

MONTANA

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 Montana'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

Montana's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$11,051 per student in 2002 to \$13,769 per student in 2020, a 24.6% growth rate that ranked 25th highest in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 34.3%—ranking 42nd in the country—going from \$1,659 per student to \$2,227 per student. In 2020, Montana had \$1,562,040,000 in total education debt, up \$8,128 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	\$11,051	\$13,769	24.6%	25	32
Support Services	\$3,442	\$4,468	29.8%	24	27
Instruction	\$6,300	\$7,131	13.2%	31	29
Benefits	\$1,659	\$2,227	34.3%	42	41
Capital	\$670	\$2,101	213.5%	4	9
Total Debt	\$2,388	\$10,515	340.4%	2	15

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

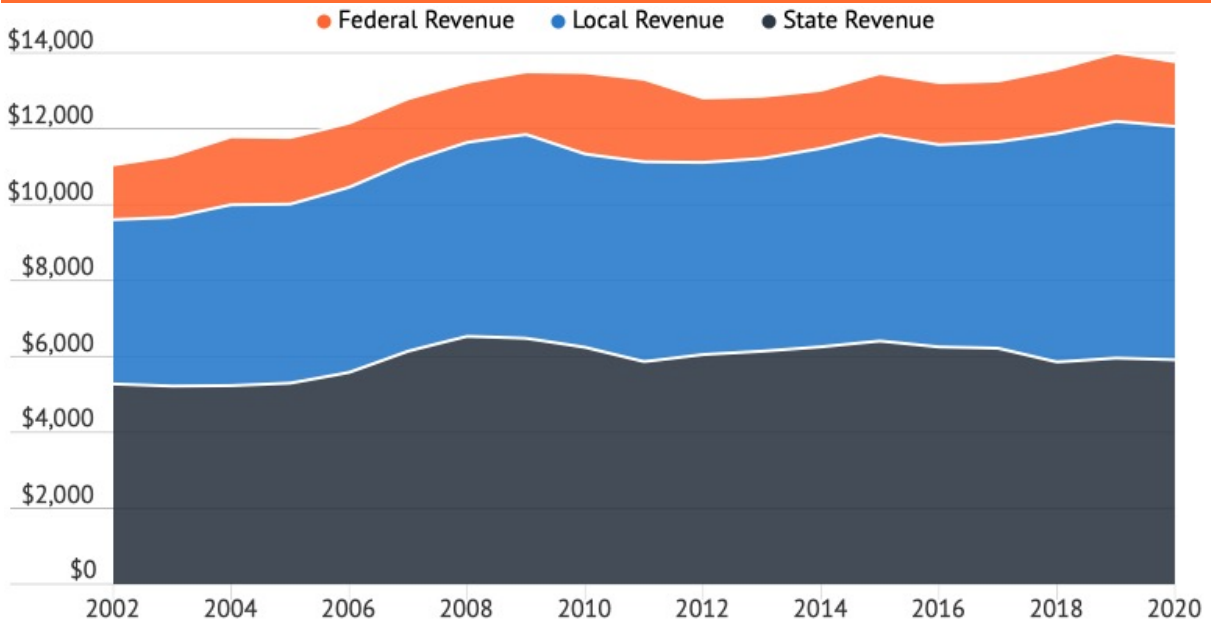
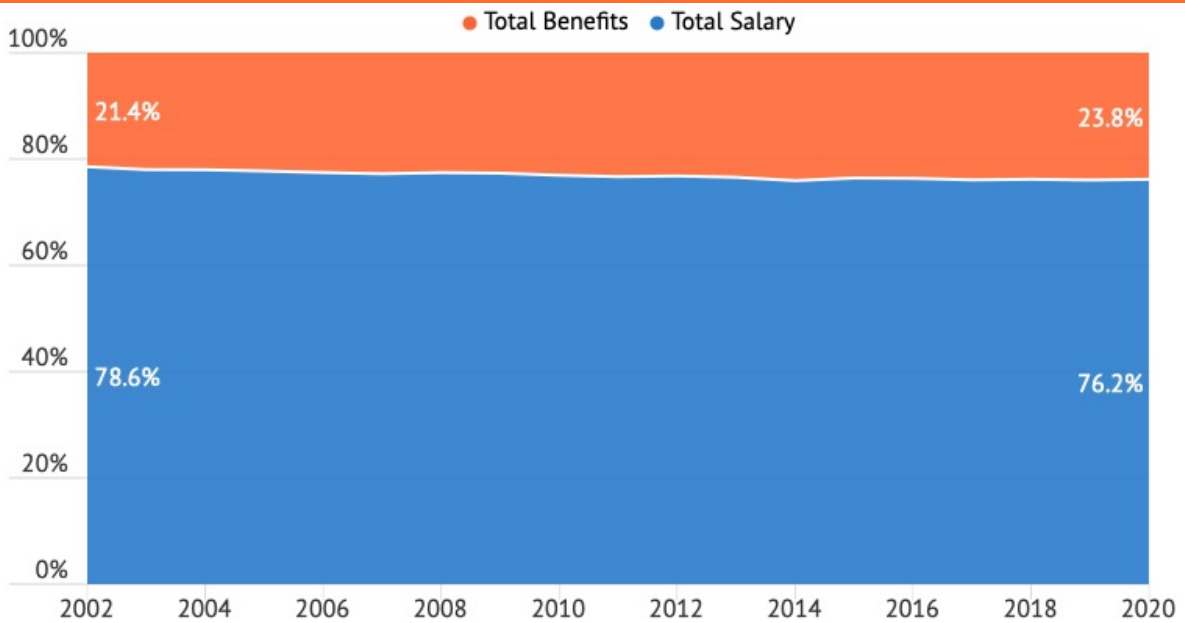


