

K12 ACADEMICS — WORLD EDUCATION SERIES

Education Systems of Americas

How school works across 35 countries — structure, exams, higher education & more, in plain English.



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2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

Education around the world.

This volume covers the education systems of **Americas** — a two-page profile of each country, with structure, compulsory years, curriculum, exams, higher education and more. From K12 Academics, reaching 185 countries every month.

HOW EACH PROFILE WORKS

The left page introduces the system and its structure; the right page covers schools, curriculum, exams and higher education, with the key facts at a glance. Systems evolve, so each links to its full, updated guide online.



Antigua and Barbuda

EDUCATION IN ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Antigua and Barbuda — a twin-island Caribbean nation and former British colony — runs an English-language, British-based education system under the Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high (around 99%), and, like its Caribbean neighbors, the country uses the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — One year of early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Ages ~11–16, leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 , covering primary and lower/secondary schooling. The school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The majority of students attend free government (public) schools . Instruction is in English, and the curriculum aligns with regional standards set through CARICOM and the CXC.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Antigua and Barbuda has a modest private and church-affiliated school sector , offering an alternative to public schools, largely in and around St. John's. International-curriculum options are limited given the country's size.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5 (British)
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward the CXC examinations at the end of secondary school. Regional history and Caribbean context feature throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **CSEC** — The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, taken at the end of secondary school (roughly equivalent to O-Levels/GCSE)
- ✓ **CAPE** — The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination, for post-secondary/pre-university study (equivalent to A-Levels)

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education includes Antigua State College and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Open Campus , which links Antigua into the region's flagship university network. Distinctively, Antigua is also home to offshore medical schools — notably the American University of Antigua (AUA) and the University of Health Sciences Antigua...

READ THE FULL ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA GUIDE
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Argentina

EDUCATION IN ARGENTINA

Argentina has a strong public-education tradition and a striking feature: education is free at every level — including university . Instruction is in Spanish , literacy is high (around 99%), and the country has one of the longest compulsory-education spans in the world , running from age 4 through the end of secondary school. Education...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial (early years)** — Kindergarten; the final years are compulsory — age 5 nationwide, with age 4 also made compulsory
- ✓ **Educación Primaria** — Primary school, typically 6 or 7 years depending on the province
- ✓ **Educación Secundaria** — Secondary school, typically 5 or 6 years, so that primary + secondary total 12 years, with a general lower cycle and an oriented upper cycle (...)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **Free** — Public schooling carries no tuition at any level
- ✓ **School year** — Runs roughly March to December (Southern Hemisphere)
- ✓ **Federal** — Provinces administer schools within a national framework
- ✓ **Language** — Spanish; English is widely taught and bilingual schools are common

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Argentine students attend free public schools , funded by the provinces and framed by national policy. The public system is deeply rooted in Argentine society and history; quality and resources vary across provinces and between urban and rural areas.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 4–18
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Mar – Dec
Public university	Free
Currency	Peso (ARS)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Argentina has a substantial private sector — including secular, Catholic, and bilingual/international schools — many of which receive some state subsidy (which keeps fees lower than they would otherwise be). Private and bilingual schools are common in Buenos Aires and other cities, and many offer English-intensive or dual-language...

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish language and literature, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and foreign languages (English is widely taught; some schools are bilingual), set within national learning frameworks and adapted by each province. The oriented upper-secondary cycle lets students specialize (for example, in natural sciences...

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Barbados

EDUCATION IN BARBADOS

Barbados has one of the Caribbean's strongest education systems, with English as the language of instruction, near-universal literacy , and a long history of heavy public investment in schooling. The system is British-based, uses the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) assessments, and hosts a major campus of the University of...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Nursery/pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (ages ~4/5-11)** — Ending with the Barbados Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination (the "11-plus" / Common Entrance) that assigns students to secondary schools
- ✓ **Secondary (ages ~11-16/18)** — Leading to CSEC and, for some, CAPE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Public education has historically been free through the tertiary level for nationals.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Barbadian students attend free government schools . The Common Entrance Examination is a significant milestone, determining secondary-school placement. Instruction is in English, following the national curriculum and CXC standards.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Barbados; nearly all children attend public or private schools, and compulsory-attendance rules apply.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC · CAPE
Currency	Bds\$ (pegged US\$)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Barbados has a modest private and church-affiliated school sector alongside its strong public system, offering alternatives largely in and around Bridgetown.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean history and context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **Common Entrance** — The secondary-school entrance exam at the end of primary
- ✓ **CSEC** — The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (≈ O-Levels/GCSE), at the end of secondary school
- ✓ **CAPE** — The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (≈ A-Levels), for pre-university study

READ THE FULL BARBADOS GUIDE
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Belize

EDUCATION IN BELIZE

Belize is the only officially English-speaking country in Central America (Spanish and Kriol are also widely spoken), and its education system reflects British-Caribbean roots. A defining feature is the church-state partnership : most schools are operated by churches/denominations but funded and regulated by the government, working...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Early-childhood years
- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Infant 1-2 plus Standard 1-6, roughly ages 5-13, ending with the Primary School Examination
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Roughly ages 13-17, leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 to 14 . The school year runs roughly September to June . The government has worked to improve access and retention, particularly at the secondary level.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Because of the church-state model, the great majority of "public" schools are government-aided but run by churches (Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and others), with a smaller number of purely government schools. Instruction is in English.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Belize; most children attend church-state or private schools, and compulsory-attendance rules apply.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–14
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Exams	PSE · CSEC
Currency	BZ\$ (pegged US\$)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Belize also has a number of private schools (including some international-curriculum options), largely in Belize City and the district towns, alongside the dominant church-state sector.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and Spanish , delivered in English and aligned with Caribbean (CXC) standards. Belize's multilingual society means Spanish is widely used and taught.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **PSE** — The Primary School Examination, taken at the end of primary school
- ✓ **CSEC** — The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CXC), taken at the end of secondary school for further study and employment

READ THE FULL BELIZE GUIDE
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Bolivia

