

KENTUCKY

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 Kentucky'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

Kentucky's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$10,194 per student in 2002 to \$12,715 per student in 2020, a 24.7% growth rate that ranked 24th highest in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 119.6%—ranking 10th in the country—going from \$1,610 per student to \$3,536 per student. In 2020, Kentucky had \$6,135,048,000 in total education debt, up \$4,195 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	\$10,194	\$12,715	24.7%	24	37
Support Services	\$3,143	\$3,995	27.1%	28	37
Instruction	\$5,734	\$6,665	16.2%	26	31
Benefits	\$1,610	\$3,536	119.6%	10	19
Capital	\$323	\$1,254	288.7%	1	33
Total Debt	\$4,673	\$8,868	89.8%	12	20

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

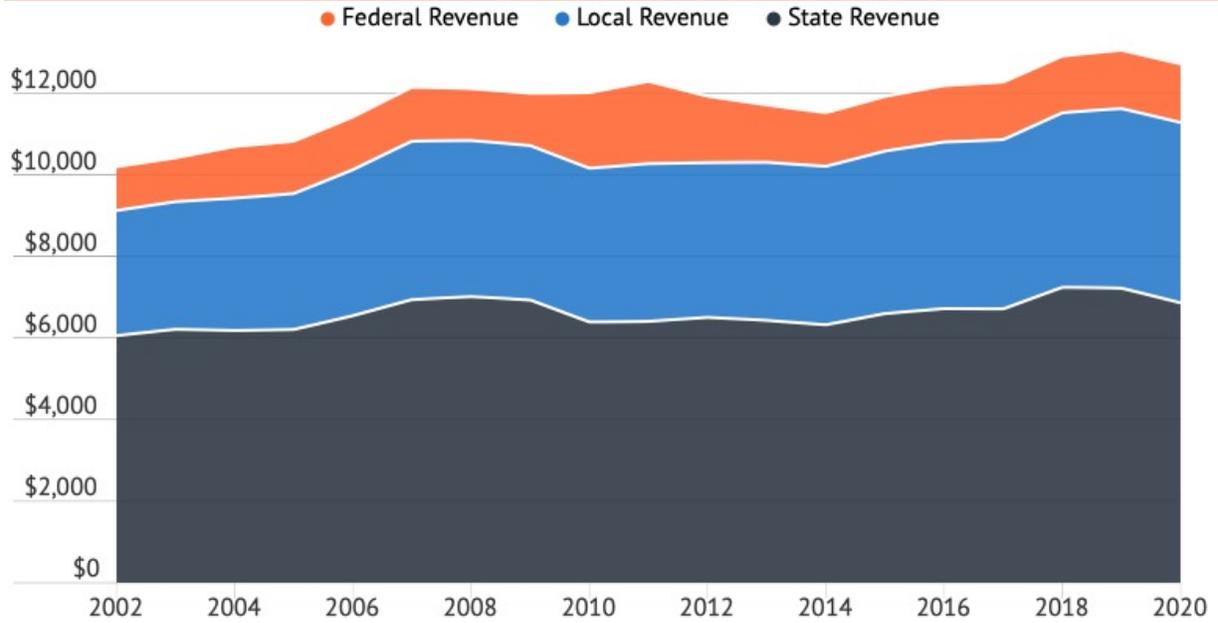
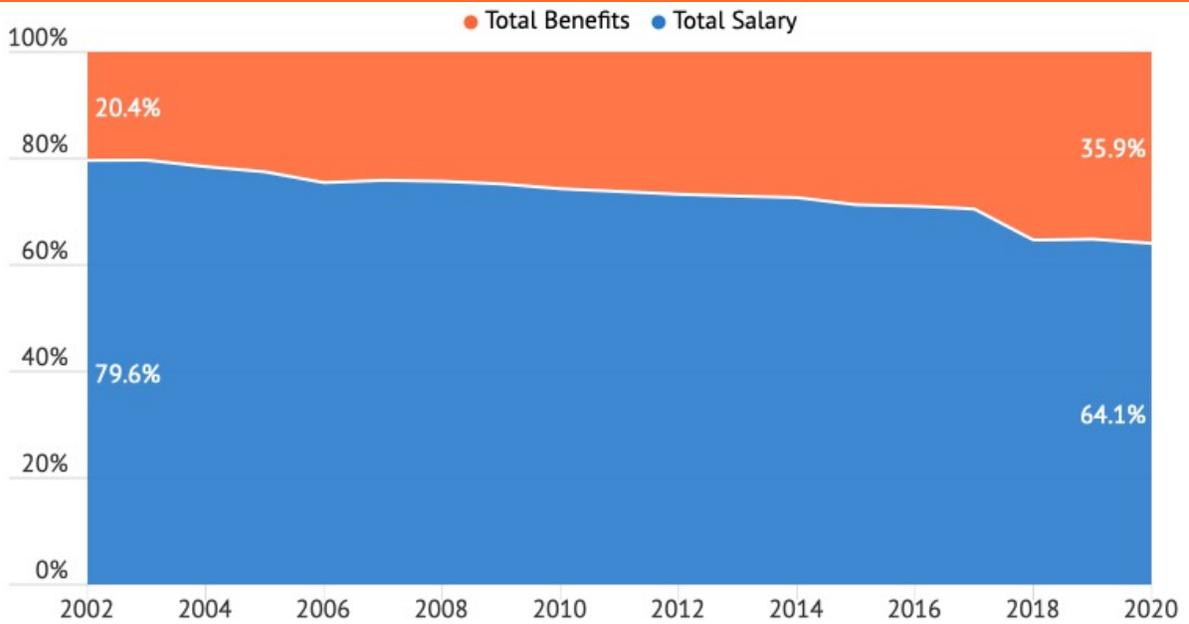