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Montana’s student population declined by 1.3%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 11.5%, with teachers increasing by 2.6% and non-teachers increasing by 21.8%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$49,643 in 2002 to \$52,135 in 2020, a 5.0% growth rate that ranked 14th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	151,947	149,917	-1.3%	33	43
Total Staff	19,488	21,734	11.5%	27	43
Teachers	10,408	10,675	2.6%	32	44
Non-Teachers	9,080	11,059	21.8%	24	43
Average Teacher Salary	\$49,643	\$52,135	5.0%	14	39

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

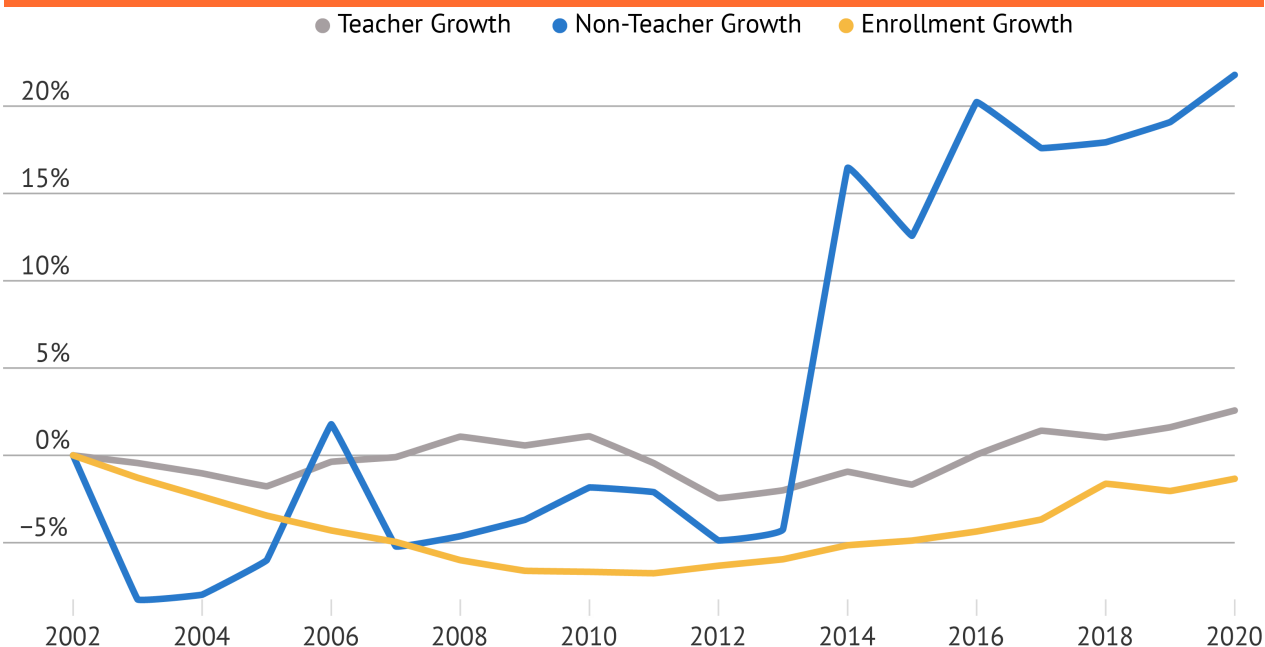
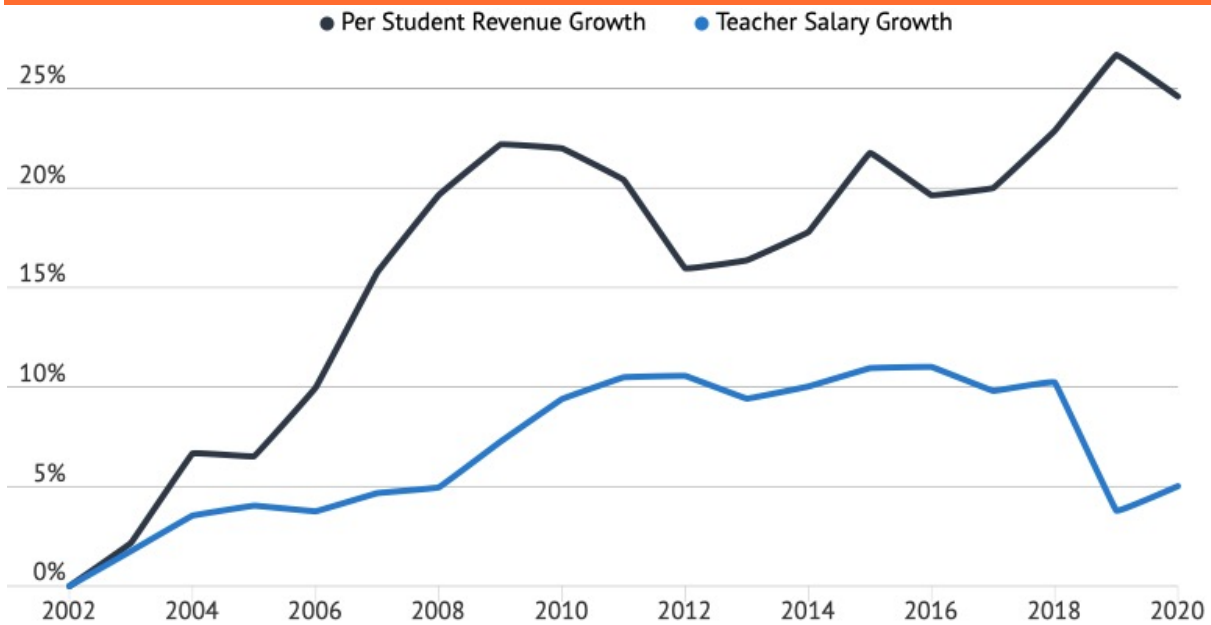


