



## Recent JLARC Work: K-12

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## In this presentation

### JLARC overview

Pandemic impact

Funding formula

Teacher pipeline

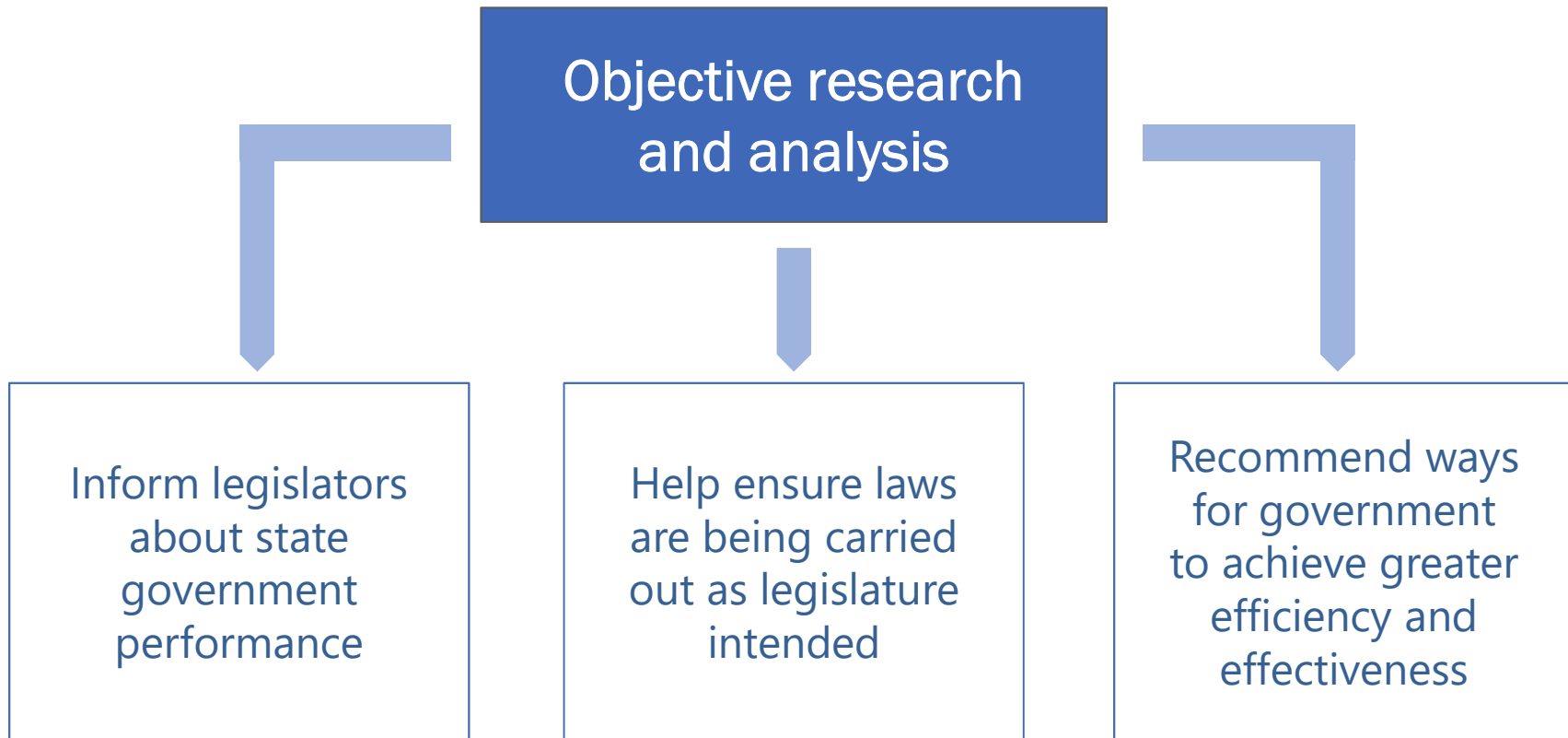
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## Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC)

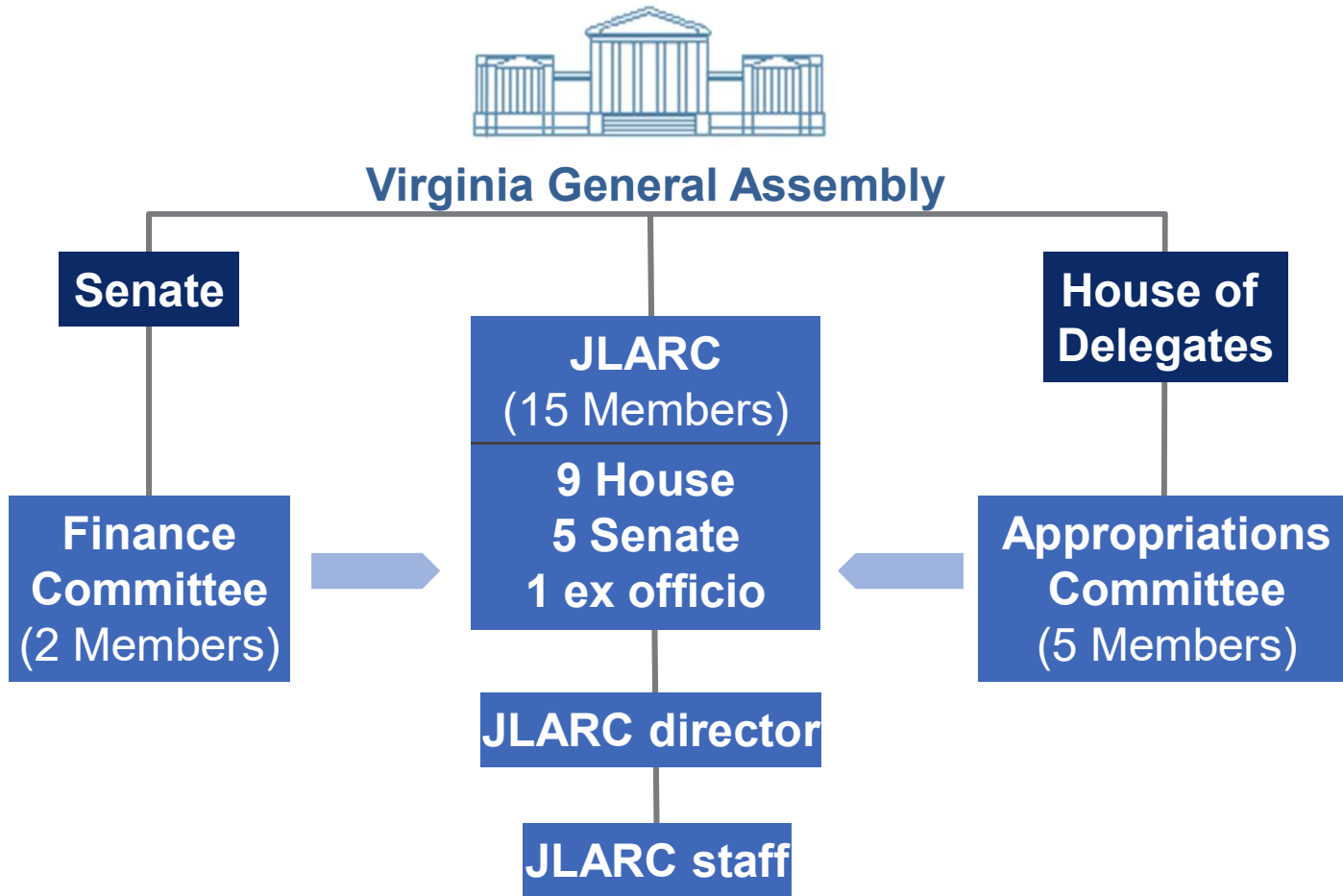
- Non-partisan, non-political evaluation and research agency of the Virginia General Assembly
- Full-time, permanent staff
- Conducts program evaluation, policy research, and oversight