EDUCATION IN BOLIVIA

Bolivia's "plurinational" education system reflects the country's diversity: Spanish is the main language of instruction, but Bolivia recognizes dozens of indigenous languages (such as Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani) and promotes intercultural and bilingual education . The system was reshaped by the 2010 Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Law...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Initial (early years)** — Pre-primary education
- ✓ **Primary education (about 6 years)** — The foundation cycle, from around age 6
- ✓ **Secondary education (about 6 years)** — Leading to the Bachillerato and university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

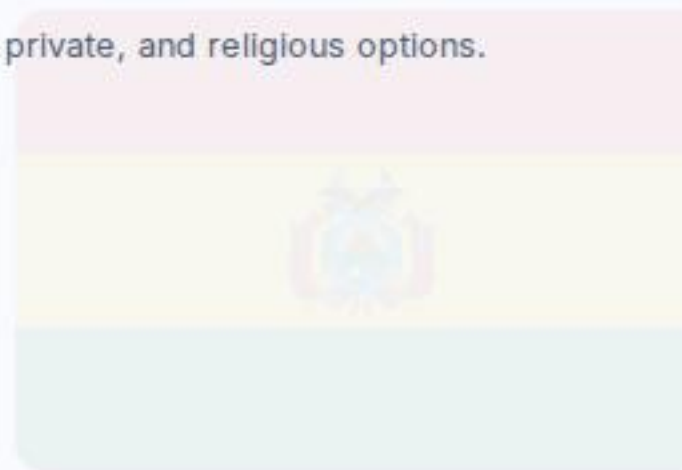
Education is free and compulsory through primary and secondary school, beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly February to November (Southern Hemisphere). Access and quality vary between urban and rural, and highland and lowland, regions.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Bolivian students attend free public schools , which apply the intercultural, plurilingual framework of the 2010 education law, including indigenous-language instruction in many communities.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Bolivia; education is school-based, with public, private, and religious options.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Indigenous
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Feb – Nov
Public university	Free
Currency	Boliviano (BOB)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Bolivia has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in cities such as La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba, offering an alternative to public schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum combines Spanish, indigenous languages, mathematics, sciences, and social studies with the law's emphasis on intercultural understanding and productive (practical/vocational) learning . Bilingual intercultural education is a defining feature.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students earn the Bachillerato (secondary diploma) on completing secondary school, which is the basis for entering university. Public universities may set their own admission processes for competitive programs.

READ THE FULL BOLIVIA GUIDE
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Brazil

EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Brazil, Latin America's largest country, runs a big, federally coordinated education system with Portuguese as the language of instruction. Basic education is free and compulsory from age 4 to 17, and — strikingly — the country's public universities are free yet highly competitive, with admission dominated by the national ENEM exam....

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educação Infantil (early years)** — Nursery and pre-school, including compulsory pre-primary from age 4
- ✓ **Ensino Fundamental (9 years)** — Fundamental education, ages ~6–14, split into early years (1–5) and later years (6–9)
- ✓ **Ensino Médio (3 years)** — Upper secondary, ages ~15–17, ending with the secondary diploma (Certificado/Diploma de Ensino Médio)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **Free** — Public education carries no tuition at any level
- ✓ **Federal structure** — Municipalities, states, and the federal government each run parts of the system
- ✓ **Attendance** — Enrollment is near-universal at fundamental level; the challenge is retention and quality through secondary

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The large majority of Brazilian students attend free public schools, run by municipalities (early/fundamental) and states (secondary). Quality varies widely, and private schools are often perceived as stronger for university preparation — one reason a 2012 law reserves 50% of places at federal universities for public-school students...



AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Ages 4–17
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Feb – Dec
University entry	ENEM
Currency	Real (BRL)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Brazil has a large private school sector — including religious, bilingual, and international schools — popular with families seeking stronger university preparation, especially in the big cities. At the university level, private institutions actually enroll the majority of students , supported by government scholarship (ProUni) and loan...

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum is framed by the national Common Curricular Base (BNCC) and covers Portuguese, mathematics, sciences, humanities, and foreign languages (English is compulsory; Spanish is commonly offered), with philosophy and sociology in upper secondary. International and bilingual private schools often add English-language or...

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Canada

EDUCATION IN CANADA

Canada consistently ranks among the world's most educated countries and is one of the top destinations for international students. The single most important thing to understand is that education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, not a federal one. There is no national ministry of education and no national curriculum...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Early childhood / Kindergarten** — Kindergarten (usually the year a child turns 5) is offered across the country; some provinces (e.g. Ontario) also offer Junior Kindergarten at age 4
- ✓ **Elementary (primary)** — Roughly Kindergarten to Grade 6 (Grade 7 or 8 in some provinces)
- ✓ **Middle / junior high** — Where used, typically Grades 7–9 (this stage doesn't exist everywhere)
- ✓ **Secondary (high school)** — Through Grade 12 across most of Canada — with the major exception of Quebec, where high school ends at Grade 11 and students then move to CEGEP...

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **Language of instruction** — English in most of the country, French in Quebec — with the constitutional right to minority-language education, plus French-immersion streams...
- ✓ **Enrollment** — Handled through local district school boards
- ✓ **Newcomers** — Public schools enroll the children of most residents, including many temporary residents; requirements for international K–12 students differ

HIGHER EDUCATION

- ✓ **Universities** — Degree-granting and often research-intensive. The U15 group of research universities includes the University of Toronto, McGill University, and the...
- ✓ **Colleges & polytechnics** — Career-focused certificates, diplomas, applied degrees, and apprenticeships — valued for hands-on, employment-ready training and often with co-op...
- ✓ **Quebec CEGEPs** — The bridge between high school and university, unique to Quebec

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	Province-run K–12
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Universities & colleges
Currency	Dollar (CAD)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The large majority of Canadian students — around nine in ten — attend free public schools , managed by local district school boards under each province's Ministry of Education. Provincial curricula are benchmarked so quality is broadly consistent, even as details differ. Several provinces (including Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan)...

