

WISCONSIN

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 Wisconsin'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

Wisconsin's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$14,091 per student in 2002 to \$15,015 per student in 2020, a 6.6% growth rate that ranked 44th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 3.9%—ranking 50th in the country—going from \$2,990 per student to \$3,106 per student. In 2020, Wisconsin had \$7,769,475,000 in total education debt, up \$144 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	\$14,091	\$15,015	6.6%	44	23
Support Services	\$4,290	\$4,731	10.3%	44	22
Instruction	\$7,658	\$7,560	-1.3%	48	24
Benefits	\$2,990	\$3,106	3.9%	50	27
Capital	\$1,423	\$1,853	30.2%	18	16
Total Debt	\$9,041	\$9,186	1.6%	38	19

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

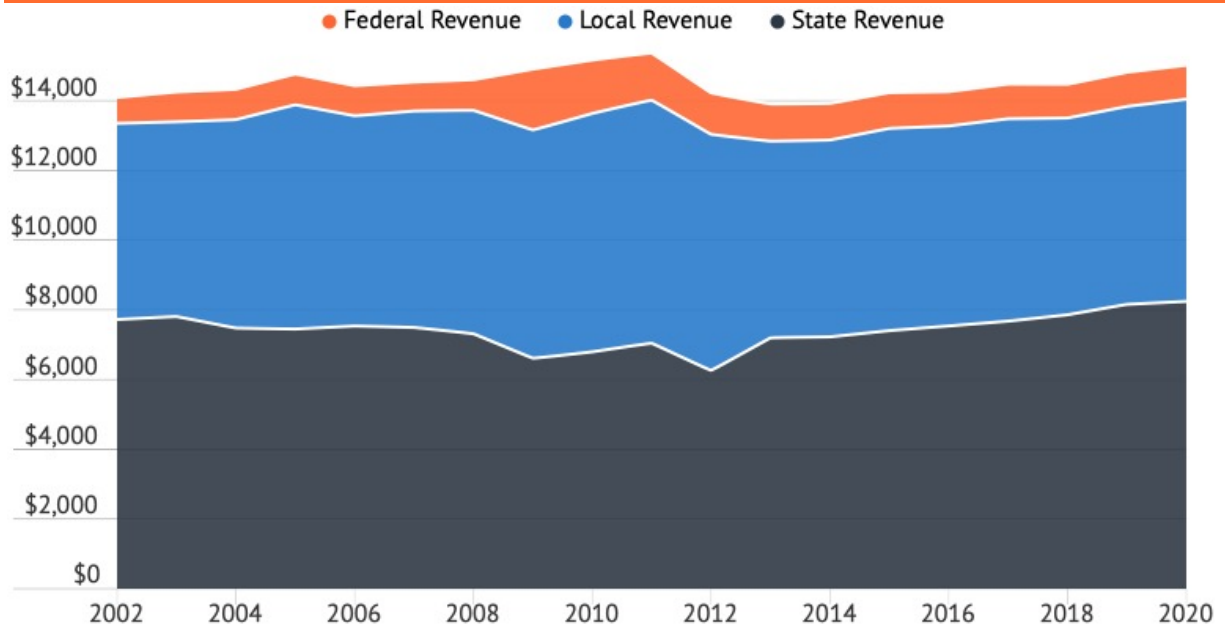
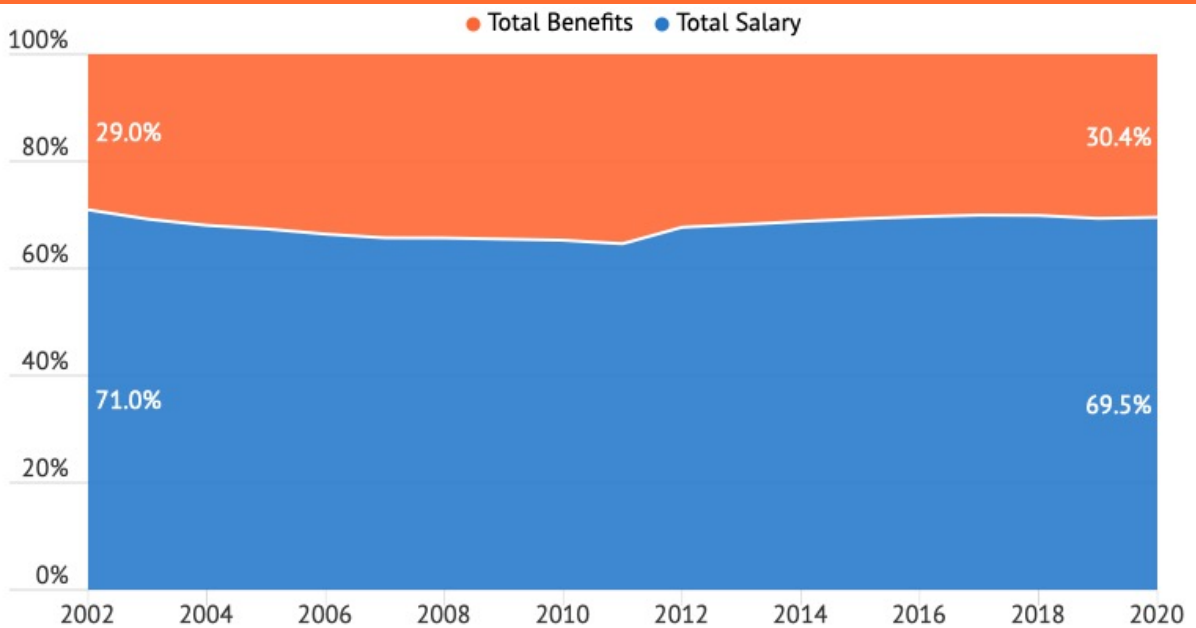


