

## At-Risk Add-On Critical to Break Down Student Barriers

Virginia can scale add-on for high-poverty schools to adequately fund all students.

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### At-Risk Add-On Supports Students Who Face the Most Barriers

- At-Risk Add-On funding is distributed to school divisions based on the percentage of free lunch participants and may be used for a variety of initiatives, including teacher recruitment, dropout prevention, English learner support, counselors, licensed behavior specialists, and programs to help students complete high school and further education and training.
- Virginia's school funding formula relies heavily on localities, who fund their schools primarily with property tax revenue. Lower property values mean less funding for essential public services. This condition led to the Education Law Center giving Virginia a "D" grade for overall funding effort in their [2022 ranking report](#).
- The variation in localities' ability to raise revenue leads to differing educational experiences across the state, with students from areas with high concentrations of poverty receiving inadequate support and having fewer opportunities than those in wealthier areas, who tend to have newer textbooks, more electives, newer technology, fewer staff vacancies, and smaller class sizes.
- At-Risk Add-On funding targets additional state support to divisions with higher concentrations of students living in poverty. [Studies show that students facing more barriers and living in poverty generally need an additional supplement of 40-200% more funding](#) to have education outcomes comparable to students not living in poverty.

**Commented [1]:** I might be inclined to change this to 2021 or 'most recent' since the report is titled, "Making the Grade 2021"

### Virginia Can Move Out of Bottom Tier and Start Funding Based on Need

- Virginia has steadily improved funding for the At-Risk Add-On over the past several years, but the state is still bottom tier for funding distribution and [40th in the country for state per student funding](#).
- Scaling the At-Risk Add-On would provide flexible support for schools to invest in essential services, particularly for student groups that have traditionally been underinvested in, including students in homes experiencing poverty, students in rural settings, and students learning English.

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- With low likelihood of any near term updates to Virginia's core K-12 funding formula, which hasn't been revamped in decades, greatly scaling the At-Risk Add-On is the best prospect to adequately account for student need in state funding.