

# NEBRASKA

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 Nebraska'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.

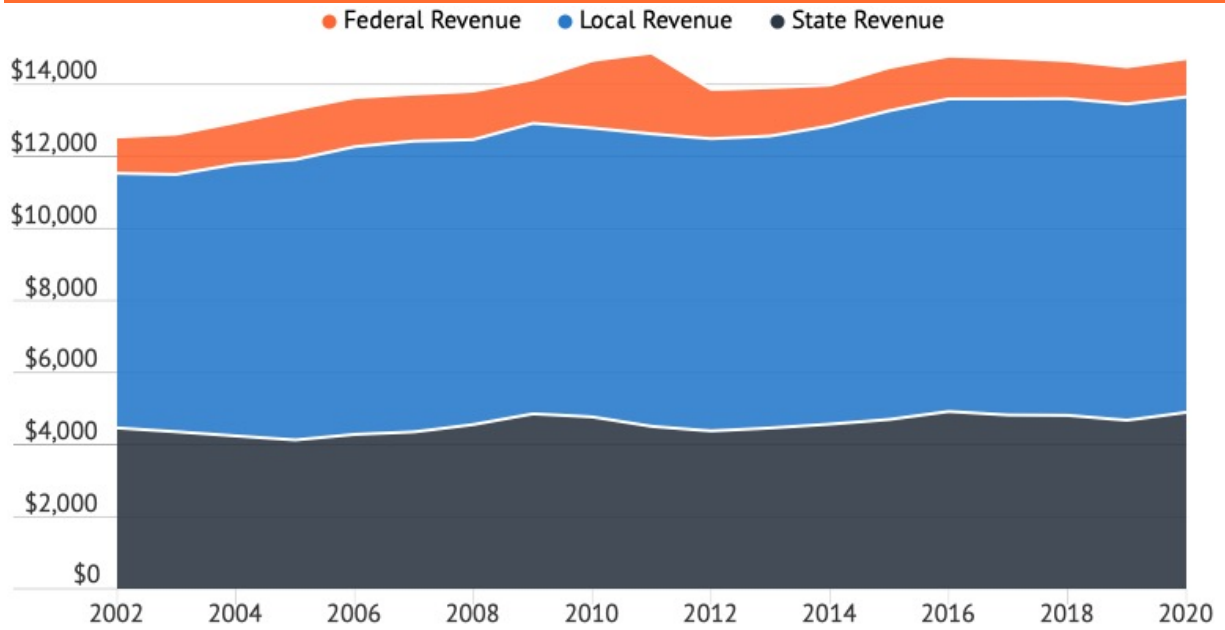
## SPENDING TRENDS

Nebraska's inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$12,545 per student in 2002 to \$14,717 per student in 2020, a 17.3% growth rate that ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 57.0%—ranking 25<sup>th</sup> in the country—going from \$1,819 per student to \$2,856 per student. In 2020, Nebraska had \$3,802,252,000 in total education debt, up \$6,007 per student in real terms since 2002.

