



OKLAHOMA  
Education

# OKLAHOMA PUBLIC EDUCATION: OVERVIEW AND KEY TRENDS

2025-2026

# INTRODUCTION

Oklahoma's education system serves as a cornerstone of the state, reflecting both its communities and its commitment to preparing students for the future. This report offers a clear look at how our PK–12 system is evolving to meet the needs of students, families, and educators.

Inside, you'll find insights into the changing demographics of our student population, the diverse pathways teachers take into the profession, and the investments that make Oklahoma's teacher compensation regionally competitive. The data also highlights how school finance has shifted over the past decade, how student support systems are adapting to challenges like absenteeism, and how academic outcomes such as early literacy and math readiness point the way toward future priorities.

To make this report even more accessible, each page includes a QR code that readers can scan to explore additional resources, interactive data, and deeper context behind the numbers.

Our goal is to provide an honest, accessible picture of where Oklahoma education stands today. By understanding the structures, the resources, and the outcomes shaping our schools, we can better plan for tomorrow and ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to thrive.

*Lindel Fields*

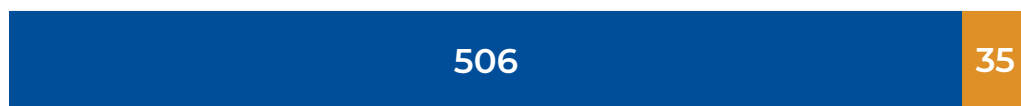


# SCHOOL STRUCTURE

Oklahoma's PK-12 system spans 77 counties and includes both traditional and charter schools. The state's comparatively high number of districts reflects longstanding local governance traditions and a geographically dispersed population. About 60% of Oklahoma public schools are classified as rural, compared with roughly one quarter of public schools nationally. Together, these structural features shape staffing patterns, funding distribution, transportation needs, and service delivery statewide.

**541** DISTRICTS

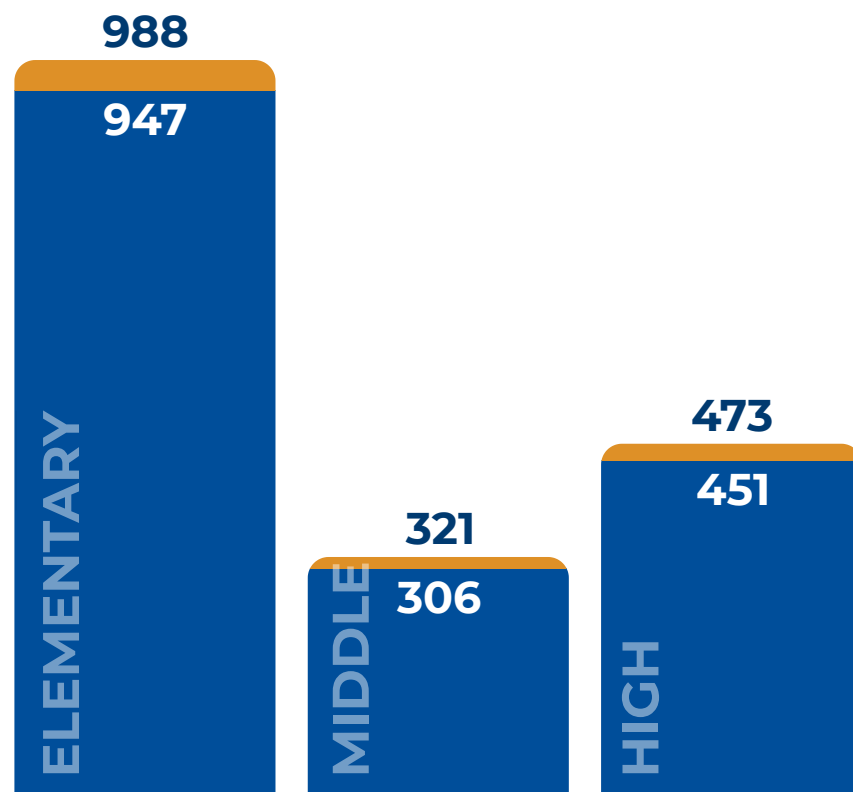
## Traditional vs Charter Districts



● Rural Districts ● Non-Rural Districts



● Traditional ● Charter



## Number of Schools Sites by Type

Understanding Oklahoma's structural landscape provides context for staffing patterns, funding distribution, and student experiences statewide, ensuring fair resource allocation to meet the needs of all students across diverse communities.



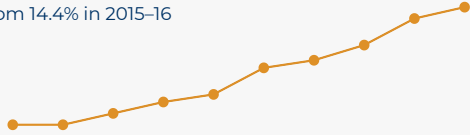
Source: OSDE Office of Accreditation (SY26); NREA: *Why Rural Matters* (2025)

# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## IEP (Special Education)

**17.5%**

▲ Up from 14.4% in 2015–16



## English Language Learners

**10.7%**

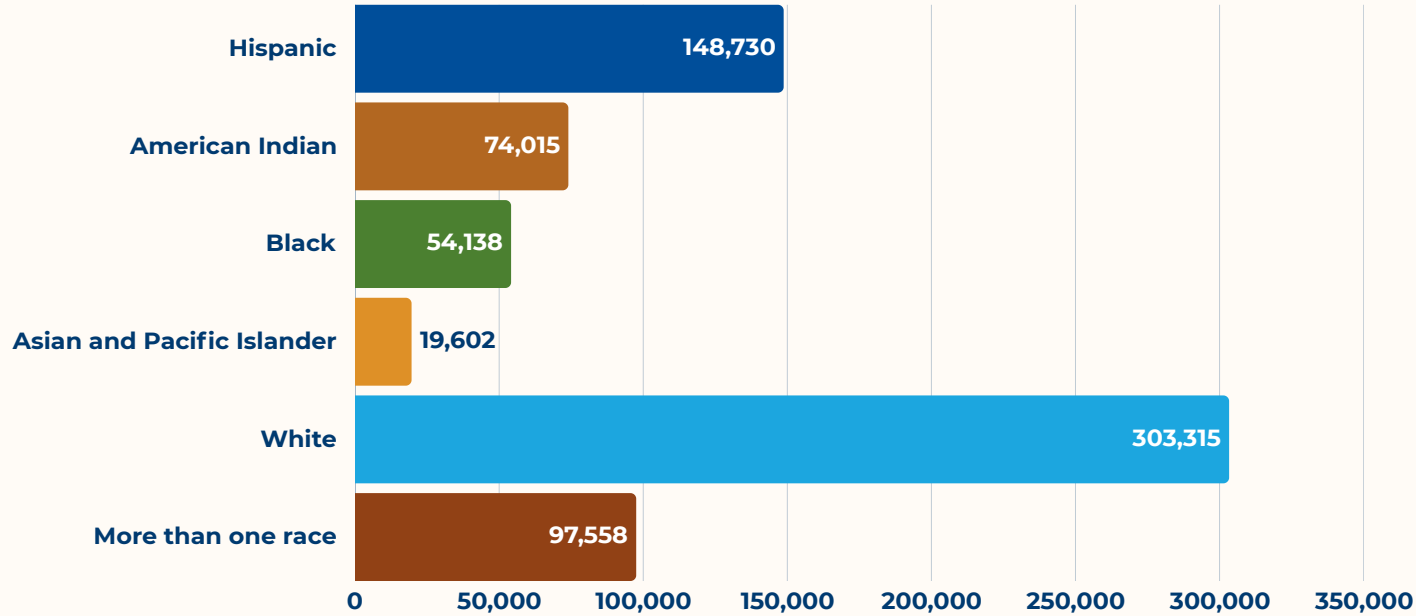
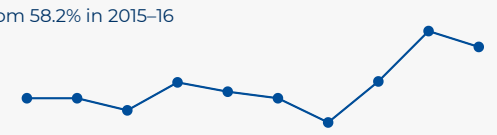
▲ Up from 7.2% in 2015–16



## Economically Disadvantaged

**64%**

▲ Up from 58.2% in 2015–16



The share of students receiving special education services, English learner supports, and economic assistance has steadily increased over the past decade.

Changing student demographics influence instructional planning and resource needs. Research shows English Learners and students with disabilities require additional supports and targeted interventions to thrive. Clear demographic data help schools, districts, and state leaders align resources with student needs and position all Oklahoma students for success.



Source: *OSDE Data & Information Systems, October 1 Consolidated Report (SY25)*.

