

ALABAMA

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 Alabama’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

Alabama’s inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$10,192 per student in 2002 to \$11,729 per student in 2020, a 15.1% growth rate that ranked 37th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 40.7%—ranking 39th in the country—going from \$1,621 per student to \$2,281 per student. In 2020, Alabama had \$5,287,501,000 in total education debt, up \$3,228 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	\$10,192	\$11,729	15.1%	37	42
Support Services	\$2,812	\$3,700	31.6%	21	40
Instruction	\$5,405	\$5,883	8.8%	35	43
Benefits	\$1,621	\$2,281	40.7%	39	38
Capital	\$986	\$825	-16.3%	34	47
Total Debt	\$3,889	\$7,116	83%	14	27

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

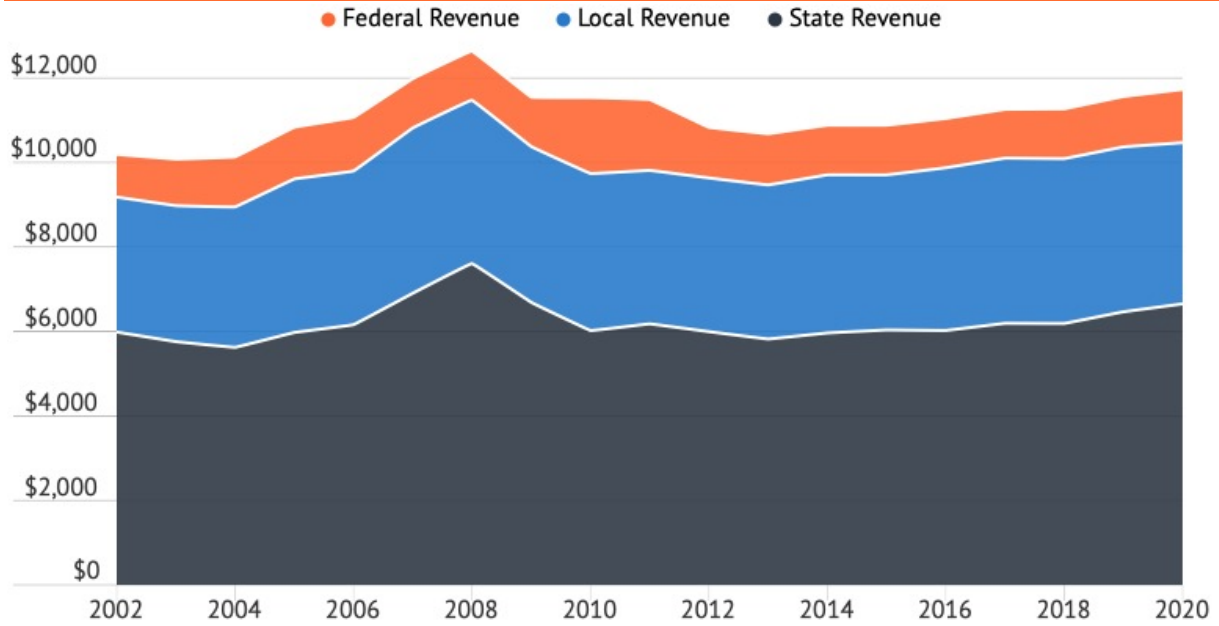
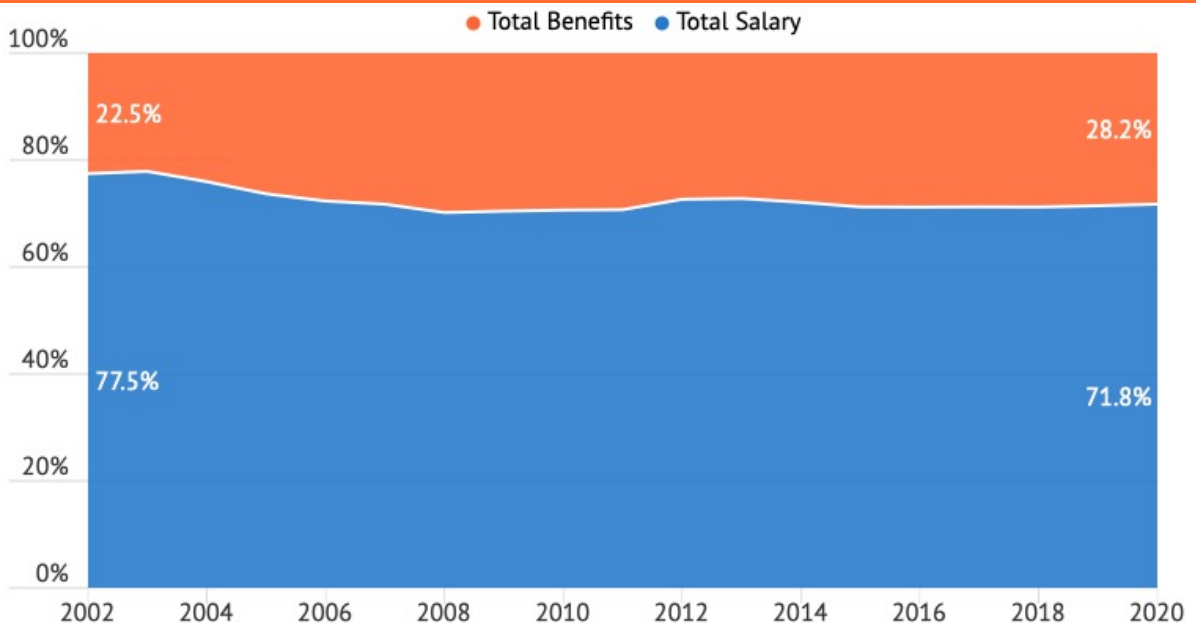


