

IOWA

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 Iowa'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

Iowa's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$12,017 per student in 2002 to \$14,310 per student in 2020, a 19.1% growth rate that ranked 28th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 35.6%—ranking 40th in the country—going from \$1,915 per student to \$2,596 per student. In 2020, Iowa had \$4,502,784,000 in total education debt, up \$4,864 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	\$12,017	\$14,310	19.1%	28	29
Support Services	\$3,508	\$4,287	22.2%	34	32
Instruction	\$6,270	\$7,194	14.7%	29	27
Benefits	\$1,915	\$2,596	35.6%	40	33
Capital	\$1,365	\$2,210	61.9%	10	7
Total Debt	\$3,840	\$8,704	126.7%	8	22

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

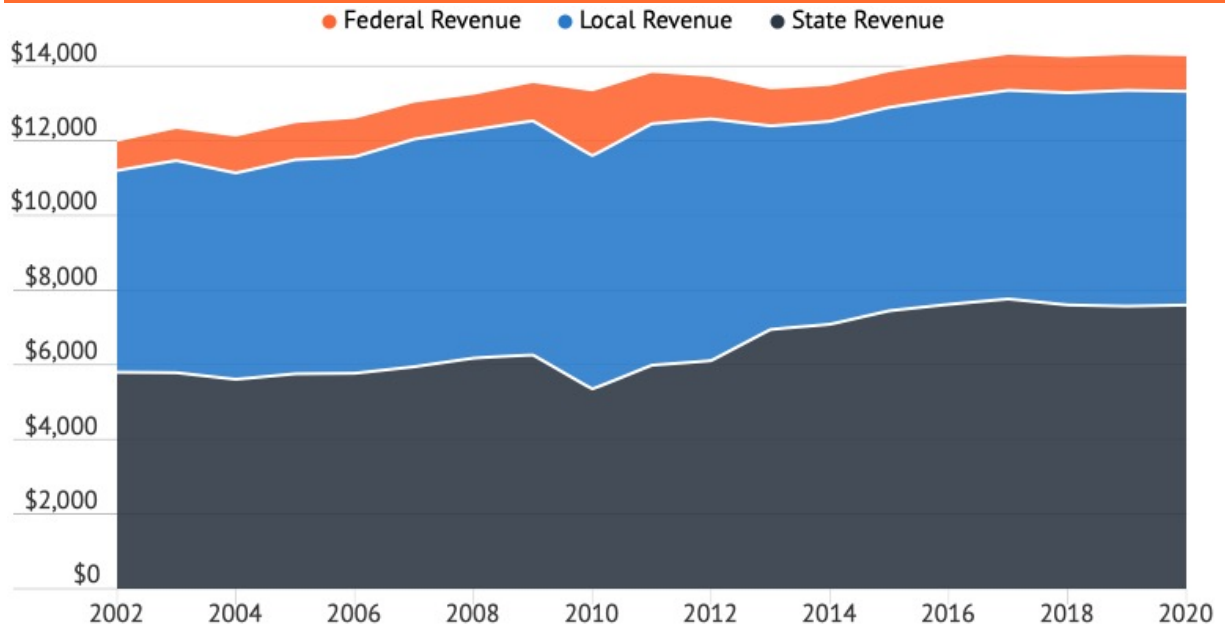
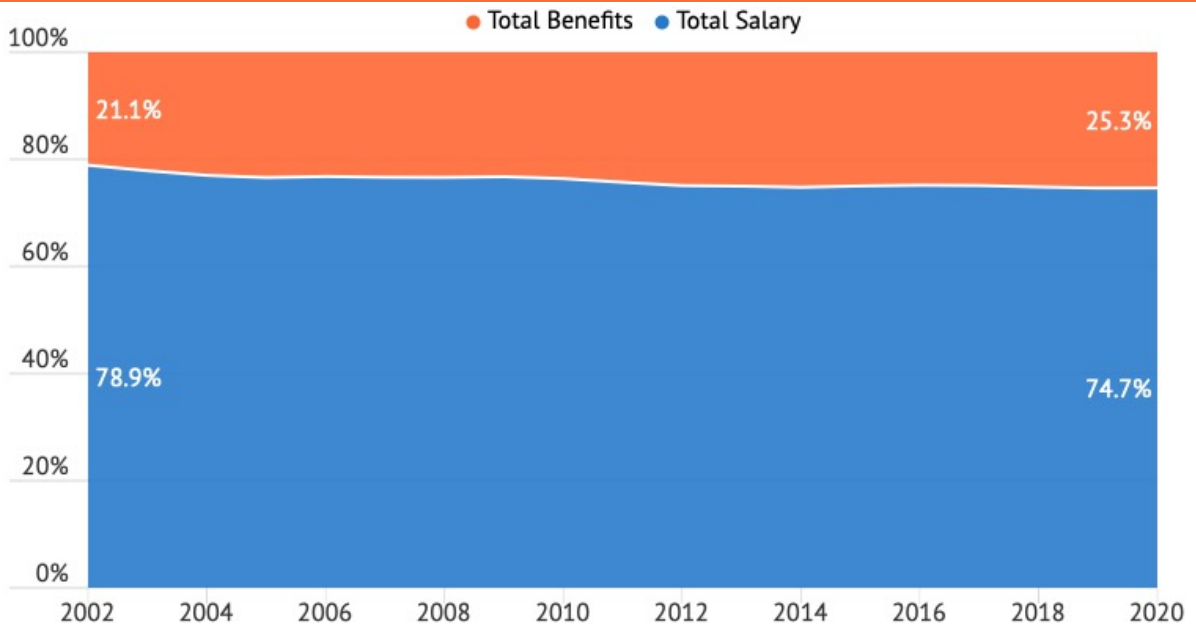