# TEACHER COMPENSATION

## COMPENSATION AVERAGES BY STATE



## COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTED AVERAGE SALARY\*



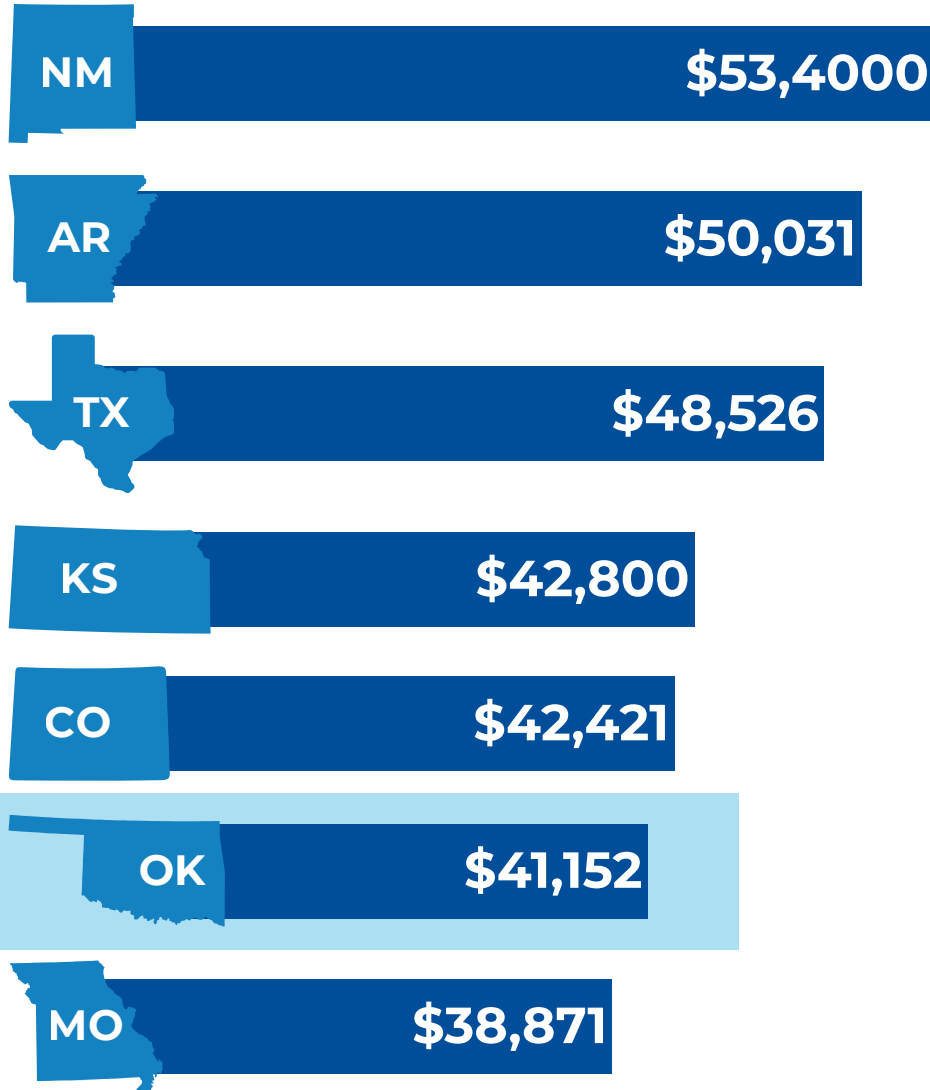
\*Cost-of-living adjustments use U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2023 Regional Price Parities (RPP) to reflect differences in purchasing power across states.



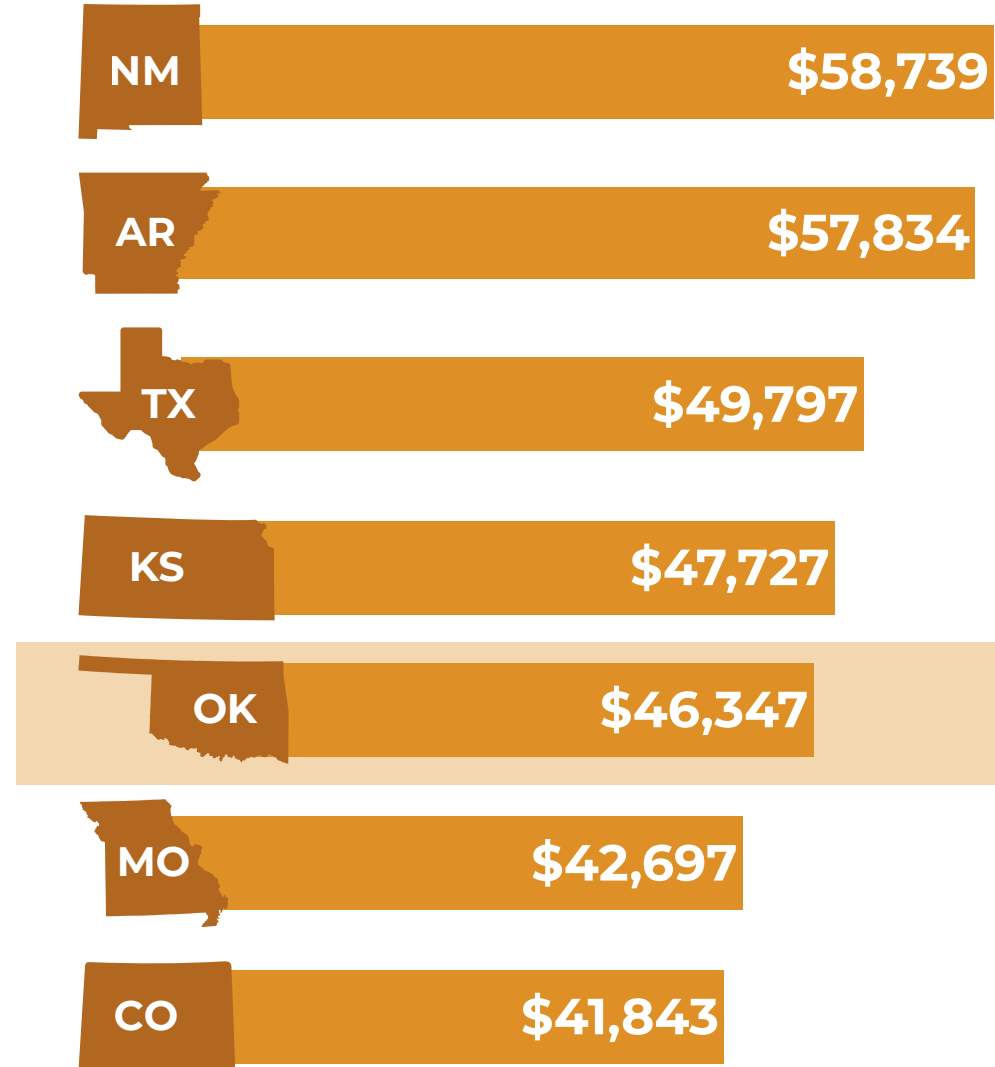
Source: [NEA Rankings of the States 2024](#) and [Estimates of School Statistics 2025](#); [BEA Regional Price Parities \(2023\)](#).

# TEACHER COMPENSATION

## FIRST YEAR SALARY AVERAGE COMPARISON BY STATE



## COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTED FIRST YEAR SALARY AVERAGE COMPARISON BY STATE\*



\*Cost-of-living adjustments use U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2023 Regional Price Parities (RPP) to reflect differences in purchasing power across states.



Source: [NEA Rankings of the States 2024](#) and [Estimates of School Statistics 2025](#); [BEA Regional Price Parities \(2023\)](#).

# TEACHER COMPENSATION

Oklahoma's average teacher compensation is regionally competitive. However, while average salaries are competitive with neighboring states, starting teacher pay remains lower than both the regional and national averages. Evaluating both entry-level and overall compensation provides a more complete picture of teacher pay and its implications for recruitment and retention.

OKLAHOMA AVERAGE



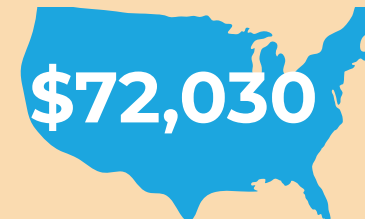
\$61,330

REGIONAL AVERAGE



\$61,785

NATIONAL AVERAGE



\$72,030

## FIRST YEAR SALARY

OKLAHOMA AVERAGE



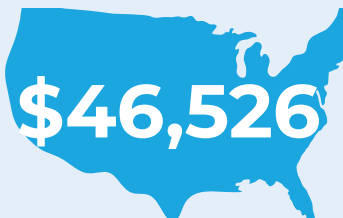
\$41,152

REGIONAL AVERAGE



\$49,283

NATIONAL AVERAGE



\$46,526

Competitive compensation is a key tool in addressing persistent teacher shortages. National research shows that targeted incentives in shortage subject areas or hard-to-staff schools can further strengthen recruitment and retention. Continued investment helps Oklahoma support a strong, stable educator workforce across communities.