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Alabama’s student population grew by 1.0%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff fell by 13.3%, with teachers decreasing by 10.2% and non-teachers decreasing by 16.8%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$53,708 in 2002 to \$54,095 in 2020, a 0.7% growth rate that ranked 24th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	737,190	744,235	1.0%	30	24
Total Staff	88,160	76,456	-13.3%	48	30
Teachers	46,785	42,022	-10.2%	45	27
Non-Teachers	41,375	34,435	-16.8%	47	33
Average Teacher Salary	\$53,708	\$54,095	0.7%	24	34

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

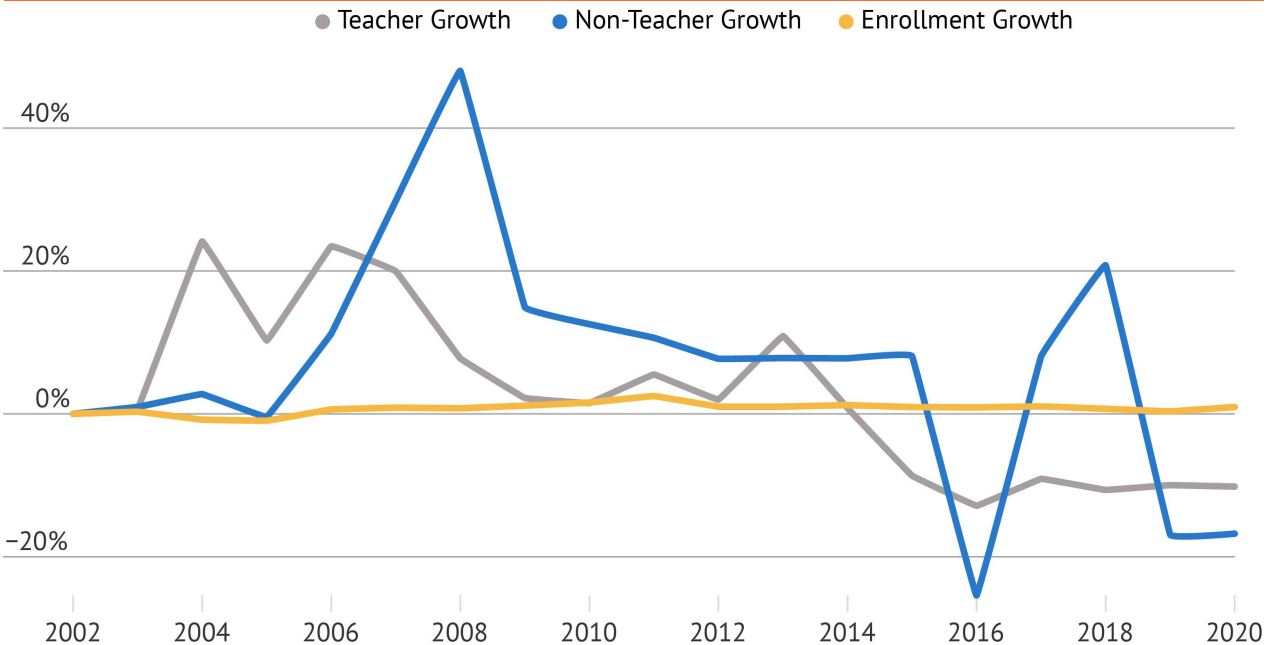
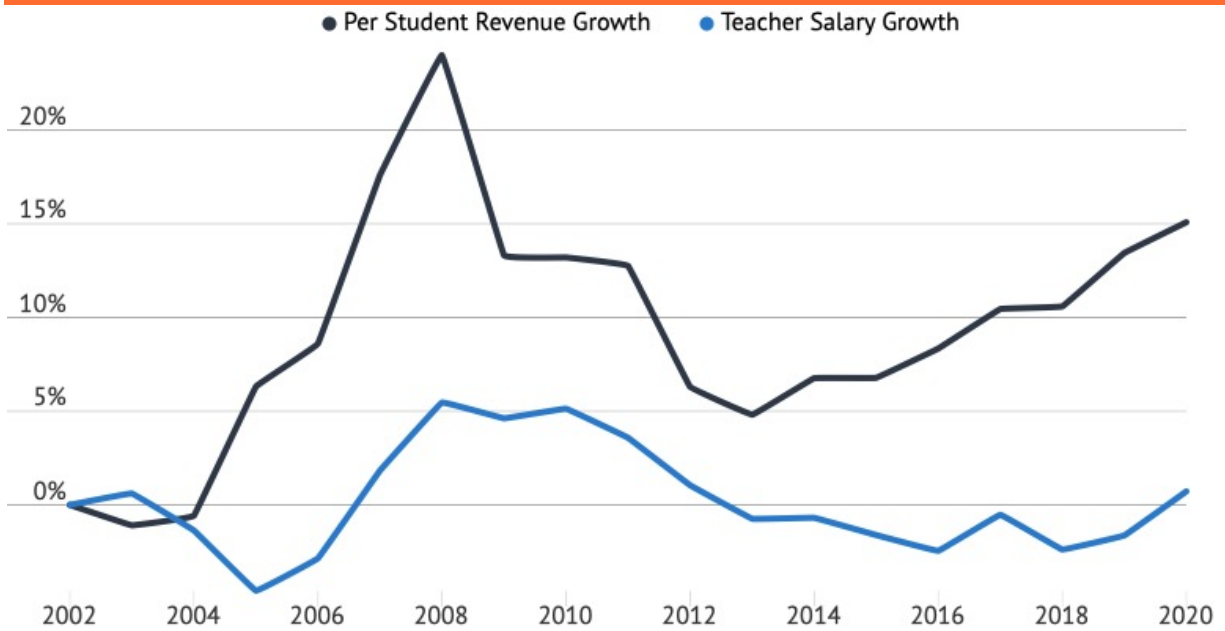