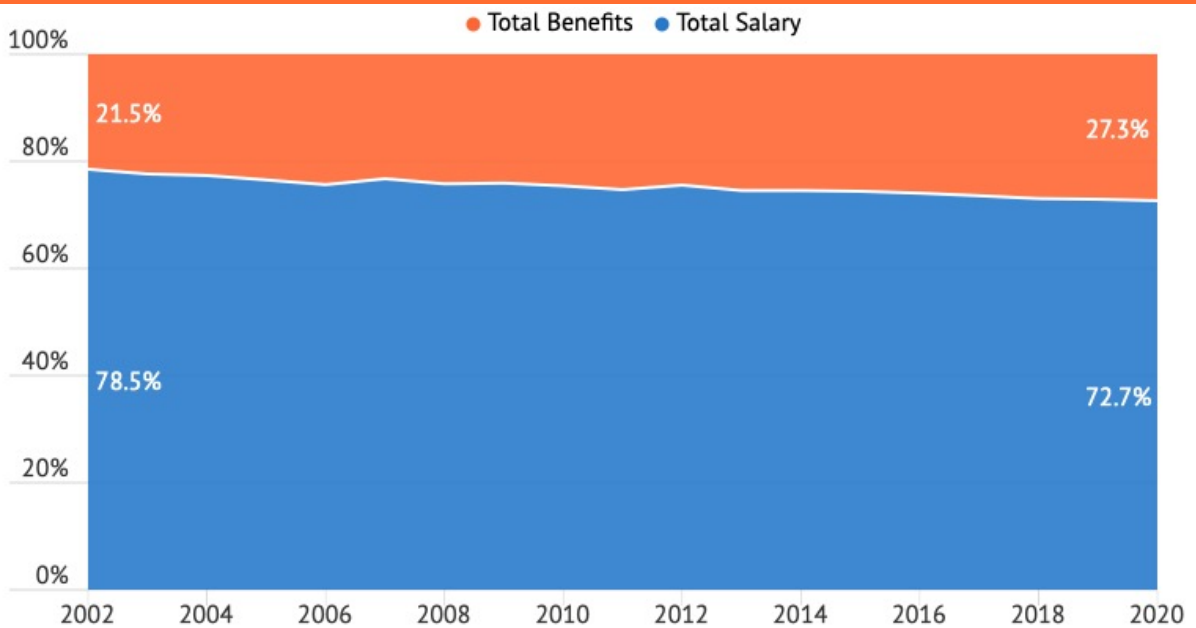
**TABLE 1: SPENDING TRENDS (2002-2020)**

Category (Per Student)	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Revenue	\$12,545	\$14,717	17.3%	33	24
Support Services	\$3,388	\$4,397	29.8%	25	30
Instruction	\$6,793	\$8,007	17.9%	24	21
Benefits	\$1,819	\$2,856	57.0%	25	30
Capital	\$1,854	\$1,762	-5.0%	29	20
Total Debt	\$5,540	\$11,547	108.4%	10	13

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



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



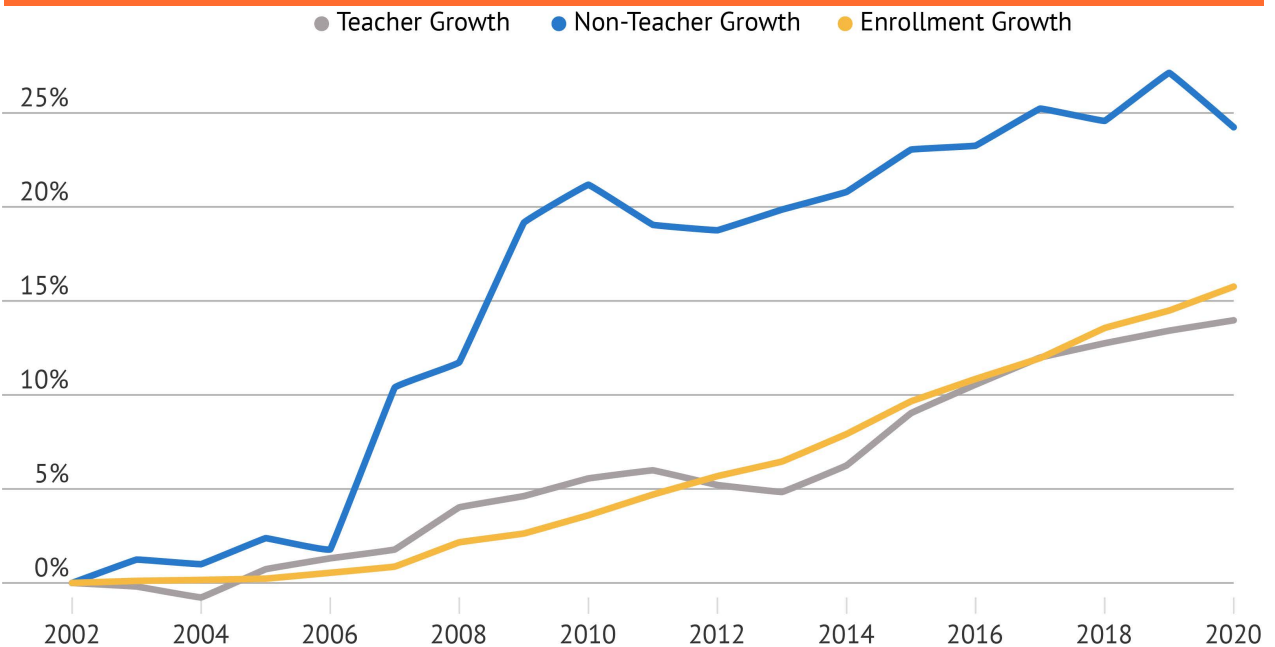
## ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS