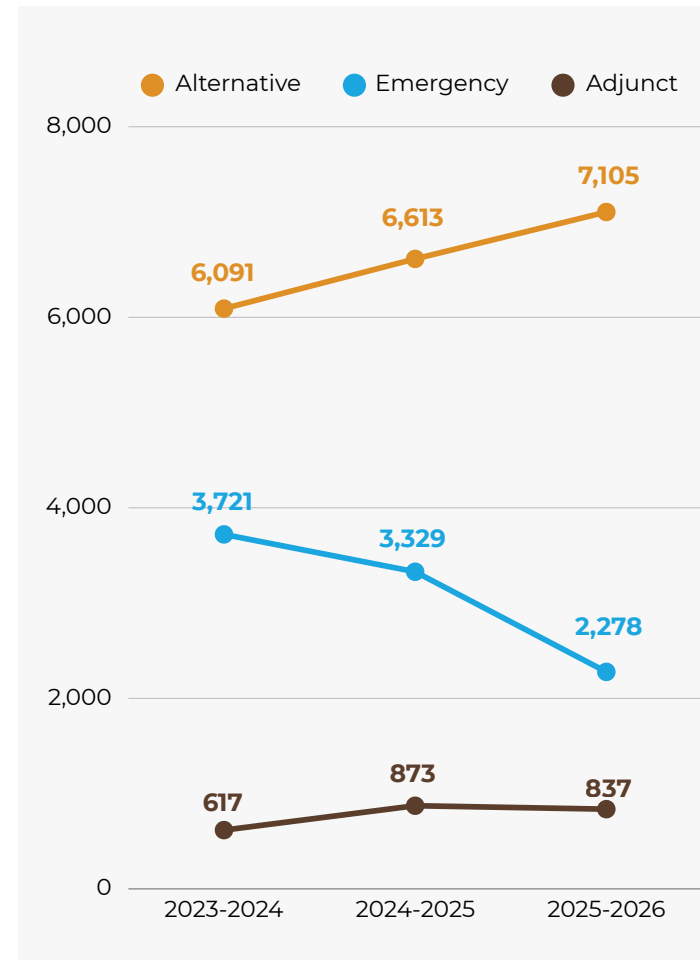
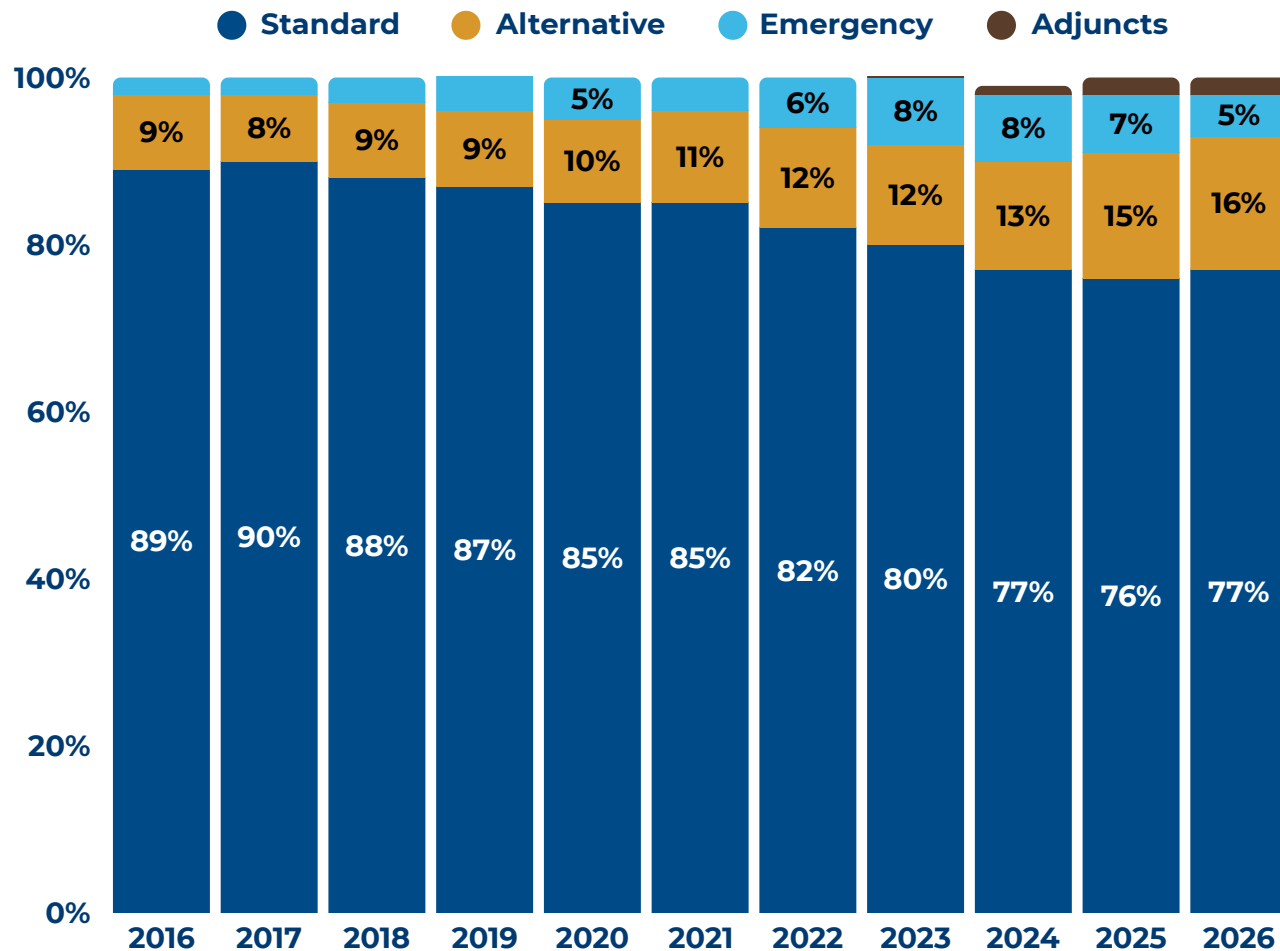


Source: [NEA Rankings of the States 2024](#) and [Estimates of School Statistics 2025](#); [BEA Regional Price Parities \(2023\)](#).



# TEACHER CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS

Oklahoma uses multiple certification pathways—including standard, alternative, emergency, and adjunct to help districts staff classrooms and meet student needs.



Emergency and adjunct certifications have steadily increased over the past decade, reaching 7% of the teacher workforce in 2025. While these pathways provide flexibility, research highlights the importance of strong preparation and mentoring for teachers entering through non-traditional routes. Tracking these trends supports thoughtful planning for Oklahoma's teacher pipeline.



Source: OSDE Office of Teacher Certification (SY26); OSDE Office of School Personnel (SY26)



# TEACHER WORKFORCE

**SY26 FTE Teachers**

**42,543**

▼ Down 725 from SY25

Oklahoma's educator workforce spans a wide range of experience levels, and while most teachers return each year, the share leaving the profession is slightly higher than the national average.

**1% DOCTORATE**

**26%  
MASTERS**

**72%  
BACHELORS**

**Degree Level**

**36%  
EXPERIENCED (15+ YRS)**

**22%  
MID CAREER (8-14 YRS)**

**18%  
EARLY CAREER (4-7 YRS)**

**22%  
BEGINNING (0-3 YRS)**

**Teacher Experience**

**80%  
RETURNED TEACHERS**

**6% MOVED WITHIN STATE**

**4% MOVED WITHIN DISTRICT**

**11% NOT RETURNED**

**Teacher Retention**

Teacher quality is the most important school-based factor affecting student learning. Above-average attrition means Oklahoma has opportunities to improve retention, especially for early-career teachers and in hard-to-staff schools. Understanding patterns in turnover, and support can guide efforts to recruit, develop, and retain effective teachers.

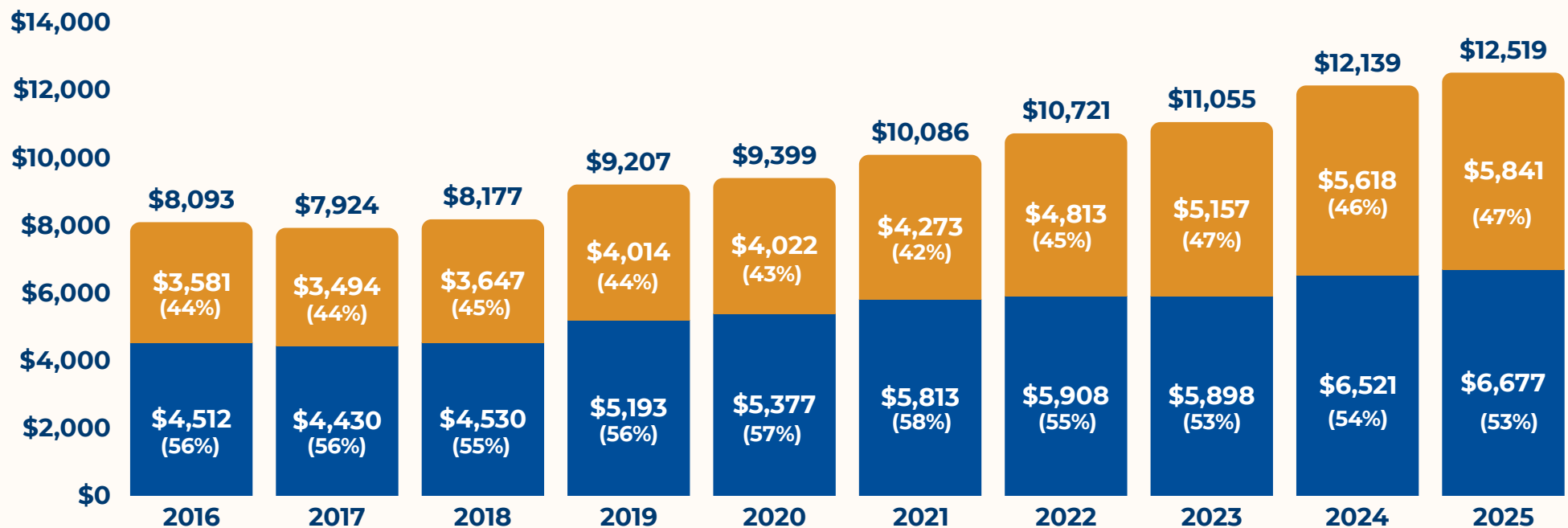


# SCHOOL FINANCE

Per-pupil expenditures in Oklahoma have increased by about 50% over the past decade, with a modest shift toward non-instructional spending alongside rising operational and student support costs.

