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# Funding for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Congress provides annual appropriations and periodically provides supplemental appropriations for public elementary and secondary schools through many agencies and programs. Of these funds, the largest tranche of federal funding for public elementary and secondary schools is for programs authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). All ESEA programs are administered by the Department of Education (ED).

This In Focus examines revenues for public elementary and secondary education (hereinafter referred to as public education) and the share of this revenue provided by the federal government. It also details overall federal funding provided for ESEA programs since FY2002, following the reauthorization of the ESEA by the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110).

## Revenues for Public Education

Each year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at ED collects data on revenues and expenditures for public education using the National Public Education Financial Survey (NPEFS). Revenues and expenditures are reported by states for prekindergarten through high school.

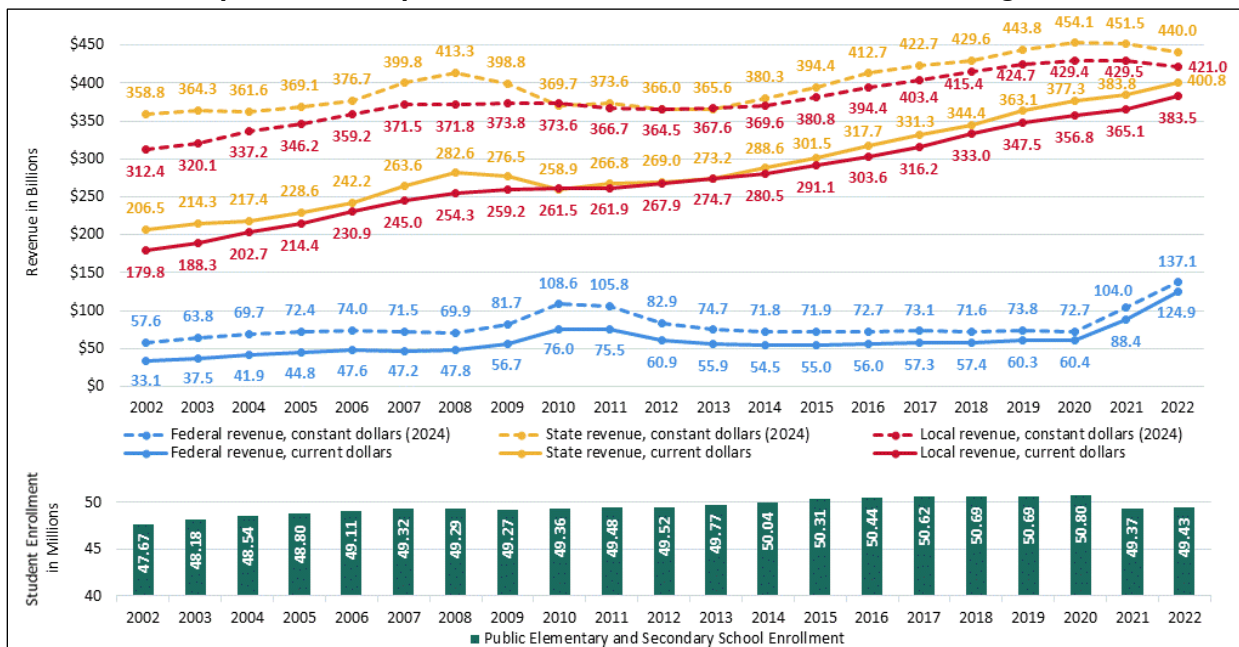
Revenue data are available by source: federal, state, and local. Federal revenue sources include, for example, ESEA grants, funds provided under the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act, Medicaid reimbursements, and COVID-19 federal assistance funds (e.g., Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief [ESSER] Fund).

The current year (i.e., unadjusted) revenues shown in **Figure 1** are based on federal, state, and local data reported by NCES for FY2002 (2001-2002 school year) through FY2022 (2021-2022 school year), which are the most recent data available. The figure also shows revenues in constant (i.e., inflation-adjusted) 2024 dollars. Inflation adjustments were made by CRS using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The annual average CPI-U was adjusted from a calendar year basis to a school-year basis (i.e., the 12-month average from July 2023 through June 2024, referred to as the 2023-2024 CPI-U).

Over this period, total revenues for public schools have increased from \$419.5 billion (\$728.8 billion in constant dollars) in FY2002 to \$909.2 billion (\$998.0 billion in constant 2024 dollars) in FY2022 (**Figure 1**). Most of these funds were provided by state and local sources. **Figure 1** also includes public school enrollment data over the same period. After increasing for many years, enrollment declined in fall 2020 (FY2021).