Between 2002 and 2020, Nebraska’s student population grew by 15.8%. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 18.9%, with teachers increasing by 14.0% and non-teachers increasing by 24.2%. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$52,325 in 2002 to \$55,267 in 2020, a 5.6% growth rate that ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the U.S.

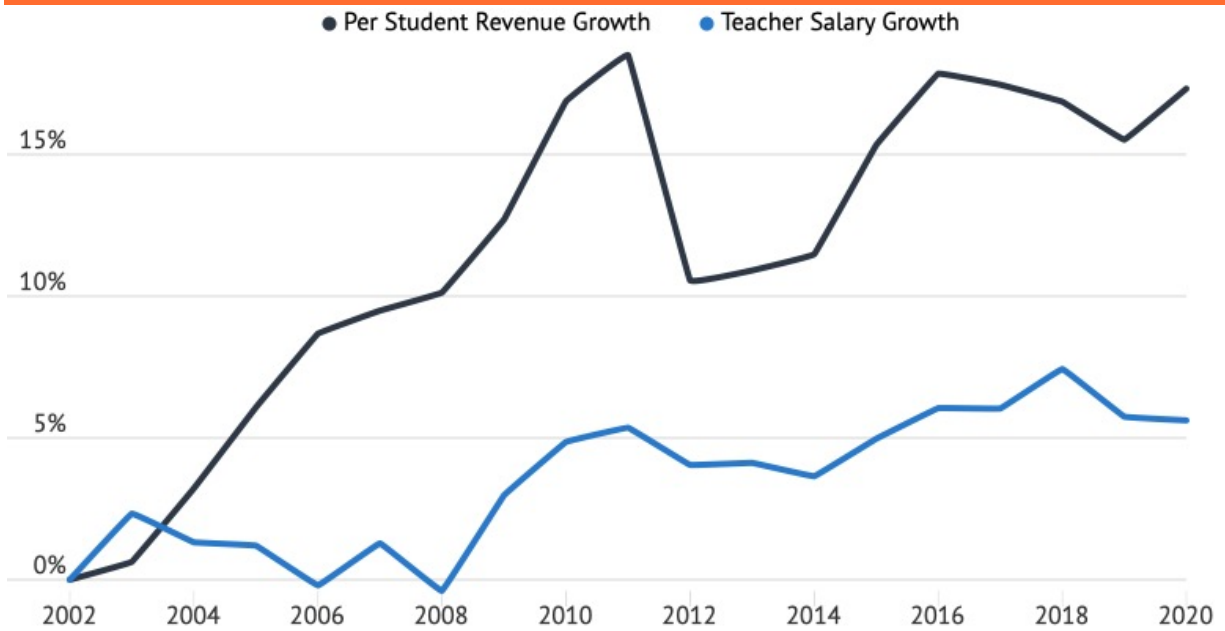
**TABLE 2: ENROLLMENT AND STAFFING TRENDS (2002-2020)**

