

EDUCATION

Does JCPS spend the most per student? Here's how much each Kentucky school district spends



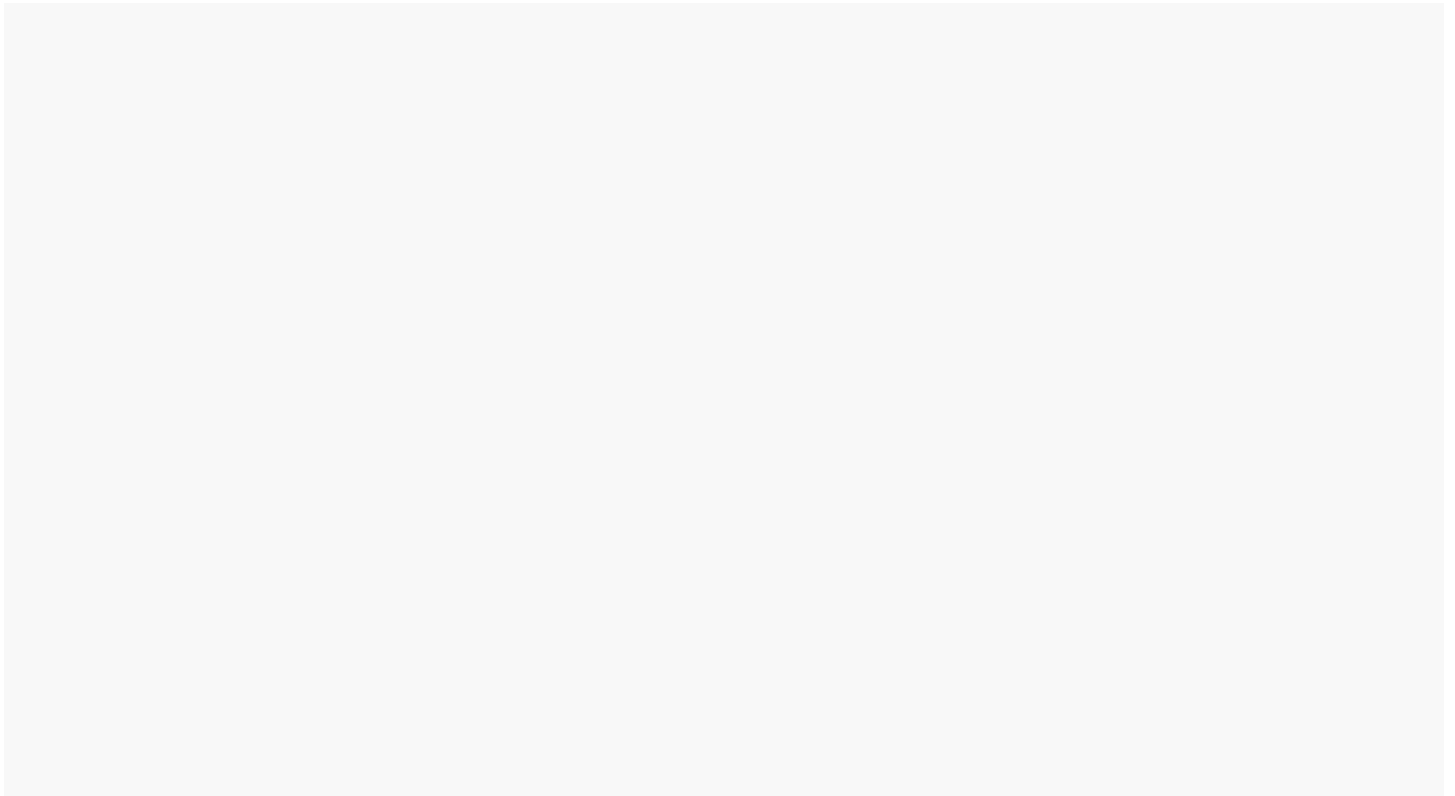
Krista Johnson

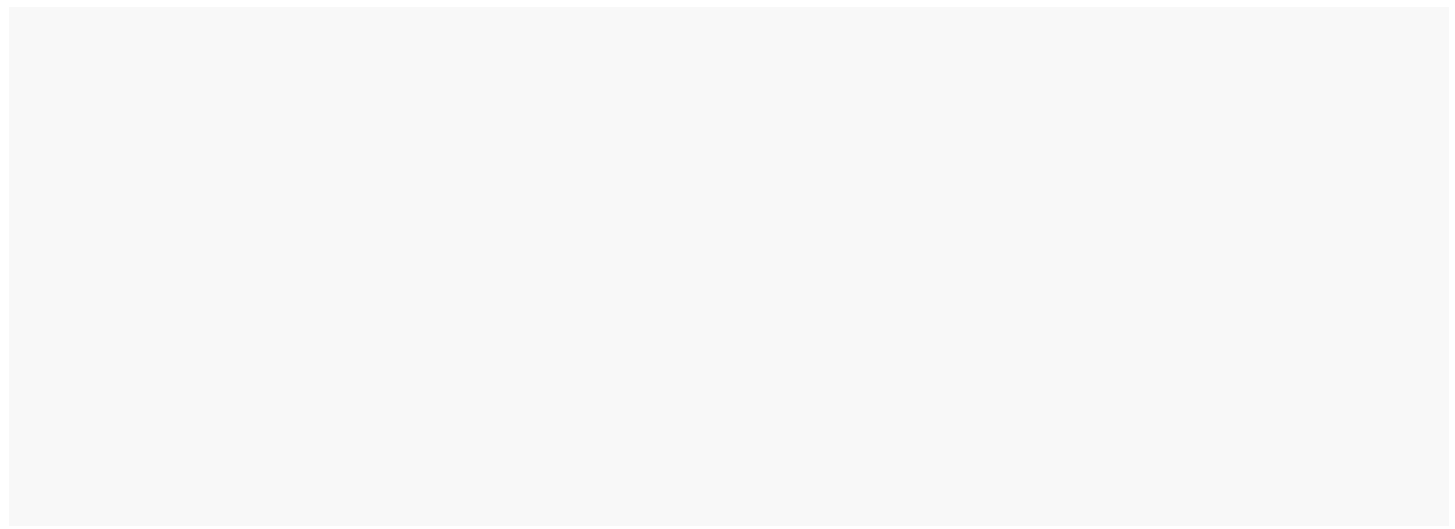
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Billions in tax dollars are spent educating Kentucky's public school students each year, with the largest chunk of change going toward the almost 100,000 staff members running the state's schools.

