ALASKA

Faced with an unprecedented set of challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, public education is at a crossroads. To be sure, much has changed since 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic swept the nation, but pre-pandemic trends provide policymakers with a critical anchor for navigating post-pandemic decisions. This section provides a snapshot of Alaska's K-12 public education resources and outcomes so that policymakers are better equipped to make critical choices that will shape generations to come. Looking forward, they should use this information to ask important questions like what their goals are for students and whether resources are being deployed toward those aims.

SPENDING TRENDS

Alaska's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from $14,957 per student in 2002 to $19,765 per student in 2020, a 32.1% growth rate that ranked 11th highest in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 124.2%—ranking 9th in the country—going from $2,366 per student to $5,304 per student. In 2020, Alaska had $1,117,285,000 in total education debt, up $1,471 per student in real terms since 2002.

TABLE 1: SPENDING TRENDS (2002-2020)

Category (Per Student)	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Revenue	$14,957	$19,765	32.1%	11	10
Support Services	$5,267	$7,894	49.9%	10	3
Instruction	$8,112	$9,753	20.2%	19	14
Benefits	$2,366	$5,304	124.2%	9	7
Capital	$2,339	$1,161	−50.3%	50	38
Total Debt	$6,992	$8,463	21%	31	23

FIGURE 1: REVENUE PER STUDENT BY FUNDING SOURCE (2002-2020)

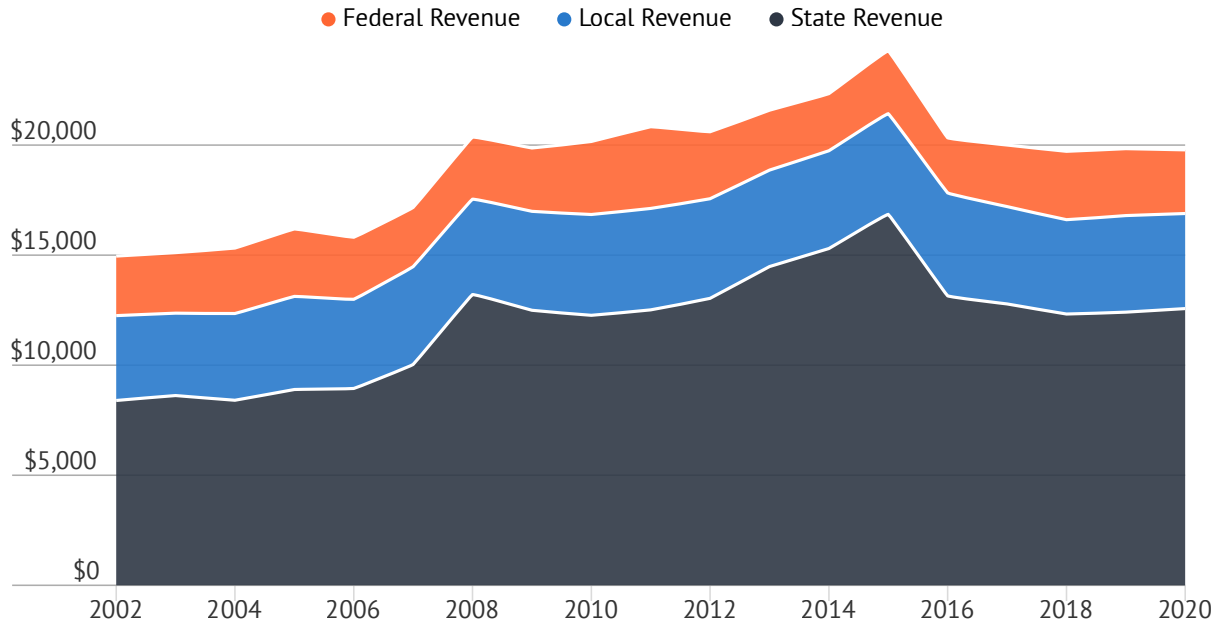
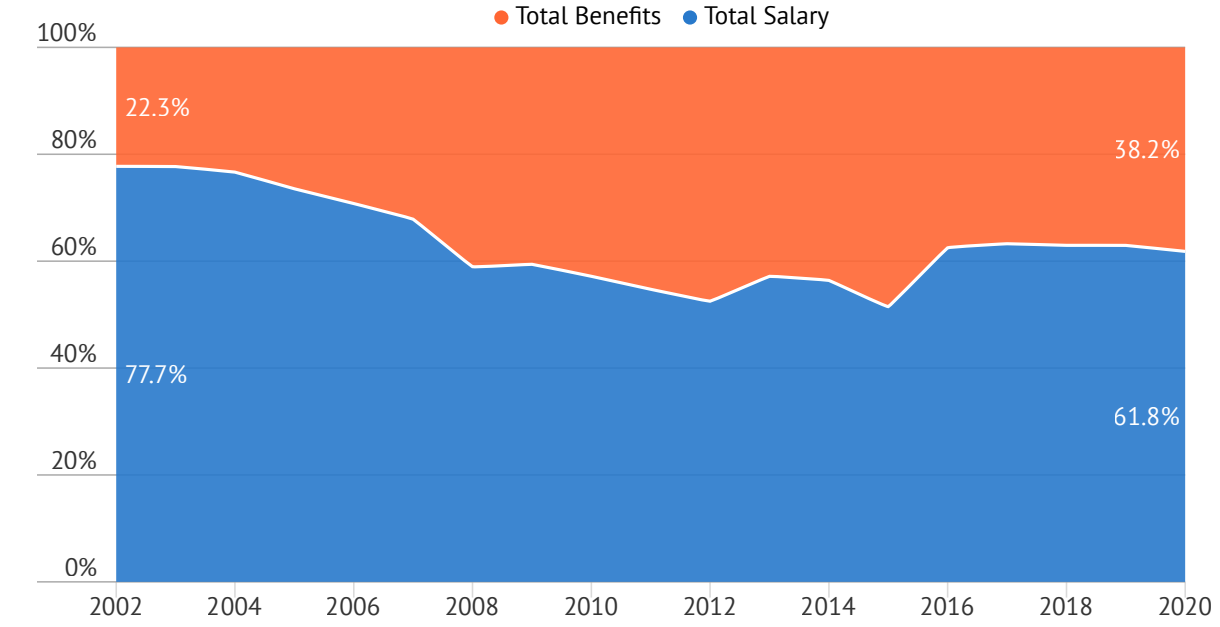