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Canada has a private and independent school sector — including university-preparatory schools, religious schools, Montessori and Waldorf schools, and international schools offering curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) . Some provinces (notably British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec) provide partial public funding to...

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Chile

EDUCATION IN CHILE

Chile has a well-developed education system with Spanish as the language of instruction and high literacy (around 97%). It is known for two distinctive features: a three-tier school system (municipal/public, government-subsidized private "voucher" schools, and fully private schools — Chile was an early adopter of school vouchers), and a...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

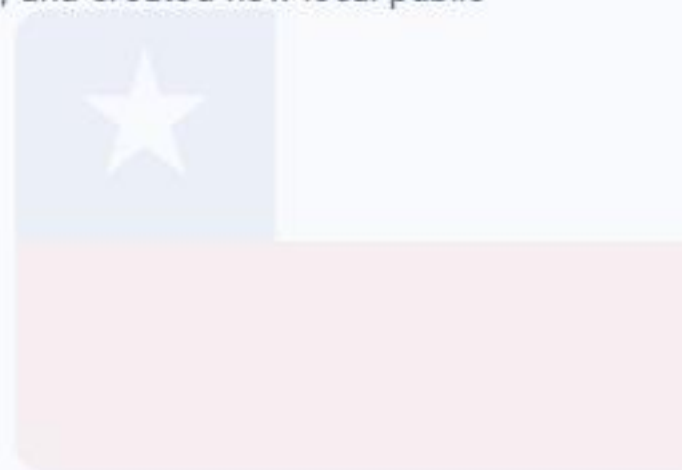
- ✓ **Educación Parvularia (early years)** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (8 years)** — Basic education, ages ~6–13
- ✓ **Educación Media (4 years)** — Secondary — scientific-humanistic (academic) or technical-professional (vocational), ages ~14–17

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 18 (basic plus secondary), and Chile has extended compulsory schooling to include kindergarten. Public education is free. The school year runs roughly March to December (Southern Hemisphere).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Chilean students attend one of three school types: municipal (public) schools, subsidized private schools (partly government-funded "voucher" schools), and fully private (paid) schools. Reforms in recent years have curtailed for-profit operation and selective admissions in the subsidized sector, and created new local public-education...



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Mar – Dec
University entry	PAES
Currency	Peso (CLP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The subsidized private ("particular subvencionado") sector educates a large share of students with a mix of public funding and (historically) family co-payment, while fully private schools serve higher-income families. This mixed market is central to how Chilean schooling works — and to ongoing debate about equity.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The national curriculum covers Spanish language, mathematics, sciences, history and social sciences, and English, with technical-professional tracks in upper secondary offering vocational specialties.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

University admission is through the PAES (Prueba de Acceso a la Educación Superior) — the national standardized admission test (which replaced the former PSU in 2023) — combined with school grades and ranking. PAES scores are used in the centralized admission process for Chile's traditional and many private universities.

READ THE FULL CHILE GUIDE
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Colombia

EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA

Colombia runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of National Education, with high literacy (around 95%). Schooling spans one compulsory year of preschool, basic education, and upper secondary, and university admission is shaped by a national standardized test, the Saber 11 . Colombia has both a competitive...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preescolar** — One compulsory transition year before primary
- ✓ **Básica primaria (grades 1–5)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Básica secundaria (grades 6–9)** — Completing basic education
- ✓ **Educación media (grades 10–11)** — Academic or technical, ending with the bachiller diploma and the Saber 11 exam

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from the transition (preschool) year through grade 9 — roughly ages 5 to 15 — with upper secondary strongly expected. Public education is free. The school year runs roughly late January/February to November (with regional calendar variations).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Colombian students attend free public schools . Quality and access vary between cities and rural or conflict-affected areas, and the government has worked to expand coverage and retention.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages ~5–15
Structure	5 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan/Feb – Nov
University entry	Saber 11
Currency	Peso (COP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Colombia has a substantial private and religious school sector , including bilingual and international schools, concentrated in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and other cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with technical tracks in upper secondary. Bilingual (Spanish–English) education is a growing emphasis.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key assessment is the Saber 11 (administered by ICFES), a national standardized exam taken at the end of upper secondary. Results are widely used in university admission , especially at public universities, and feed government scholarship programs.

READ THE FULL COLOMBIA GUIDE
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Costa Rica

EDUCATION IN COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is famous for a remarkable choice: after abolishing its army in 1948 , it redirected the savings into education and health. The country now invests a very high share of GDP in public education, has one of the highest literacy rates in the Americas (near-universal among young people), and treats education as a constitutional...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school, with compulsory years before primary
- ✓ **Educación General Básica — primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Secondary** — Academic (to 11th grade) or vocational/technical tracks, with the latter running longer and including a technical qualification

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory from pre-school through the end of secondary (roughly ages 4/5 to 17). The school year runs roughly February to December . Costa Rica has worked to close gaps between richer and poorer students and to keep young people in school through upper secondary.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Costa Rican students attend free public schools , funded by the country's exceptionally high education spending. Vocational-technical education is strong — and, unusually, students in vocational tracks often perform very well.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages ~4–17
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Feb – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of Costa Rica
Currency	Colón (CRC)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Costa Rica has a private and international-school sector , including bilingual and IB schools, concentrated around San José. Private-school students follow a similar national curriculum and may add international qualifications.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, sciences, social studies, civics, and foreign languages (English and, in some schools, French). Since 2016, a major reform ("Educating for a New Citizenry") has emphasized twenty-first-century skills and citizenship.

STUDYING IN COSTA RICA FROM ABROAD

- ✓ **Spanish immersion & field study** — Its stable democracy, biodiversity, and welcoming reputation make it a top choice for Spanish-language, environmental, and biology study-abroad and...
- ✓ **Language** — Most degree programs are in Spanish; many providers offer Spanish-language and English-taught study-abroad options
- ✓ **Practicalities** — International students arrange a student visa/permit and should confirm program requirements; public-university tuition is low but admission is by...