## Per Pupil Expenditures

● Instructional ● Non-Instructional



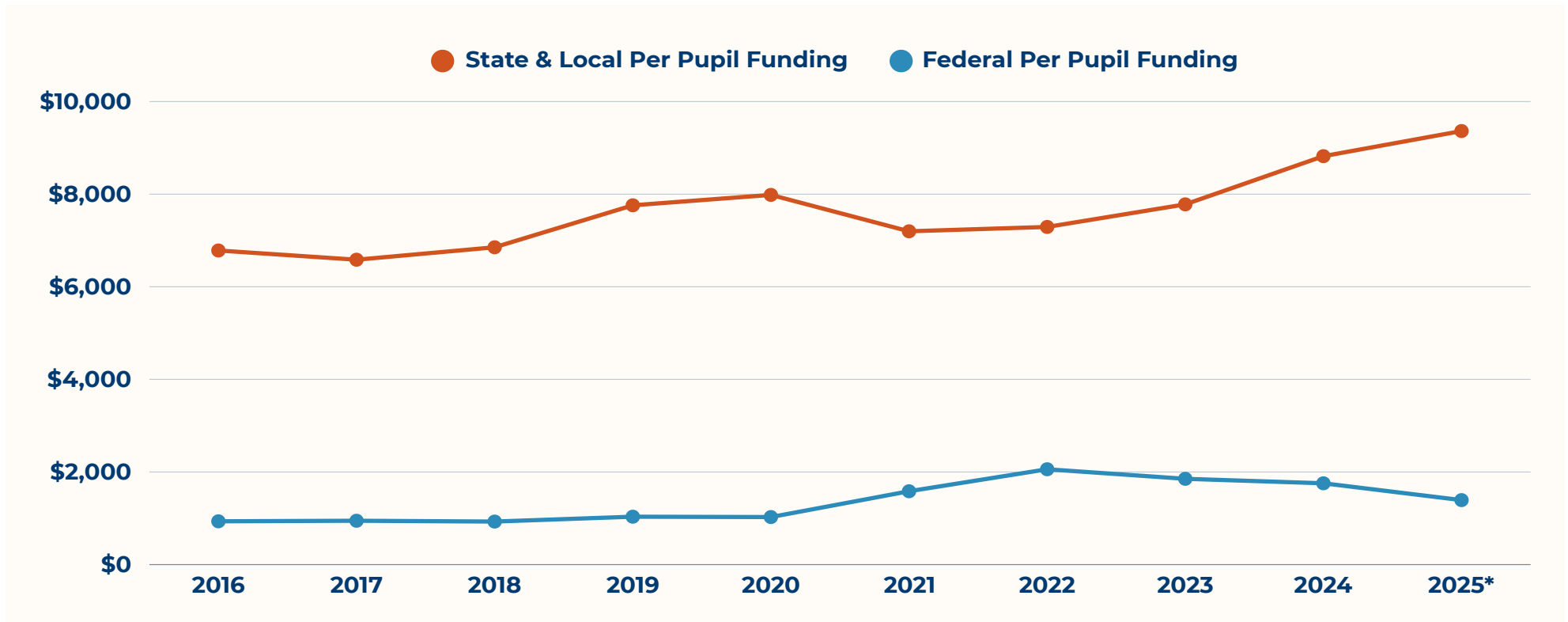
In 2024, Oklahoma's per-pupil expenditures trailed regional peers such as TX (\$12,423), AR (\$13,061), MO (\$13,586), KS (\$14,901), FL (\$13,584), NM (\$15,183) and MS (\$12,490). Research shows that while overall funding levels matter, there is not a clear relationship between higher statewide PPE and stronger student outcomes. Instead, impacts depend on how dollars are used within schools, with investments in areas such as early literacy, high-need student supports, and evidence-based instructional practices leading to the most improved outcomes.



Source: *OSDE Cost Accounting System (OCAS), FY16–FY25; OSDE Data & Information Systems, October 1 Consolidated Report, SY16–SY25; NEA Rankings of the States 2024 and Estimates of School Statistics 2025.*

# SCHOOL FINANCE

Per-pupil funding has increased over the past decade. Federal COVID relief created a significant funding spike in recent years that is now trailing off. State funding also saw a notable increase in 2023–24, reflecting recent legislative investments.



*\*2025 data are preliminary.*

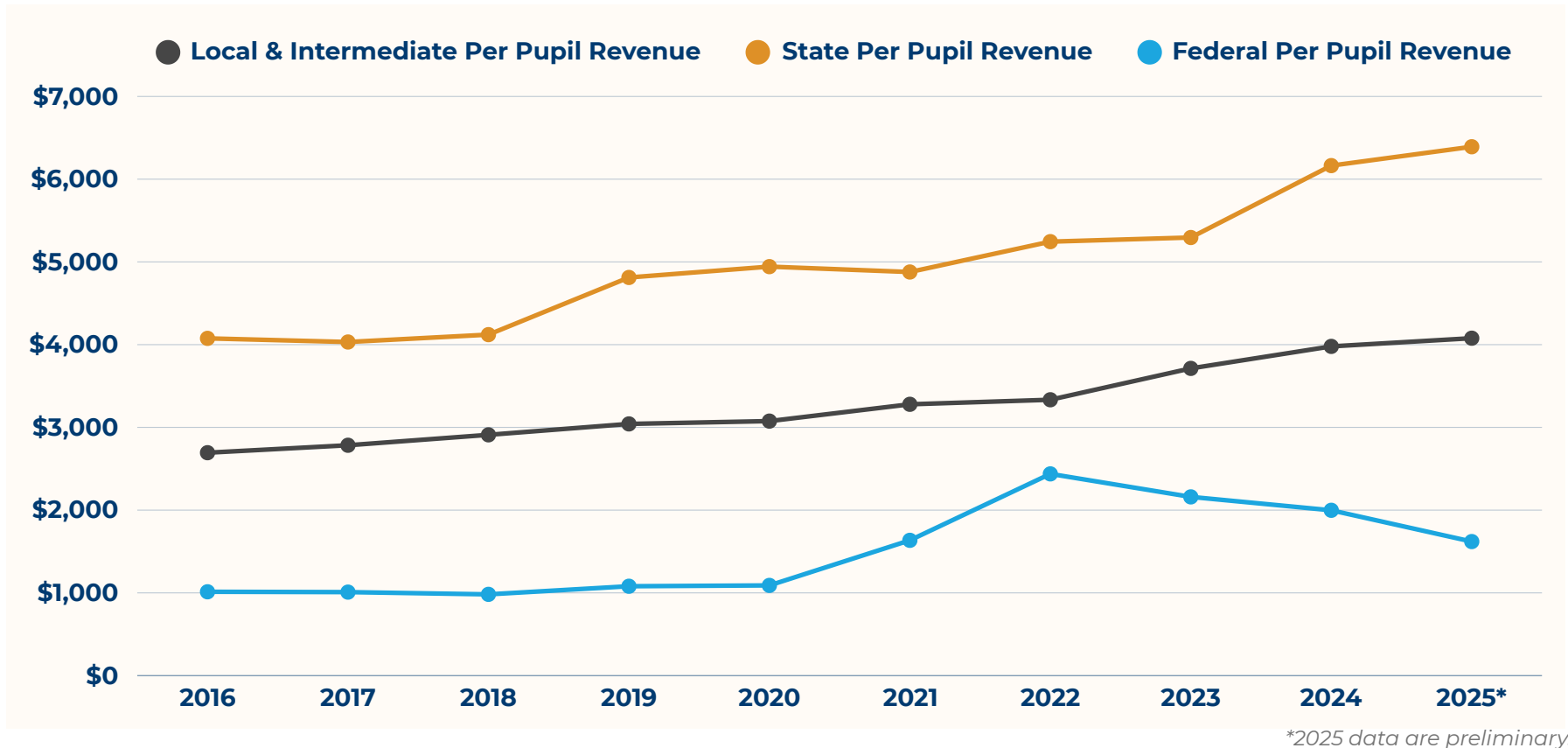
Oklahoma's funding structure reflects a shared-responsibility model among local communities, the state, and federal partners. Revenue levels shift as local property values change, state appropriations vary, and federal programs expand or expire. Recent state investments and temporary federal relief contributed to short-term increases in available resources. Understanding how these sources interact helps leaders plan budgets, anticipate needs, and maintain financial stability for schools.



Source: [OSDE Cost Accounting System \(OCAS\), FY16-FY26](#); [OSDE Data & Information Systems, October 1 Consolidated Report, SY16-SY25](#).

# SCHOOL FINANCE

Oklahoma's K–12 system is funded primarily through state revenue, with additional support from local and intermediate sources and federal aid. Per-pupil revenue has increased over the past decade. State funding also saw a notable increase in 2023–24, reflecting recent legislative investments.

