

The price for constitutional schools

Mike Bronson © 2026 NAACP Anchorage

Legislature must fund public schools to a constitutional floor.

Moore v. Alaska, 2004 to 2012

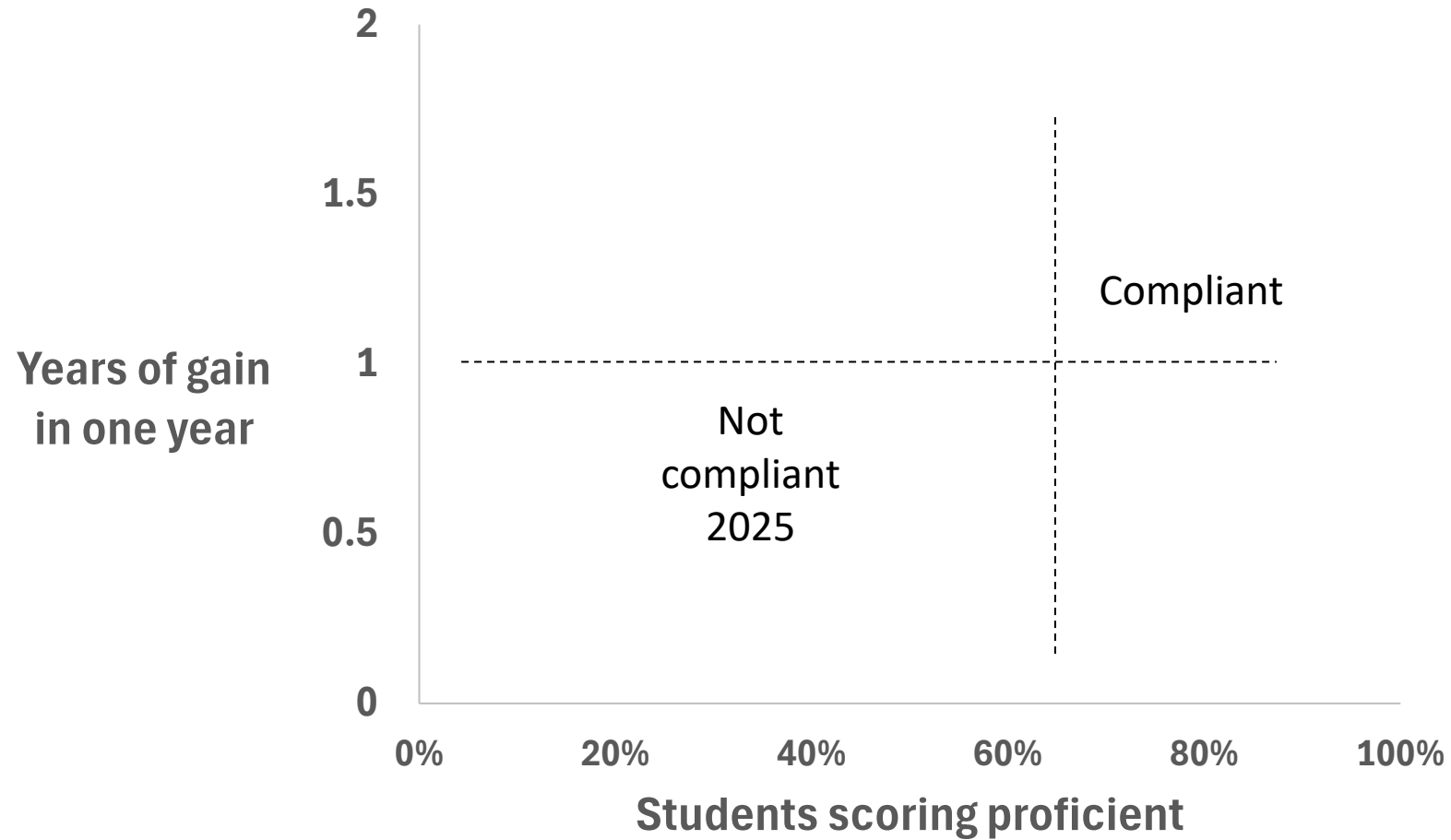
- Students must achieve to state standards.
- Schools must provide students the opportunity to meet those standards.

“Substantial majority”

“All children;”

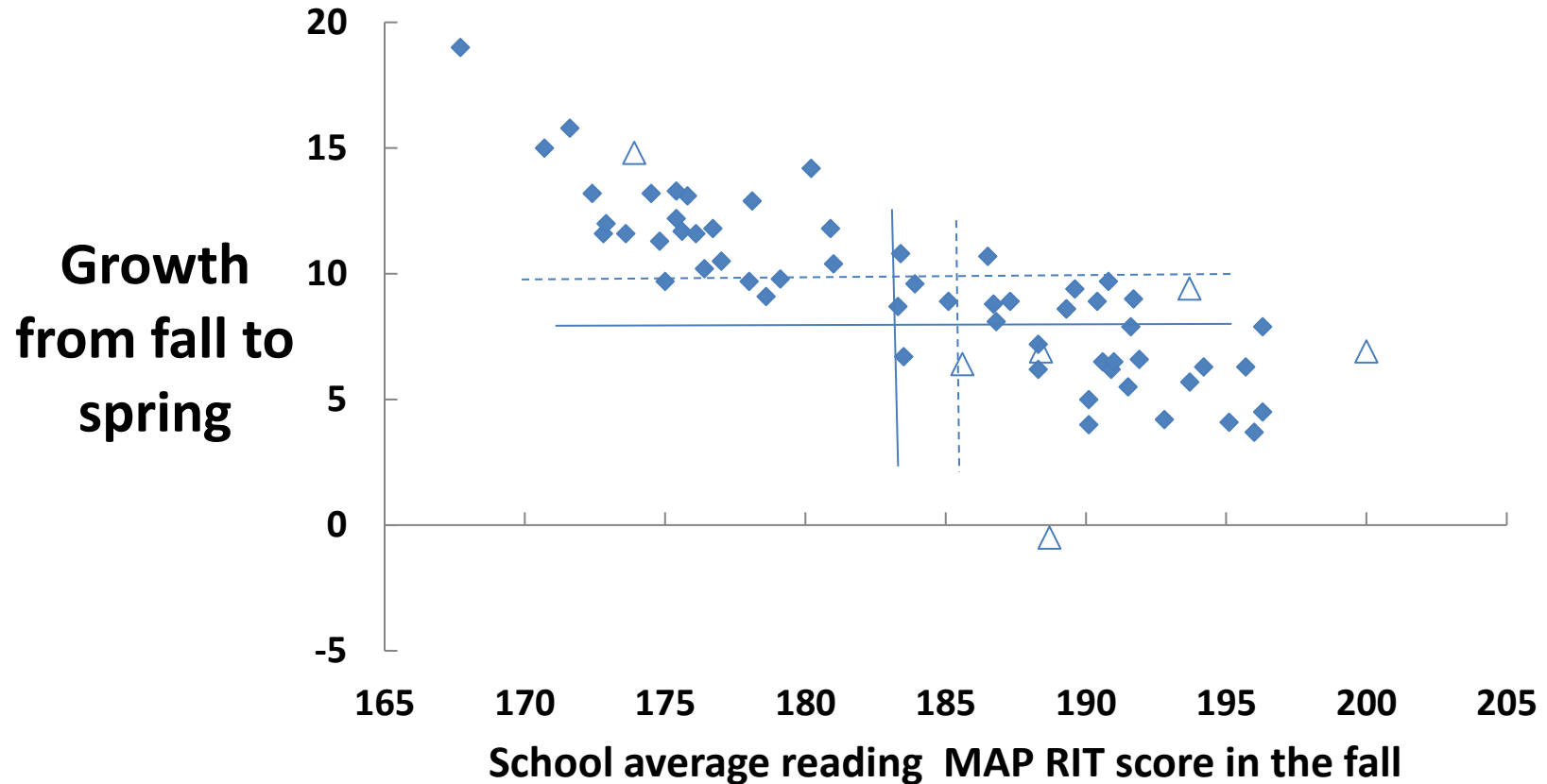
“each child”

