

GEORGIA

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 Georgia'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

Georgia's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$12,803 per student in 2002 to \$13,605 per student in 2020, a 6.3% growth rate that ranked 45th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 43.7%—ranking 37th in the country—going from \$2,062 per student to \$2,963 per student. In 2020, Georgia had \$5,188,438,000 in total education debt, down \$811 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	\$12,803	\$13,605	6.3%	45	34
Support Services	\$3,281	\$4,010	22.2%	33	36
Instruction	\$6,769	\$7,111	5.0%	44	30
Benefits	\$2,062	\$2,963	43.7%	37	29
Capital	\$1,629	\$1,325	-18.7%	38	31
Total Debt	\$3,800	\$2,989	-21.3%	46	47

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

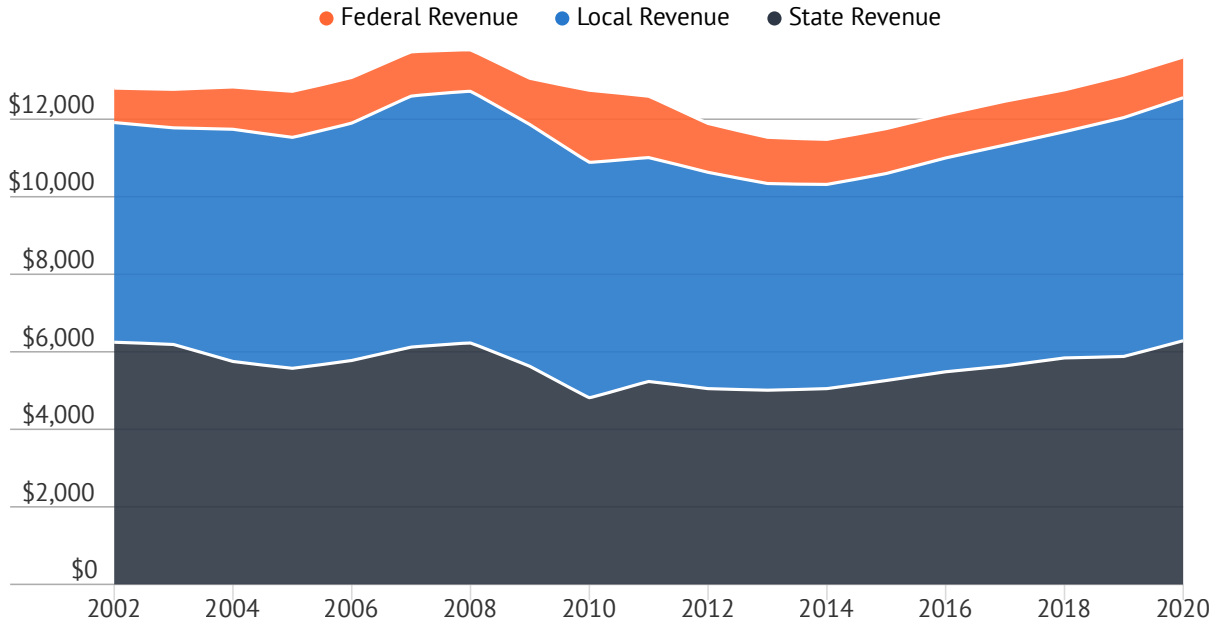
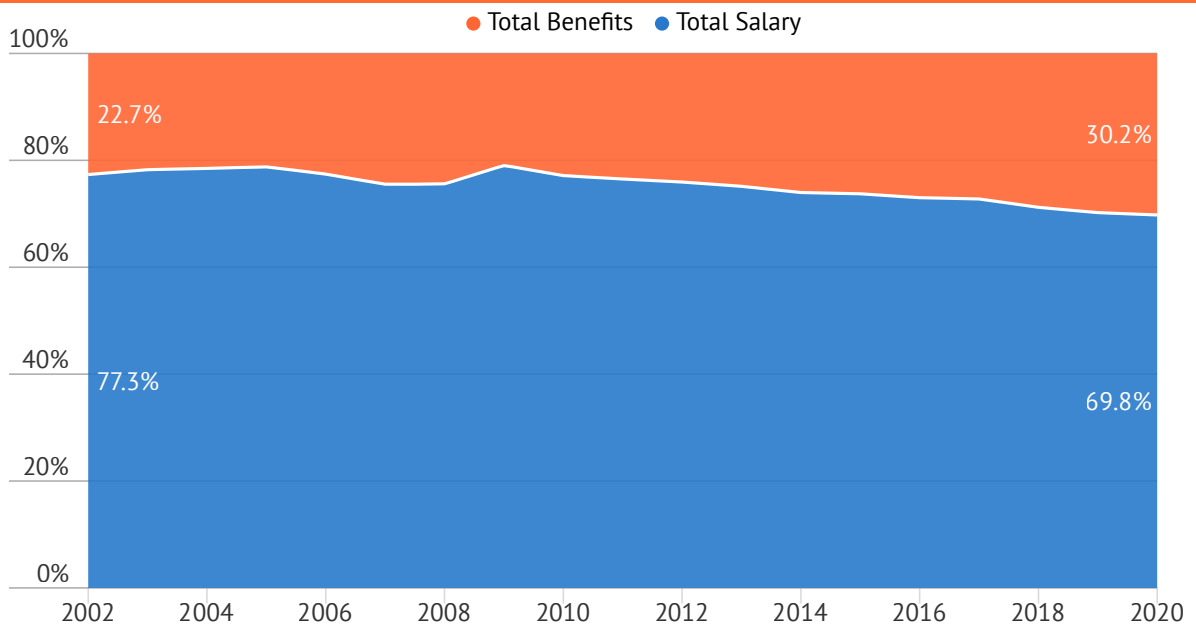