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Wisconsin’s student population declined by 2.7%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff decreased by 1.0%, with teachers decreasing by 5.5% and non-teachers increasing by 4.4%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$60,983 in 2002 to \$59,431 in 2020, a -2.5% growth rate that ranked 29th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	879,361	855,400	-2.7%	37	22
Total Staff	115,917	114,709	-1.0%	44	20
Teachers	63,310	59,801	-5.5%	41	19
Non-Teachers	52,607	54,908	4.4%	41	22
Average Teacher Salary	\$60,983	\$59,431	-2.5%	29	21

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

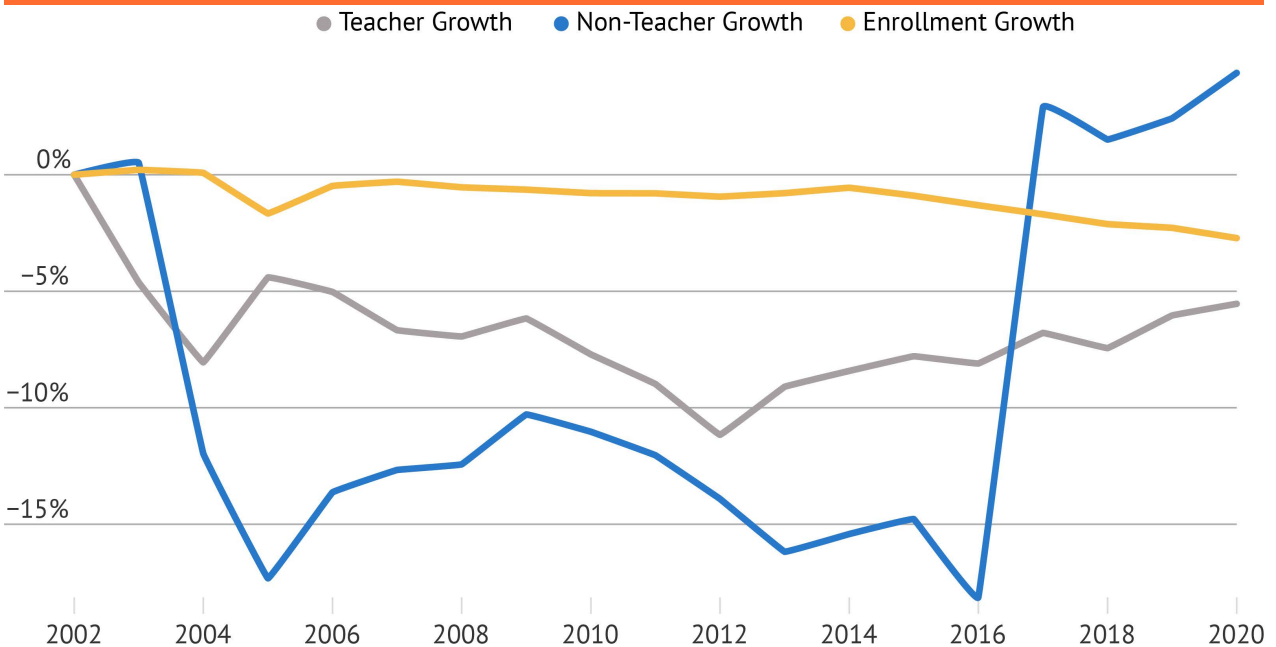
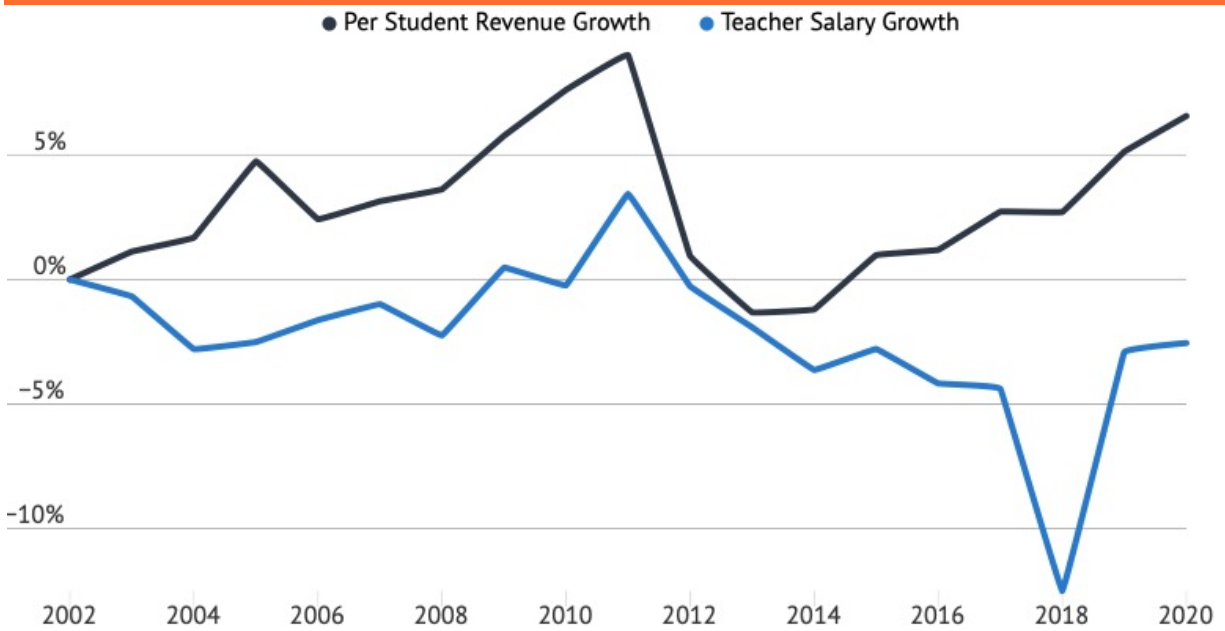