Two constitutional criteria: opportunity and proficiency



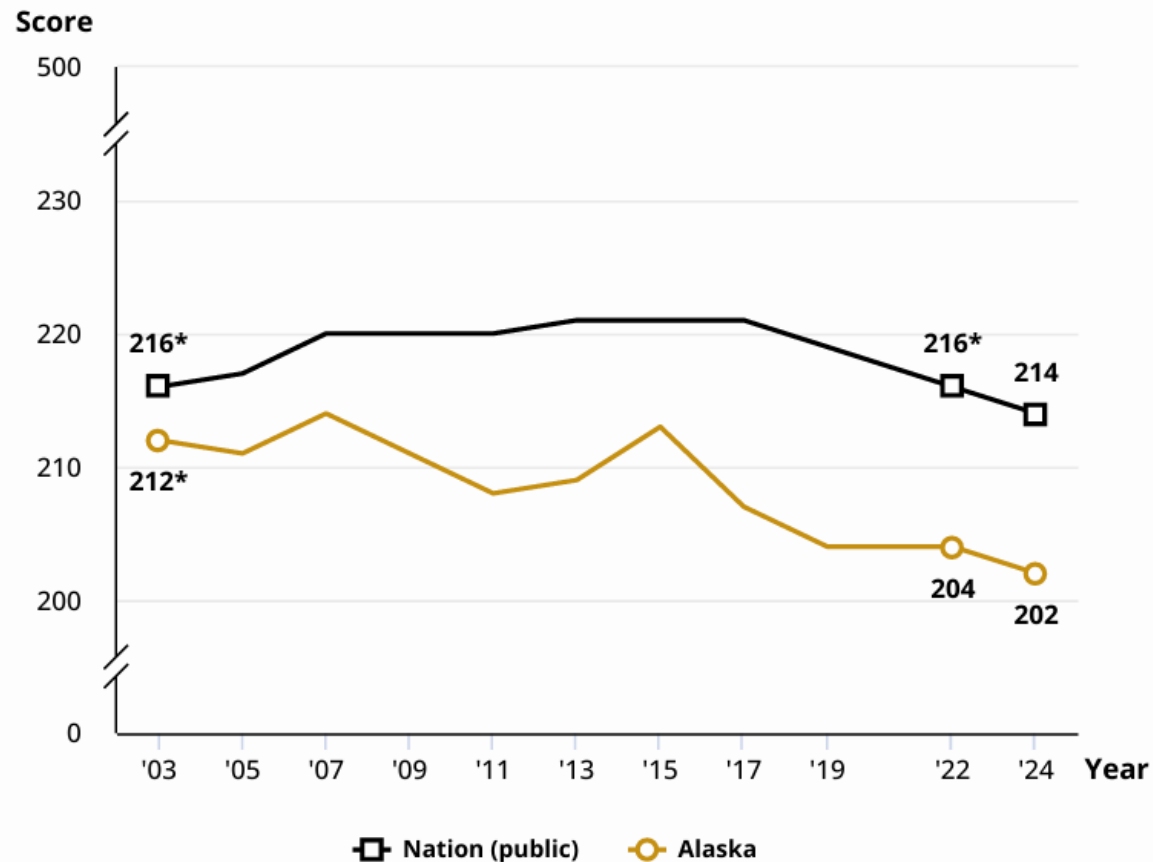
Many get little opportunity.

Anchorage third graders Measures of Academic Progress

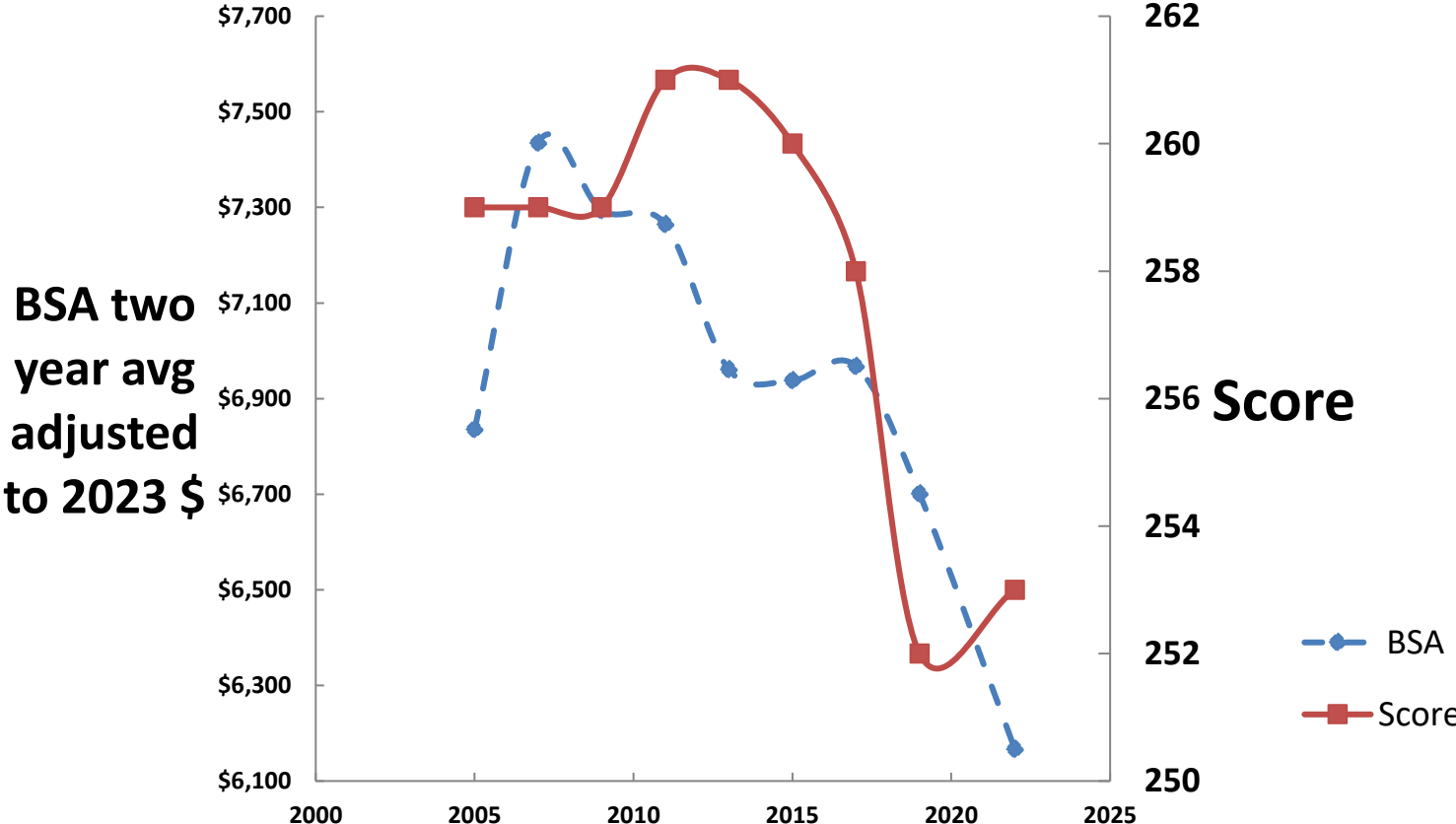


Reading 4th grade: Alaska is way behind.