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## JLARC's primary role



# JLARC is part of the legislative branch



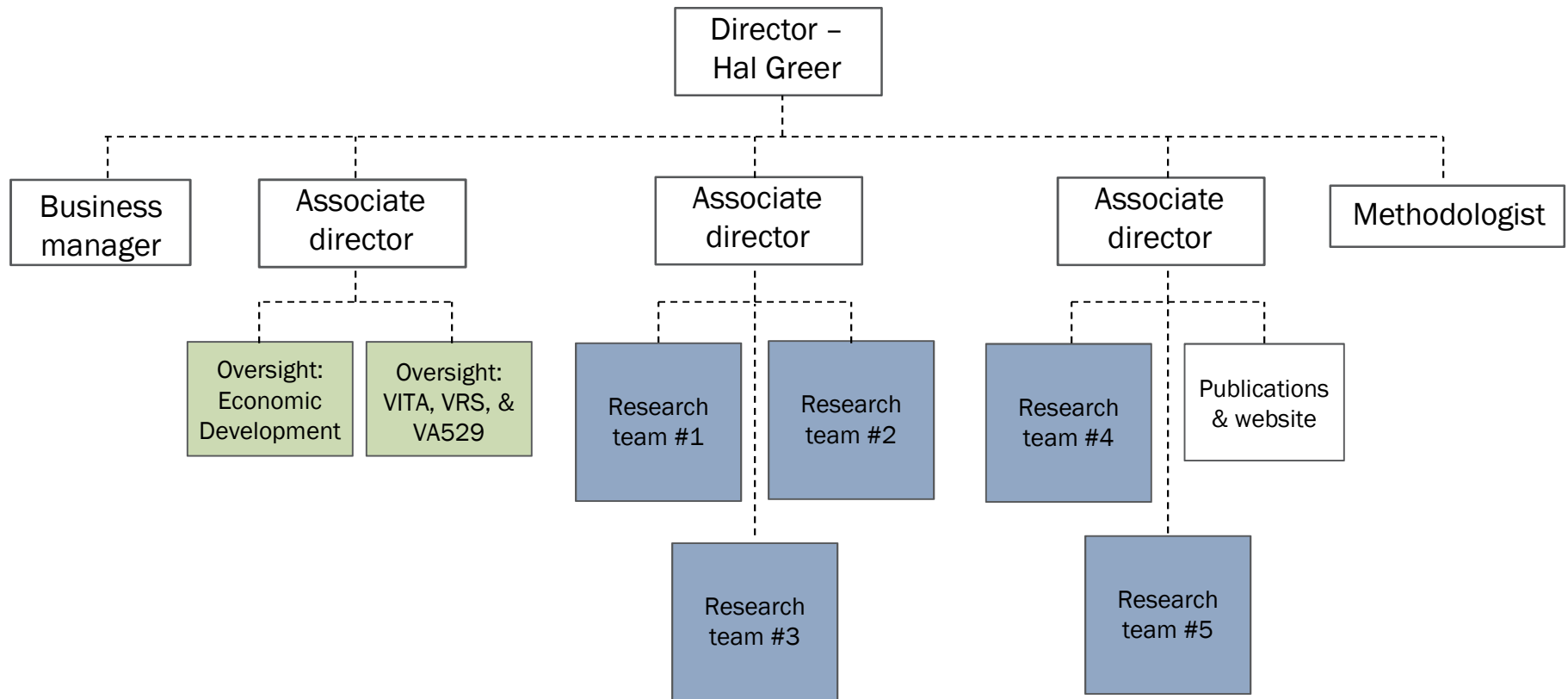
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## JLARC primarily conducts evaluations of policies or agencies, or ongoing oversight

- In-depth program, agency, and policy reviews
- Ongoing oversight and analysis
  - Virginia Retirement System
  - Virginia Information Technologies Agency
  - Virginia529 college savings plan
- Other
  - Economic development incentives
  - Fiscal impact reviews
  - Racial and ethnic impact analysis

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# JLARC employs $\approx 30$ staff, most of whom are policy analysts conducting research or oversight



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## Evaluations are usually performed by teams of analysts

- Team assignments seek to balance workload, analyst availability, prior expertise, research strengths, and personal interest
- Managed by a “project leader” with a minimum of 5-7 years research experience
- Usually include 2-3 analysts of varying experience and complementary expertise and strengths



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## Recent and current program and agency reviews and policy studies

- 2023 studies (*released*)
  - Publicly funded attorneys
  - State psychiatric hospitals
  - K-12 funding formula
  - K - 12 teacher pipeline
  - Self-sufficiency and child care
  - GO Virginia
- 2024 studies (*underway*)
  - VCU Health system
  - Tolling & congestion reduction
  - Higher education costs
  - Higher education institutional outlook
  - Data center impact and policy
  - Virginia Department of Health
  - Broadband implementation status

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## JLARC has released 3 major evaluations of K-12 topics since November 2022

- Pandemic Impact on K-12 Education, Nov 2022
- Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula, July 2023
- Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline, Sept 2023

*Interviews, focus groups, and surveys of current and former teachers were major source of information for much of this work*

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## Summary

The pandemic was an unprecedented disruption for K-12 students and staff.

As students returned to in-person learning, chronic absenteeism, classroom behavior, and reported mental health issues have worsened.

Multiple indicators of student academic achievement declined during the pandemic; some started to rebound as students returned to in-person learning.

The teacher workforce is smaller, less qualified, and less satisfied with their jobs than prior to the pandemic.

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## Multiple indicators of academic achievement declined during the pandemic

- Early childhood literacy declined during the pandemic
- Reading and math SOL scores have generally begun to rebound in 2022, but scores remain below pre-pandemic levels
- From 2019 to 2022
  - 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math scores declined more than the national average on nationwide assessment
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math scores follow national trends
- Some pre-existing achievement gaps among Virginia students widened, especially among younger students

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## Pandemic-related declines in academic performance were not typical, will take time to resolve

- Prior to the pandemic, student achievement was fairly stable with the exception of a declining trend in reading
- Divisions that relied longer on remote instruction generally experienced larger declines but have also rebounded by more
- Experts estimate that it could take three-to-five years for students to return to pre-pandemic achievement levels

See Chapter 4 and Appendix F of written report for detail on student performance prior to and during the pandemic.

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## State and school divisions began many efforts to address decline

- Divisions reported hiring more instructional staff, providing tutoring, and providing additional instructional time (e.g., before or after school and summer school programs)
- State recently funded new early childhood reading programs; learning recovery grants and tutoring programs
- Improvement will take time:
  - Teachers report students can only absorb so much additional instruction at one time
  - Staff burnout and vacancies can limit amount of additional instruction that can be delivered

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## Variation in academic skills and achievement among students increased during the pandemic

- Difference in individual students' SOL scores compared with the average score was greater in 2021–22 than before the pandemic
- 80% of teachers and principals surveyed indicated wider variation in academic skills among students



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## Variation in skills requires individualized or small group instruction, difficult for a single teacher

- Providing individualized or small group instruction to students with similar skill levels is a best practice that allows tailoring instruction to student needs
- Teachers emphasized the difficulty of individualized or small group instruction without another adult in the classroom
  - “I cannot close the gaps of students working at four different levels in every content area on my own.”
  - “If I’m with that small group, there’s 24 other students that I’m not with. It would help so much to have an instructional assistant in every classroom.”

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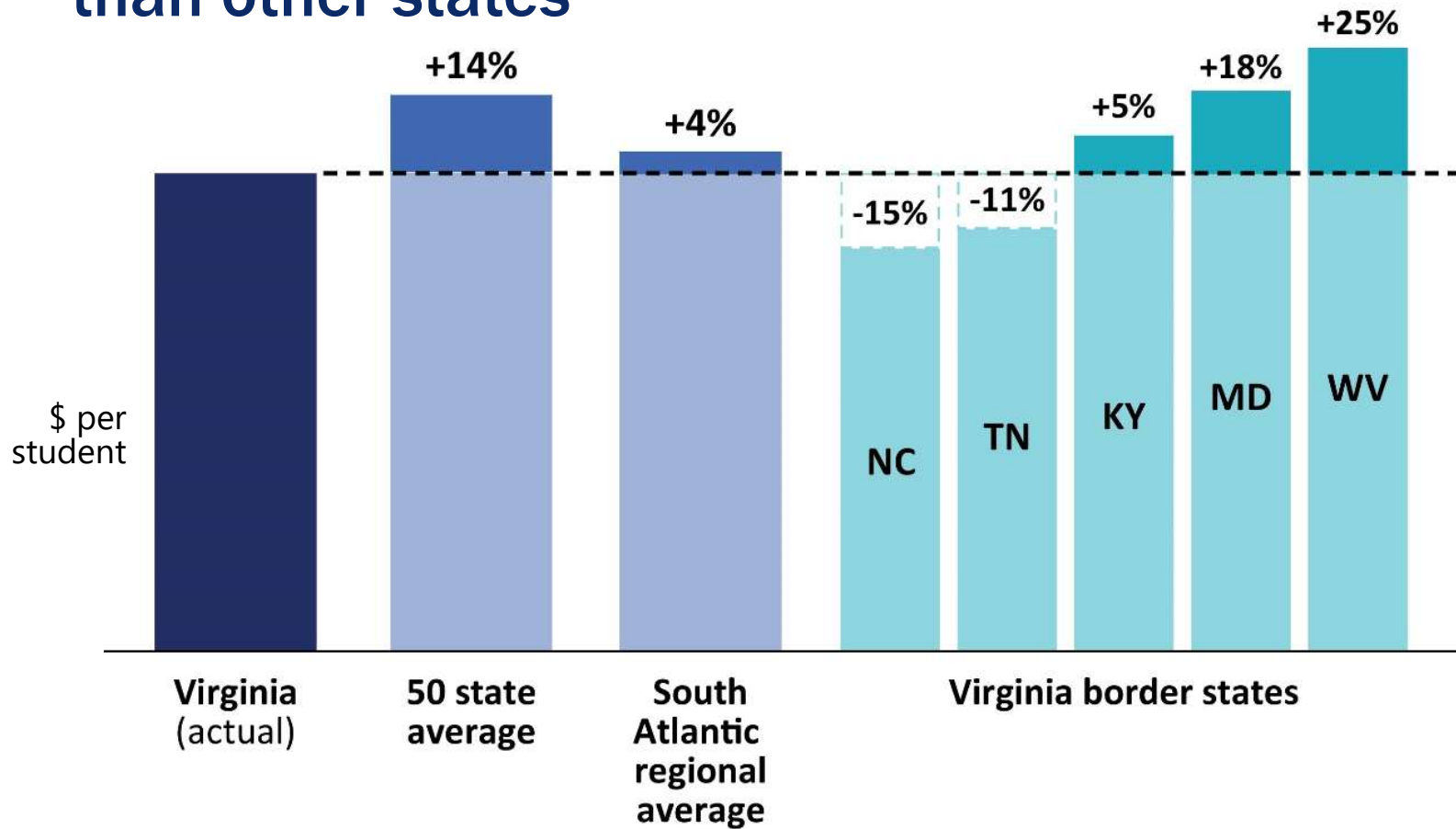
Teacher pipeline