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Alaska's student population reduced by -1.7%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 1.7%, with teachers decreasing by 6.8% and non-teachers increasing by 9.6%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from $71,360 in 2002 to $72,010 in 2020, a 0.9% growth rate that ranked 22nd in the U.S.

TABLE 2: ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS (2002-2020)

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	134,349	132,017	−1.7%	35	47
Total Staff	16,688	16,980	1.7%	40	49
Teachers	8,026	7,484	−6.8%	44	49
Non-Teachers	8,662	9,496	9.6%	38	48
Average Teacher Salary	$71,360	$72,010	0.9%	22	9

FIGURE 3: ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS (2002-2020)

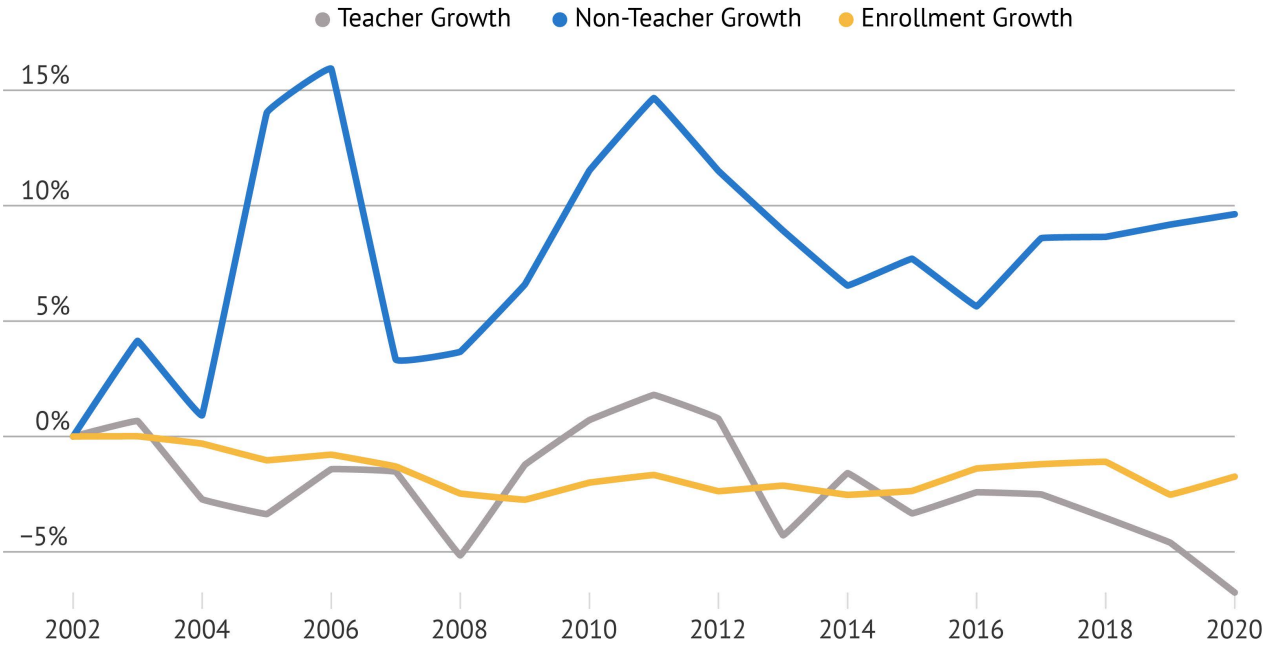
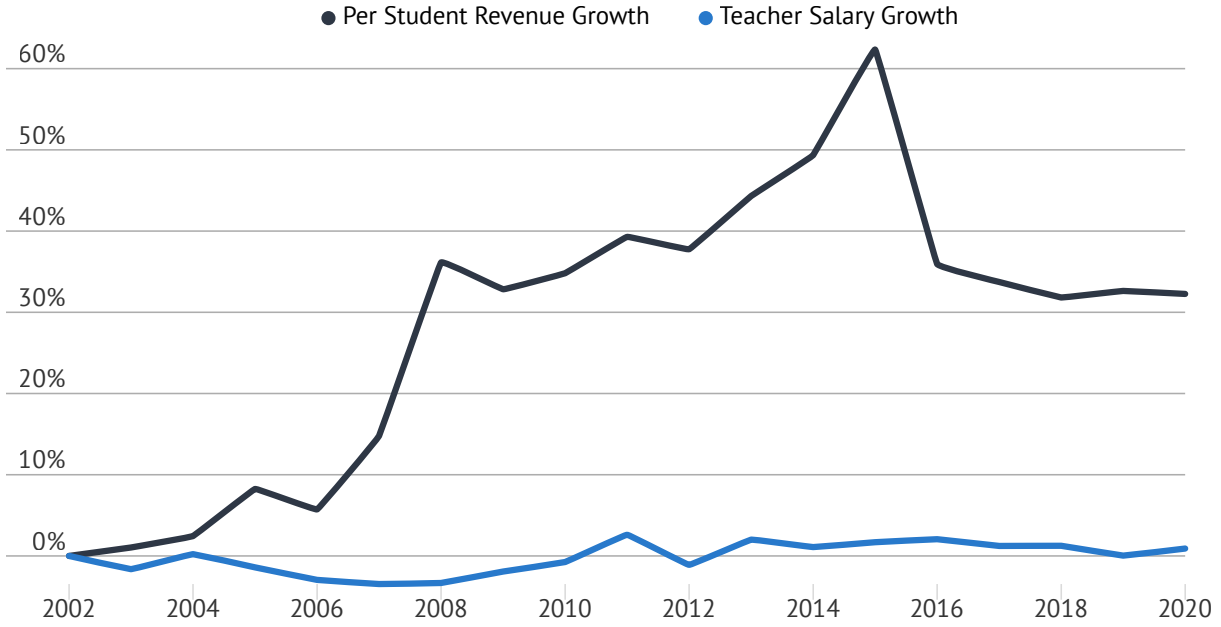