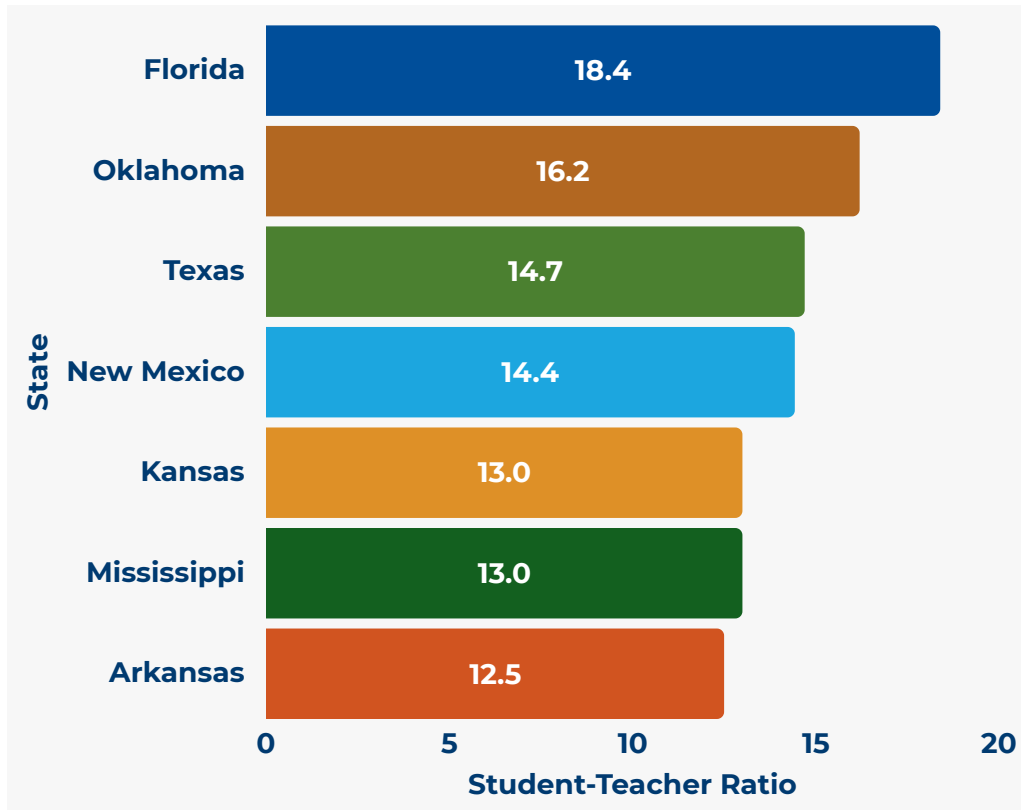


Oklahoma's funding structure reflects a shared-responsibility model among local communities, the state, and federal partners. Temporary federal relief contributed to short-term increases in available resources, but those funds have now declined. Understanding how these sources interact helps leaders plan budgets, anticipate needs, and maintain financial stability for schools.



# STUDENT SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT

Oklahoma's student-teacher ratio (16.2:1) is slightly higher than several regional peers but similar to some high-performing states. Note that student-teacher ratio is not necessarily reflective of class size. Student-counselor ratios are better than the national average but still above the recommended 250:1



*\*Comparisons to high-performing peer states use the Urban Institute's States' Demographically Adjusted Performance on the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress to allow more comparable cross-state performance rankings.*

## Student-Teacher Ratio\*

# 16.2:1

This reflects typical classroom staffing and influences engagement, individualized instruction, and learning conditions.

**\*Not an indicator of class size**

## Student-Counselor Ratio

# 332:1

The American School Counselor Ratio Recommends 250:1. Oklahoma counselors support significantly more students than the national guideline.

Research shows mixed evidence on the impact of broad ratio changes but stronger benefits for targeted class-size reductions in early grades (K–3) and high-needs settings. How schools deploy teachers and student-support staff plays a critical role in strengthening engagement, learning conditions, and student outcomes.



Source: [OSDE Data & Information Systems, October 1 Consolidated Report \(SY25\)](#); [OSDE Office of School Personnel \(SY26\)](#); [NEA Rankings of the States 2024 and Estimates of School Statistics 2025](#); [Urban Institute, States' Demographically Adjusted NAEP Performance \(2024\)](#).

# INSTRUCTIONAL TIME & CALENDAR MODELS

Oklahoma's calendar requirements align with national norms for instructional hours but fall below most peer states on the number of school days. Fifty-one Oklahoma districts use 4-day weeks, compressing required hours into fewer, longer days.

## Oklahoma Instructional Requirements

 **166\*** MINIMUM REQUIRED INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS

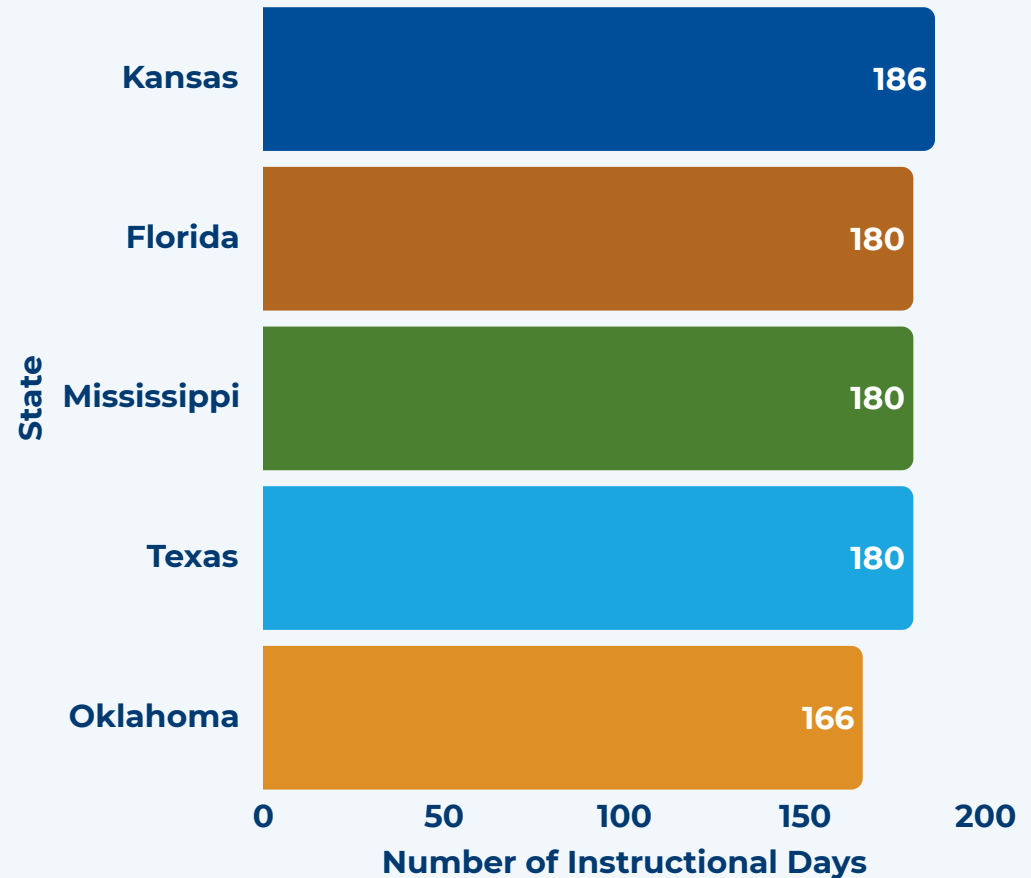
 **1,086** MINIMUM REQUIRED INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS

 **298** NUMBER OF DISTRICTS ON INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS SCHEDULE

 **51** NUMBER OF DISTRICTS ON 4-DAY SCHEDULES

\*ALSO THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS

States such as Mississippi, Florida, and Texas generally operate closer to 180 instructional days.



Research shows that while total instructional hours matter, how that time is organized has a greater impact on student learning. Models that compress hours into fewer, longer school days are generally less effective, especially for younger students, due to higher student fatigue and fewer high-quality instructional cycles. High-performing states typically distribute comparable annual hours across more school days, using shorter, focused instructional blocks.