**Figure 1. Revenues for Public Education in Current and Constant 2024 Dollars, by Source and Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment: School Year 2001-2002 through 2021-2022**



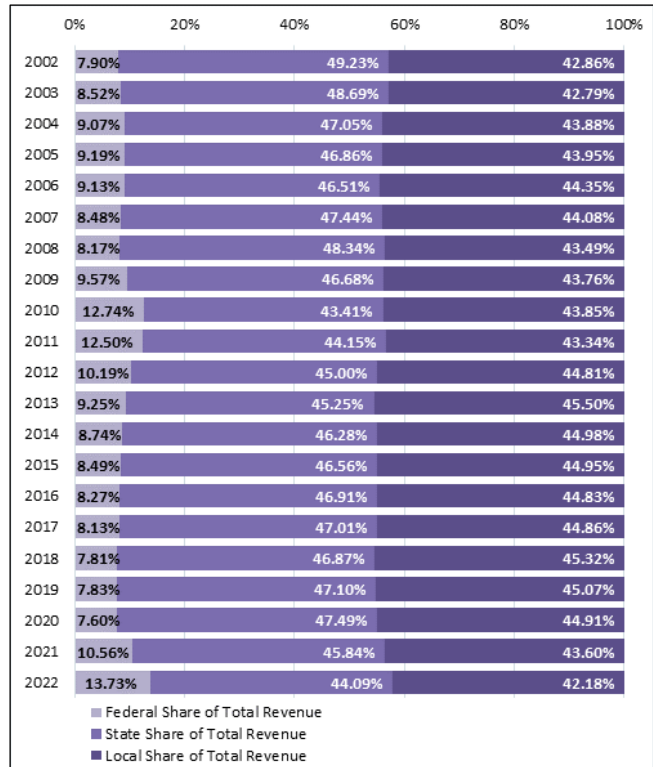
**Source:** Revenue data obtained from the Digest of Education Statistics: 2023, Table 235.10; and Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY22. Enrollment data obtained from the Digest of Education Statistics, current tables, Table 105.30.  
**Notes:** Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and adjusted to a school-year basis (July 2023 to June 2024) by CRS.

While the federal government has annually provided billions of dollars in support for public education, federal funding has generally accounted for less than 10% of the annual revenue provided for public education on average nationwide since FY2002 (**Figure 2**). Exceptions have occurred when the federal government has provided supplemental aid in response to a national crisis—the Great Recession in FY2010 (2009-2010 school year) through FY2012 (2011-2012 school year) and the COVID-19 pandemic in FY2021 (2020-2021 school year) and FY2022 (2021-2022 school year). However, federal revenue can regularly exceed 10% of total revenue for public education for some states and local educational agencies (LEAs), while being much less than the national average for others.

### ESEA Funding

**Figure 3** provides total ESEA funding only, as opposed to all federal revenue for public education depicted in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, provided through annual appropriations acts from FY2002 through FY2024 as calculated by CRS. The appropriations included in **Figure 3** are based on the most recent data available from ED’s Budget Service Office. It should be noted that ED considers all of the funds provided in an appropriations act for a given fiscal year to be appropriations for that fiscal year, including any advance appropriations provided for the following fiscal year. For example, ED considers all of the funds provided in the FY2024 appropriations act, including advance appropriations provided for FY2025, to be FY2024 appropriations. These funds will be used primarily during the 2024-2025 school year. **Figure 3** follows this convention with regard to the fiscal year of the funds. Data are presented in current dollars and constant 2024 dollars based on the 2023-2024 CPI-U.

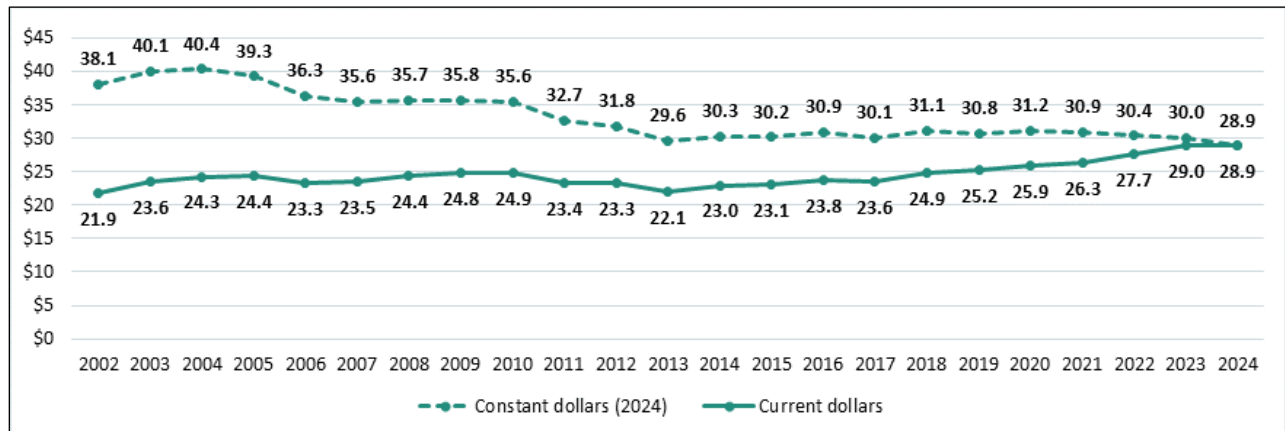
**Figure 2. Share of Total Revenues for Public Education, by Source: School Year 2001-2002 through 2021-2022**



**Source:** Revenue data obtained from the Digest of Education Statistics: 2023, Table 235.10; and Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY22.

**Note:** Revenue shares may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**Figure 3. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Funding in Current and Constant 2024 Dollars, FY2002-FY2024**  
(dollars in billions)



**Source:** Figure prepared based on CRS analysis of data available from the U.S. Department of Education, Budget Service, various years.

**Notes:** Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and adjusted to a school-year basis (July 2023 to June 2024) by CRS.

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