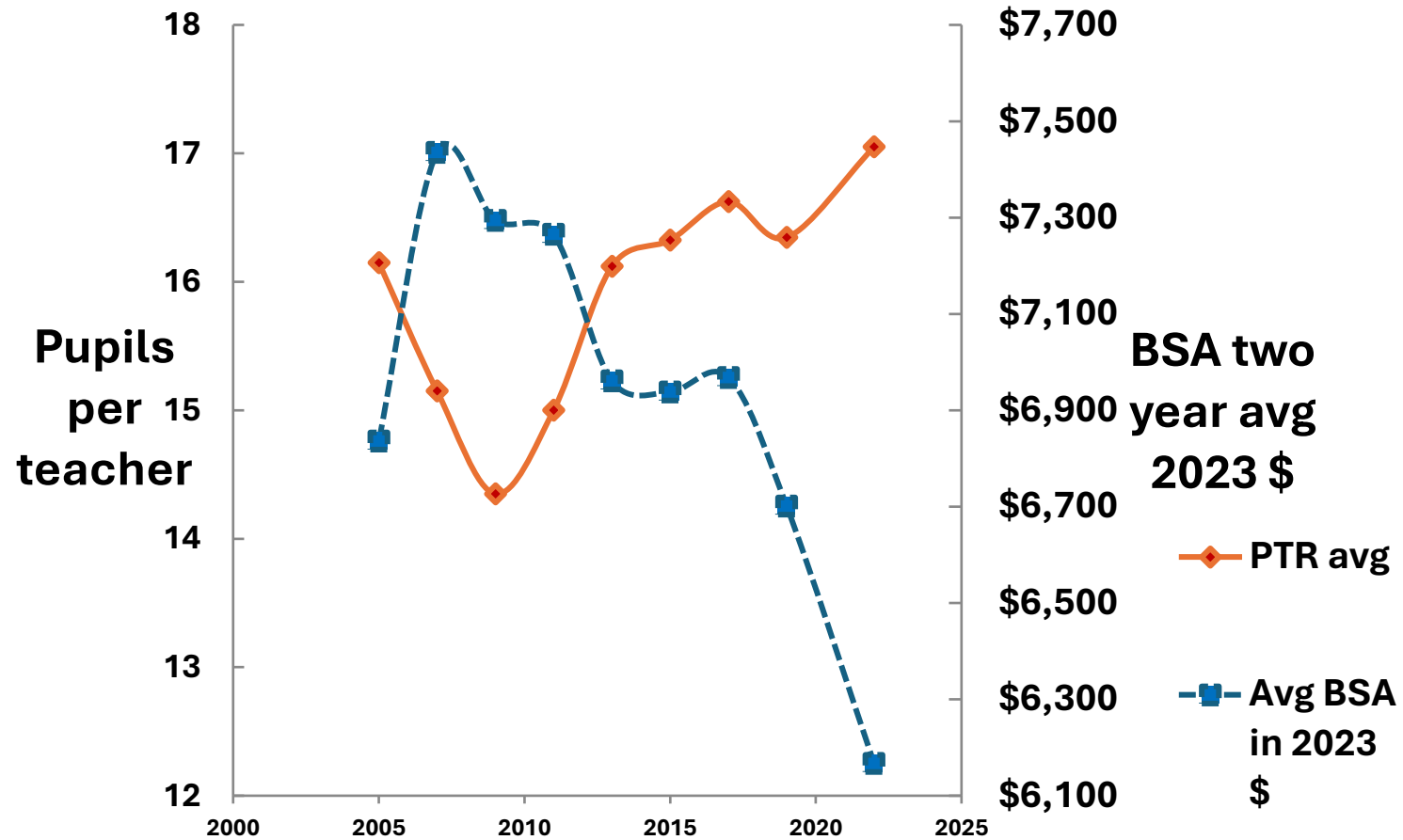
AVERAGE SCORES FOR STATE/JURISDICTION AND THE NATION (PUBLIC



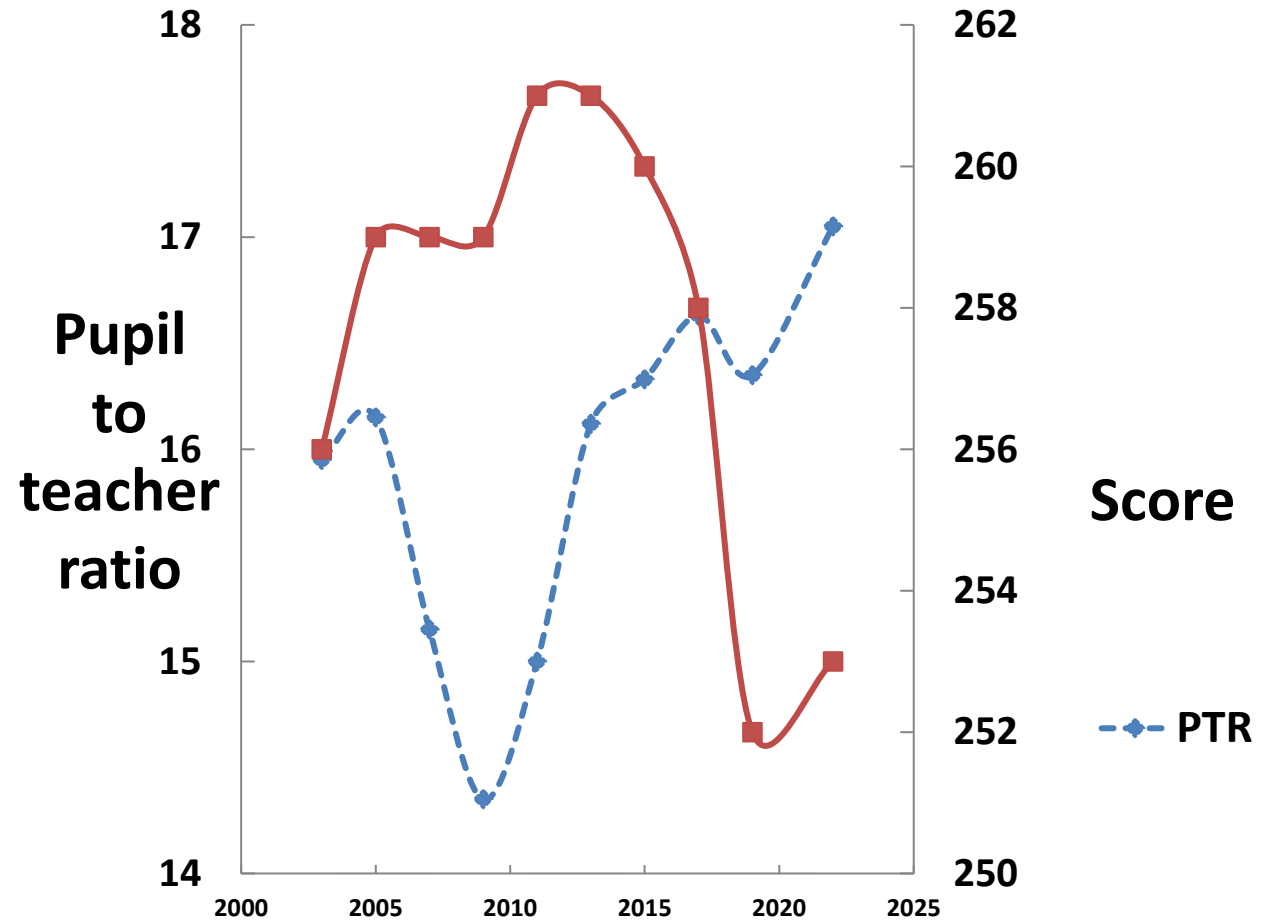
Eighth grade reading fell with BSA.