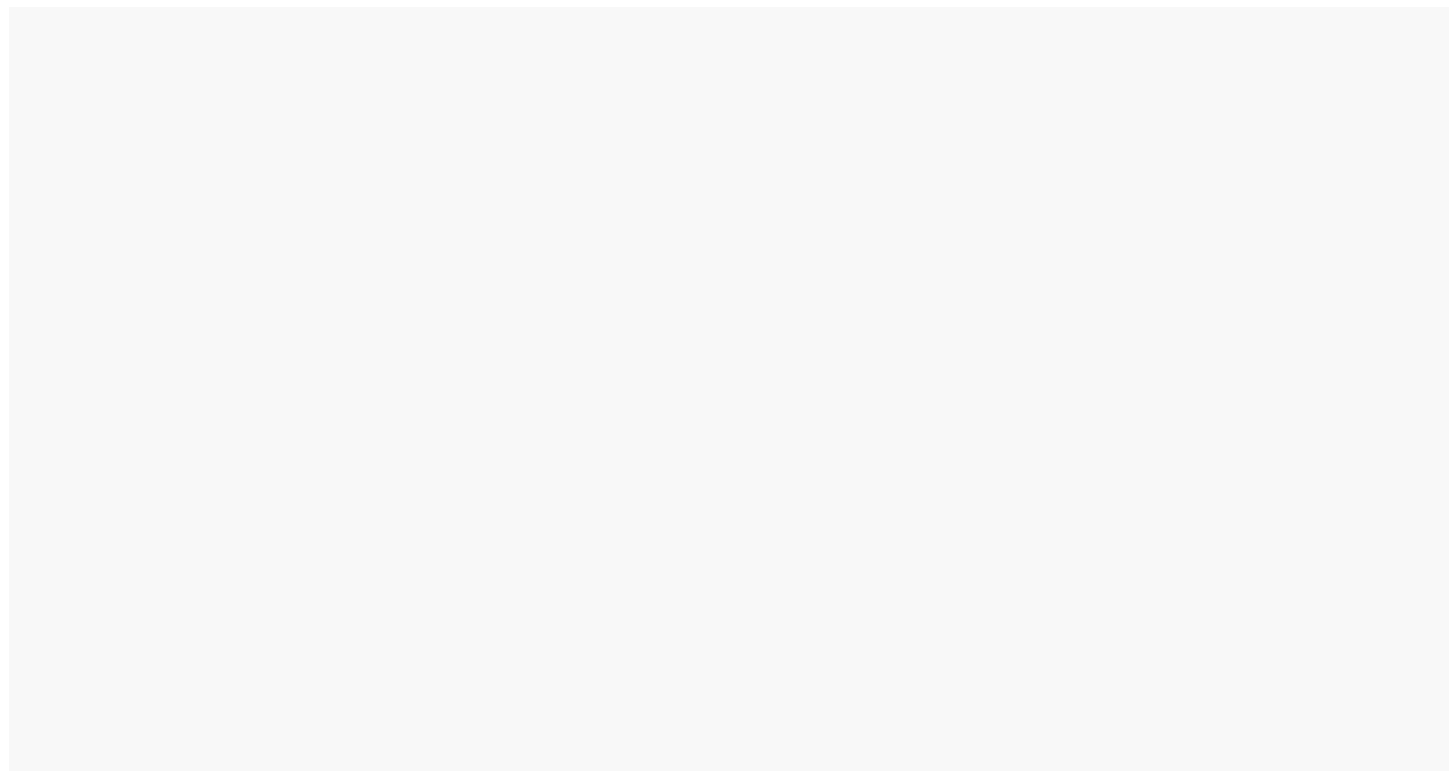
That funding comes from federal, state and local governments, with districts collectively spending nearly \$14 billion in the 2022-2023 school year (not taking into account grants and donations that supplement school budgets).





While federal and state allocations are largely uniform across districts — with both factoring in conditions that often drive up education costs for certain student groups, such as those with disabilities — communities have far more discretion on their contributions through local taxes, creating a different education landscape from county to county.

While some districts spent about \$13,000 per student, others spent more than \$30,000, according to data compiled by Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab.



On average, districts spend a little more than \$18,500 per student. Of that, about \$4,200 came from the state and \$2,000 from federal funds. Several factors skew those amounts up and down by district, with districts that have a higher rate of property tax revenue receiving less from the state, while those with higher rates of impoverished, disabled or homeless students receive more.