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Iowa’s student population grew by 6.5%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 11.4%, with teachers increasing by 2.4% and non-teachers increasing by 20.6%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$55,204 in 2002 to \$58,184 in 2020, a 5.4% growth rate that ranked 13th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	485,932	517,324	6.5%	22	31
Total Staff	69,504	77,460	11.4%	28	28
Teachers	34,906	35,737	2.4%	34	31
Non-Teachers	34,598	41,723	20.6%	26	26
Average Teacher Salary	\$55,204	\$58,184	5.4%	13	23

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

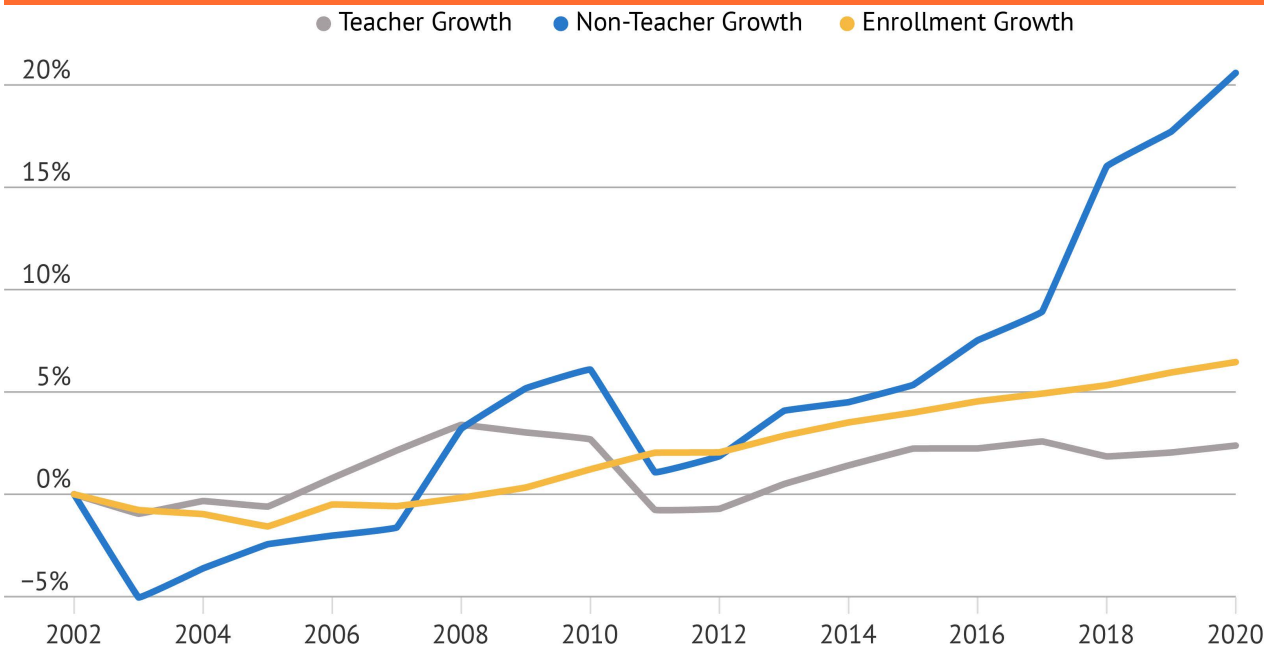
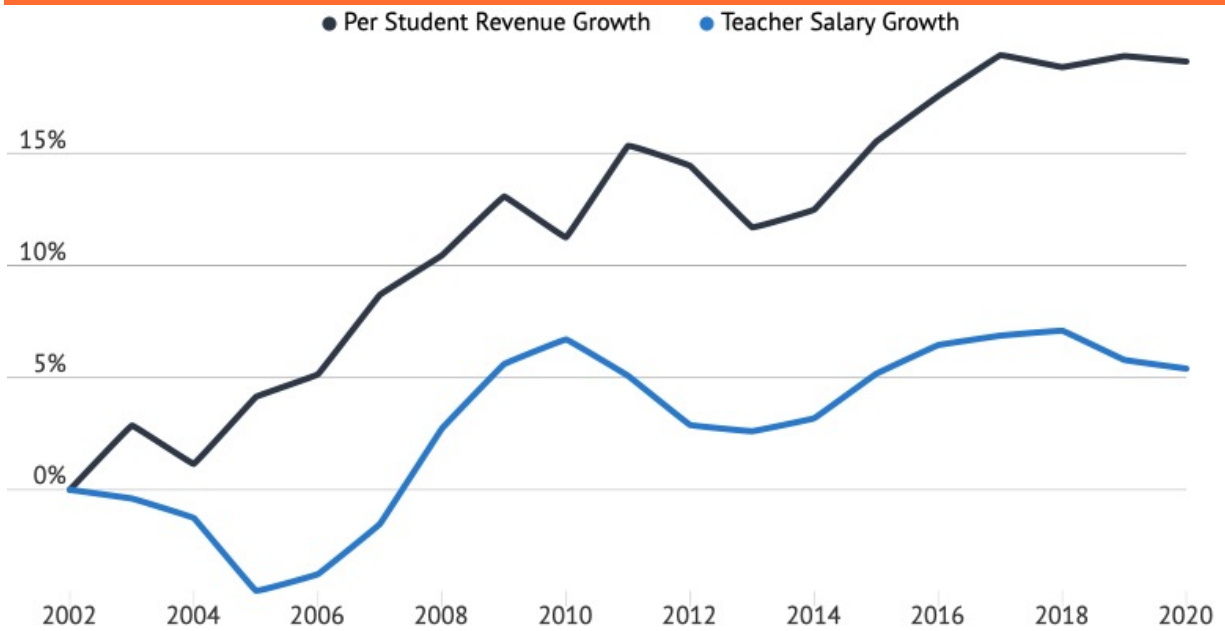