BSA's buying power dropped and class size increased.



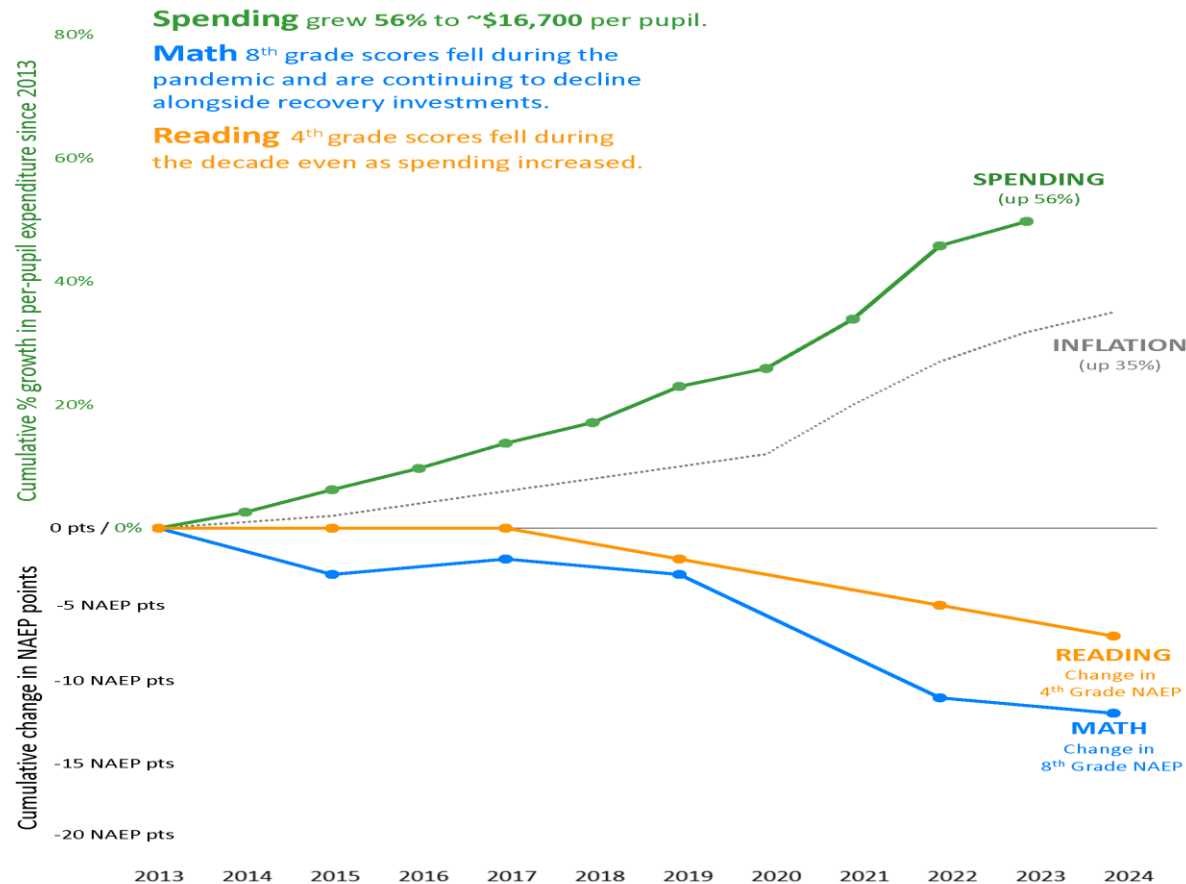
As class size climbed, 8th grade reading fell.



USA school spending beats inflation.

<https://edunomicslab.org/spending-v-outcomes-2/>

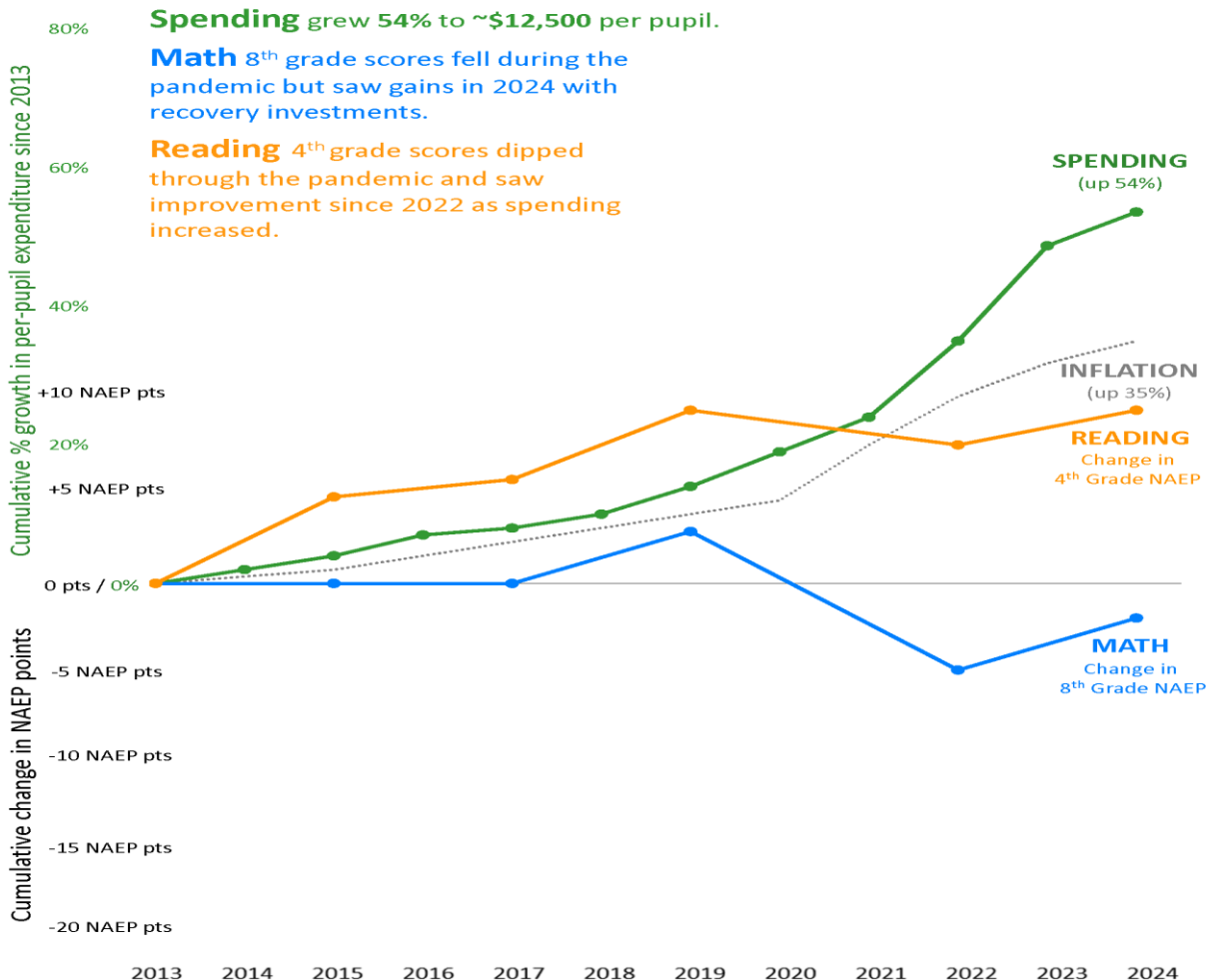
United States: Change in Spending and Scores since 2013