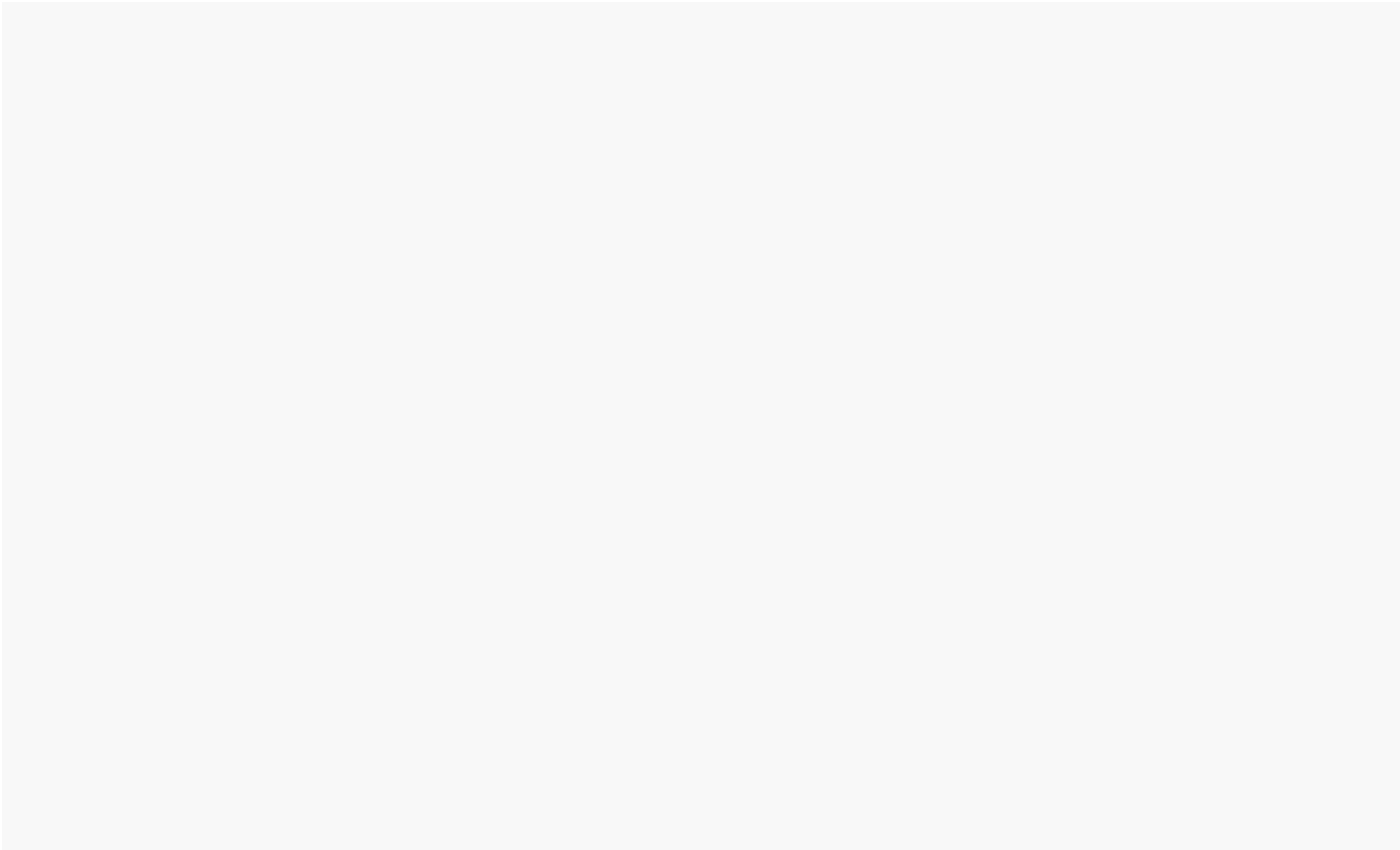
Together these funds are meant to provide an equitable experience for students in all communities. But once local funds come into play, they can drastically change how one district operates compared to others. Higher rates of local funding can allow a system to have more competitive salaries, build new schools, offer different programs and much more.



Which Kentucky school district spent the most per student?

Data from the Edunomics Lab lumped both state and local funding together in the breakdown for the 2022-2023 school year, the most recent data available for Kentucky.

Anchorage Independent, located in eastern Jefferson County, had a very low rate of federal funding but still spent roughly \$26,500 per its 404 students from local and state funds — a far higher amount than all other districts, with the runner up spending just over \$20,000 per student from those funds.