READ THE FULL COSTA RICA GUIDE
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Cuba

EDUCATION IN CUBA

Cuba has one of the most distinctive education systems in the world: free and state-run at every level, including university, with no private schools. Following a mass literacy campaign in 1961, Cuba achieved — and has maintained — among the highest literacy rates in the world (around 99.7%), and it invests a very high share of...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preschool** — Early-childhood education, widely available
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Basic secondary (3 years)** — Completing compulsory schooling
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Pre-university (leading to university) or technical/vocational

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory from age 6 through basic secondary (around age 15), and the vast majority continue to upper secondary. The school year runs roughly September to July. All schooling is provided by the state.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

All schools are public and state-run — there is no private-school sector. The system is centrally organized, with small class sizes and a strong emphasis on universal access, teacher training, and equity across the country.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Univ. of Havana
Currency	Peso (CUP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Cuba has no private schools ; education is entirely state-provided at every level. This is a defining feature of the system.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, the sciences, history, and the arts , alongside physical education and civic/political education rooted in the ideals of José Martí and the Revolution. Cuba is noted for strong outcomes in literacy, mathematics, and science relative to its income level.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take entrance examinations for pre-university study and for university, and placement into competitive programs and institutions depends on results combined with academic records.

READ THE FULL CUBA GUIDE
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Dominica

EDUCATION IN DOMINICA

The Commonwealth of Dominica — a small eastern-Caribbean island (not to be confused with the Dominican Republic) — runs an English-language, British-based education system under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and, like its neighbors, Dominica uses the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5-12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

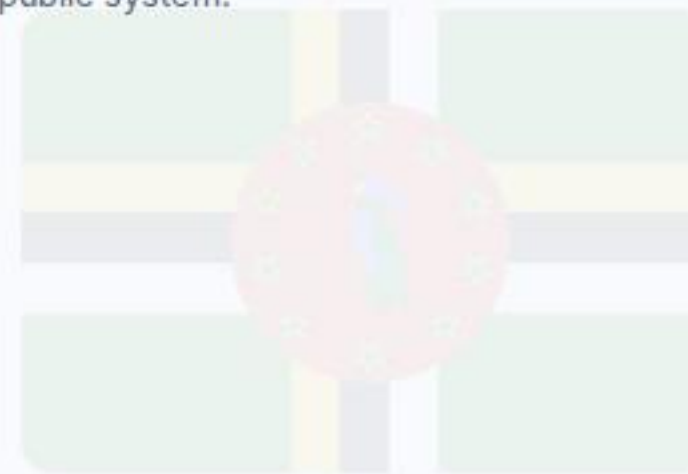
Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards. Dominica has invested in expanding secondary access across the island.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Dominica has a small private and church-affiliated school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward the CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC (Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, ≈ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE (Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination, ≈ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education centers on Dominica State College and the UWI Open Campus . Distinctively, Dominica has hosted offshore medical schools serving international students — Ross University School of Medicine operated on the island for decades before relocating (to Barbados) after Hurricane Maria in 2017, while All Saints University...

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Dominican Republic

EDUCATION IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with high literacy (around 94%). A 2012 push to devote 4% of GDP to education significantly increased funding and expanded programs such as extended school days. The country is also home to the oldest university in the Americas , and...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Nivel Inicial (early years)** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Nivel Primario (6 years)** — Primary education, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Nivel Secundario (6 years)** — Secondary — academic or technical-vocational tracks, ending with the secondary diploma

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory through primary and secondary school. The school year runs roughly August to June . Investment has expanded access and introduced longer school days, though quality gaps remain.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . The 4%-of-GDP commitment funded new schools, teacher training, and the extended-day (*jornada escolar extendida*) program, though outcomes still vary widely.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in the Dominican Republic; education is school-based, with public and private options.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Sec.
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Pruebas Nacionales
Currency	Peso (DOP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Dominican Republic has a large private and religious school sector , concentrated in Santo Domingo, Santiago, and other cities, offering alternatives to public schooling.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with academic and technical-vocational options in secondary school.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Pruebas Nacionales (national examinations) at the end of secondary school, which contribute to the diploma. Public and private universities may set their own admission tests (for example, UASD's admission process) and requirements.

READ THE FULL DOMINICAN REPUBLIC GUIDE
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AMERICAS — 14 OF 35

Ecuador

EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

Ecuador runs a Spanish-language education system, overseen by the Ministry of Education, with intercultural bilingual education for Indigenous communities (in languages such as Kichwa and Shuar) and high literacy (around 93%). A notable feature: Ecuador's 2008 constitution guarantees free public higher education , and the country uses...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Educación General Básica (EGB)** — Ten levels of basic education, ages ~5-14
- ✓ **Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU)** — Three years of upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato diploma

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from early years through the end of the bachillerato (roughly ages 5 to 17). Public education is free. School calendars differ by region — the highland (Sierra) and coastal (Costa) zones run on different schedules.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most Ecuadorian students attend free public schools . The system includes intercultural bilingual schools serving Indigenous communities, reflecting Ecuador's constitutional recognition of plurinationality.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ecuador has a private and religious school sector , including bilingual and international schools, concentrated in Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 5–17
Structure	EGB + BGU
School year	varies by region
Public university	Free
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with Indigenous languages in intercultural bilingual schools. The BGU provides a unified upper-secondary curriculum with some specialization.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school. Admission to free public universities is managed through a national system (run by SENESCYT), historically involving a standardized examination and a merit-and-preference placement process for limited public-university places.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Ecuador supports inclusive education , integrating students with disabilities into mainstream schools with support, alongside special provision.

