

# Education Rankings

*Measuring how well states are educating their students*

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The quality of a community’s schools is central to any family’s aspirations. Public education has largely been a local matter for school boards and states that allocate most of their funding. Yet for the past several decades, the federal government has entered the field: With the No Child Left Behind Act, President George W. Bush put in place annual testing requirements for states that showed for the first time glaring achievement gaps among white students and Black and Latino students, among wealthy, middle-income and low-income students, as well as among students with disabilities and English learners.

The Obama administration pushed states to adopt more rigorous academic standards and tests, new teacher evaluations and pay systems based in part of student test scores and strict improvement models for so-called “failing” schools. In the twilight of the Obama administration, Congress replaced No Child Left Behind with the Every Student Succeeds Act, which enshrined the annual testing requirement but otherwise represented a sweeping rollback of the federal government’s involvement in K-12 education.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration’s biggest-ticket education priority was expanding school choice – a big tent that includes everything from charter schools to private and parochial schools to school vouchers and education savings accounts. Despite striking out at the federal level, the focus served to expand school choice options in a handful of states.

New Jersey is the top state for education. It’s followed by Massachusetts, Florida, Washington and Colorado to round out the top five. Six of the 10 states with the best education systems also rank among the top 10 Best States overall.

Learn more about the Best States for education below.

45	 West Virginia	47	41
46	 Arizona	33	47
47	 Alabama	39	45
48	 Louisiana	48	46
49	 Alaska	36	49
50	 New Mexico	24	50

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