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



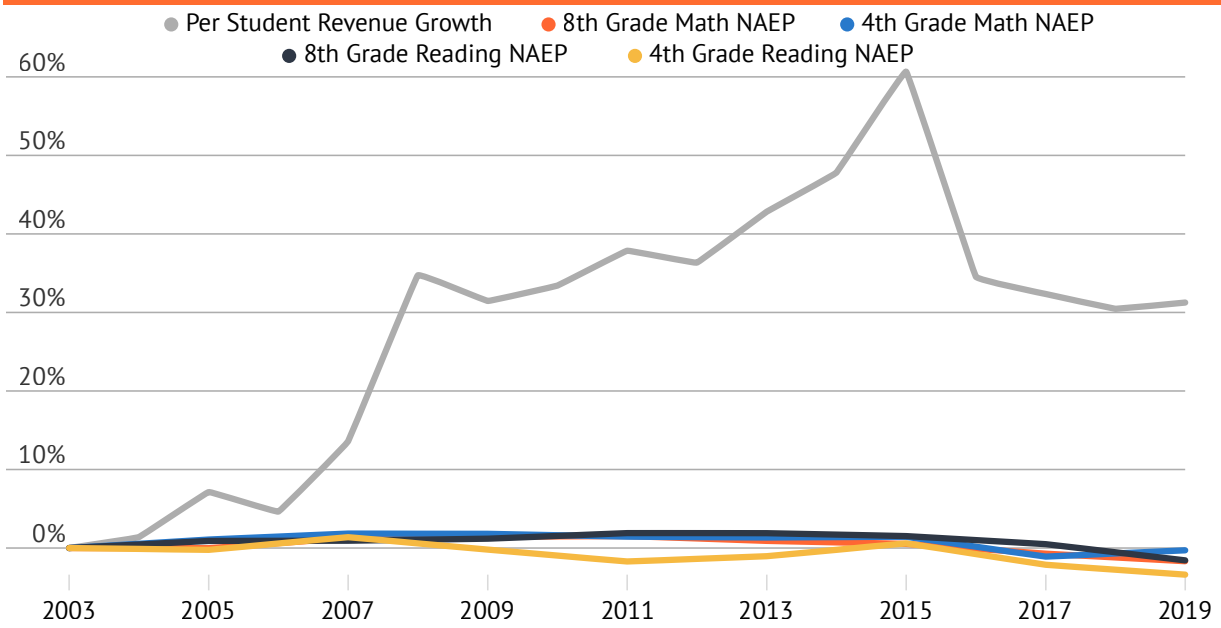
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Alaska's 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by seven points (−3.4%), ranking 50th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores fell by one point (−0.3%), ranking 48th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by four points (−1.6%), ranking 43rd in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by five points (−1.7%), ranking 50th.

TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Subject	**Score Growth**	**Growth Rank**	**2019 Rank**	**Score Growth**	**Growth Rank**	**2019 Rank**
Reading	−7	50	50	−4	43	49
Math	−1	48	46	−5	50	44

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH[1]



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Alaska's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by three points (−1.6%), ranking 46th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by zero points (+0.0%), ranking 46th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by zero points (+0.2%), ranking 28th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by zero points (−0.1%), ranking 44th.

TABLE 4: LOW-INCOME NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Subject	**Score Growth**	**Growth Rank**	**2019 Rank**	**Growth**	**Growth Rank**	**2019 Rank**
Reading	−3	46	50	0	28	50
Math	0	46	49	0	44	46

[1] It should be noted that NAEP scores and revenue are inherently different in their potential for growth and shouldn't be expected to move in perfect unison (e.g. a 10% increase in funding shouldn't be expected to result in a 10% improvement in NAEP).

FIGURE 6: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (LOW-INCOME STUDENTS)[1]