

SOUTH CAROLINA

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 South Carolina'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

South Carolina's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$12,038 per student in 2002 to \$14,324 per student in 2020, a 19.0% growth rate that ranked 29th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 51.9%—ranking 33th in the country—going from \$1,825 per student to \$2,772 per student. In 2020, South Carolina had \$9,712,077,000 in total education debt, up \$4,958 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	\$12,038	\$14,324	19.0%	29	28
Support Services	\$3,473	\$4,576	31.8%	20	25
Instruction	\$6,063	\$6,393	5.4%	42	34
Benefits	\$1,825	\$2,772	51.9%	33	31
Capital	\$2,050	\$1,908	-6.9%	32	14
Total Debt	\$7,911	\$12,870	62.7%	19	9

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

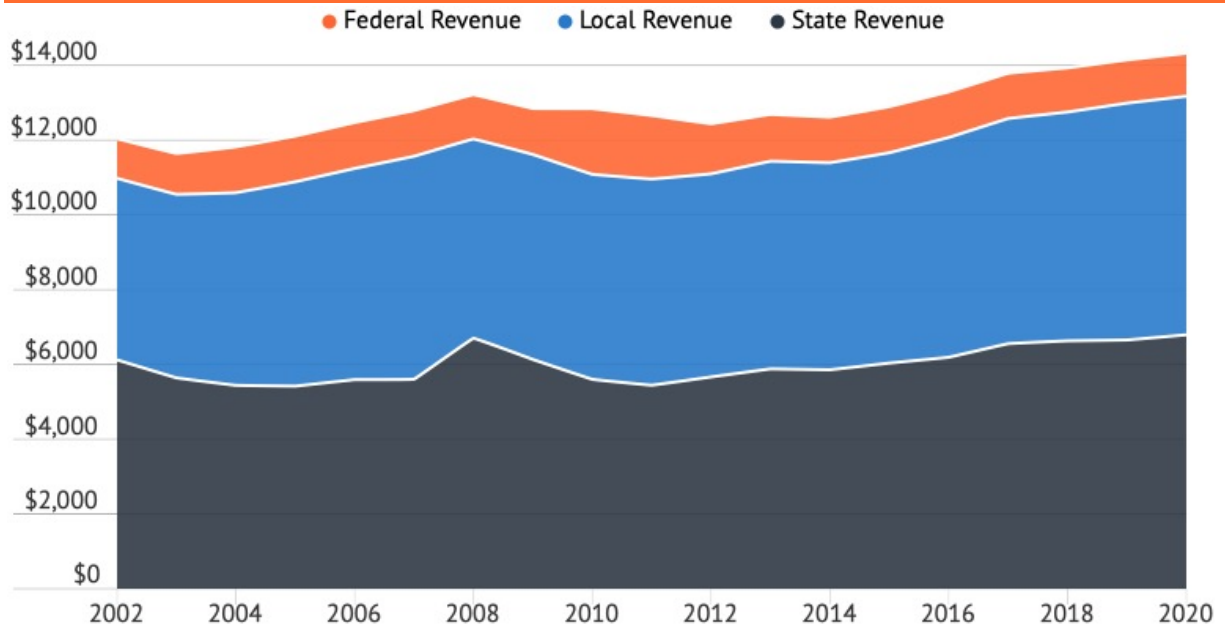
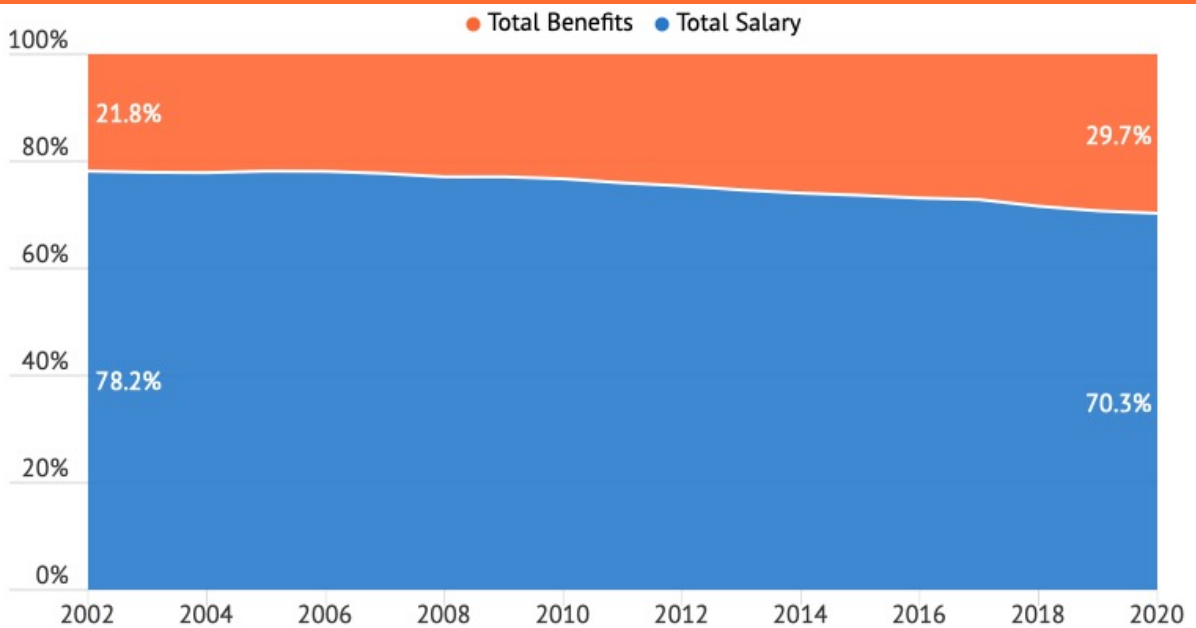