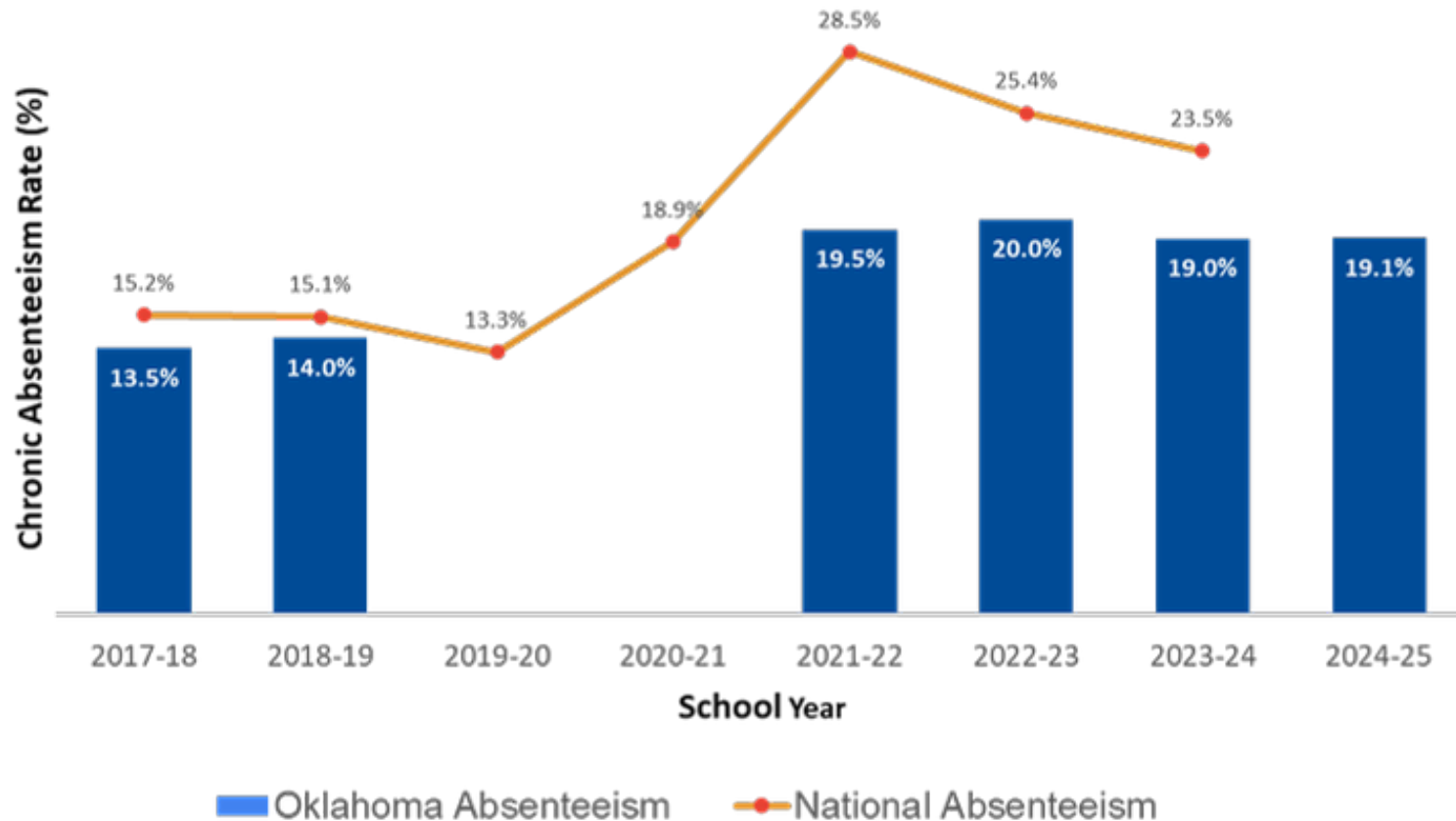


Source: OSDE Office of Accreditation (SY26); 70 O.S. §1-109 (2025); Education Commission of the States (ECS), 50-State Comparison: Instructional Time Policies

# CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Chronic absenteeism (10%+ days missed) rose after the pandemic and has not fully recovered. Notably, Oklahoma remains slightly below national rates.

**Oklahoma vs. National Chronic Absenteeism Rates (2018-2025)**



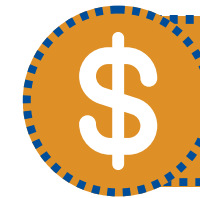
**Students who miss 10% or more of the school year fall behind academically, and entire classrooms feel the effects as teachers reteach missed content. Addressing it through attendance initiatives and optimized instructional time can strengthen recovery and statewide results.**





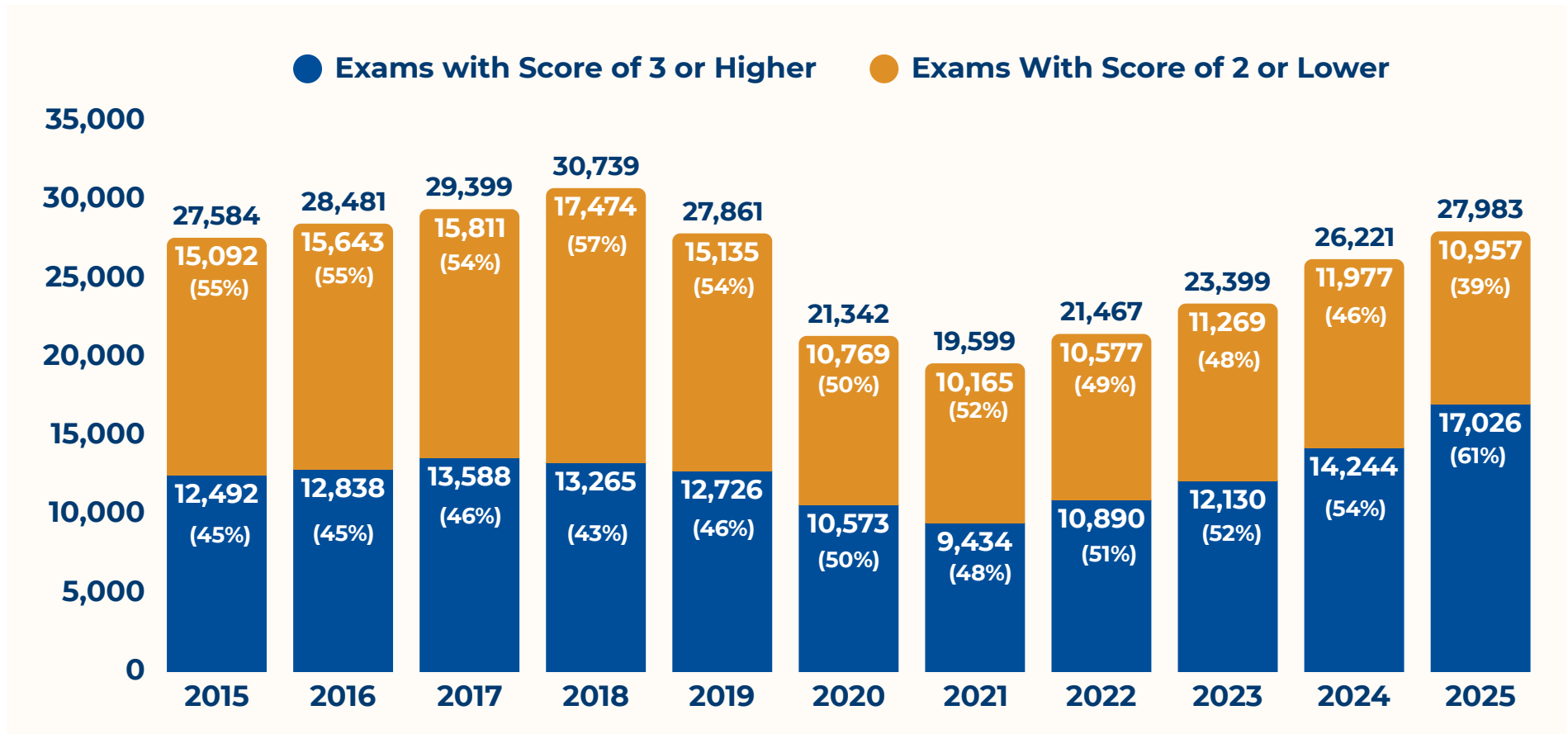
# ADVANCED PLACEMENT

AP participation has rebounded strongly from the pandemic low. Additionally, the percentage of exams earning college credit (score 3+) has climbed steadily to 61% in 2025, the highest in a decade.



**\$13,375,116**

potential tuition and fee savings to Oklahoma students and families as a result of AP exams taken in 2024.



Expanding access to rigorous coursework broadens students' college and career opportunities. Strong performance enables many students to earn college credit, reducing costs for families. These trends reflect statewide and local efforts to support advanced learning and readiness.

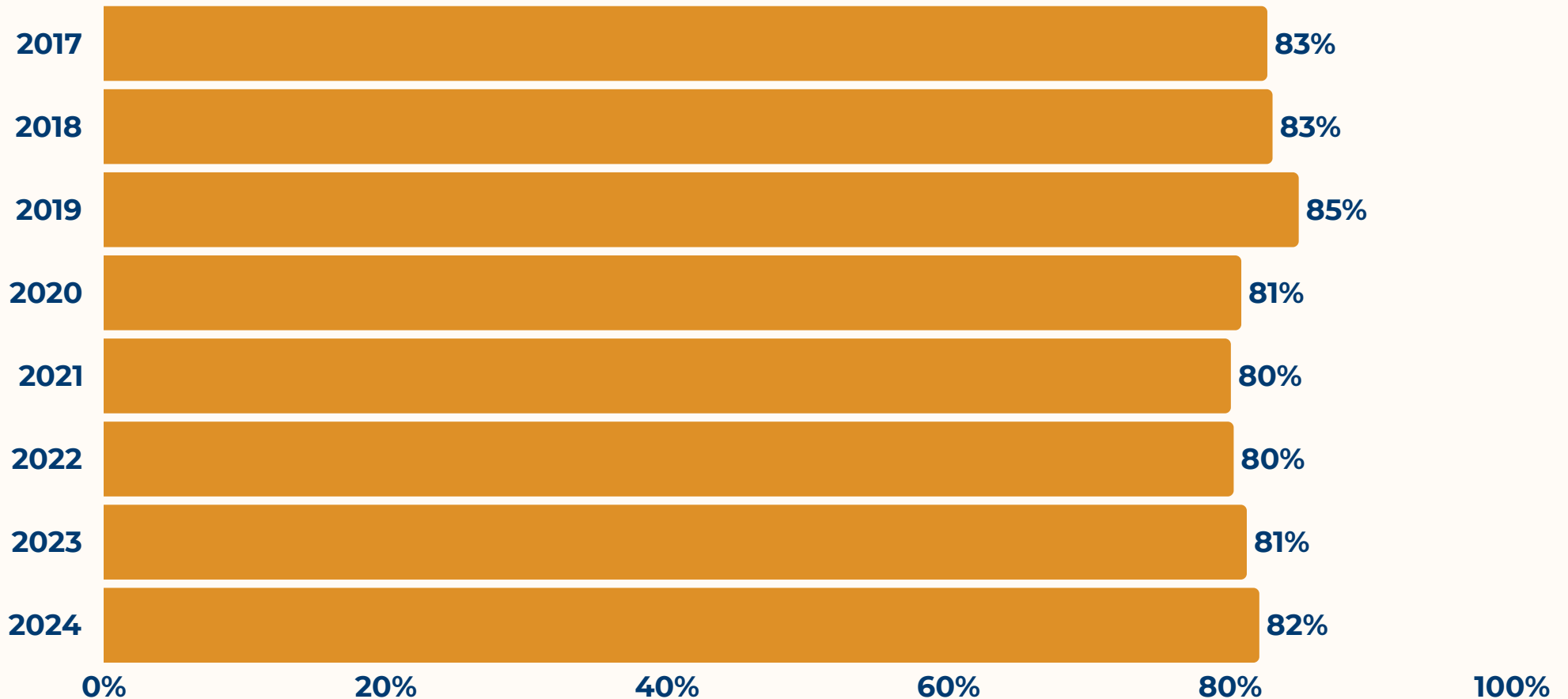


Source: *OSDE Advanced Placement Annual Report, SY15-SY25*

# GRADUATION RATES

Oklahoma's graduation rates have held steady near 80% for nearly a decade.