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## Summary

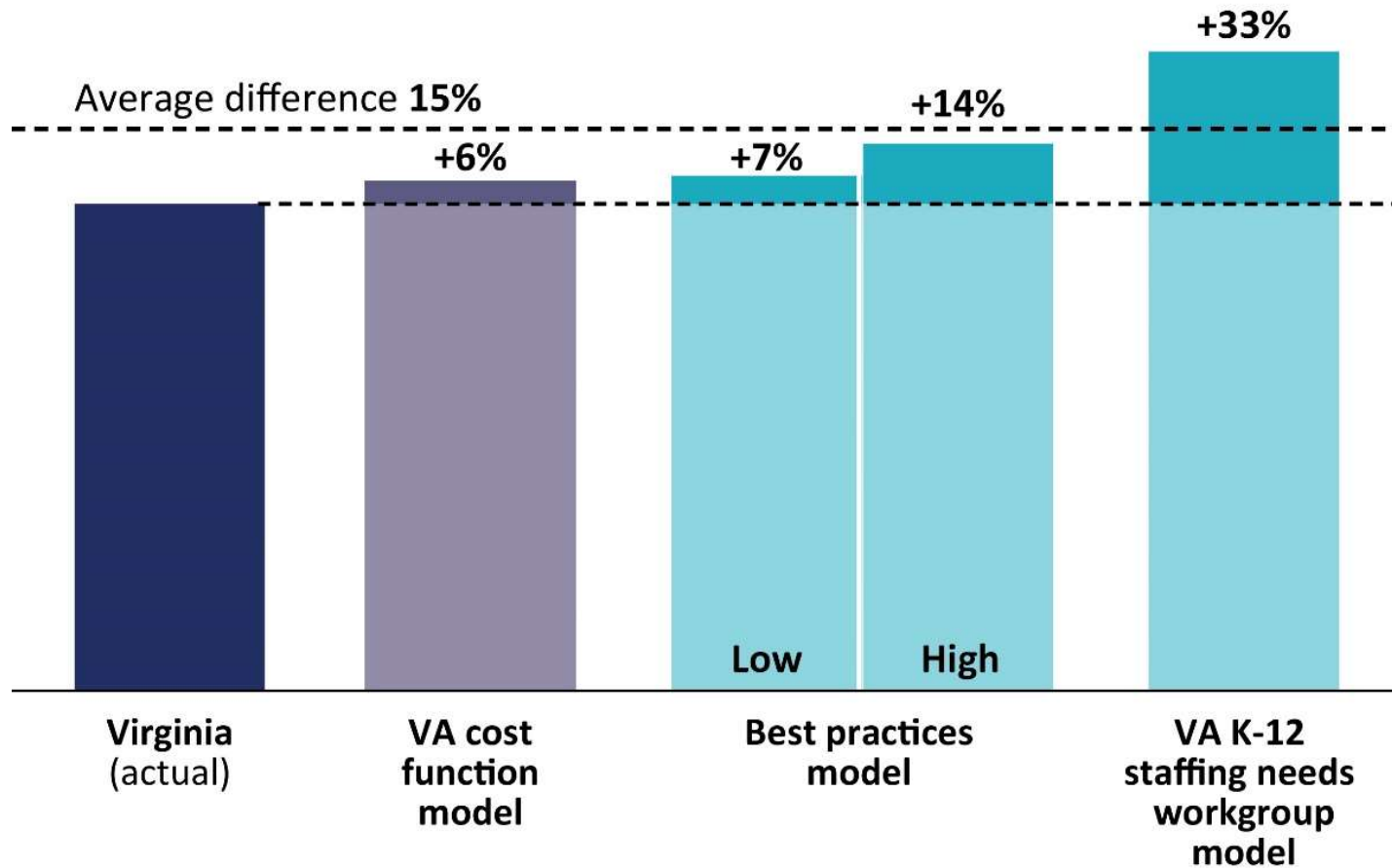
- Virginia school divisions received less K–12 funding per student than multiple, relevant funding benchmarks
- SOQ formula
  - Uses many inputs & assumptions that lack a clear rationale and do not reflect prevailing practice in schools
  - Does not adequately account for higher needs students, regional labor costs, and division size (the 3 main cost drivers outside a division’s control)
- Most states use a student-based K–12 funding formula, which is simpler than Virginia’s complex staffing-based formula

# Virginia divisions received less funding per student than other states



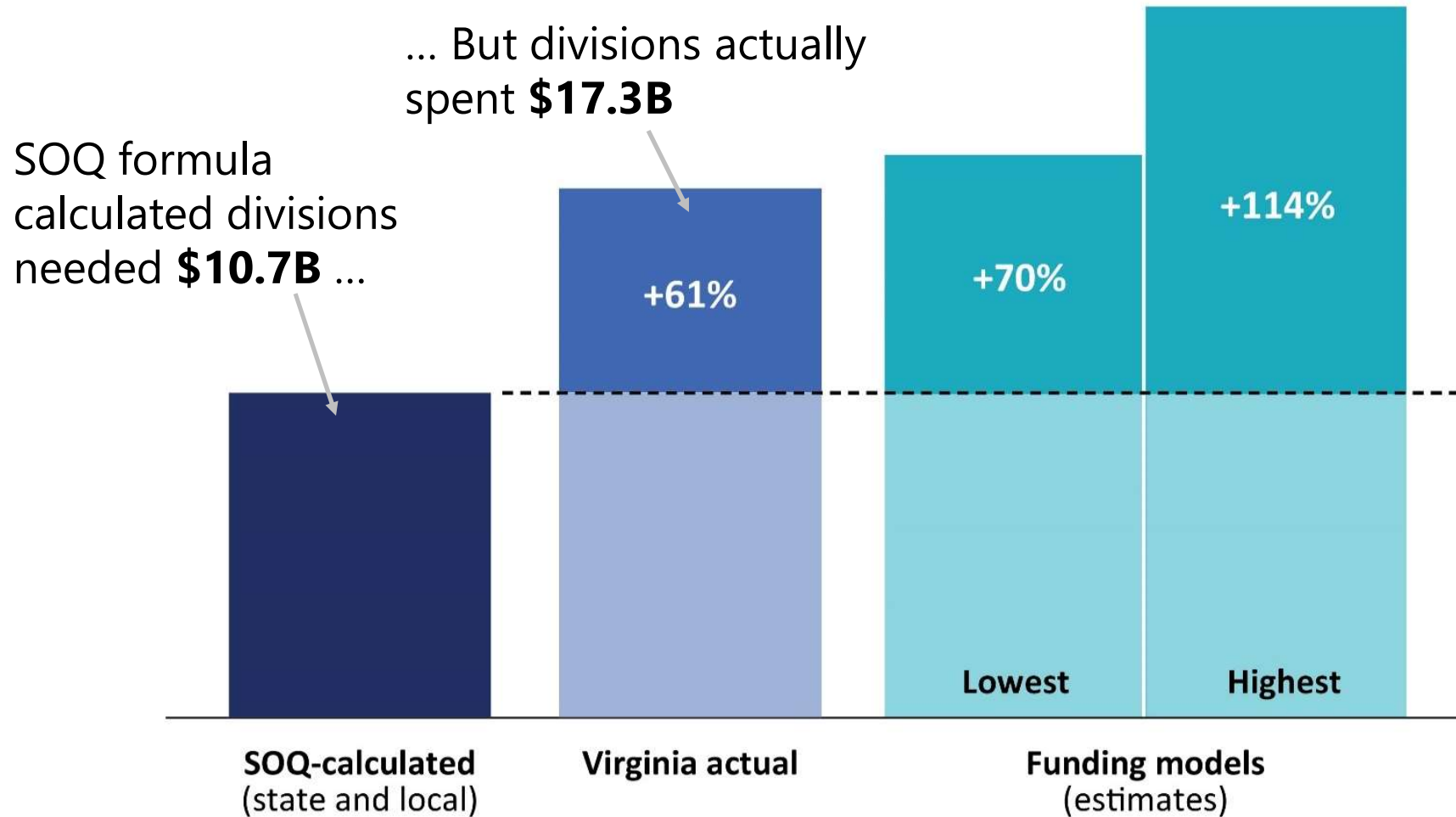
NOTE: Adjusted, FY20 data. Includes funding for K-12 operations from all sources (federal, state, and local). Analysis controls for differentials in statewide cost of labor.