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, South Carolina’s student population grew by 16.4%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 38.2%, with teachers increasing by 14.9% and non-teachers increasing by 82.1%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$57,649 in 2002 to \$53,329 in 2020, a -7.5% growth rate that ranked 44th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	676,198	786,879	16.4%	10	23
Total Staff	71,338	98,587	38.2%	4	24
Teachers	46,616	53,556	14.9%	13	22
Non-Teachers	24,722	45,031	82.1%	2	25
Average Teacher Salary	\$57,649	\$53,329	-7.5%	44	37

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

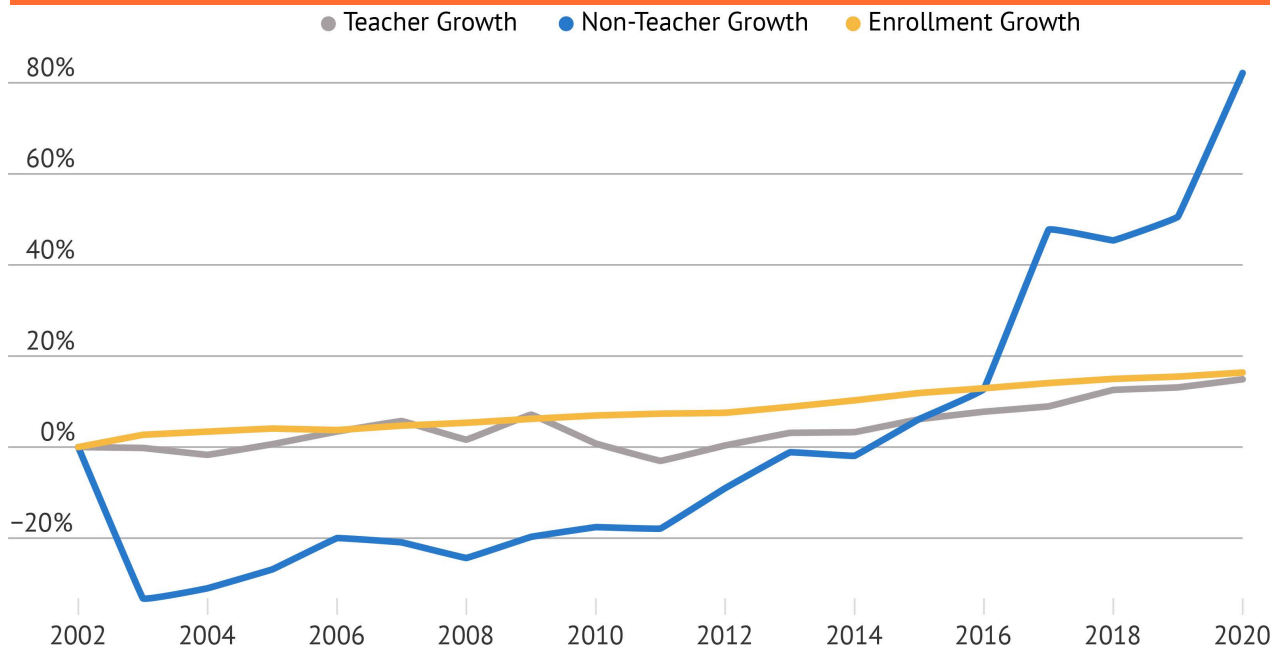
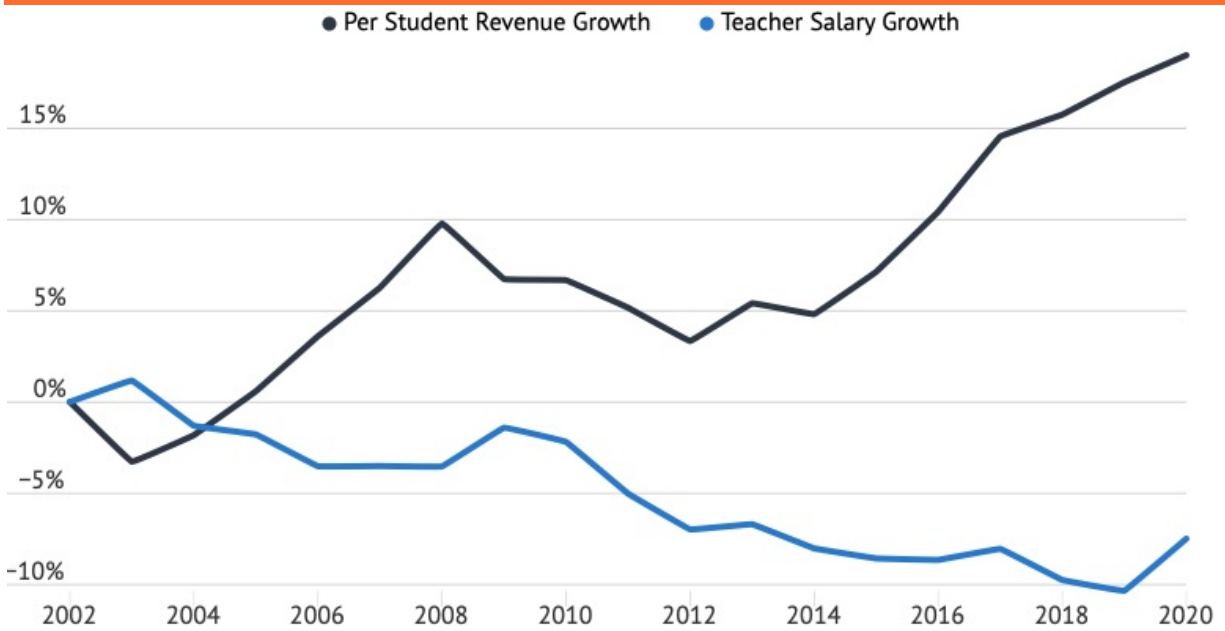