Analysis by Edunomics Lab using data from these sources: *Scores*: The Nation's Report Card (NAEP) 2013-2024, *Spending*: U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances through 2023, *Inflation*: CPI, BLS, *Questions*: Edunomics@Georgetown.edu

“Mississippi miracle” costs a lot.

Mississippi: Change in Spending and Scores since 2013

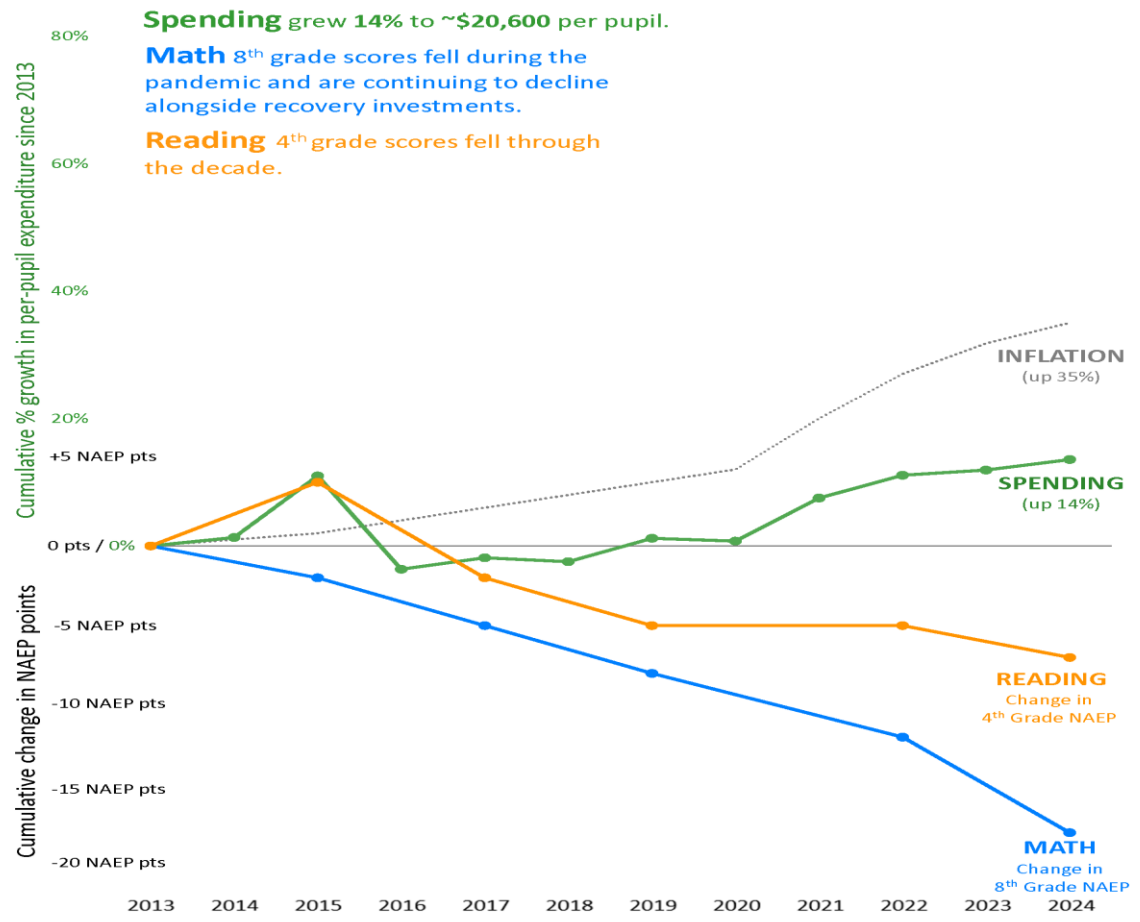


Analysis by Edunomics Lab using data from these sources: *Scores*: The Nation's Report Card (NAEP) 2013-2024. *Spending*: U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances through 2023, then NEA's Ranking of the States estimate for 2024. *Inflation*: CPI, BLS. *Questions*: Edunomics@Georgetown.edu

Alaska is stingy.

- [Edunomics.org/roi-over-time](https://edunomics.org/roi-over-time)