## Funding models estimated Virginia school divisions need 6% to 33% more total funding



NOTE: Includes funding for K-12 operations from all sources (federal, state, and local).

# SOQ-calculated funding amounts were substantially less than actual funding and benchmarks (FY21)



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## States and localities, including in Virginia, have recently been providing additional K-12 funds

- General Assembly has recently provided substantial, additional funds
  - Salary increases
  - Funding to remediate learning loss
- Other states, such as Tennessee and Maryland, recently embarked upon major, long-term funding initiatives also not reflected in benchmark comparisons
- But no changes have yet been made to the SOQ formula itself, nor were any proposed in the Governor's budget

# Finding

	Clear & justifiable rationale*	Reflects prevailing practice?*	Accurate?	Fair?	Predict-able?	Trans-parent?
SOQ formula staffing ratios and calculations				n/a	n/a	

Fully meets criteria

Partially meets

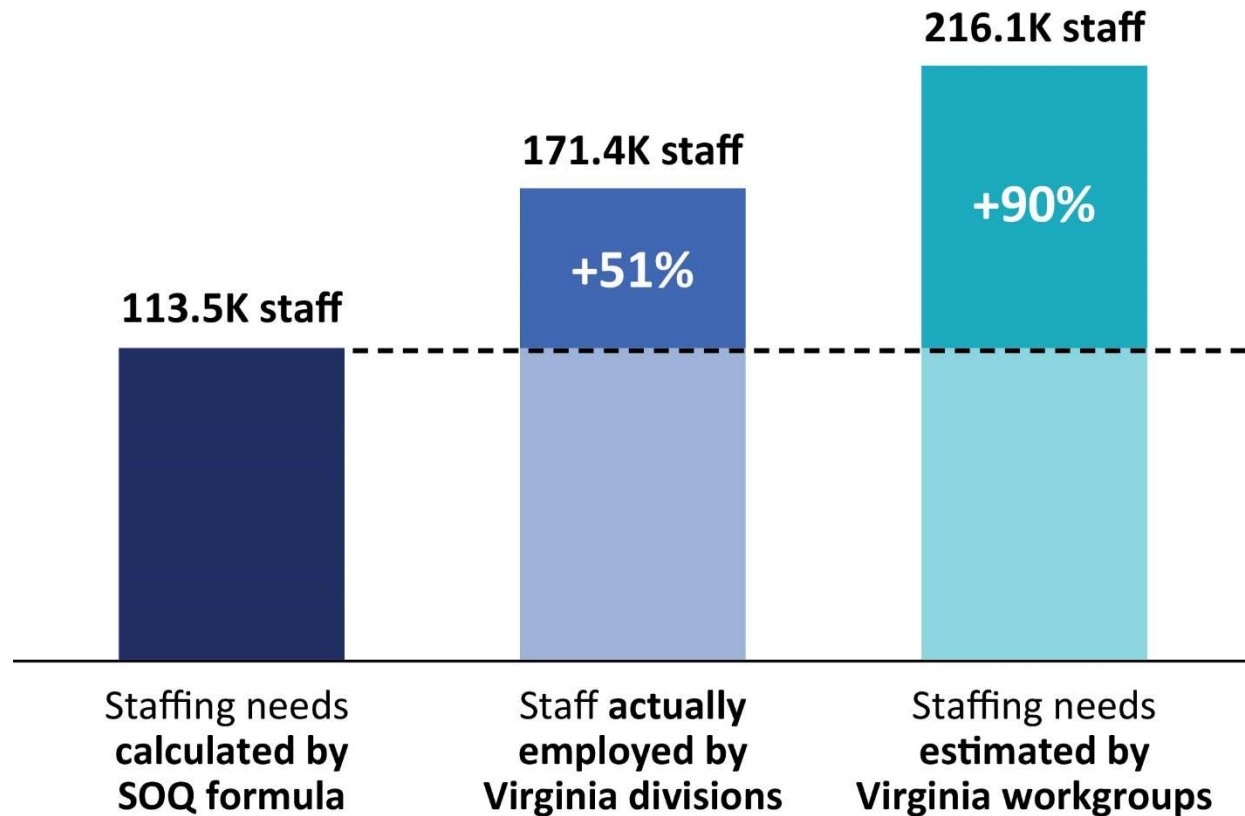
Does not meet

\*Criteria established by the Task Force for Financing the Standards of Quality, 1972-1973 and Virginia Attorney General opinions, 1973, 1983.



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## SOQ formula assumes fewer staff are needed than number employed and workgroup estimates



# Finding

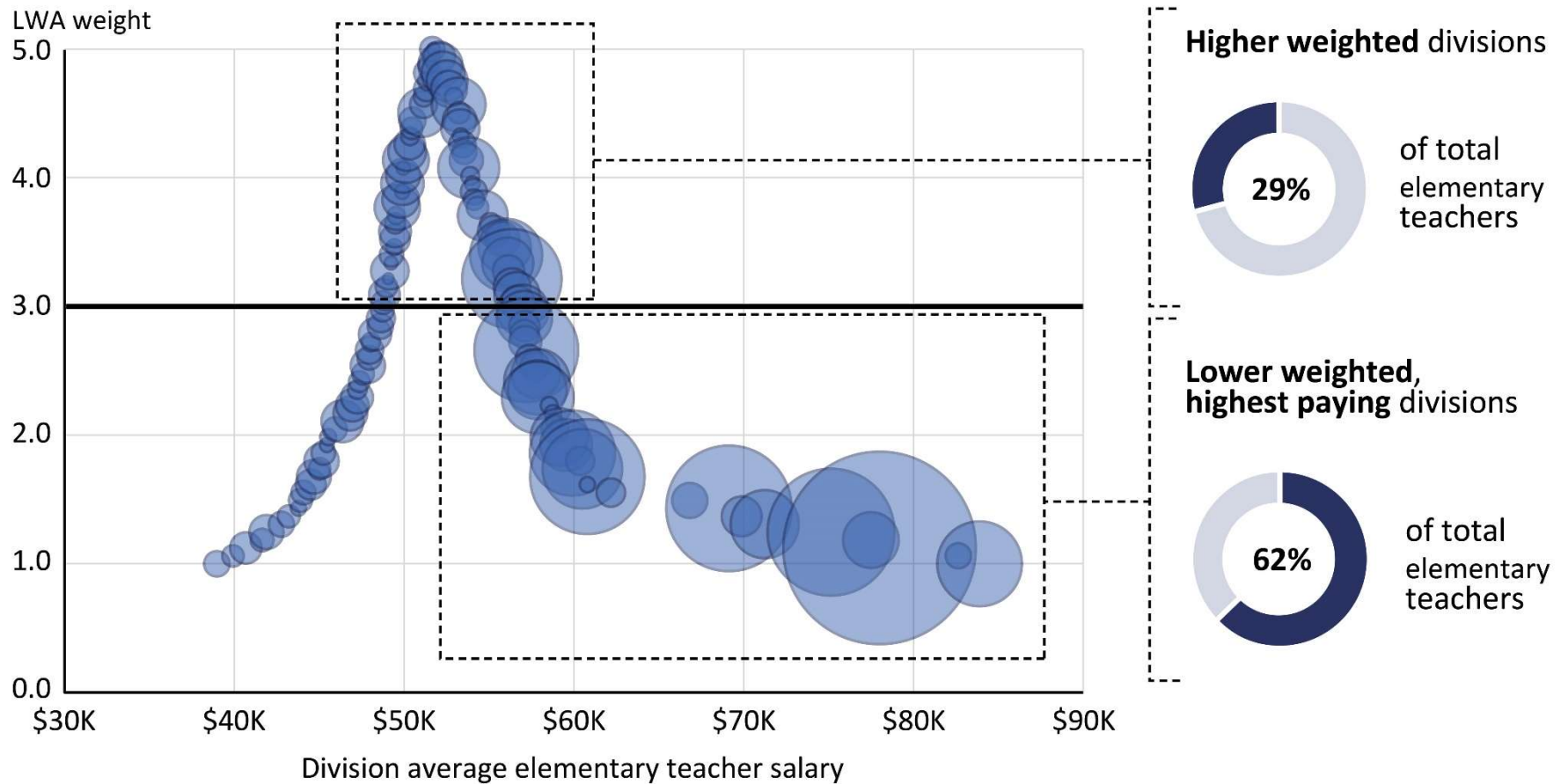
	Clear & justifiable rationale	Reflects prevailing practice?	Accurate?	Fair?	Predict-able?	Trans-parent?
Great Recession-era formula changes	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	n/a	n/a	<input type="radio"/>
SOQ formula calculation of prevailing salaries	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	n/a	<input type="radio"/>

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## Several changes were made to SOQ formula in FY09 & FY10 during steep revenue declines

- “Support cap” reduced funding for divisions below prevailing costs
  - Also affected instructional funding
- Certain “non-personal” costs were removed from the prevailing SOQ cost calculations, though they are still incurred by divisions (travel, leases, other)
- Calculation used to account for federal funds was changed to use less accurate assumptions

# Formula's "prevailing" statewide teacher salary underweights divisions with the most staff



Note: Each dot represents one school division. Larger dot size = more teachers employed by division.