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



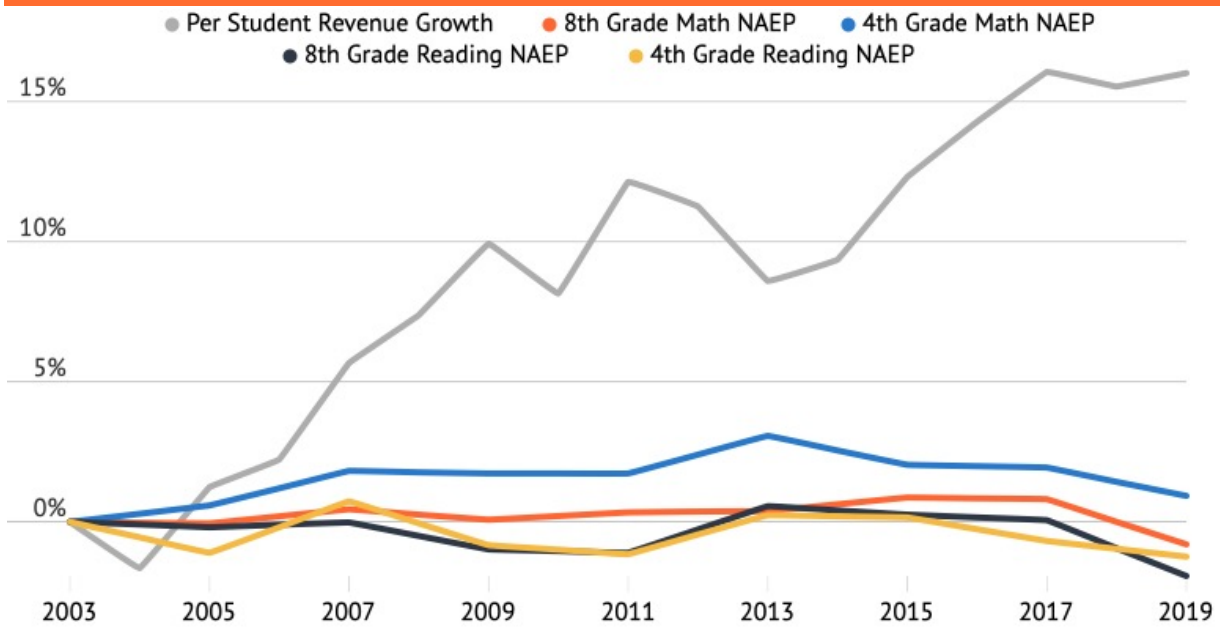
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Iowa's 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by three points (-1.2%), ranking 43rd in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by two points (+0.9%), ranking 39th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by five points (-1.9%), ranking 47th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by two points (+0.8%), ranking 49th.

TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)

Subject	4th Grade			8th Grade		
	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank	Score Growth	Growth Rank	2019 Rank
Reading	-3	43	23	-5	47	32
Math	2	39	24	-2	49	25

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Iowa’s low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by two points (−0.8%), ranking 43rd in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores fell by zero points (−0.1%), ranking 47th. During this time, the state’s 8th grade reading scores decreased by six points (−2.2%), ranking 47th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by one point (+0.3%), ranking 40th.

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	43	24	−6	47	42
Math	0	47	30	1	40	27

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