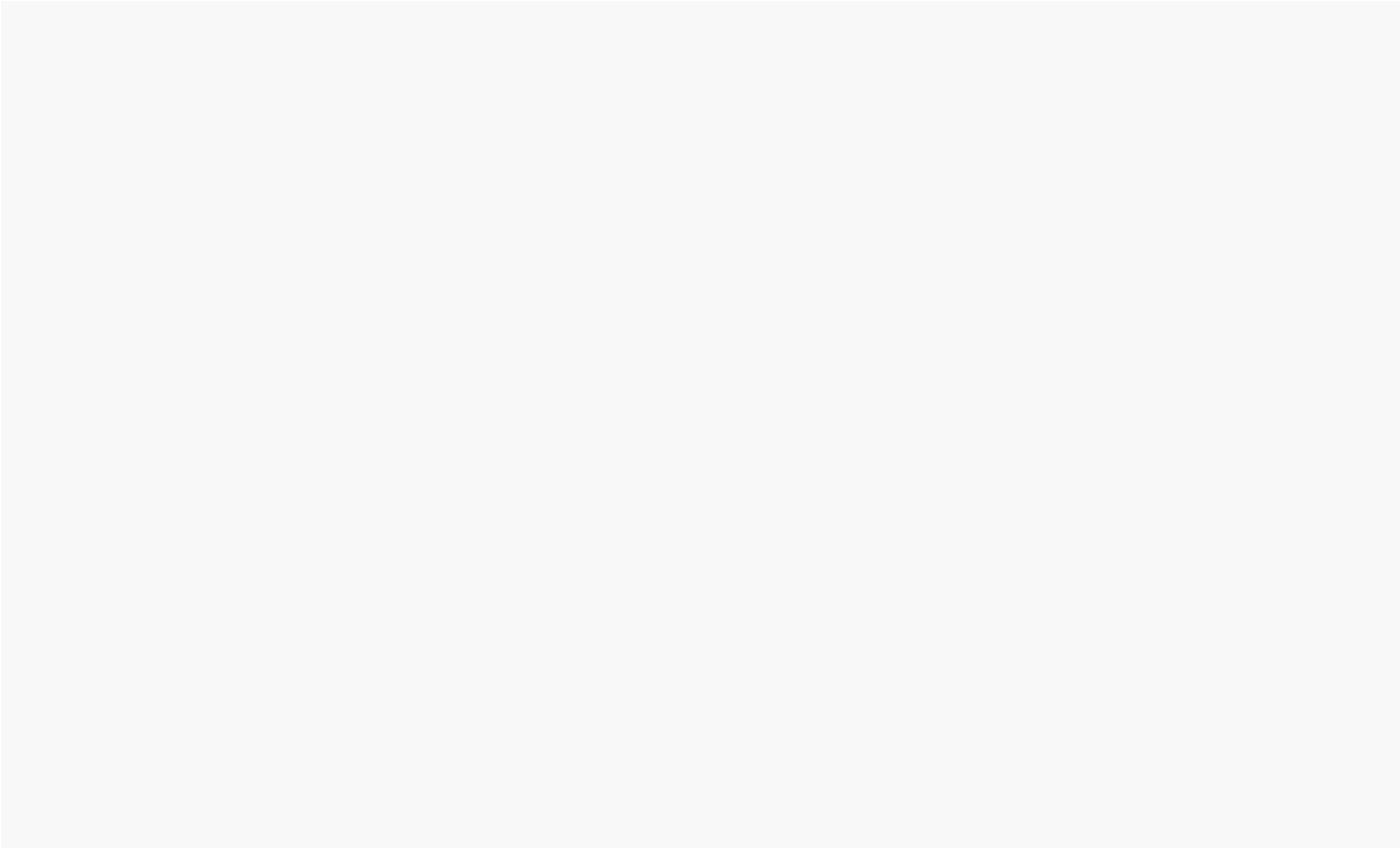
Anchorage's low level of federal support — \$418 per student — stems from its low number of students with special needs. Just 7% of the district's students are considered economically disadvantaged, about 11% have disabilities and none are English language learners (though the federal government's support for that latter group is not significant).

Meanwhile, neighboring Jefferson County Public Schools, the state's largest district, had a student population with far more needs than Anchorage's. Of its about 94,000 students, 65% came from impoverished households, nearly 19% received English language supports, 14% had disabilities and nearly 3% were homeless.

Because of this, the federal contribution to JCPS was much higher. The district spent roughly \$3,000 per student from federal funds and an additional \$16,555 from state and local funds, bringing the district's total per student to about \$21,700 — the 26th highest of Kentucky's 161 districts.

Which Kentucky school districts spent the least per student?

On the other side of the spectrum, Christian County Schools in western Kentucky spent the least per student in state and local funds with an average under \$10,000. Even with federal funds added in, the district spent less than half as much as Anchorage, though it had very similar rates of poverty and disabilities among students as JCPS.



While the district received a similar rate of federal help as JCPS because of these student groups, its community brought in a far lower rate of support through property taxes.

In total, Christian County spent \$13,075 per student. Barbourville Independent in eastern Kentucky was the only other district to fall below \$14,000.

How much did your Kentucky district spend per student?

Use the table below to find how much each Kentucky public school district spent on students using federal, state and local funds.

Krista Johnson covers education and children. Have story ideas or questions? Contact her at atkjohnson3@gannett.com.