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



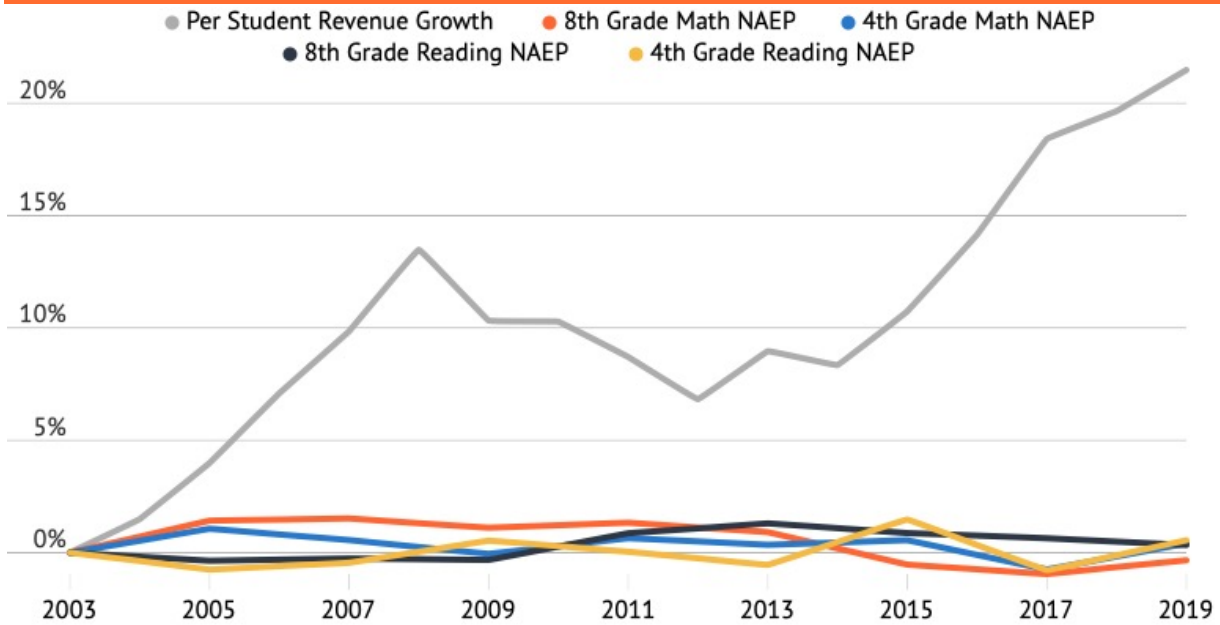
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, South Carolina's 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by one point (+0.5%), ranking 27th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by one point (+0.4%), ranking 42nd. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by one point (+0.3%), ranking 19th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by one point (-0.3%), ranking 44th.

TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

Subject	4th Grade			8th Grade		
	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank
Reading	1	27	43	1	19	38
Math	1	42	39	-1	44	39

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, South Carolina's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+0.8%), ranking 31st in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by one point (+0.3%), ranking 44th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by two points (+0.7%), ranking 23rd in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by zero points (-0.1%), ranking 43rd.

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	2	31	42	2	23	34
Math	1	44	32	0	43	39

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