FIGURE 2: K-12 TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS (2002-2020)



ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Georgia’s student population grew by 20.3%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 24.9%, with teachers increasing by 27.1% and non-teachers increasing by 22.8%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$63,641 in 2002 to \$60,578 in 2020, a -4.8% growth rate that ranked 38th in the U.S.

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

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	1,470,634	1,769,657	20.3%	8	6
Total Staff	190,053	237,311	24.9%	9	9
Teachers	92,731	117,837	27.1%	5	7
Non-Teachers	97,322	119,474	22.8%	23	9
Average Teacher Salary	\$63,641	\$60,578	-4.8%	38	18

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

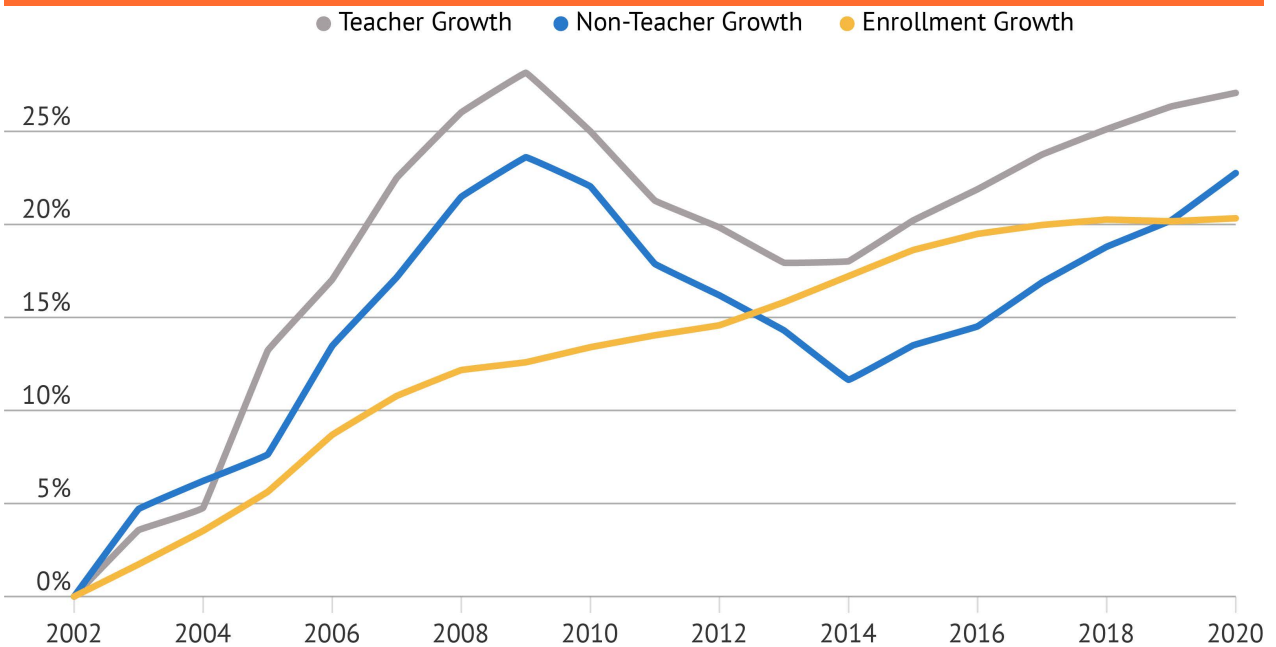
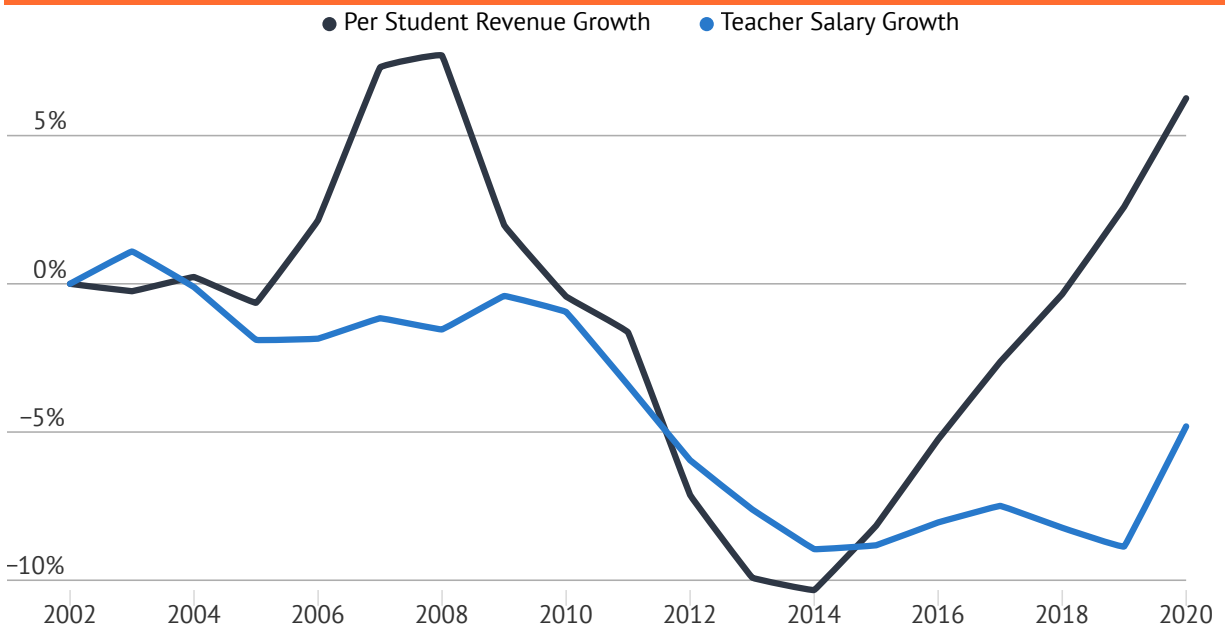