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



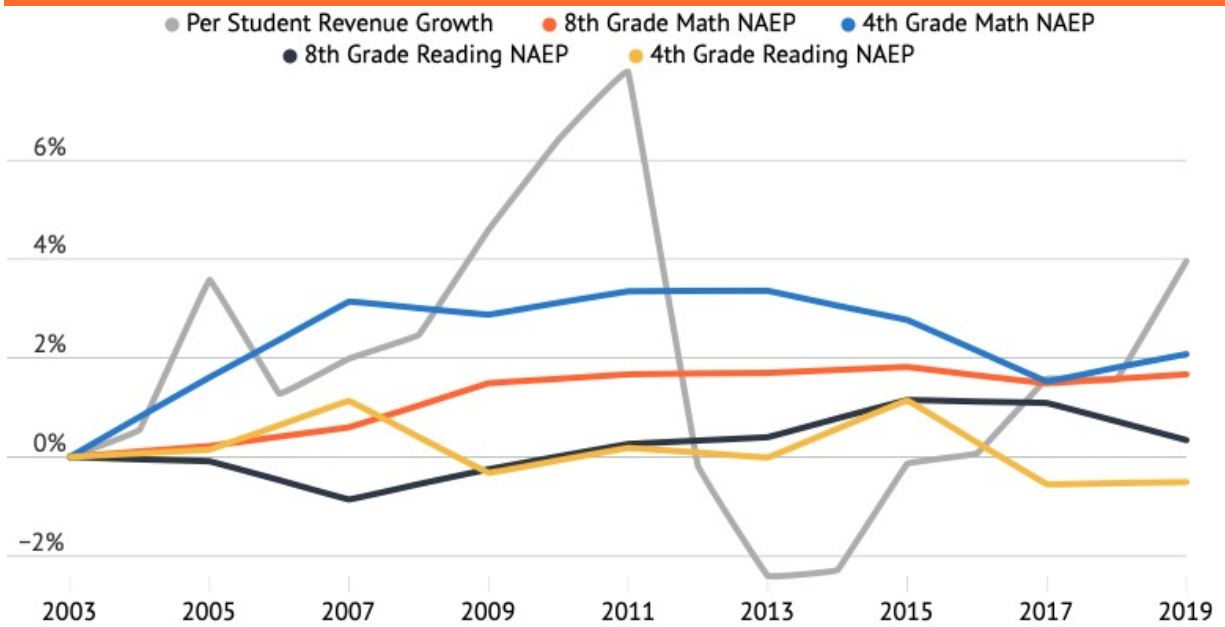
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Wisconsin's 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by one point (-0.5%), ranking 39th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by five points (+2.1%), ranking 29th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by one point (+0.3%), ranking 18th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by five points (+1.7%), ranking 19th.

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	39	26	1	18	7
Math	5	29	17	5	19	4

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Wisconsin’s low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by two points (-0.8%), ranking 42nd in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by five points (+2.2%), ranking 30th. During this time, the state’s 8th grade reading scores increased by eight points (+3.5%), ranking 5th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by 11 points (+4.2%), ranking 10th.

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	42	43	8	5	13
Math	5	30	38	11	10	13

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

