

## 3/12/2026 – School Board Speaking Notes:

**Let's talk about the budget in 3 minutes.**

- I'd like to call your attention to the first spreadsheet—per-pupil funding:
- In the FY24 Superintendents report:  
Of 98 of Virginia's counties, Highland is **4th** highest in per-pupil funding at **\$24,507**.
- Note that **Loudoun County** (highlighted), the absolute wealthiest county in the nation, supplied **\$21,183** per student. So, Highland County supplied **\$3,324 more than the wealthiest county in the United States**.

Let's think about this in terms of per-capita wealth. Highland County residents have nowhere near the wealth of the average resident in Loudoun County. Highland has a median income of about **\$46,000** per household, with Loudoun County at **3 or 4 times that amount**.

So, in consideration of individual wealth, and **ranking #4 out of 98 counties**, I think it's safe to say that Highland's funding of public schools is beyond generous—it's **lavish**.

Along those lines, I'm sure you've heard "**what-about-isms**"—Highland has this issue, that challenge, etc., etc. On the bottom line, all counties are different **IN THE SAME SORT OF WAY**. This is the reason for the Superintendents report—to provide an apples-to-apples comparison.

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First, let's acknowledge that the **lion's share of education funding is in salaries**.

- Now let's take a look at the second spreadsheet, which I found to be quite shocking.
- Highland has an average of 8.25 students per teacher for K–8 and an **amazing 4.01 students per teacher in grades 8–12**. **These ratios are the absolute lowest in the entire state of Virginia**. That's a "**tutors in the king's court**" level of teachers.

I don't have to look at **the master schedule to know that you have teachers who have 1 or 2 students per class**, so rather than talk about "graduation requirements," **why don't we put on our thinking caps and consider having multiple grade levels in the same class?**

- **Lastly, please stop trying to expand the student rolls by taking in students from outside of Highland.**

All that's doing is increasing education costs to Highland County residents.

- **The same goes for pushing Pre-K.** I don't have time to go into the Pre-K issue in 3 minutes, but it's arguably a waste of taxpayer dollars.
- During the next decade or two, **a 10% reduction in Highland County's population is being forecast. It's time to start thinking about scaling back.**
- Finally, **inflation was about 2.5% last year.** I'm hoping that's what you'll be asking for.