

# RHODE ISLAND

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 Rhode Island'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.

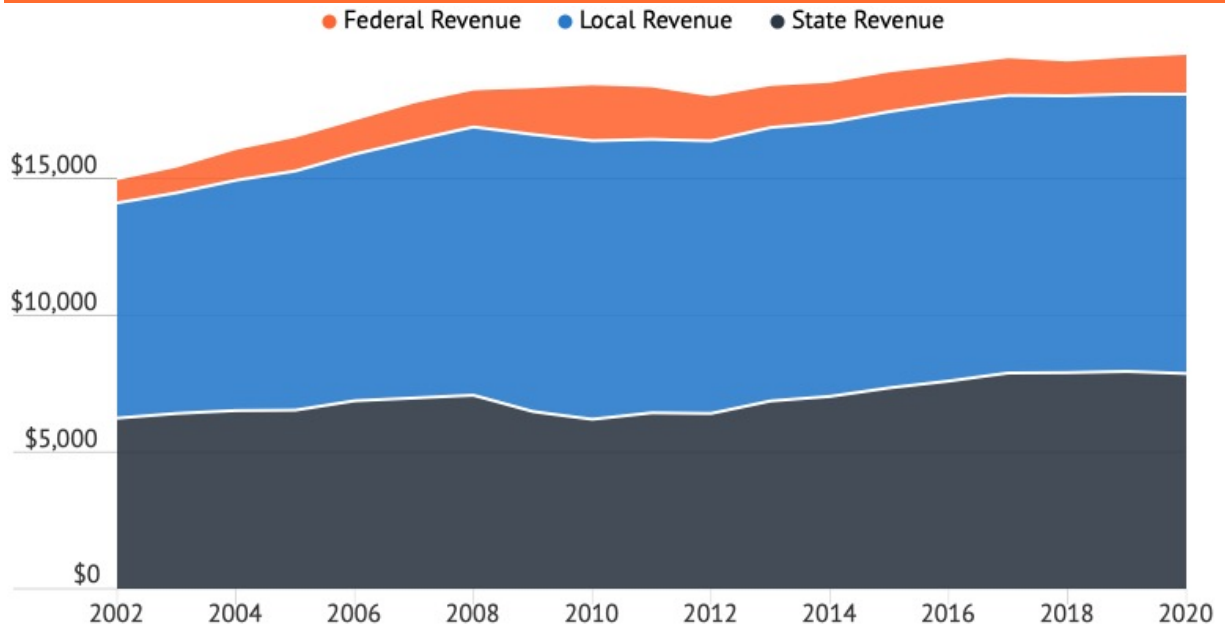
## SPENDING TRENDS

Rhode Island's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$14,993 per student in 2002 to \$19,574 per student in 2020, a 30.6% growth rate that ranked 14<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 79.4%—ranking 19<sup>th</sup> in the country—going from \$2,731 per student to \$4,901 per student. In 2020, Rhode Island had \$876,268,000 in total education debt, up \$4,878 per student in real terms since 2002.