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## Three major drivers of what divisions spend are outside their direct control

- Number of higher needs students (at-risk / low income, special education, English learners)
- Regional labor costs
- Division size (as measured by number of students)

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## Findings

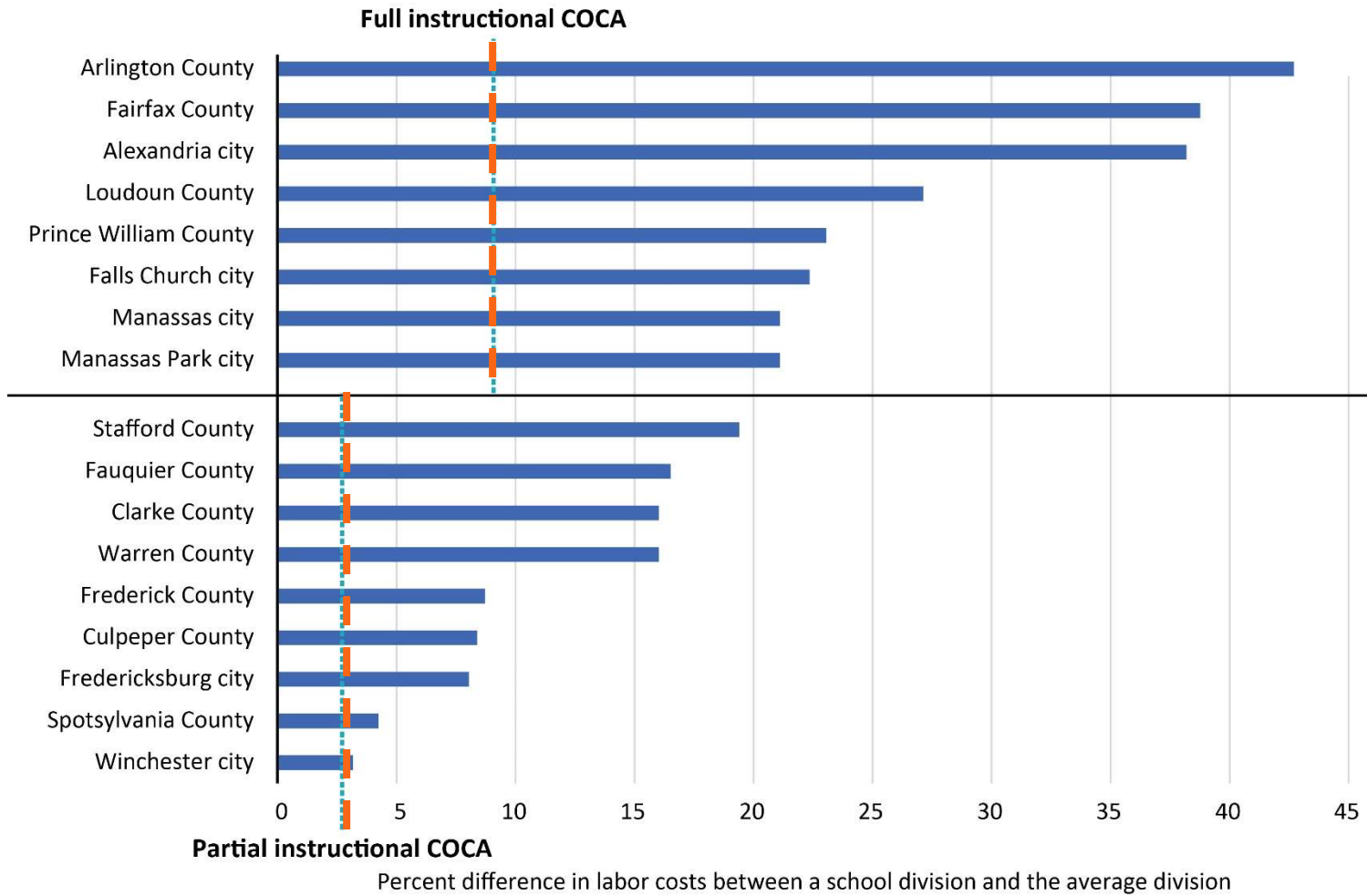
State funding per student has increased for at-risk (low income) and English learners. But declined for special education.

State funding per student for higher needs students was less than several relevant benchmarks.

Funding for at-risk programs is essential for low income student success, yet not SOQ required.

Data used to estimate poverty for at-risk program funding is old and increasingly inaccurate.

# COCA amount is less than division salaries



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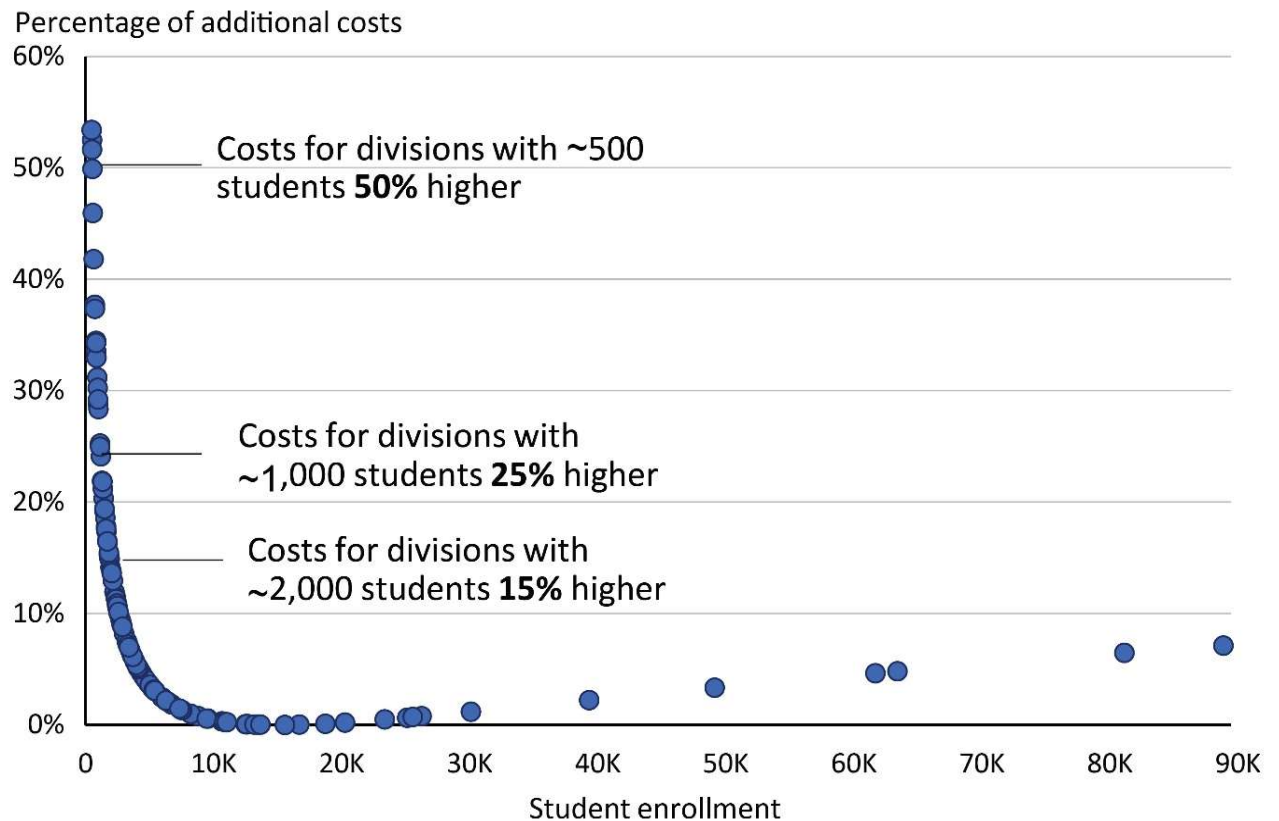
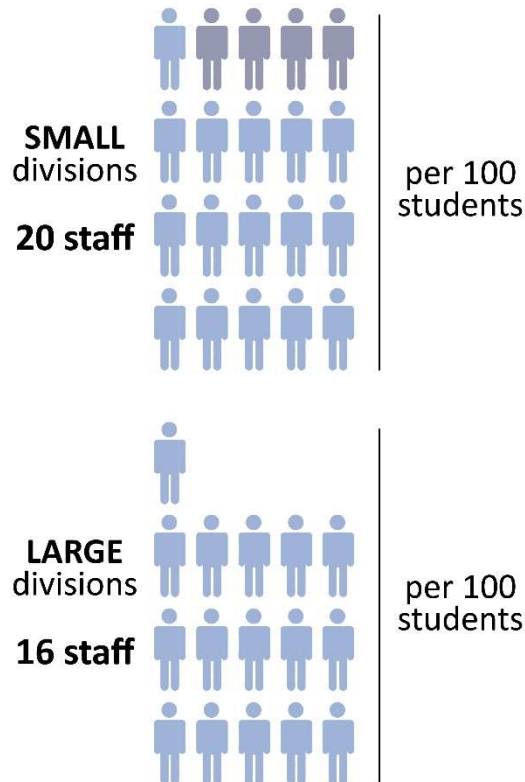
## Current wage data shows several divisions outside Northern Virginia have above average labor costs

- Several localities not included in the current COCA have above average labor costs
- Central Virginia
- Tidewater

*Note: Full state map provided in written report.*



# Academic research and analysis of Virginia finds small divisions have higher costs per student



Second figure shows Virginia school divisions plotted using a formula developed by cost study researchers.