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



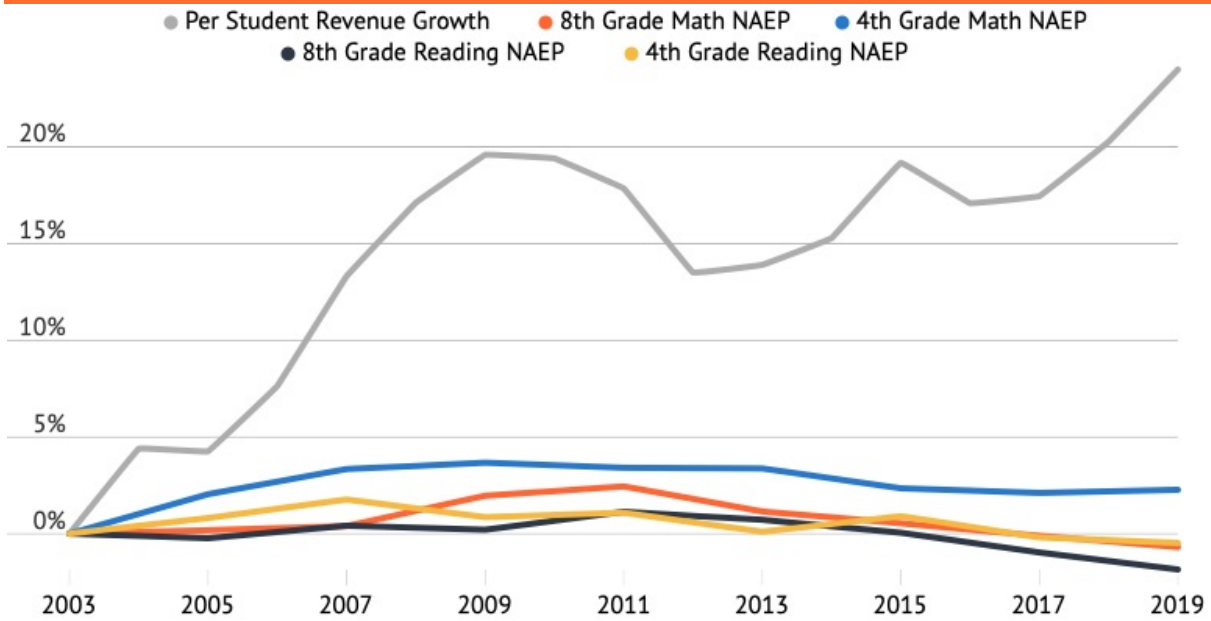
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Montana's 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by one point (-0.5%), ranking 38th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by five points (+2.3%), ranking 26th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by five points (-1.9%), ranking 46th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by two points (-0.7%), ranking 47th.

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	38	18	-5	46	14
Math	5	26	21	-2	47	20

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Montana's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores decreased by zero points (-0.1%), ranking 37th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by four points (+1.8%), ranking 34th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores decreased by five points (-1.9%), ranking 45th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores fell by four points (-1.5%), ranking 49th.

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	0	37	19	-5	45	9
Math	4	34	11	-4	49	15

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