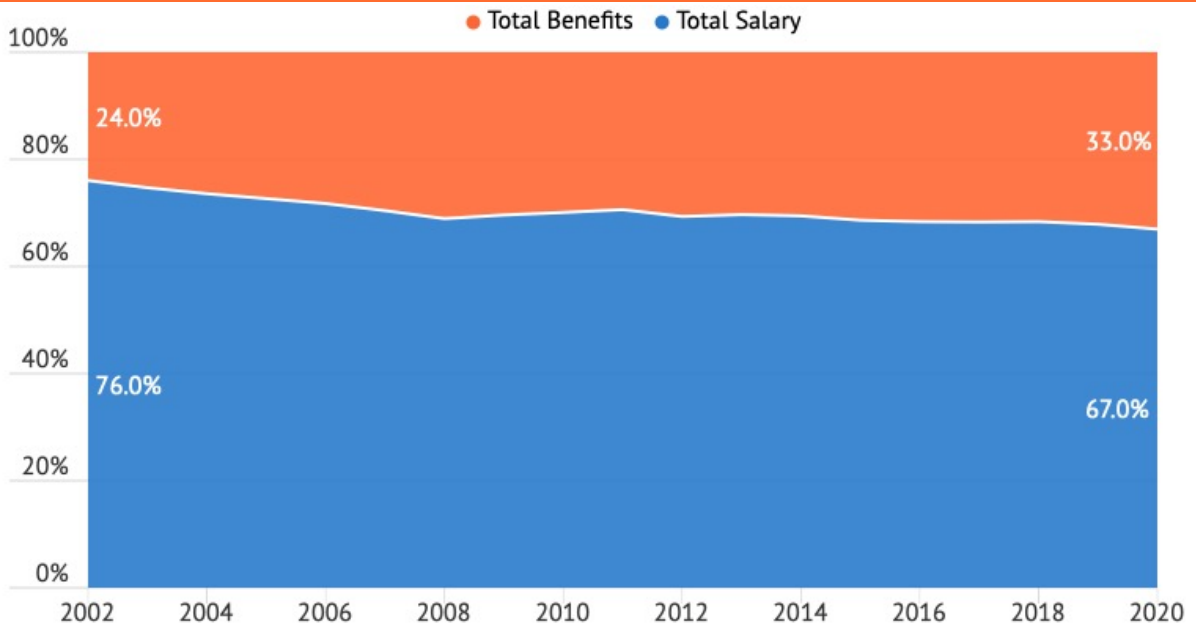
**TABLE 1: SPENDING TRENDS (2002-2020)**

| Category (Per Student) | 2002     | 2020     | Growth Rate | Growth Rank | 2020 Rank |
|------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Revenue                | \$14,993 | \$19,574 | 30.6%       | 14          | 11        |
| Support Services       | \$4,466  | \$6,446  | 44.3%       | 13          | 8         |
| Instruction            | \$8,416  | \$10,023 | 19.1%       | 22          | 9         |
| Benefits               | \$2,731  | \$4,901  | 79.4%       | 19          | 10        |
| Capital                | \$249    | \$941    | 278.0%      | 2           | 43        |
| Total Debt             | \$1,729  | \$6,607  | 282.2%      | 3           | 30        |

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



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



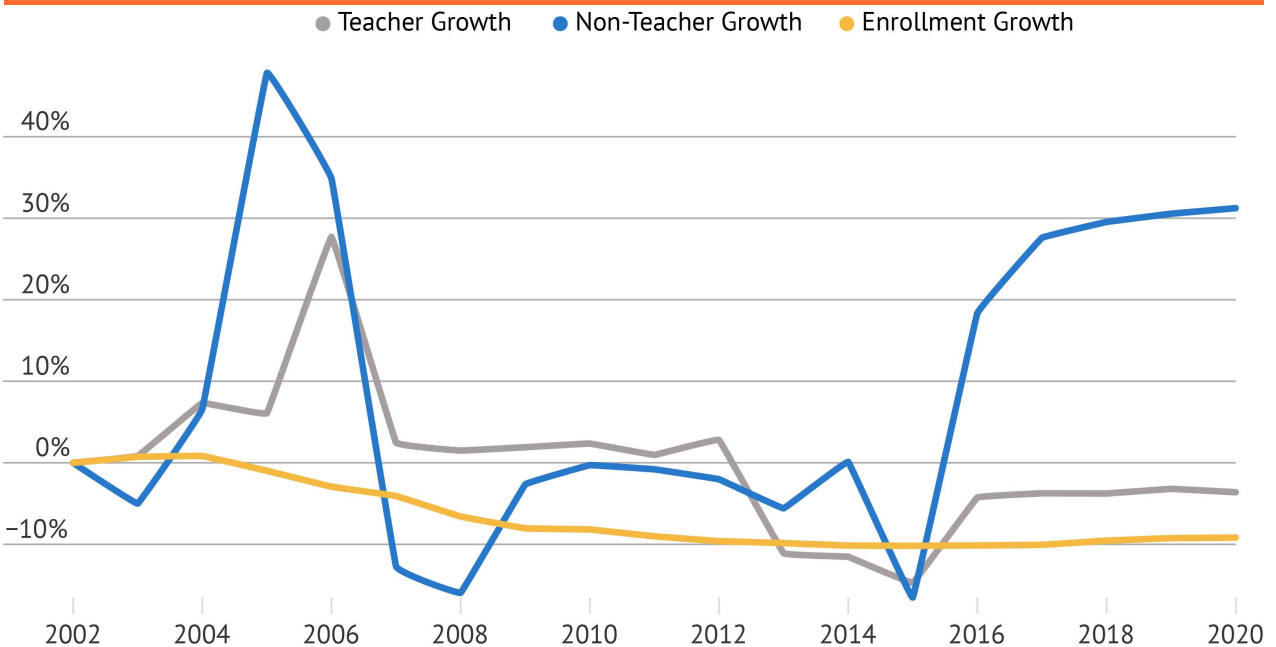
## ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Rhode Island’s student population declined by 9.2%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 10.4%, with teachers decreasing by 3.6% and non-teachers increasing by 31.2%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$71,851 in 2002 to \$75,336 in 2020, a 4.9% growth rate that ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the U.S.