READ THE FULL ECUADOR GUIDE
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El Salvador

EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR

El Salvador runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, and uses the US Dollar as its currency. The country has worked to expand access and rebuild its system after past conflict, with literacy around 90%. Free basic education is the foundation, followed by a general or technical bachillerato.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Parvularia** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~7–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato)** — General (2 years) or technical/vocational (3 years)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (nine years) is free and compulsory , and the government has worked to extend access to the bachillerato. The school year runs roughly January to November .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Access and quality have historically varied, and improved security conditions in recent years have affected school life; the government continues to invest in expanding coverage.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

El Salvador has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in San Salvador and larger towns, offering alternatives to public schooling.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Nov
Higher ed	Univ. of El Salvador
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with technical specialties in the vocational bachillerato.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete a national learning assessment at the end of upper secondary (historically the PAES, more recently reformed under the "AVANZO" assessment) alongside the bachillerato diploma. Universities may set their own admission requirements.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the public University of El Salvador (UES) , the country's main and largest public university, alongside private institutions such as the Jesuit-run Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) .

READ THE FULL EL SALVADOR GUIDE
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Grenada

EDUCATION IN GRENADA

Grenada — the "Spice Isle" of the eastern Caribbean and a former British colony — runs an English-language, British-based education system under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. Grenada is also home to St. George's University , one of the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5-12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government and government-assisted schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Grenada has a small private and church-affiliated school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education includes the T.A. Marryshow Community College and the UWI Open Campus . Grenada's standout is St. George's University (SGU) — a large, US-model university best known for its School of Medicine and School of Veterinary Medicine , which enroll thousands of international students and make SGU a major contributor to...

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Guatemala

EDUCATION IN GUATEMALA

Guatemala, the most populous country in Central America, runs a Spanish-language education system with intercultural bilingual education in its many Mayan languages for Indigenous communities. Literacy is around 83%, with significant gaps between urban and rural, and Ladino and Indigenous, populations. The country is also a...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preprimaria** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~7-12
- ✓ **Ciclo Básico (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Ciclo Diversificado (2-3 years)** — Upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato or a teaching/technical qualification

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory through primary and the ciclo básico, though completion is uneven, especially in rural and Indigenous areas. The school year runs roughly January to October .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , which include intercultural bilingual education (EBI) programs serving Mayan-language communities. Access and quality vary widely across the country.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Mayan
Compulsory	Primary + Básico
Structure	6 + 3 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Oct
Higher ed	USAC (free)
Currency	Quetzal (GTQ)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Guatemala has a substantial private and religious school sector , concentrated in Guatemala City and larger towns, which educates a significant share of students.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and (in bilingual schools) Mayan languages . The upper-secondary diversificado offers academic, teaching, and technical specializations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato (or a teaching/technical diploma) to finish secondary school. Universities set their own admission requirements and entrance tests.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited , delivered through a mix of government and NGO programs, and concentrated in urban areas.

READ THE FULL GUATEMALA GUIDE
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Guyana

EDUCATION IN GUYANA

Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America — a former British colony that is culturally Caribbean and a member of CARICOM. It runs an English-language, British-based education system , uses the regional CXC examinations, and has high literacy. A recent offshore oil boom has made Guyana one of the world's fastest-growing...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Nursery** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ending with the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), which allocates secondary places
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5–7 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English (Guyanese Creole is widely spoken).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards. The NGSA is a significant milestone determining secondary-school placement.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Guyana has a growing private and faith-based school sector , concentrated in and around Georgetown.

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	NGSA · CXC
Currency	Dollar (GYD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies , taught in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two key points mark the path: the NGSA at the end of primary (for secondary placement), and the Caribbean CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) examinations in secondary school.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Guyana (UG) in Georgetown (founded 1963), along with technical institutes and a small number of offshore/private medical universities. Guyana's new oil wealth is expected to expand higher-education investment significantly.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Guyana; most children attend public or private schools.

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Haiti

EDUCATION IN HAITI

Haiti has two official languages — French and Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) , the latter spoken by virtually everyone — and a school system unusual for how little of it is public: the great majority of schools are private (run by churches, NGOs, and communities), with the state providing only a small share. Haiti is the poorest country in the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **École fondamentale (fundamental, ~9 years)** — The basic cycle, from around age 6
- ✓ **Secondary (~4 years)** — Leading to the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Fundamental education is compulsory in principle and intended to be free , but because most schooling is private and fee-charging, cost is a major barrier for families. The school year runs roughly September to June , when conditions allow.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The public school sector is small ; the state directly runs only a minority of schools, and public capacity has been further strained by crises. Efforts to expand free public schooling have had limited reach.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students progress through fundamental and secondary examinations, culminating in the Baccalauréat , which is required for university entry.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Haitian Creole
Compulsory	Fundamental
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Gourde (HTG)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Most Haitian children attend private schools — run by religious organizations, NGOs, and communities — which charge fees that many families struggle to afford. This heavy reliance on private, fee-based schooling is a defining and challenging feature of the system.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction has traditionally been in French, though Haitian Creole — the language nearly all children actually speak — has been increasingly used in early grades to improve learning. The curriculum follows a French-influenced model.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the State University of Haiti (Université d'État d'Haïti, UEH) in Port-au-Prince, along with private and religious universities. Capacity is limited, and higher education has been affected by the wider instability.

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Honduras

EDUCATION IN HONDURAS

Honduras runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with literacy around 88%. The country has worked to expand access and improve retention, though poverty, rural provision, and security challenges affect schooling. Free basic education is the foundation, followed by a general or technical...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Prebásica** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato)** — General or technical, 2–3 years

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (nine years) is free and compulsory , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly February to November . The government has worked to extend access to the bachillerato.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Access and quality vary, particularly between urban and rural areas, and the government continues to invest in coverage and retention.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Honduras has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, including bilingual and international schools.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 2/3
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	UNAH
Currency	Lempira (HNL)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with technical specialties in the vocational bachillerato.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school. The main public university sets its own admission process (an academic aptitude test) for entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) — the country's main and largest public university, which is autonomous — alongside private universities. Admission to UNAH is by aptitude test.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Honduras; education is school-based, with public and private options.

