

NEW JERSEY

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 New Jersey'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

New Jersey's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$18,969 per student in 2002 to \$24,010 per student in 2020, a 26.6% growth rate that ranked 20th highest in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 132.7%—ranking 7th in the country—going from \$2,679 per student to \$6,233 per student. In 2020, New Jersey had \$7,320,962,000 in total education debt, down \$1,515 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	\$18,969	\$24,010	26.6%	21	3
Support Services	\$6,497	\$8,027	23.6%	30	1
Instruction	\$9,542	\$12,074	26.5%	14	4
Benefits	\$2,679	\$6,233	132.7%	7	2
Capital	\$1,527	\$1,191	-22.0%	39	35
Total Debt	\$6,935	\$5,421	-21.8%	47	39

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

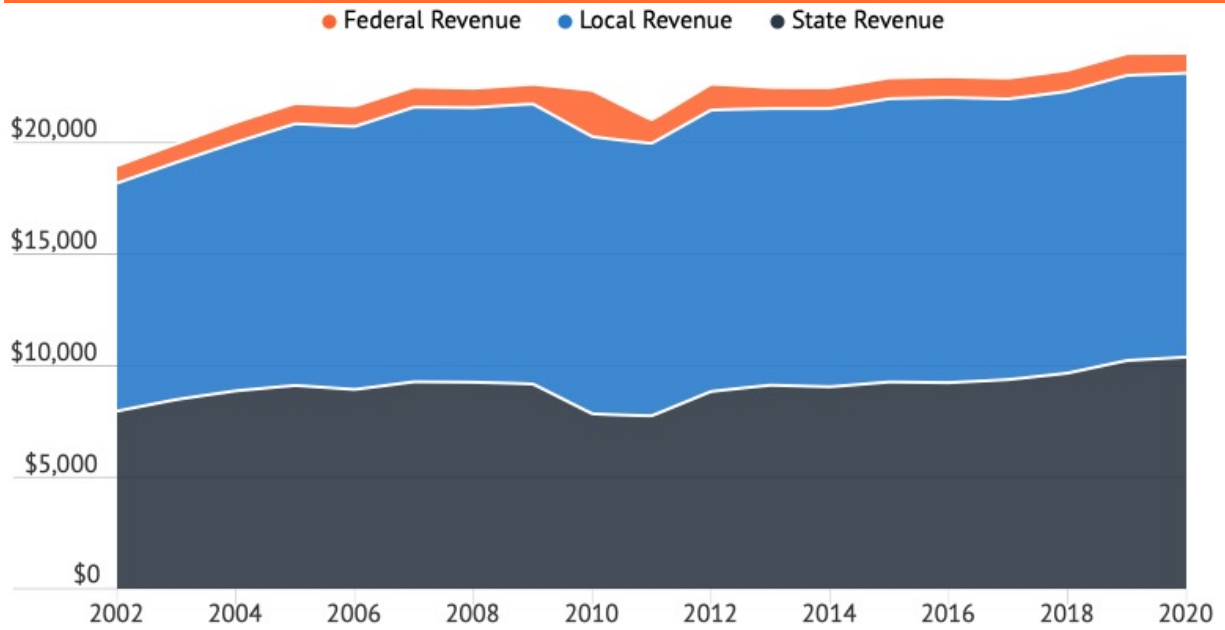
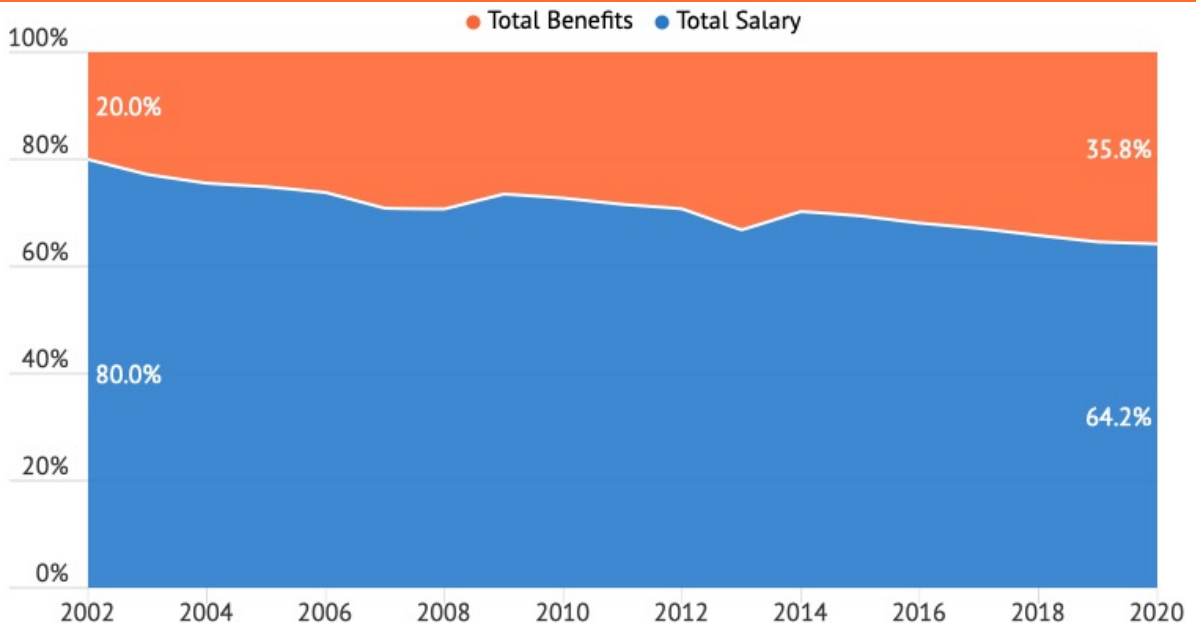