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Kentucky’s student population grew by 5.8%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 4.3%, with teachers increasing by 4.6% and non-teachers increasing by 4.1%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$54,801 in 2002 to \$53,907 in 2020, a -1.6% growth rate that ranked 26th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	654,363	691,996	5.8%	24	27
Total Staff	94,827	98,882	4.3%	37	23
Teachers	40,376	42,223	4.6%	28	26
Non-Teachers	54,451	56,659	4.1%	42	20
Average Teacher Salary	\$54,801	\$53,907	-1.6%	26	35

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

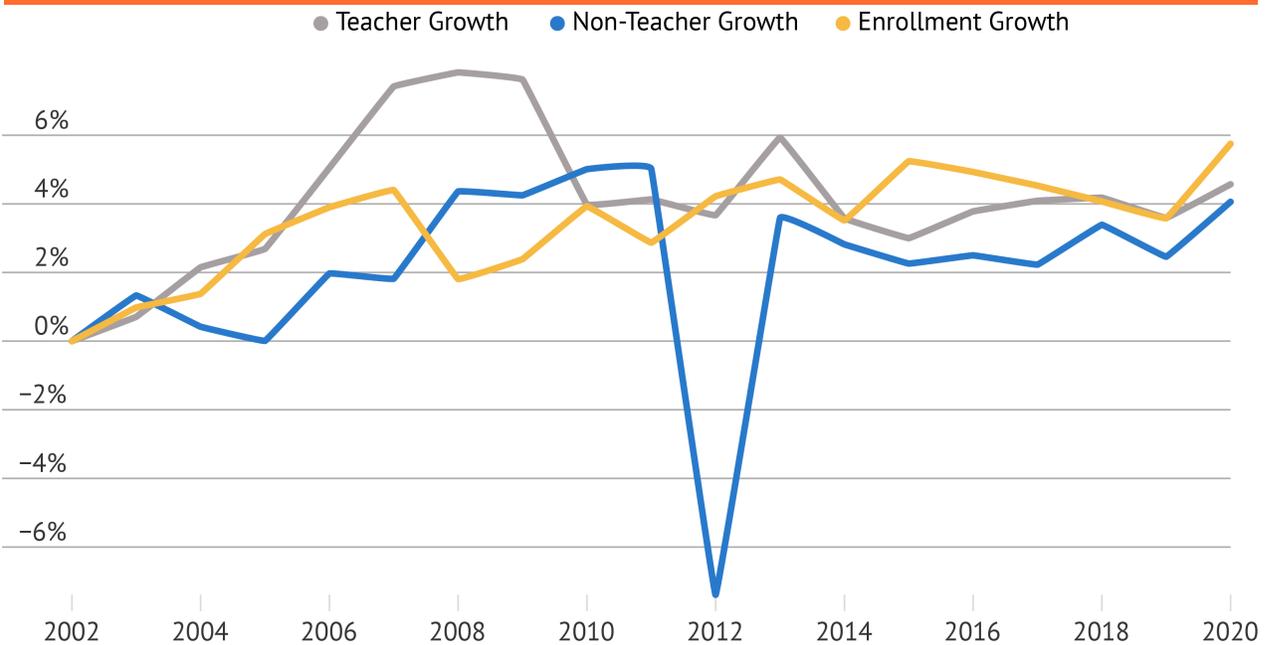
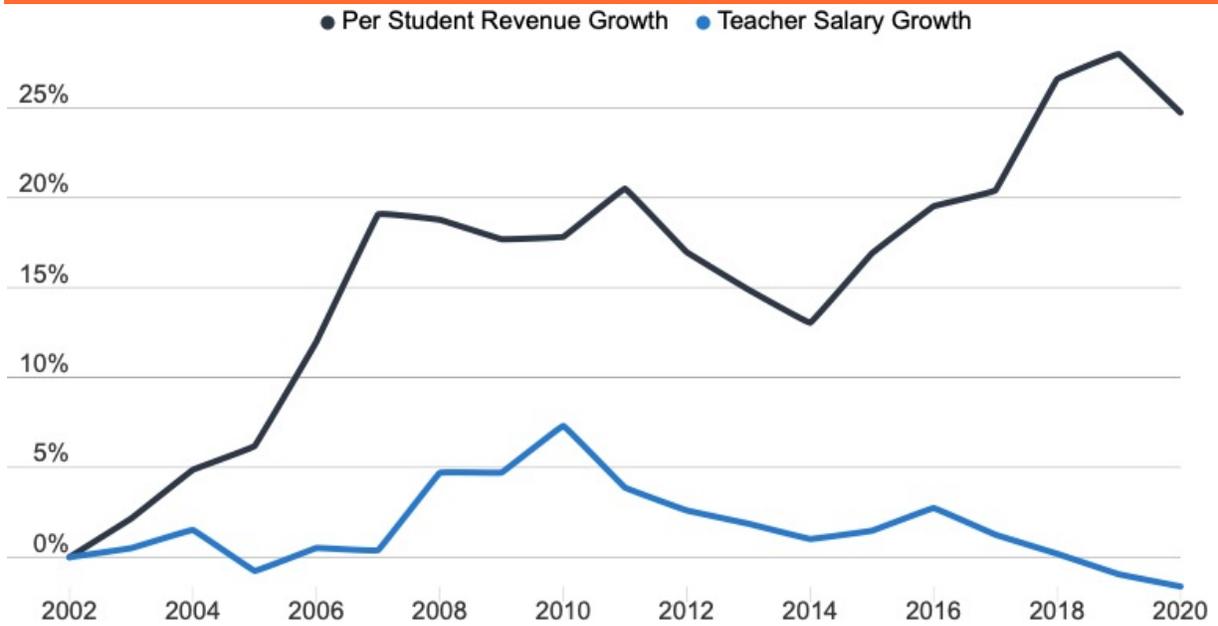