READ THE FULL HONDURAS GUIDE
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Jamaica

EDUCATION IN JAMAICA

Jamaica runs an English-language, British-based education system (with Jamaican Patois widely spoken) under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, the country uses the regional CXC examinations, and Jamaica is home to the founding campus of the University of the West Indies — a major Caribbean higher-education institution.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Early childhood** — Basic and infant schools, ages ~3–5
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ending with the Primary Exit Profile (PEP)
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5–7 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 6 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government and government-aided schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards. The PEP assessment allocates students to secondary schools.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Jamaica has a private and church-affiliated school sector (often called "prep schools" at the primary level), offering an alternative to public schools.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	PEP · CXC
Currency	Dollar (JMD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two key points mark the path: the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) (which replaced the former GSAT) at the end of primary for secondary placement, and the Caribbean CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) examinations in secondary school.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona Campus in Kingston — the founding campus of the region's flagship university (established 1948) — along with the University of Technology (UTech) , Northern Caribbean University, and teacher-training colleges.

READ THE FULL JAMAICA GUIDE
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Mexico

EDUCATION IN MEXICO

Mexico runs one of Latin America's largest education systems — over 36 million students — governed centrally by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) . Instruction is in Spanish , with intercultural bilingual education in the country's 68 recognized indigenous languages. A notable feature: education is free and constitutionally...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preescolar (preschool, 3 years)** — Ages 3–5, compulsory
- ✓ **Primaria (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the Certificado de Educación Primaria
- ✓ **Secundaria (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Grades 7–9, general or technical
- ✓ **Educación Media Superior (upper secondary / bachillerato, 3 years)** — Ages ~15–18 — academic (bachillerato general), technological, or vocational (CONALEP)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory from age 3 through the end of upper secondary (around age 18) — one of the more extensive compulsory ranges. The school year runs roughly August to July , and public schools provide free textbooks (the libros de texto gratuitos).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Mexico's vast geography has produced distinctive delivery models — including telesecundaria , television-based lower-secondary schooling that serves around a fifth of secundaria students in rural and remote areas, and many multi-grade primary schools. Intercultural bilingual schools serve...

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 3–18
Structure	3 + 6 + 3 + 3
School year	Aug – Jul
University entry	Entrance exams
Currency	Peso (MXN)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Mexico has a substantial private-school sector (from modest to elite, including bilingual and IB international schools), concentrated in the cities and often chosen for stronger English and facilities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The SEP sets a national curriculum covering Spanish, mathematics, the sciences, history, geography, civics, the arts, and English (a compulsory subject, though proficiency remains a challenge). Indigenous-language and intercultural programs operate where relevant.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Mexico has no single national exit exam ; secondary completion is certified by the SEP. University admission is by entrance examination set by each institution — for example, UNAM's own exam, the IPN's exam, and the centralized COMIPEMS exam used to place students into public upper-secondary schools in the Mexico City area. Competition...

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Nicaragua

EDUCATION IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with bilingual intercultural education (in English Creole, Miskito, and other languages) on the Caribbean coast's autonomous regions. A famous 1980 literacy crusade sharply reduced illiteracy, and the constitution guarantees free public education...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Secundaria (5 years)** — Ending with the bachillerato

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory at the primary level (and expected through secondary), beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly February to November .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , including intercultural bilingual schools in the autonomous Caribbean regions. Access and quality vary between urban and rural areas.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Nicaragua has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Managua and larger towns.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	UNAN
Currency	Córdoba (NIO)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with indigenous and Creole languages in the autonomous regions.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school, which is the basis for entering university; universities may set their own admission requirements.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the public National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) , with campuses in Managua and León, alongside other public and private universities. The constitution guarantees a budget share (historically 6%) to public universities, supporting free tertiary education.

READ THE FULL NICARAGUA GUIDE
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Panama

EDUCATION IN PANAMA

Panama runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with English and indigenous languages also taught. Literacy is high, and Panama's canal-driven economy has supported growing investment in education, though quality gaps between urban and rural (and indigenous) areas remain.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

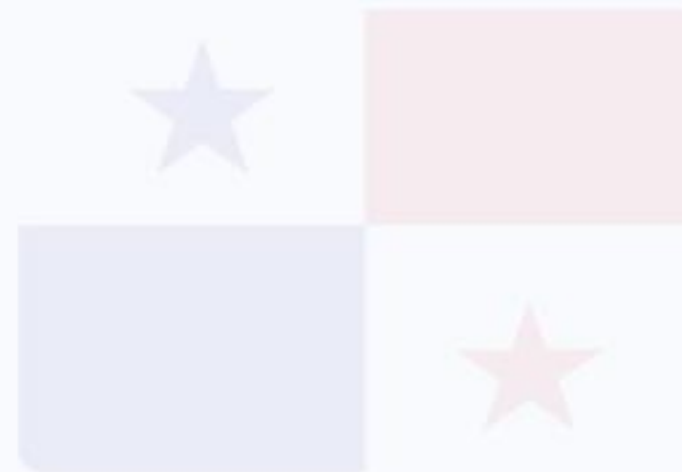
- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Premedia (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Media (3 years)** — Upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory through primary and premedia (and expected through media), beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly March to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Access and quality vary, particularly in rural and indigenous (comarca) areas, and the government has worked to expand coverage.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Premedia
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of Panama
Currency	Balboa / US\$

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Panama has a substantial private and international-school sector (including bilingual and American/IB schools), concentrated in Panama City.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with academic and technical options in the media (upper-secondary) stage.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school, which is the basis for university admission; universities set their own admission requirements.

STUDYING IN PANAMA FROM ABROAD

- ✓ **Language** — Most programs are taught in Spanish; some private universities offer English-medium options
- ✓ **Practicalities** — International students arrange a student visa and confirm requirements directly

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Paraguay

EDUCATION IN PARAGUAY

Paraguay is genuinely bilingual: both Spanish and Guaraní are official languages, and — unusually for an indigenous language — Guaraní is spoken by the majority of the population . This shapes a distinctive bilingual education system . Literacy is relatively high, and the country has worked to expand access and strengthen its...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Escolar Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato, 3 years)** — Academic or technical

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Basic education (nine years) is free and compulsory , beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly February to November .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , which apply the country's bilingual (Spanish–Guaraní) education model. Access and quality vary between urban and rural areas.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Paraguay has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Asunción and larger towns.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish · Guaraní
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	Univ. of Asunción
Currency	Guaraní (PYG)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, Guaraní, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies , with bilingual instruction a defining feature — Paraguay is one of the few countries to formally teach and use an indigenous language alongside Spanish across the system.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school, the basis for university admission; universities may set their own entrance requirements.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the public National University of Asunción (UNA) , the oldest and largest, alongside the Catholic University and other private institutions.