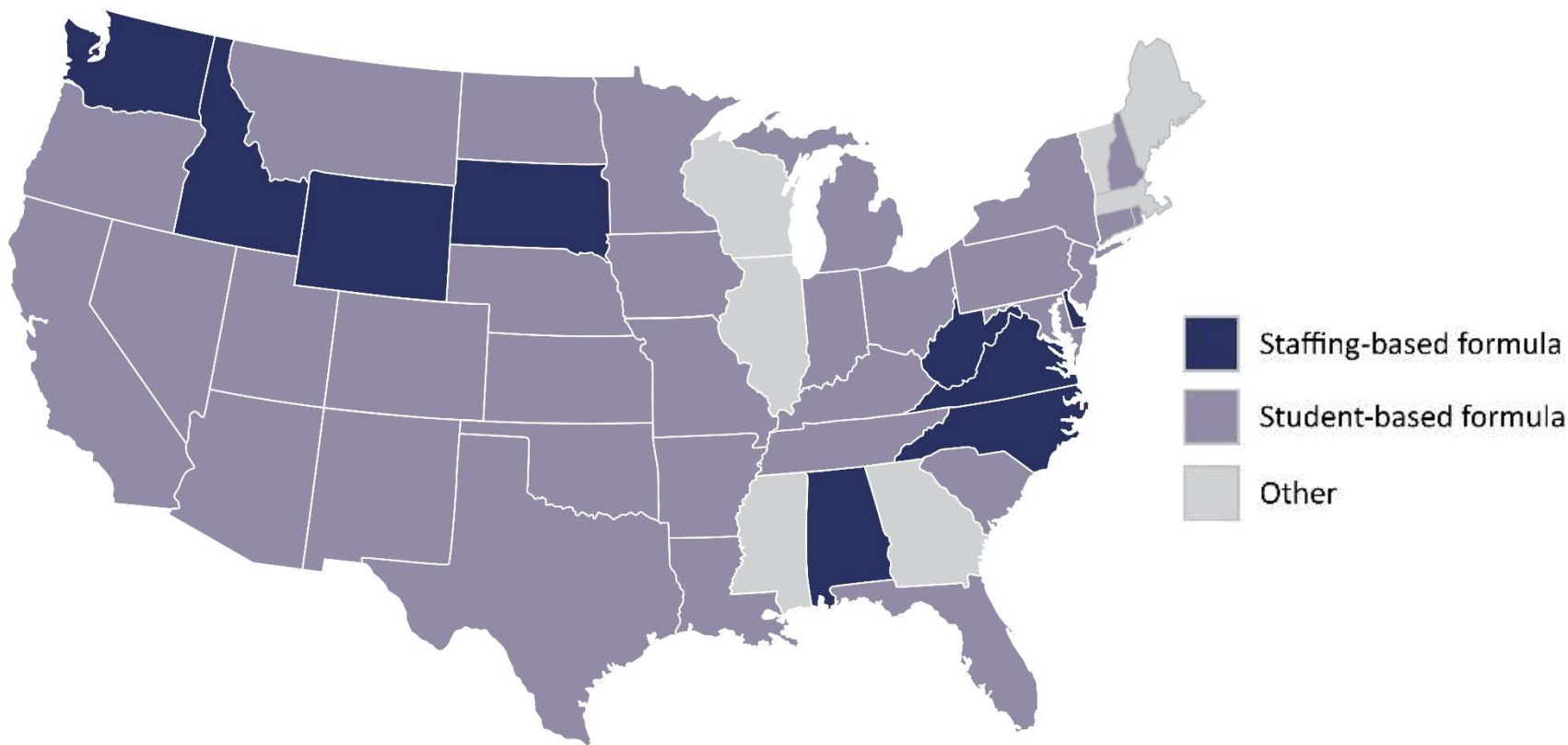
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## Multiple introduced bills would implement many of JLARC's near-term recommendations

- JLARC recommended numerous changes to the K-12 funding formula, both near-term and long-term
- 2024 major legislation introduced:
  - \**HB 187 & SB 104 – Compensate teachers at national average*
  - \**HB 359 & SB 128 – Address various arbitrary funding caps*
  - \**HB 654 & SB 227 – Increase high needs student funding, reduce funding volatility in local composite index*
  - \**HB 1247, SB 228, & SB 272 – Increase English language learner funding, and special education funding*

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## Virginia is one of only a few states that use a staffing-based education funding model



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## Student-based funding models used by most other states have several advantages

- Simpler than staffing-based funding models
- Allow funding to more easily be designated for specific purposes (e.g., special education)
- More accurate, transparent, and easier to adapt to changes in education practice over time (if well designed)
- Can be directly tied to actual prevailing costs

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## Summary

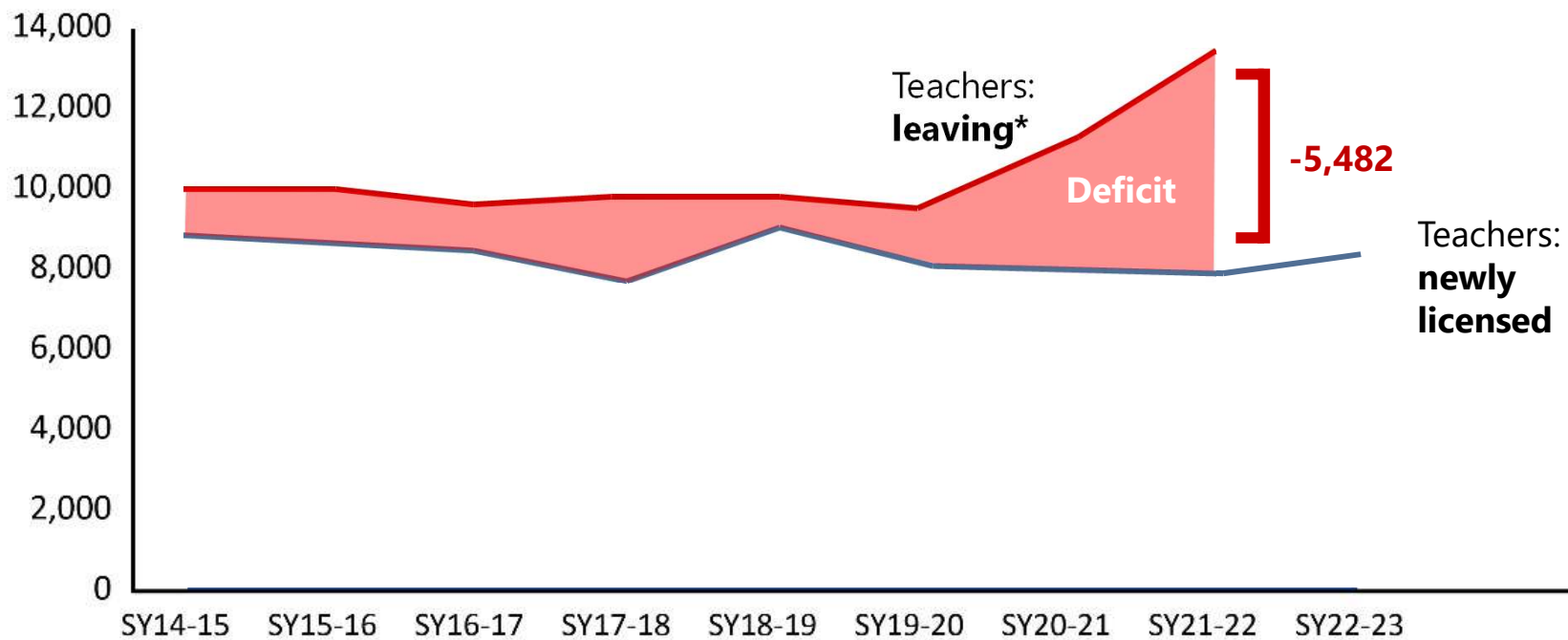
Latest available data showed continued statewide teacher shortage, though some divisions had no or few vacancies.

Individuals using “direct” pathways to full teacher licensure are generally better prepared to teach in the short term, but indirect pathways often cost less and are more flexible.