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



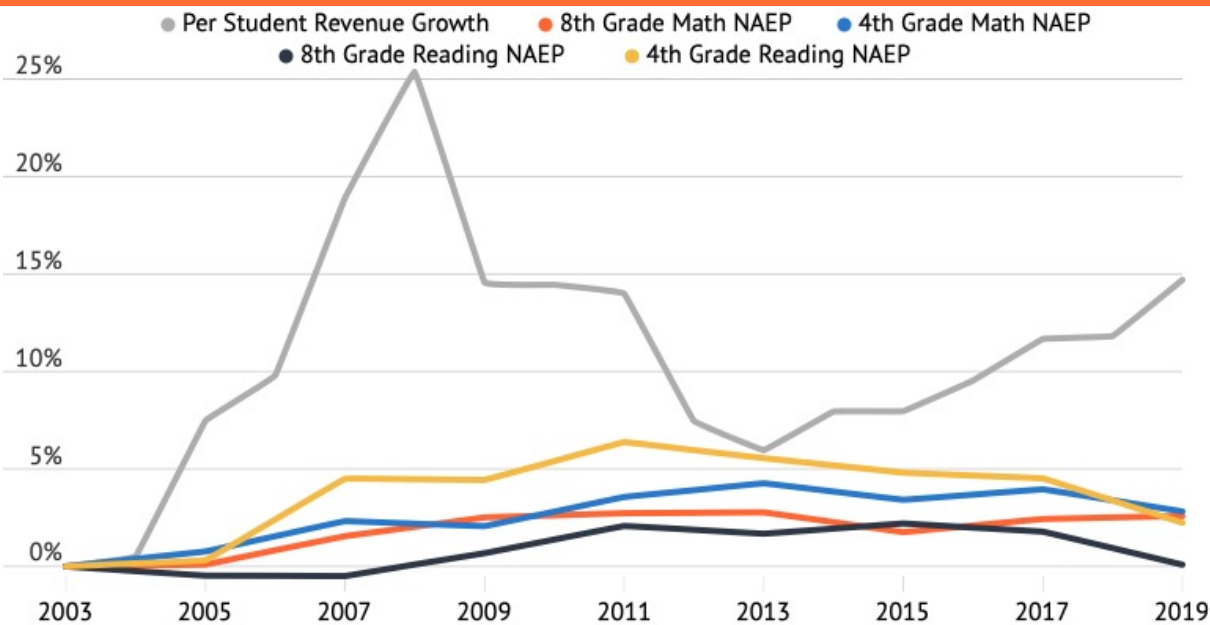
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Alabama's 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by five points (+2.2%), ranking 10th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by six points (+2.8%), ranking 23rd. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by zero points (+0.1%), ranking 23rd in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by seven points (+2.6%), ranking 11th.

TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

Subject	4th Grade			8th Grade		
	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank
Reading	5	10	47	0	23	48
Math	6	23	50	7	11	50

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Alabama’s low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by six points (+3.1%), ranking 13th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by seven points (+3.1%), ranking 22nd. During this time, the state’s 8th grade reading scores increased by two points (+0.9%), ranking 22nd in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by seven points (+3.0%), ranking 17th.

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	6	13	49	2	22	49
Math	7	22	50	7	17	50

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