READ THE FULL PARAGUAY GUIDE
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Peru

EDUCATION IN PERU

Peru runs a Spanish-language education system with intercultural bilingual education in indigenous languages (Quechua and Aymara are also official). Literacy is relatively high, and Peru is home to the oldest officially established university in the Americas . Quality gaps between urban and rural — and Spanish-speaking and indigenous —...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Secundaria (5 years)** — Ending with the secondary diploma

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is free and compulsory through primary and secondary school, beginning around age 6. The school year runs roughly March to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , including intercultural bilingual schools serving Quechua- and Aymara-speaking communities. Access and quality vary widely across the coast, highlands, and Amazon.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Peru has a substantial private and religious school sector , concentrated in Lima and other cities.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Quechua
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	San Marcos
Currency	Sol (PEN)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , with indigenous languages in intercultural bilingual schools.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Peru does not use a single national exit exam ; students complete secondary school to earn their diploma, and university admission is by entrance examination set by each institution (public universities are highly competitive).

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is anchored by the National University of San Marcos in Lima — founded in 1551 and the oldest officially established university in the Americas — and the top private Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP) , alongside many public and private universities. The sector is overseen by SUNEDU.

READ THE FULL PERU GUIDE
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Saint Kitts and Nevis

EDUCATION IN SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Saint Kitts and Nevis, a twin-island Caribbean federation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system . Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. It also hosts offshore medical schools that enroll international students.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5-12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Saint Kitts and Nevis has a small private and church-affiliated school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education centers on the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College and the UWI Open Campus . The federation also hosts offshore medical schools (such as the University of Medicine and Health Sciences and Windsor University School of Medicine) serving international students.

READ THE FULL SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS GUIDE
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AMERICAS — 28 OF 35

Saint Lucia

EDUCATION IN SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia, an eastern-Caribbean island and former British colony (with a strong French-Creole cultural heritage), runs an English-language, British-based education system (French Creole, Kwéyòl, is widely spoken). Public education is free, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5-12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 15 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Saint Lucia has a small private and church-affiliated school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–15
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education centers on the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (named for the St. Lucian Nobel laureate economist) and the UWI Open Campus . Many Saint Lucian students also study elsewhere in the Caribbean and abroad.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Saint Lucia; most children attend public or private schools.

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Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

EDUCATION IN SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, an eastern-Caribbean nation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system . Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. It also hosts offshore medical schools that enroll international students.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5-12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government schools , following a curriculum aligned with regional (CXC) standards.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a small private and church-affiliated school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward CXC examinations, with Caribbean context throughout.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Local higher education centers on the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College and the UWI Open Campus . The country also hosts offshore medical schools (such as Trinity School of Medicine) serving international students.

READ THE FULL SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES GUIDE
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AMERICAS — 30 OF 35

Suriname

EDUCATION IN SURINAME

Suriname, on the northern coast of South America, is the only Dutch-speaking country in the Americas — a legacy of Dutch colonial rule. Its education system follows the Dutch model , with Dutch as the language of instruction (Sranan Tongo is the lingua franca, and many other languages are spoken in this diverse society). Literacy is...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (GLO, about 6 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Secondary** — Junior (VOJ) and senior (VOS) secondary, leading toward higher education or work

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from about age 7 to 12 and free in public schools. The school year runs roughly October to August . Delivering education to interior and Maroon/Indigenous communities is a particular challenge.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most children attend public and denominational schools , with instruction in Dutch. The system reflects Dutch educational traditions and Suriname's multi-ethnic makeup.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Suriname has a denominational and private school sector (run by various religious groups), largely in and around Paramaribo.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Dutch
Compulsory	Ages 7–12
Structure	6 + secondary
School year	Oct – Aug
Higher ed	Anton de Kom Univ.
Currency	Dollar (SRD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction is in Dutch , covering the standard academic subjects on a Dutch-influenced model, with English and Spanish taught as foreign languages.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students progress through Dutch-style examinations , culminating in the qualifications needed for higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the Anton de Kom University of Suriname in Paramaribo (the main institution). Because of the shared language, many Surinamese students pursue higher education in the Netherlands .

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision is limited , delivered through a small number of programs, concentrated in the capital.

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Bahamas

EDUCATION IN THE BAHAMAS

The Bahamas runs an English-language, British-based education system overseen by the Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country administers its own national examinations (the BJC and BGCSE) modeled on British qualifications and developed with Cambridge. Schooling is spread across islands in ten...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Early-childhood years before formal schooling
- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Ages ~5–11; national GLAT assessments in grades 3 and 6
- ✓ **Junior secondary (grades 7–9)** — Leading to the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC)
- ✓ **Senior secondary (grades 10–12)** — Leading to the BGCSE; some students add GCE A-Level study for university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to June , and all children in that age range must be enrolled in an approved educational setting.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The majority of Bahamian students attend free government schools (the Ministry oversees the great majority of primary and secondary schools). Instruction is in English, following the national curriculum across the islands.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Exams	BJC · BGCSE
Currency	B\$ (pegged US\$)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Bahamas has a sizable private and church-affiliated school sector — tens of thousands of students attend private schools — offering an alternative to public education, largely in Nassau and Freeport. Some offer international qualifications.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , taught in English and geared toward the national examinations. Content reflects both British foundations and Bahamian context.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **GLAT** — Grade Level Assessment Tests during primary school
- ✓ **BJC** — The Bahamas Junior Certificate, at the end of junior secondary (grade 9)
- ✓ **BGCSE** — The Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (based on the UK GCSE/IGCSE), taken at grade 12 — the main secondary qualification for...

