded out the top five.

The city of Falls Church had the lowest allocation, at \$2,149 per student, followed by the city of Williamsburg (\$2,182), Arlington County (\$2,204), the city of Fairfax (\$2,237) and Northumberland County (\$2,245).

The money represents the state's basic aid funding, sales tax revenue dedicated to schools and funding from a variety of other smaller sources. The total typically comes to less than half what local school systems spend, with the rest coming from local governments and federal programs.

zreid@timesdispatch.com

(804) 775-8179

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