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, New Jersey’s student population grew by 5.2%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 25.3%, with teachers increasing by 13.0% and non-teachers increasing by 39.5%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$76,809 in 2002 to \$76,376 in 2020, a -0.6% growth rate that ranked 25th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	1,341,656	1,411,917	5.2%	27	11
Total Staff	193,337	242,254	25.3%	8	8
Teachers	103,611	117,060	13.0%	16	8
Non-Teachers	89,726	125,194	39.5%	7	7
Average Teacher Salary	\$76,809	\$76,376	-0.6%	25	6

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

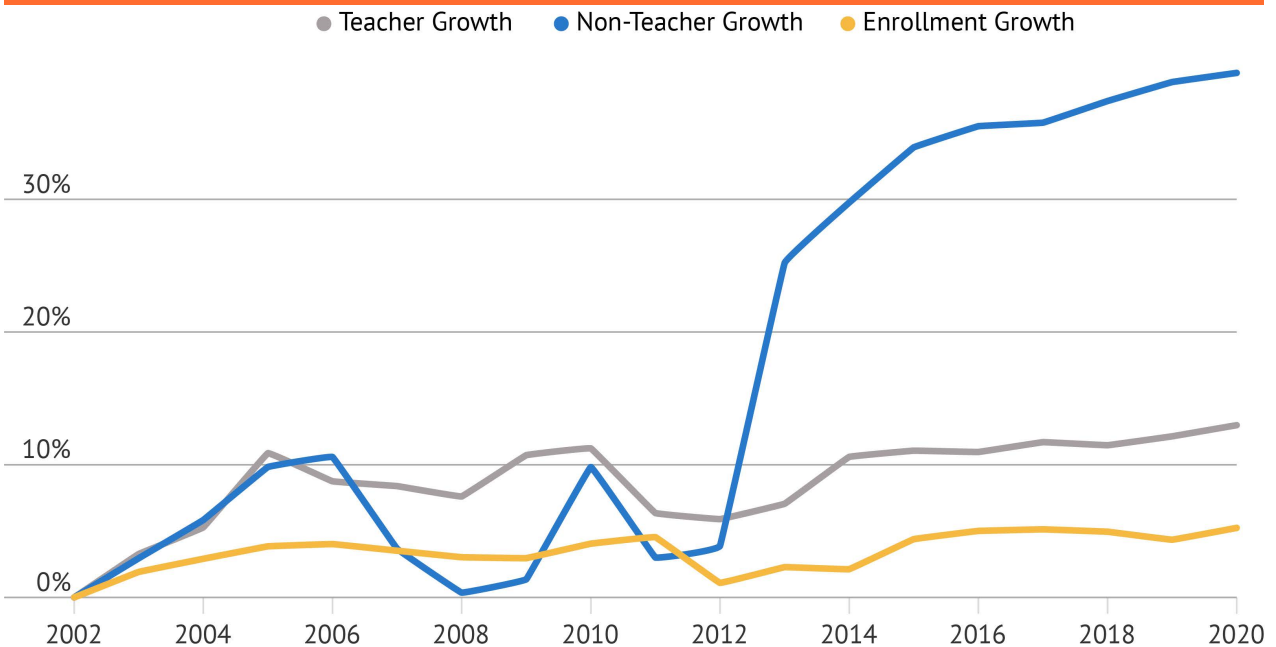
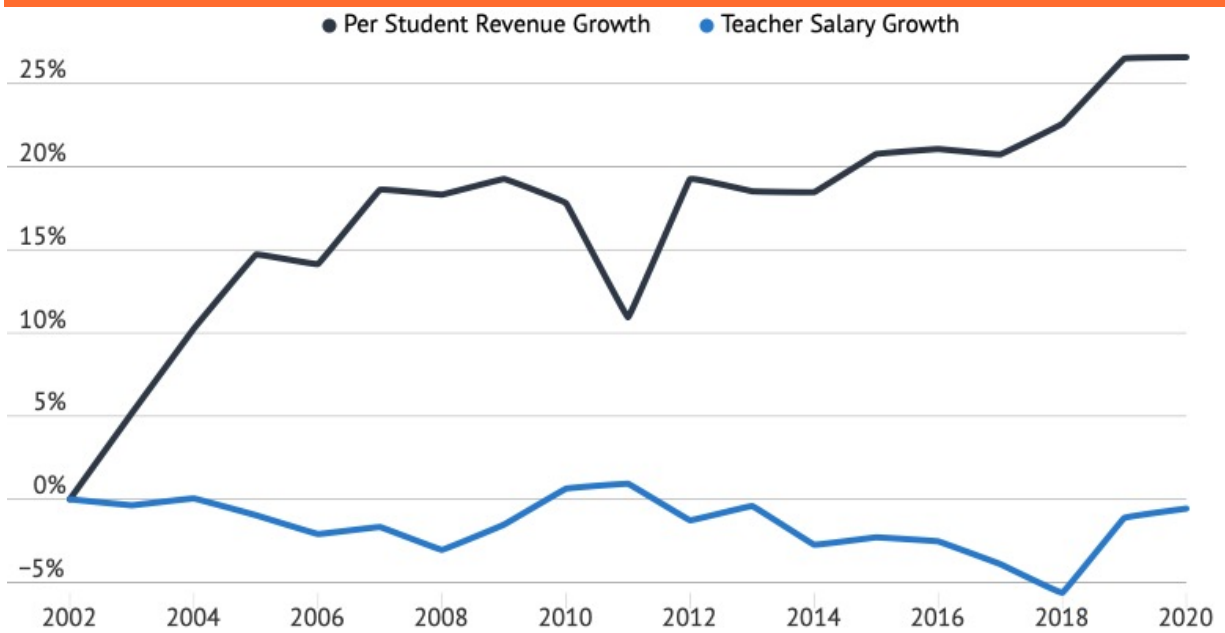