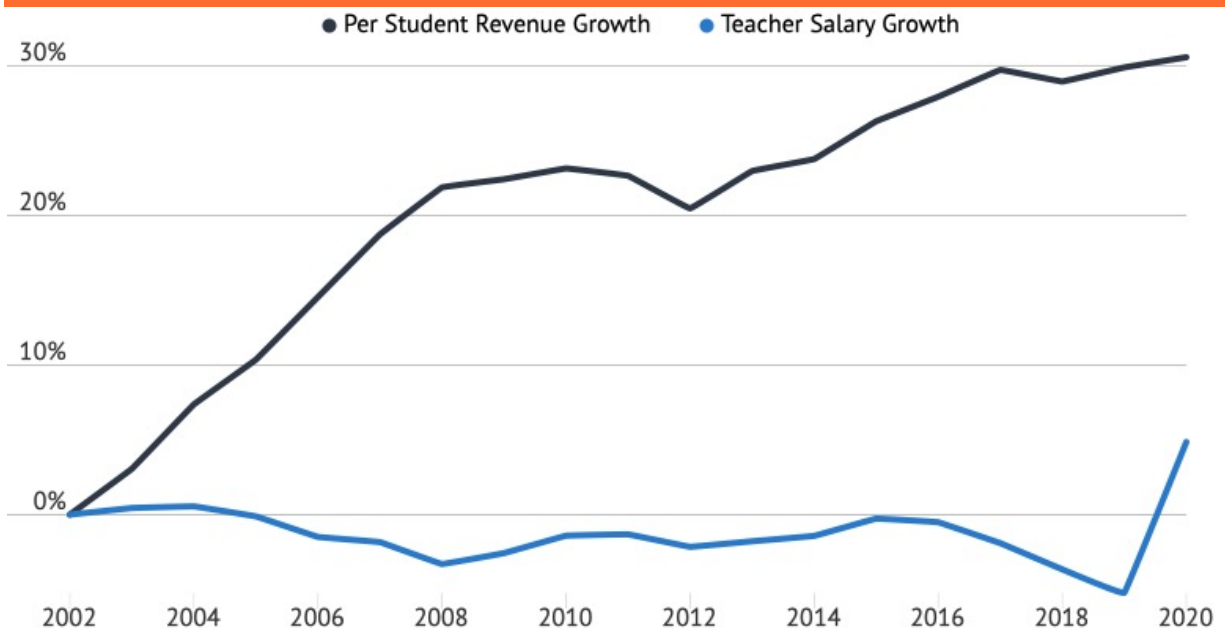
**TABLE 2: ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS (2002-2020)**

| Category               | 2002     | 2020     | Growth Rate | Growth Rank | 2020 Rank |
|------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Enrollment             | 158,046  | 143,557  | -9.2%       | 46          | 44        |
| Total Staff            | 18,584   | 20,519   | 10.4%       | 30          | 44        |
| Teachers               | 11,104   | 10,704   | -3.6%       | 40          | 43        |
| Non-Teachers           | 7,480    | 9,816    | 31.2%       | 12          | 47        |
| Average Teacher Salary | \$71,851 | \$75,336 | 4.9%        | 15          | 7         |