## Oklahoma High School Graduation Rates



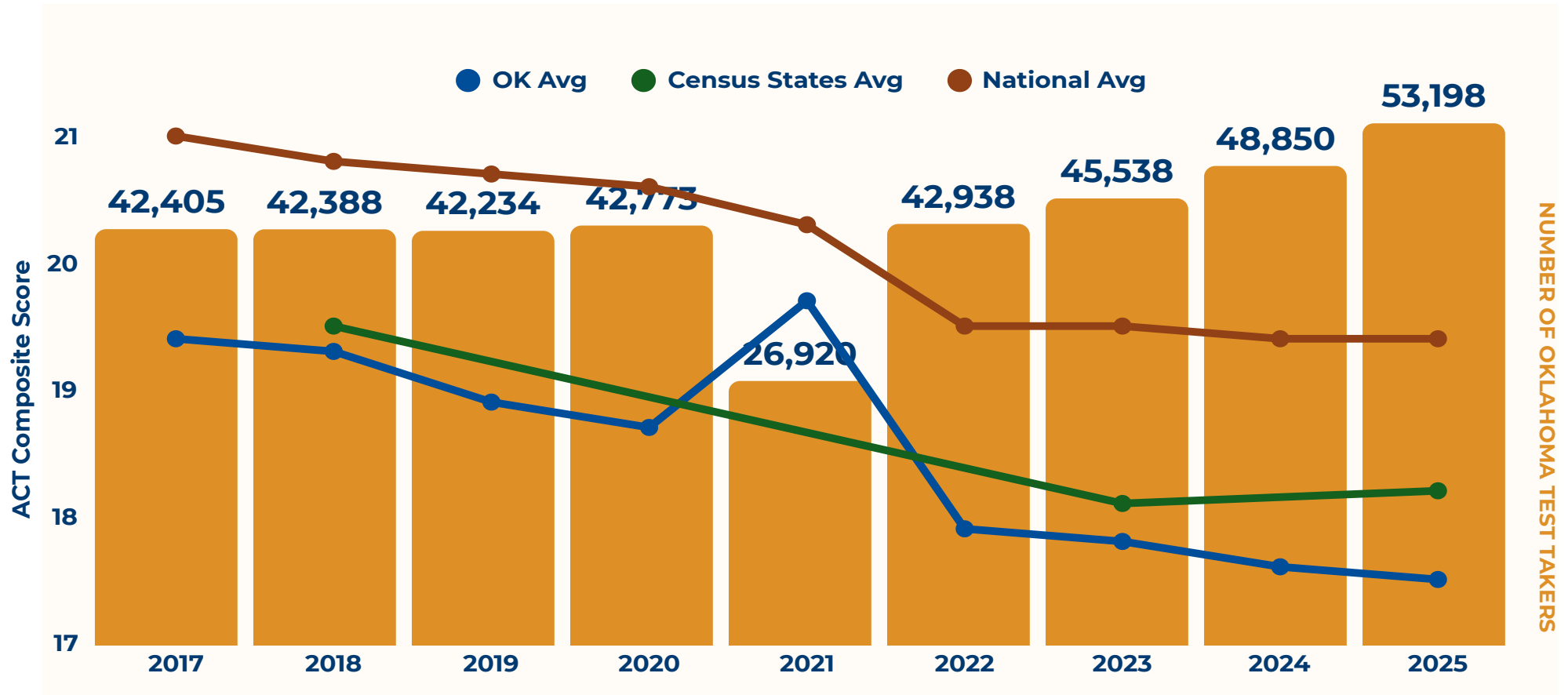
**These trends illustrate how students are navigating postsecondary pathways, including careers, training programs, service opportunities, and higher education. Clear data support efforts to strengthen advising, readiness, and access to multiple high-quality options after high school.**



Source: OSDE Office of Accountability; SY17-SY24; [OSRHE, High School Indicators Report \(2023\)](#); [OSRHE, High School Indicators Report, Archives](#)

# ACT PERFORMANCE & PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Oklahoma has provided the ACT (or SAT) at no cost to every junior since 2016, one of the few states testing 100% of students. Oklahoma is about 2 points lower than the national average of 19.4 drawn only from self-selected, college-bound test-takers. There are currently 9 census states testing all juniors.



\*2021 - Due to COVID, all students were not required to take the ACT.

**Giving every Oklahoma student a free opportunity to take the ACT levels the playing field and eliminates financial barriers that can keep some students from even applying to college. Pairing universal testing with targeted tutoring, summer bridge programs, and strong core instruction in middle and high school can raise scores while keeping opportunity open to all.**



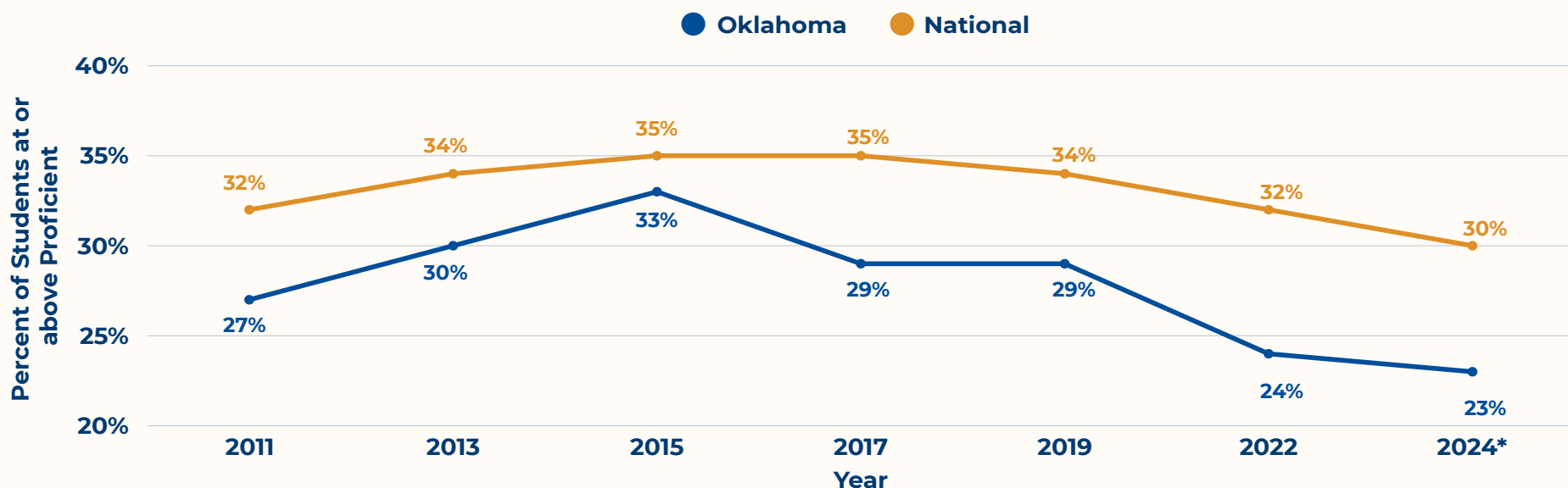
Source [Digest of Education Statistics, ACT State Participation & Scores \(2018, 2023\)](#); [ACT Average ACT Test Score by State Graduating Class of 2025](#); [OSDE Office of Assessment, SY17-SY25](#); [ACT, National Profile Report \(2025\)](#).

# NAEP READING (4TH GRADE)

NAEP 4th grade reading is one of the strongest indicators of a state's long-term academic trajectory. Reading by 4th grade is considered a national benchmark because students transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." NAEP provides a consistent, comparable measure across states and over time, allowing Oklahoma's early literacy progress to be evaluated against national trends.

*Note: the NAEP is administered every two years.*

## NAEP 4th Grade Reading Achievement



\*1700 Oklahoma students were tested in 2024 - rounded to the nearest 100

Oklahoma's early reading performance has declined over time and remains below the national average, with only 23% of students scoring proficient in 2024. Strengthening early literacy will require continued investment in high-quality instructional materials, Science of Reading implementation, strong attendance, and intensive support in the early grades—areas where high-performing states have made sustained gains.