Virginia-specific assessment required for full licensure is outdated and may be unnecessary barrier to teaching.

Cost of traditional higher education preparation programs can be substantial barrier to program participation and completion.

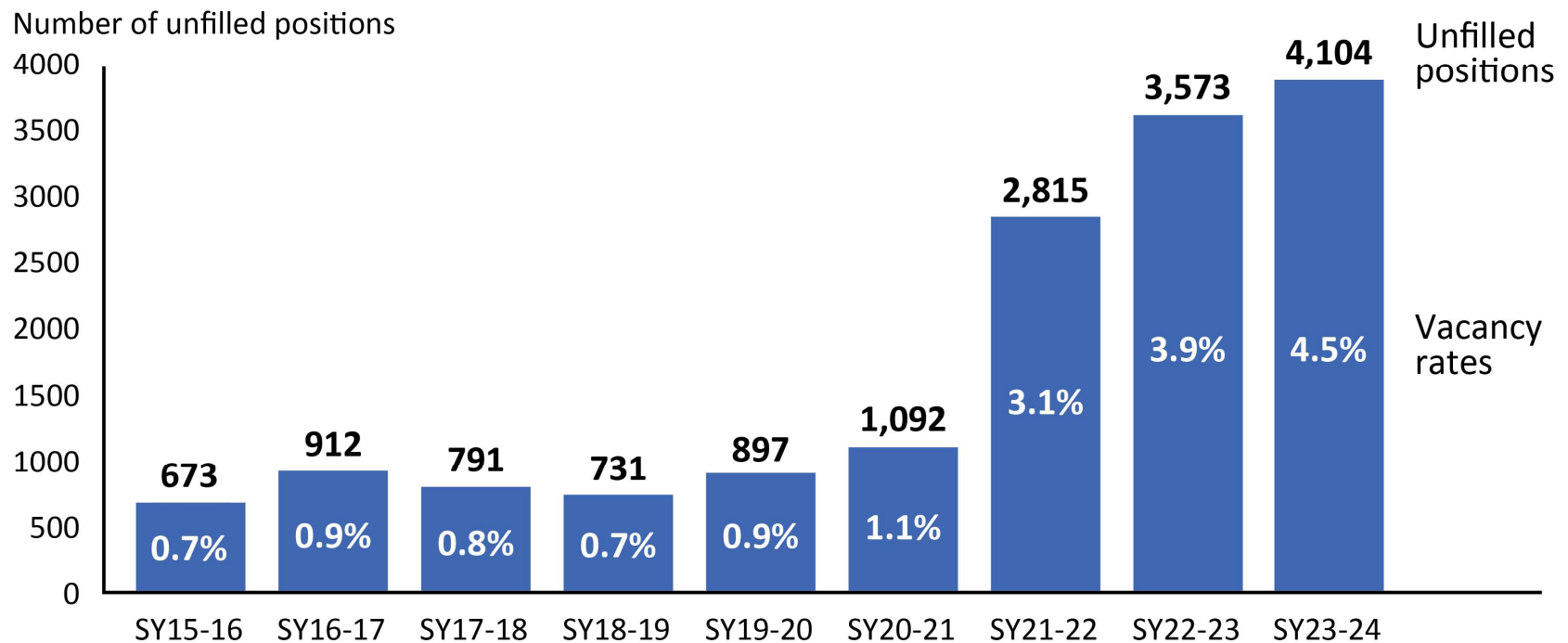
## Data showed continued deficit between newly licensed teachers and those leaving (as of Fall 2023)



\* 2023 data on teachers leaving not available until early 2024

\*Figure reflects data available during JLARC study. Updated data on teachers leaving may now be available.

## Vacant teaching positions statewide were still above historical trend (as of Fall 2023)

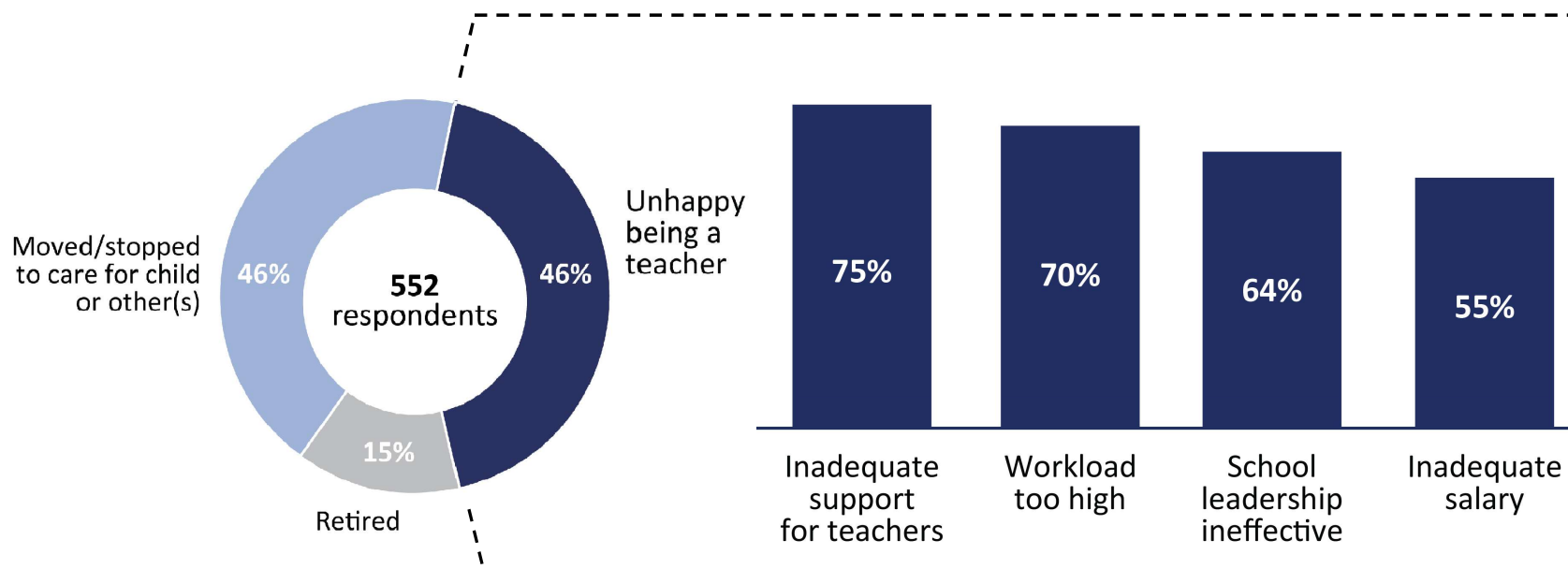


Note: Teacher vacancies reported as of October 1, 2022 for SY15-16 through SY22-23.

Actual or anticipated vacancies on first day of school for 123 divisions for SY23-24.



## Teachers reported leaving for personal reasons, or because they were unhappy being a teacher



Note: Feedback from JLARC survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school, 2023. Individuals could select multiple reasons for leaving public K-12 teaching.

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## Several barriers to entering K-12 teacher workforce identified beyond classroom conditions and pay

- Outdated and unnecessary VCLA assessment
- Comparatively high cost of higher ed prep programs-- Virginia's largest rigorous preparation pathway
- Unclear VDOE licensure process and requirements

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## Virginia currently requires individuals to pass VCLA test to qualify for full teacher licensure

- Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA)
  - Virginia-specific test
  - Tests (i) reading comprehension and (ii) written communication
  - Passage often admission requirement for traditional prep programs

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## VCLA is outdated and includes irrelevant content for certain endorsement areas