FIGURE 4: TEACHER SALARY GROWTH VS. REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH (2002-2020)



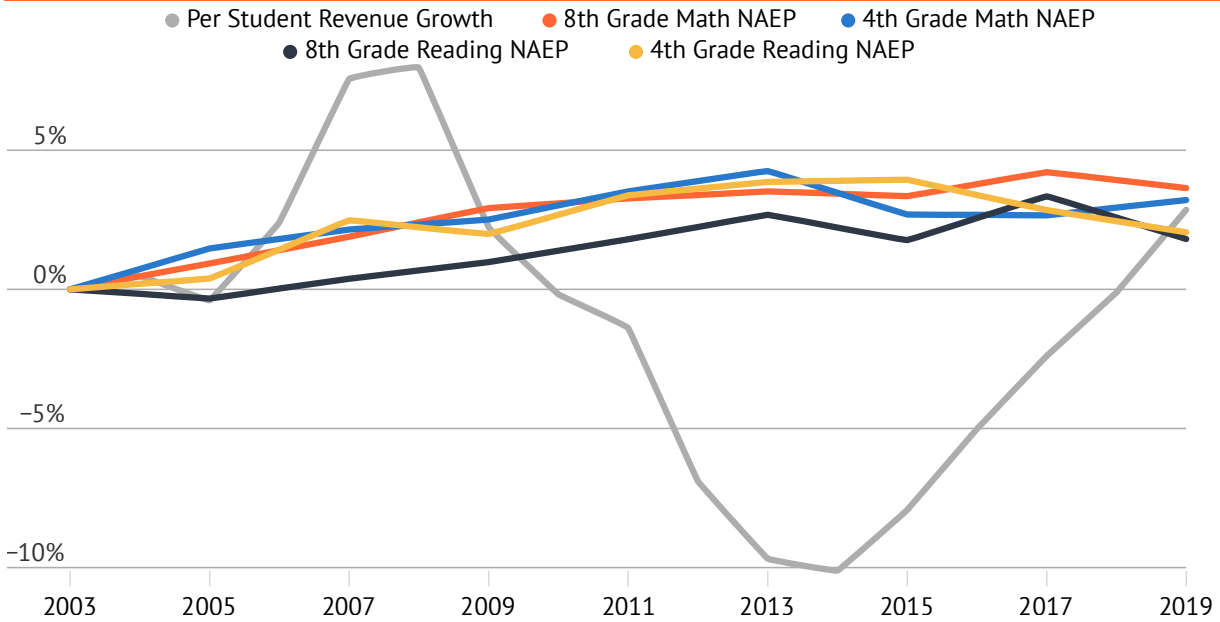
NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Georgia's 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by four points (+2.1%), ranking 13th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by seven points (+3.2%), ranking 15th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by five points (+1.8%), ranking 5th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by 10 points (+3.6%), ranking 4th.

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	13	35	5	5	31
Math	7	15	35	10	4	34

FIGURE 5: NAEP SCORE GROWTH VS REVENUE PER STUDENT GROWTH¹



LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Georgia's low-income 4th grade NAEP reading scores increased by seven points (+3.5%), ranking 10th in the U.S., while its 4th grade math scores grew by eight points (+3.8%), ranking 16th. During this time, the state's 8th grade reading scores increased by nine points (+3.5%), ranking 4th in the U.S., while its 8th grade math scores grew by 13 points (+5.0%), ranking 2nd.

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	7	10	26	9	4	14
Math	8	16	31	13	2	31

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