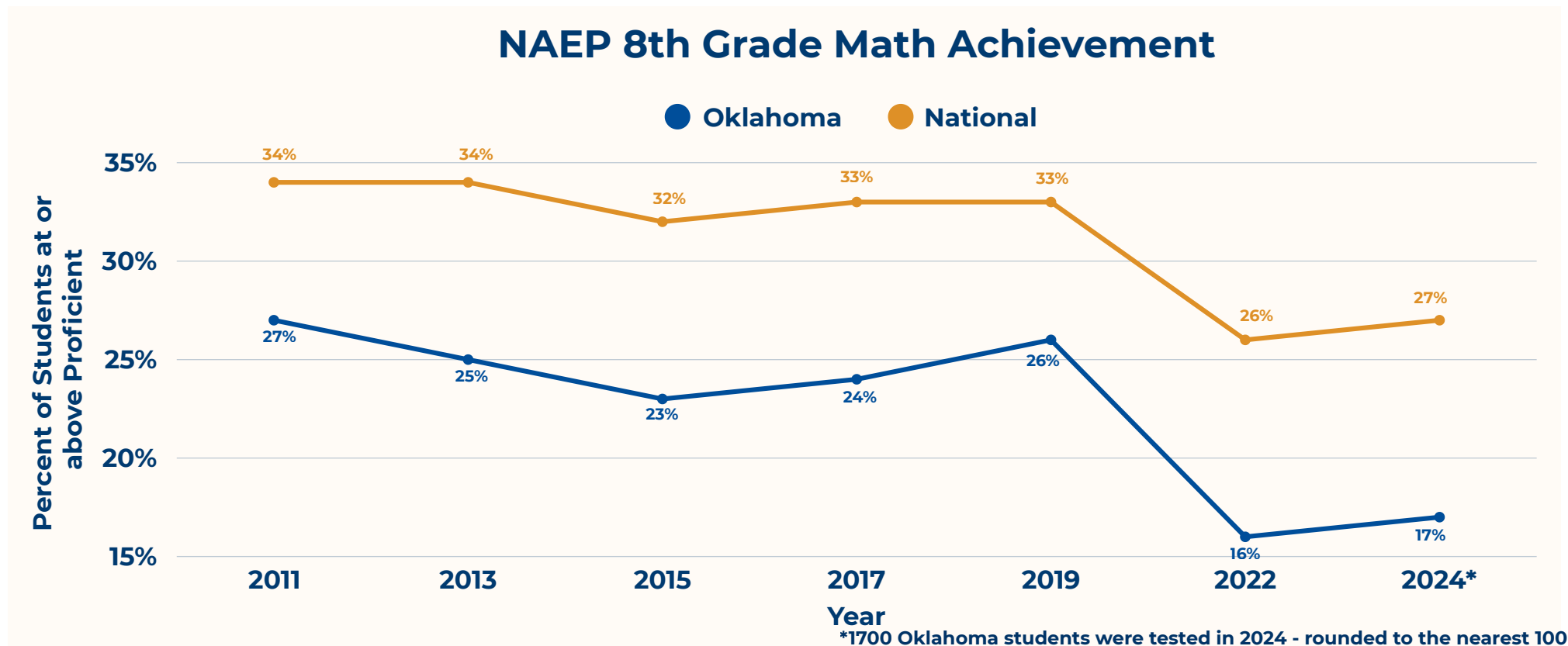


Source: [NCES, National Assessment of Educational Progress \(Reading\), 2011–2024](#)

# NAEP MATH (8TH GRADE)

NAEP 8th grade math is a key national benchmark of student readiness for advanced coursework and the workforce. Unlike state tests, NAEP provides a stable, comparable measure across states and over time. NAEP 8th-grade math is widely looked at by researchers and policymakers because it reflects cumulative learning from elementary and middle school.

*Note: the NAEP is administered every two years.*



Over the past decade, Oklahoma's NAEP math performance has remained below national levels, with sharp declines following the pandemic and limited signs of recovery. Strengthening math outcomes will require investments in early-grade numeracy, improved instructional quality, and consistent attendance—areas where high-performing states have made sustained, long-term commitments. Without targeted action, Oklahoma risks falling further behind.



Source: [NCES, National Assessment of Educational Progress \(Math\), 2011–2024](#)

# GLOSSARY

## **Alternative Certification**

A pathway to becoming a teacher for those who did not complete a teacher education program. A college-credit course in classroom management and pedagogical principles is required during the provisional certification.

## **Average Daily Membership (ADM)**

An average number of students is taken twice a year to arrive at a student population. This is calculated by dividing the sum of enrolled students' total days present and days absent by the number of days taught. The First-Quarter Statistical Report (FQSR) is completed after the first nine weeks, and the Annual Statistical Report (ASR) is completed after the school year.

## **Economically Disadvantaged Student**

Any student eligible for federally funded free and reduced-price meal programs or who meets the criteria from the Economic Disadvantage Survey.

## **Emergency Certification**

A teaching certificate issued on an emergency basis for one school year to someone who has not yet met the certification qualifications of a state-approved program. Districts may request emergency certification for a specific candidate only after exhausting every option to find an appropriately certified person for the open position.

## **Enrollment**

A count of students enrolled in a school on October 1.

## **Financial Support of Schools**

The primary allocation of state funds appropriated by the Legislature to schools. Also known as the State Aid Funding Formula, this allocation distributes money to districts based on their Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM) and accounts for other funding the district may receive, including property taxes and other state-dedicated revenue such as gross production tax and school land earnings. The goal of the formula is to provide equity across all schools, regardless of socio-economic status or proportion of students with special needs.

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

A written document developed collaboratively by parents and school personnel that outlines the special education program for a student with a disability. This document is developed, reviewed, and revised at an IEP meeting at least annually and required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

# GLOSSARY

## **Regional Price Parities (RPP)**

The federal government's official index for comparing price levels across states, produced by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). RPP is used to adjust salaries and other economic measures for cost-of-living variations, ensuring fair regional comparisons. It is the recommended method by organizations such as NCES, CEPA, and national research groups for real salary analyses. The 2023 RPP data is applied in this report for teacher compensation adjustments.

## **School Calendar Hours Requirement**

Districts must provide at least 166 six-hour days or 1,086 hours of instruction per school year. They may suspend school days or hours as long as those hours are made up by the end of the year.

## **State Aid Funding**

See Financial Support of Schools on the previous page.

## **Support of Teachers and Students**

Provides line-item support for an array of initiatives separate from the State Aid Funding Formula. This allocation supports initiatives including alternative education, professional development, Advanced Placement teacher training and fee assistance, Reading Sufficiency, and Sooner Start.

## **Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM)**

The ADM adjusted to reflect the weights of individual students. Students are assigned a greater weight if they belong to a student group that requires additional educational services, such as students with disabilities. WADM determines funding allocations to the district.



# PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES CLASSIFICATION

## **Expenditures are reported by the Function dimension as follows:**

Instruction, Support Services-Students, Support Services-Instructional Staff, Support Services-General Administration, Support Services-School Administration, Support Services-Central, Operation and Maintenance of Plant Services, Student Transportation Services, Child Nutrition Programs Operations, Community Services Operations, and Facilities Acquisition and Construction Services.

### **1. Instruction (Function 1000)**

Instruction includes activities dealing directly with the interaction between teachers and students. This would include the classroom, television, telephone, correspondence, and other educational or assistive technology devices.

### **2. Support Services for Students (Function 2100)**

Activities designed to assess and improve the well-being of students and to supplement the teaching process.

### **3. Support Services for Instructional Staff (Function 2200)**

Activities associated with assisting the instructional staff with the content and process of providing learning experiences for students.

### **4. Support Services for General Administration (Function 2300)**

Activities involving the establishment and administration of policy in connection with operating the entire school district.

### **5. Support Services for School Administration (Function 2400)**

Activities concerned with overall administrative responsibility for a single school or a group of schools.

### **6. Support Services for Business (Function 2500)**

Activities that support other administrative and instructional functions, fiscal services, human resources, planning, and administrative information technology.

### **7. Operation and Maintenance of Plant Services (Function 2600)**

Activities concerned with keeping the physical plant open, comfortable, and safe for use, and keeping the grounds, buildings, and equipment in an effective working condition and state of repair. Activities that maintain safety in buildings, on the grounds, and in the vicinity of schools are included.

### **8. Student Transportation Services (Function 2700)**

Activities concerned with the conveyance of students to and from school as provided by state law. Included are trips between home and school, and trips to school activities.

### **9. Child Nutrition Services (Function 3100)**

Activities concerned with providing food to students and staff in a school or LEA. This service area includes the preparation and service of regular and incidental meals, including breakfasts, lunches, or supplements in connection with school activities, and the delivery of food.

### **10. Enterprise Services (Function 3200)**

Activities that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises where the stated intent is that the costs are financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

### **Total Expenditures using:**

Funds: 11-60, 81, 82, & 86

Functions: 1000-3200

Objects: Excludes 511, 561, 564, 567, 591 & 700 Series

Programs: Excludes 500 & 600 Series

Plus credits received from: Teacher's Retirement, Career Tech, Student Assessment and Commodities.

# CONTACT US



## **Oklahoma State Department of Education**

**Oliver Hodge Building**

**2500 North Lincoln Boulevard**

**Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105**



## **Main Line: (405) 521- 3301**

**Accountability: (405) 522-5169**

**Alternative Education: (405) 831-1242**

**Assessment: (405) 521-3341**

**Child Nutrition: (405) 521-3327**

**Communications: (405) 761-0371**

**Compliance: (405) 521-3335**

**Data and Information Systems: (405) 522-3020**

**Financial Accounting: (405) 522-0275**

**Special Education: (405) 521-3351**

**Standards and Learning: (405) 521-4287**

**State Aid: (405) 521-3460**

**Teacher Certification: (405) 521-3337**



**[Oklahoma.gov/Education](https://oklahoma.gov/education)**