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



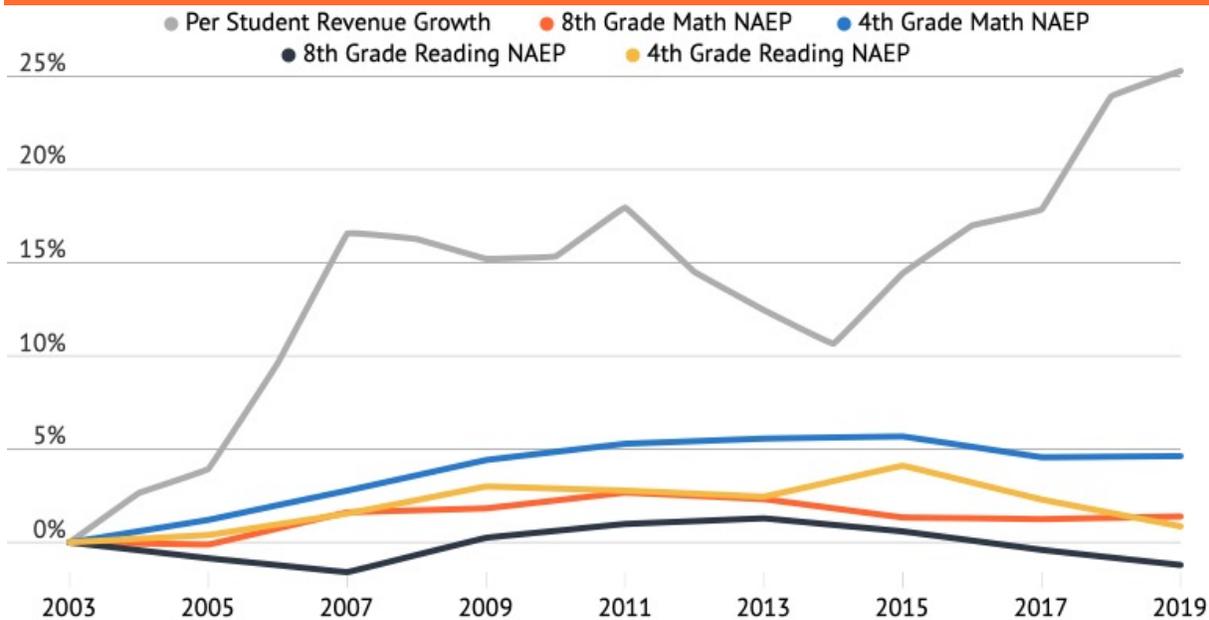
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Kentucky's 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+0.9%), ranking 20th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by 11 points (+4.6%), ranking 5th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by three points (-1.2%), ranking 38th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by four points (+1.4%), ranking 26th.

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	20	22	-3	38	25
Math	11	5	30	4	26	36

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Kentucky's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+1.2%), ranking 26th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by 10 points (+4.6%), ranking 7th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by four points (-1.5%), ranking 43rd in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by six points (+2.2%), ranking 23rd.

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	26	5	-4	43	11
Math	10	7	16	6	23	26

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