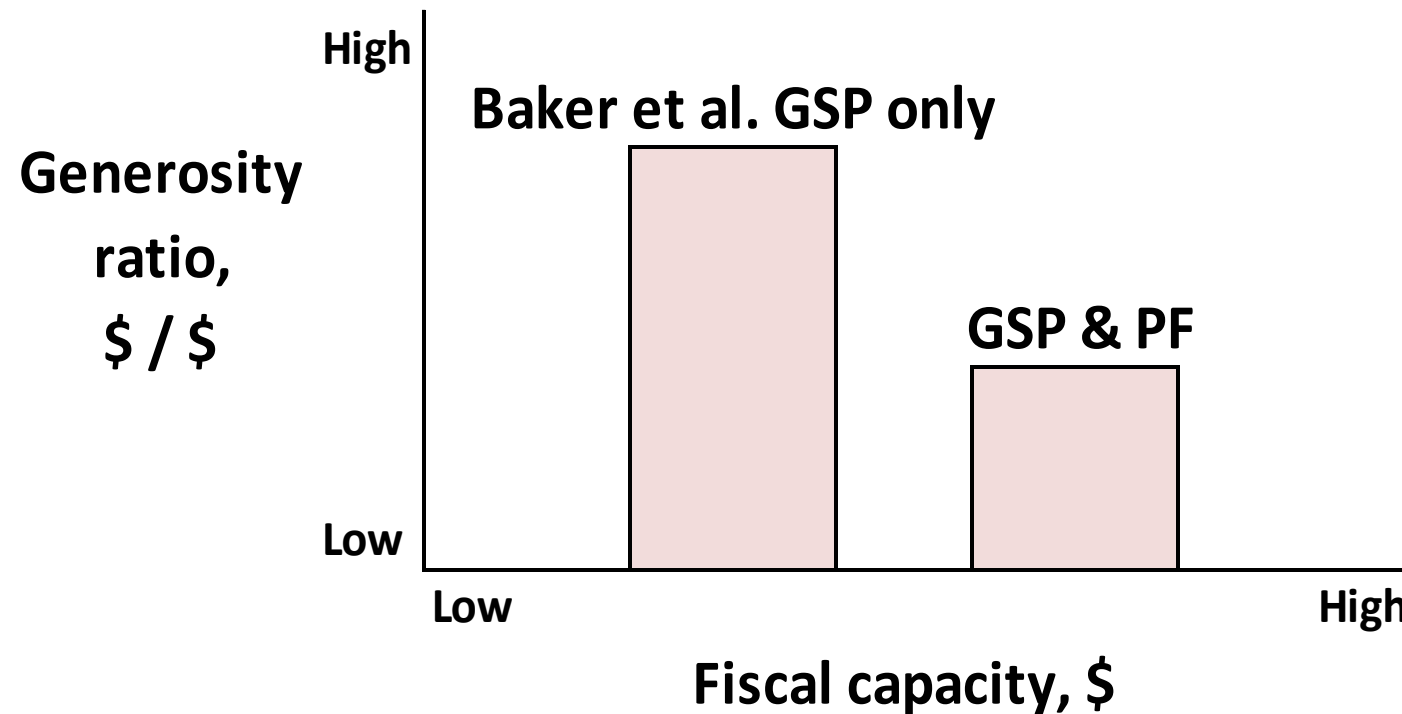
Alaska: Change in Spending and Scores since 2013



Analysis by Edunomics Lab using data from these sources: Scores: The Nation's Report Card (NAEP) 2013-2024. Spending: U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances through 2023, then NEA's Ranking of the States estimate for 2024. Inflation: CPI, BLS. Questions: Edunomics@Georgetown.edu

They ranked State's generosity to schools but forgot Permanent Fund.

- Baker & DiCarlo; Farrie & Kim

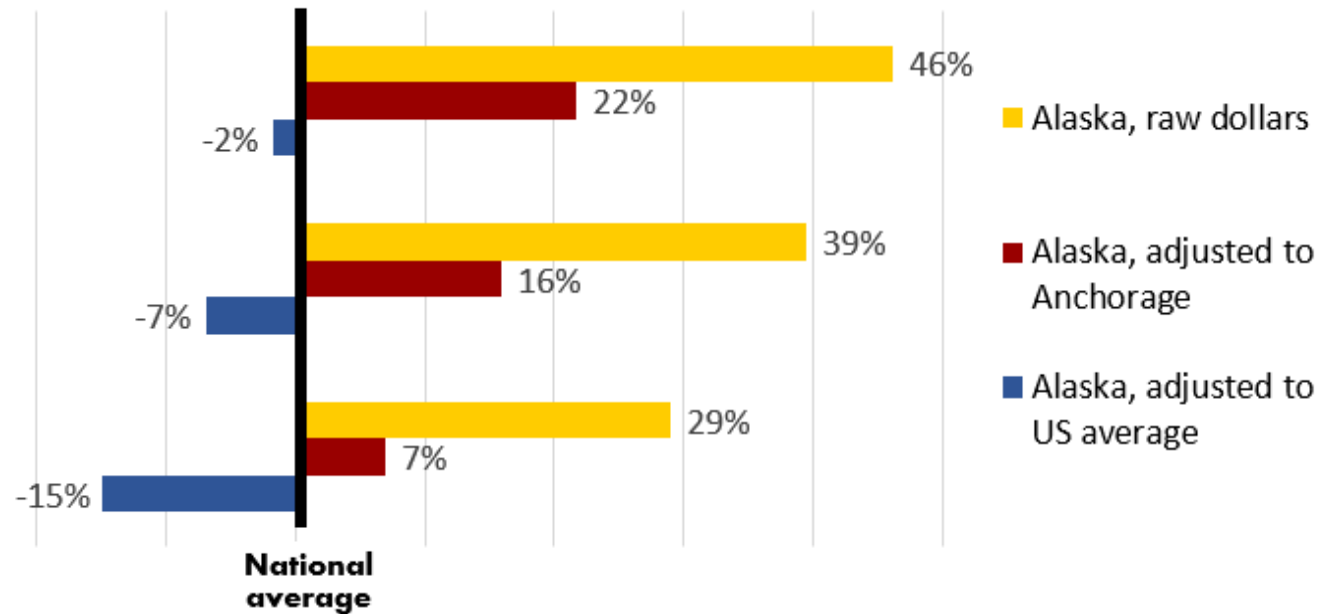


Alaska school spending is below average, Berman & DeFeo, 2025

Figure 2

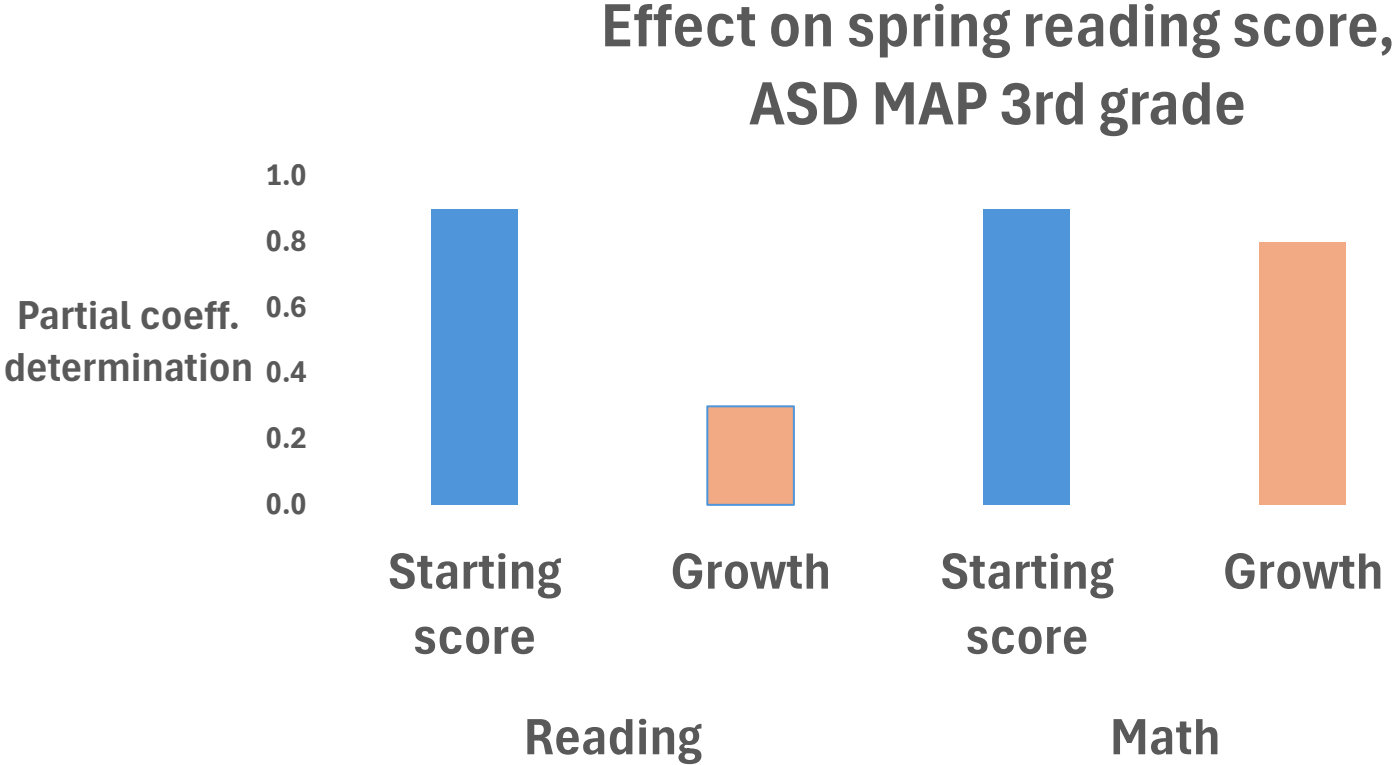
Alaska's per-pupil spending, adjusted to Anchorage and the US average, 2017-2022