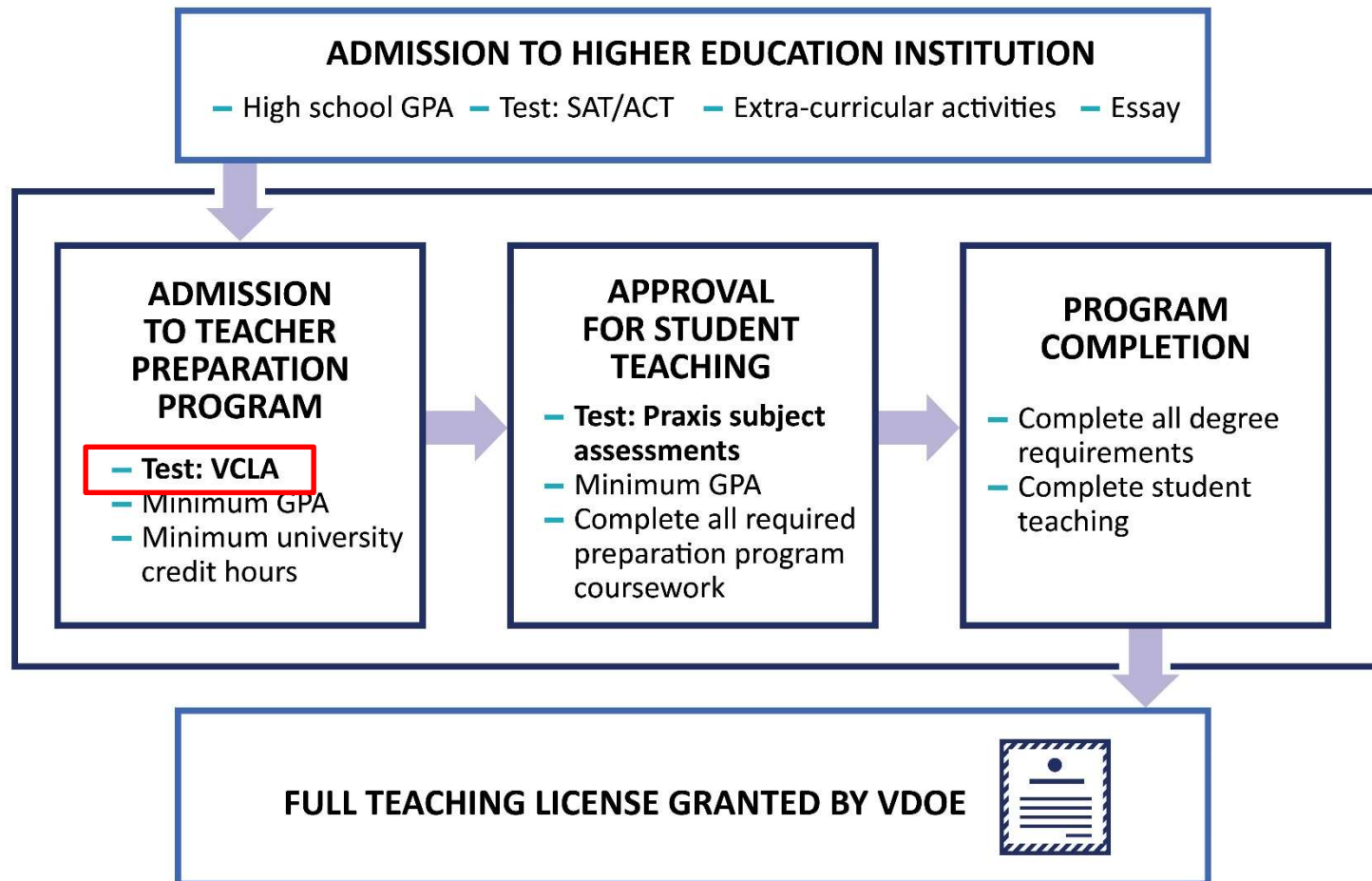
- Virginia developed the VCLA in 2007, and it has not been changed since
  - Vendor has offered to update test at no cost to the state
- VCLA tests certain skills that are not essential for certain types of teachers, according to preparation staff
  - Example - copy editing for math or physical education teachers

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## Inability to pass the VCLA is a barrier for some individuals interested in traditional prep programs

- 86% of individuals eventually pass the VCLA; 14% do not (630 test takers annually, on average)
- 11 of Virginia's 14 public higher education teacher preparation programs cite difficulty passing required tests as a top barrier to enrollment or completion

# Traditional preparation program participants must fulfill requirements other than VCLA passage



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## Recommendations

Board of Education should either replace the VCLA with a relevant and nationally recognized test or remove it as a requirement for full licensure.

OR

General Assembly may wish to create a waiver for individuals attending higher ed teacher preparation programs allowing them to qualify for full licensure if they do not pass the VCLA but meet necessary criteria.

2024 legislation passed by GA & signed by Gov:

*\*HB 731 (Sewell) eliminates the VCLA*

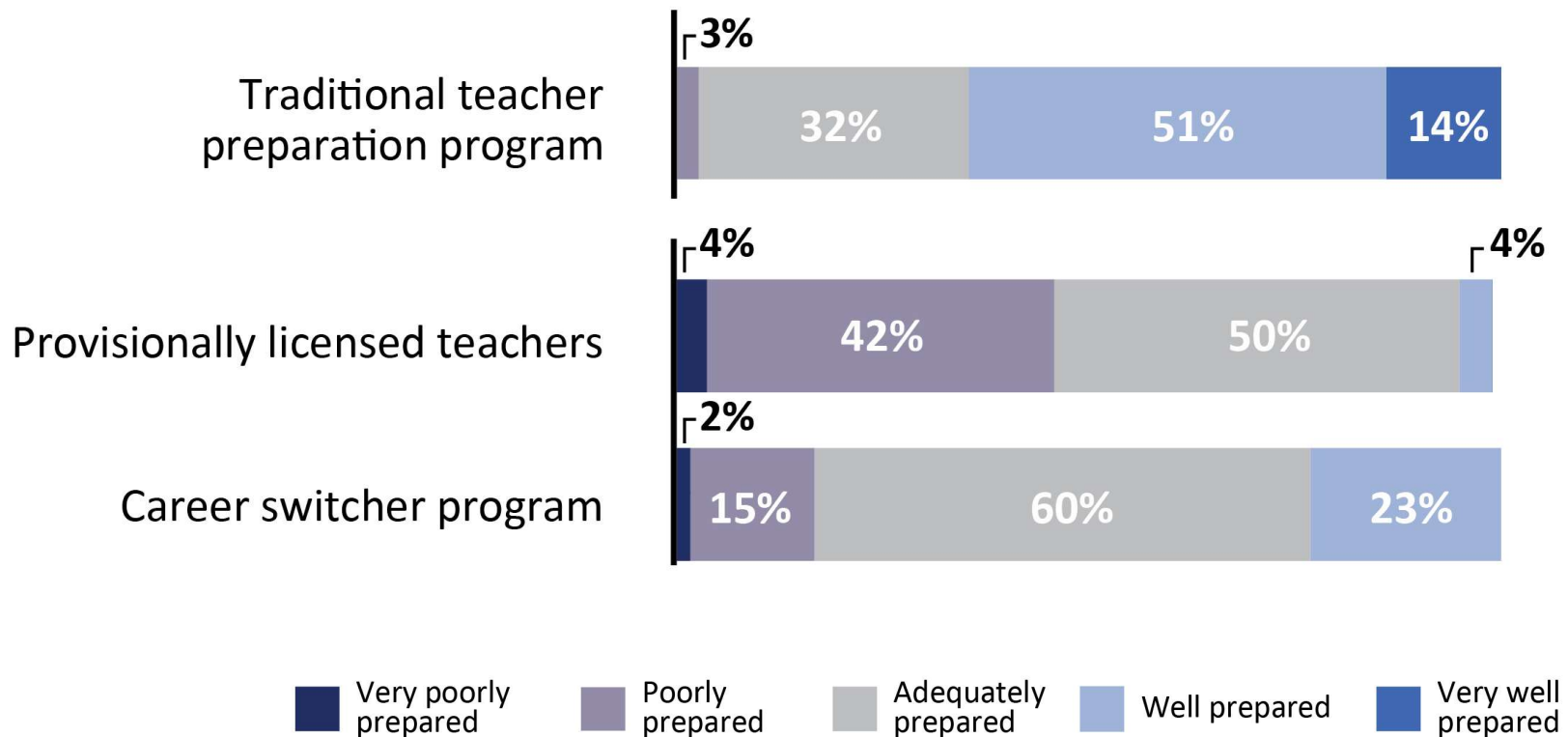
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## New teachers and higher education administrators cite cost as a barrier

- Traditional higher-ed prep programs can cost \$15K - \$96K in tuition and fees.
- Nearly 75% of new teachers who attended traditional teacher preparation programs cited cost as a “moderate” or “significant” barrier
- 10 of 14 higher education teacher preparation programs cited “financial concerns” as a top reason why candidates do not enter or complete programs



## Divisions reported teachers from traditional preparation programs tend to be more prepared



Source: JLARC survey of Virginia school divisions, summer 2023.

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## Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) helps offset tuition & fees for some individuals

- VTSLP requires recipients to teach  $\geq 2$  years in critical shortage area or economically disadvantaged school\*
- Appropriated \$708,000 annually and provides aid to ~75 individuals per year
  - Estimated 10% of individuals with need based on Pell grant eligibility
- Institutions report substantial unmet demand with current funding level

\*More than half of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

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## Licensure process had historically been inefficient, but VDOE has been making improvements

- Licensure process was lengthy and frustrating for some applicants as of mid 2023
  - 2020 - JLARC found issues with licensure process in 2020
  - Summer 2023 - Some divisions and licensure applicants believed licensure requirements were unclear
- Superintendent prioritized improving licensure in summer 2023, reduced backlog
- As of early fall 2023, VDOE was implementing new system designed to help improve the process

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## Recommendations

VDOE should:

(i) work with Virginia higher education institutions to identify and publish specific courses that fulfill licensure requirements

(ii) identify and publish specific license types and endorsement areas in other, selected states that qualify for a Virginia license through reciprocity

2024 legislation passed by GA & signed by Gov:

*\*HB 632 (Rasoul) directs VDOE to publish on its website licensure standards & requirements in other states compatible with Virginia*

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## Questions? / Comments?

Full reports, including:

- All recommendations & policy options
- State and local \$ impact estimates

Available at:

[jlarc.virginia.gov](http://jlarc.virginia.gov)