Category	2002	2020	Growth Rate	Growth Rank	2020 Rank
Enrollment	285,095	330,018	15.8%	11	37
Total Staff	40,541	48,202	18.9%	18	36
Teachers	21,083	24,028	14.0%	15	36
Non-Teachers	19,458	24,174	24.2%	22	35
Average Teacher Salary	\$52,325	\$55,267	5.6%	11	29

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



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



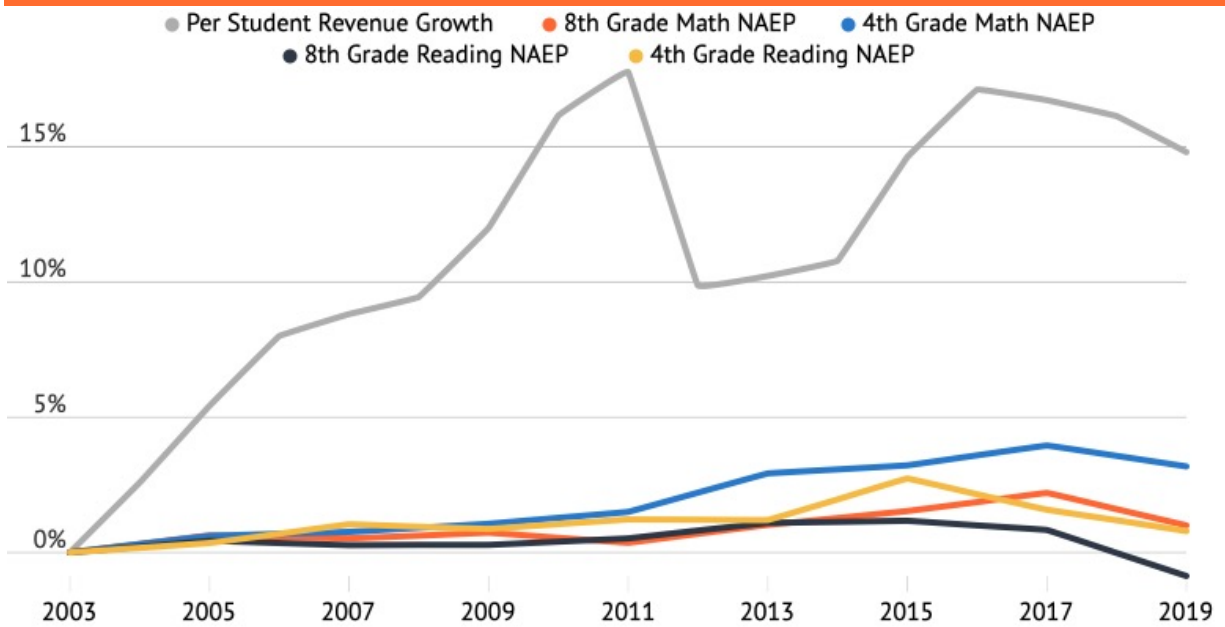
## NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Nebraska's 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+0.8%), ranking 22<sup>nd</sup> in the U.S., while its 4<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by eight points (+3.2%), ranking 14<sup>th</sup>. During this time, the state's 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores decreased by two points (-0.9%), ranking 32<sup>nd</sup> in the U.S., while its 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by three points (+1.0%), ranking 28<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	2	22	13	-2	32	19
Math	8	14	11	3	28	17

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



## LOW-INCOME NAEP TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2019, Nebraska's low-income 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading scores increased by two points (+1.2%), ranking 27<sup>th</sup> in the U.S., while its 4<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by 10 points (+4.5%), ranking 8<sup>th</sup>. During this time, the state's 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores decreased by three points (-1.3%), ranking 41<sup>st</sup> in the U.S., while its 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores grew by five points (+1.8%), ranking 26<sup>th</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	2	27	12	-3	41	29
Math	10	8	8	5	26	12

<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>**