Source: US Census Bureau, Annual Survey of School System Finances

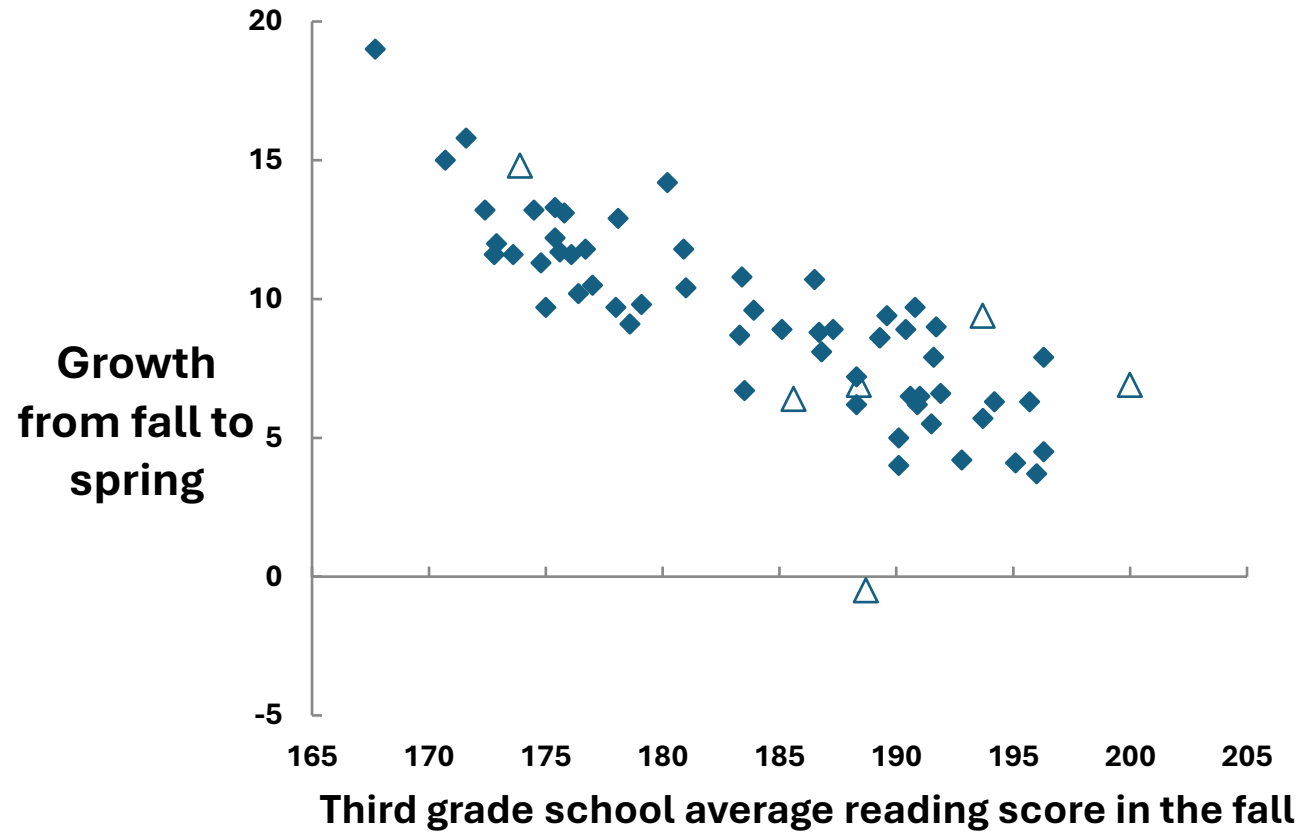


Adjustments show how Alaska's spending compares to the national average, considering the higher cost of living in the state. Since 2017 when we first started compiling these data, Alaska's spending has steadily declined, relative to the national average. The numbers in this figure reflect real dollars and are not adjusted for inflation.

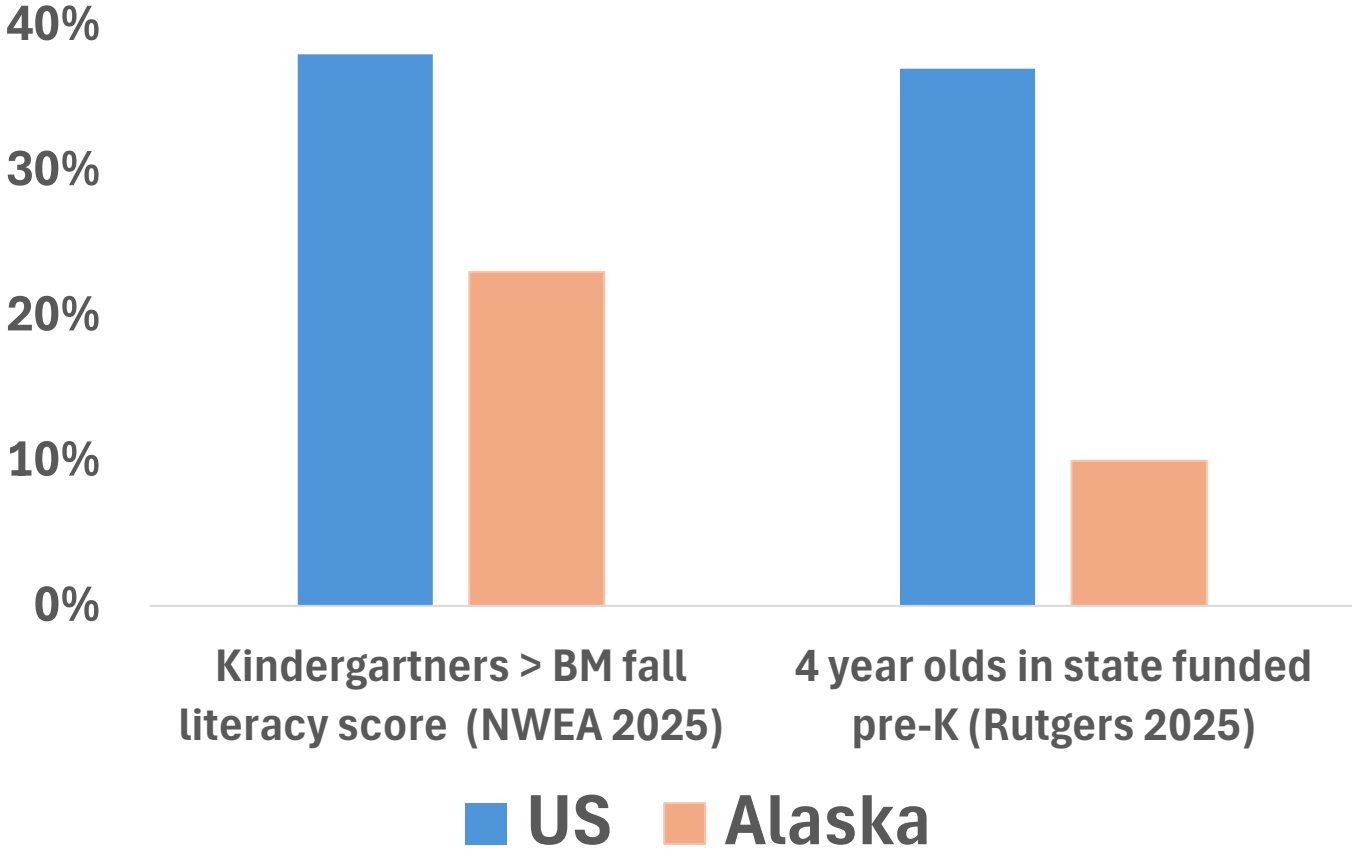
Fall score proves more important than growth rate for spring proficiency.