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



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



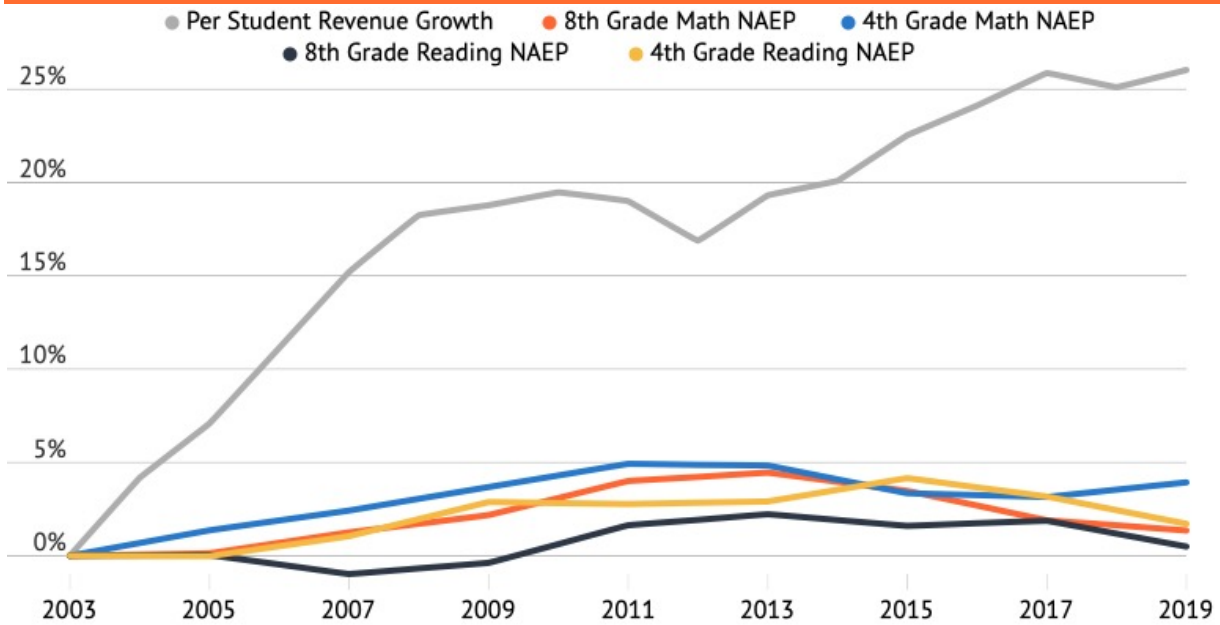
## NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Rhode Island's 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading scores increased by four points (+1.7%), ranking 16<sup>th</sup> in the U.S., while its 4<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by nine points (+3.9%), ranking 6<sup>th</sup>. During this time, the state's 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores increased by one point (+0.5%), ranking 16<sup>th</sup> in the U.S., while its 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by four points (+1.4%), ranking 27<sup>th</sup>.

**TABLE 3: NAEP SCORES (2003-2019)**

| Subject | 4th Grade    |             |           | 8th Grade    |             |           |
|---------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
|         | Score Growth | Growth Rank | 2019 Rank | Score Growth | Growth Rank | 2019 Rank |
| Reading | 4            | 16          | 24        | 1            | 16          | 33        |
| Math    | 9            | 6           | 28        | 4            | 27          | 40        |

**FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH<sup>1</sup>**



## LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Rhode Island’s low-income 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading scores increased by five points (+2.7%), ranking 15<sup>th</sup> in the U.S., while its 4<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by 12 points (+5.3%), ranking 4<sup>th</sup>. During this time, the state’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores decreased by zero points (–0.2%), ranking 33<sup>rd</sup> in the U.S., while its 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by three points (+1.3%), ranking 31<sup>st</sup>.

**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 | 5            | 15          | 33        | 0         | 33          | 47        |
| Math    | 12           | 4           | 24        | 3         | 31          | 49        |

<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>1</sup>**