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



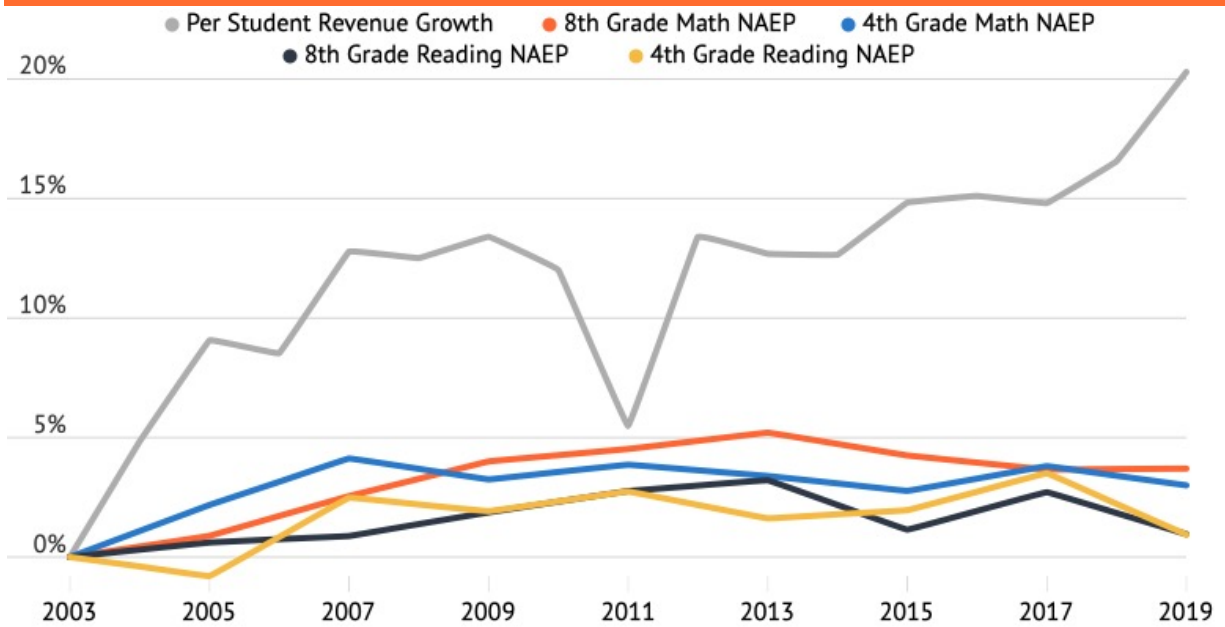
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, New Jersey's 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+0.9%), ranking 19th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by seven points (+3.0%), ranking 17th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by three points (+1.0%), ranking 11th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by 10 points (+3.7%), ranking 3rd.

TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

Subject	4th Grade			8th Grade		
	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank
Reading	2	19	2	3	11	2
Math	7	17	5	10	3	2

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, New Jersey's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by seven points (+3.3%), ranking 11th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by 10 points (+4.5%), ranking 9th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by five points (+2.1%), ranking 11th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by 12 points (+4.8%), ranking 5th.

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

Subject	4th Grade			8th Grade		
	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank	Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank
Reading	7	11	8	5	11	18
Math	10	9	15	12	5	21

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