Even big growth is not enough.

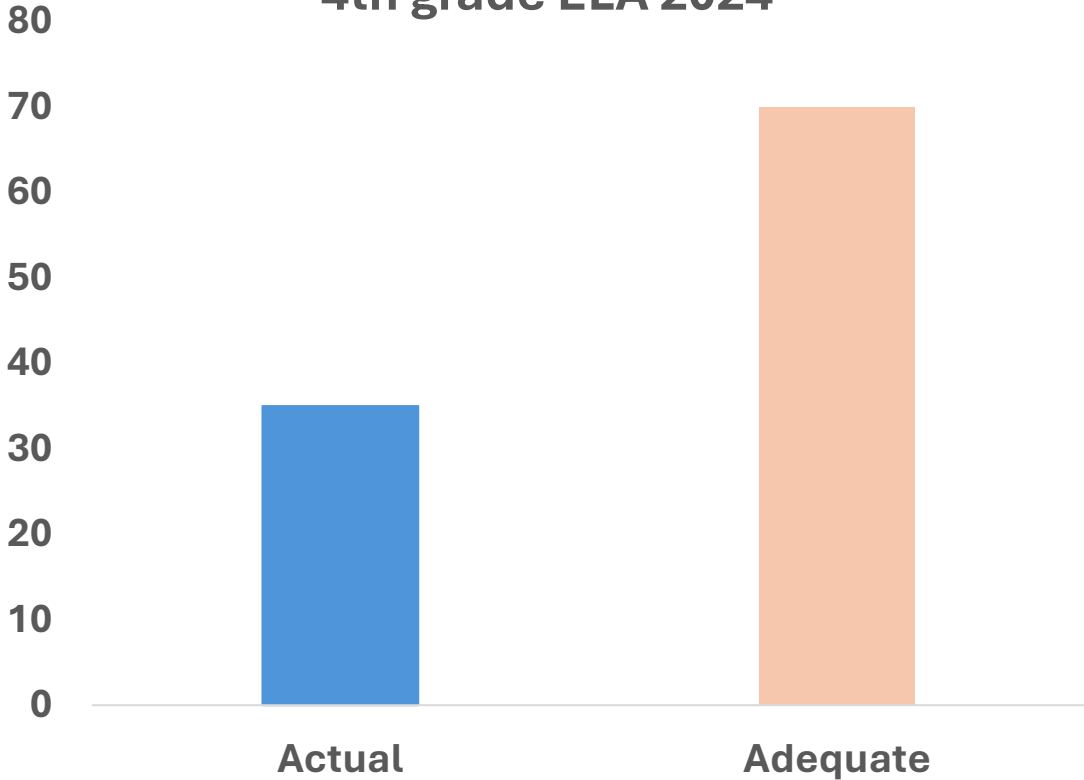


Alaska ranks low in preschool enrollment and skills entering kindergarten.

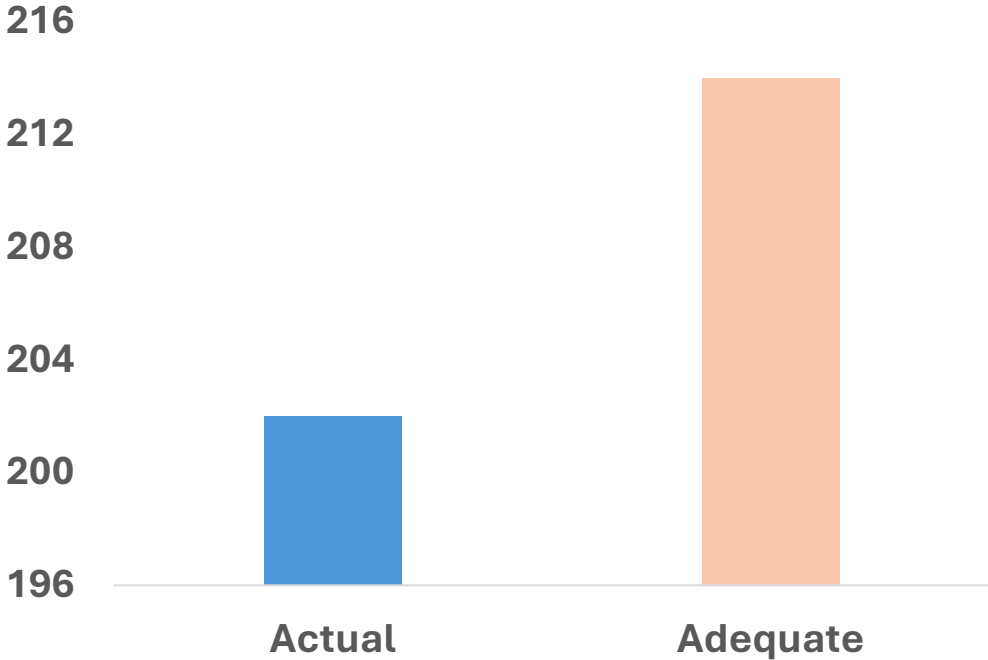


What adequate schools look like

State test % proficient,
4th grade ELA 2024



Alaska's federal test score, 4th
grade reading 2024



Project the price for constitutional adequacy.

- **Close ASD's gap with USA** **\$124 million** **Picus Odden 2015**
 - **Adjust for inflation since 2015** **X 1.4** **US BLS**
 - **State AADM : ASD AADM** **X 3.5** **DEED**
- \$600 million**

Thank you.

See Mike's Substack on Alaska schools.