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Trinidad and Tobago

EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad and Tobago, an energy-rich twin-island Caribbean nation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system . Public education is free, literacy is very high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations — plus a distinctive primary-exit exam (the SEA) that places students into secondary...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12, ending with the SEA
- ✓ **Secondary (5–7 years)** — Leading to CSEC and, for pre-university study, CAPE

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to July . Instruction is in English.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free government and government-assisted (often denominational) schools . The Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) — taken at the end of primary — is a high-stakes exam that determines secondary-school placement.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Trinidad and Tobago has a private and denominational school sector alongside the public system.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	SEA · CXC
Currency	TT Dollar (TTD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, sciences, social studies, and the arts , delivered in English and geared toward the SEA and CXC examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The SEA places students into secondary school at the end of primary. Assessment follows the Caribbean regional framework: the CSEC ($\approx$ O-Levels/GCSE) at the end of secondary school, and CAPE ($\approx$ A-Levels) for pre-university study.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is anchored by the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine campus — one of UWI's three main campuses and a major regional institution — along with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and other colleges. The government's GATE program (Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses) subsidizes tertiary...

READ THE FULL TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO GUIDE
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United States

EDUCATION IN UNITED STATES

The United States runs one of the world's largest and most decentralized education systems: there is no national curriculum, and public education is run by the 50 states and roughly 13,000+ local school districts. Instruction is in English. The system is known for its breadth and flexibility, its holistic (not exam-only) college...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

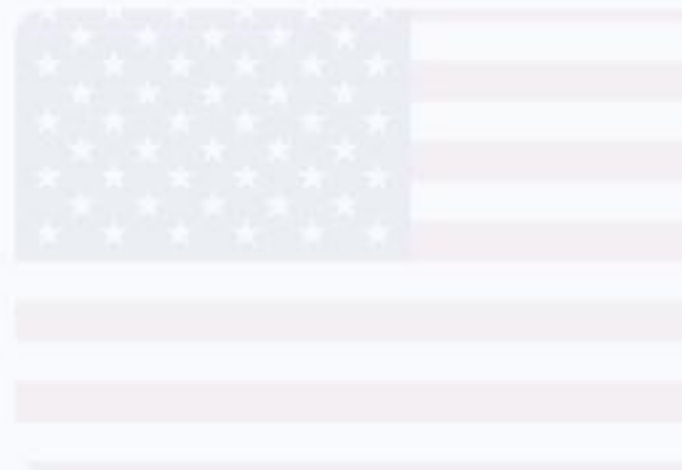
- ✓ **Elementary school (Kindergarten–Grade 5)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Middle / junior high school (Grades 6–8)** — Ages ~11–14
- ✓ **High school (Grades 9–12)** — Ages ~14–18, ending with the high school diploma

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory, but the exact ages are set by each state — generally from around age 6 to 16, 17, or 18. Public schooling is free, funded largely by state and local (property) taxes, and the school year typically runs August/September to May/June.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools run by local districts, with wide variation in funding and quality. The landscape also includes charter schools (publicly funded, independently run) and, increasingly, school-choice programs (vouchers, education savings accounts) in many states.



AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	~Ages 6–18
Structure	K–5 + 6–8 + 9–12
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Diploma + SAT/ACT
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The US has a large private-school sector (religious and independent), from parochial schools to elite prep schools, plus a well-established homeschooling movement.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

There is no single national curriculum ; states set standards (many use the Common Core in English and math). High schoolers accumulate credits across subjects and can take advanced options such as Advanced Placement (AP) or the International Baccalaureate (IB).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

There is no national exit exam ; students earn a high school diploma based on credits (states may add their own graduation tests). For college, the SAT and ACT admissions tests have long been standard, though many colleges have gone "test-optional" in recent years. Admissions are famously holistic — weighing grades (GPA), courses...

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Uruguay

EDUCATION IN URUGUAY

Uruguay runs a Spanish-language education system with a strong secular, free, and compulsory tradition dating back to 19th-century reforms. Literacy is very high, education is free at every level (including university), and Uruguay is world-famous as a pioneer of one-laptop-per-child technology in schools through its Plan Ceibal.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school (compulsory from age 4)
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Educación Media** — A three-year basic cycle plus a three-year bachillerato (or technical education)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

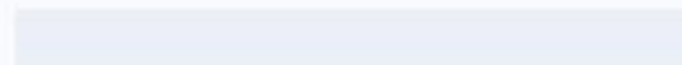
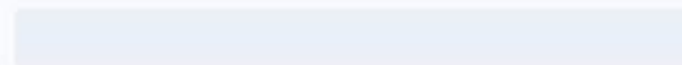
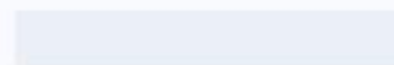
Education is free and compulsory from age 4 to 17 (pre-school through secondary). The school year runs roughly March to December .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . A defining feature is Plan Ceibal — launched in 2007, it gave every public primary (and later secondary) student a laptop and internet access, making Uruguay a global reference point for education technology and digital inclusion.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Uruguay has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Montevideo.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 4–17
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	UdelaR (free)
Currency	Peso (UYU)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , delivered on a secular model, with strong integration of digital tools through Plan Ceibal.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school. Public university admission is generally open (no competitive entrance exam) for those with the bachillerato.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is dominated by the University of the Republic (UdelaR) in Montevideo — free, public, and enrolling the large majority of university students — along with the newer Technological University (UTEC) and private universities.

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Venezuela

EDUCATION IN VENEZUELA

Venezuela runs a Spanish-language education system that once boasted high enrollment and literacy. Since the 2010s, however, a prolonged economic and political crisis has badly damaged the system — driving teacher shortages, school dropout, and the emigration of millions, including many students and educators. This guide describes the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Educación Media (5 years)** — General or technical, ending with the bachillerato

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

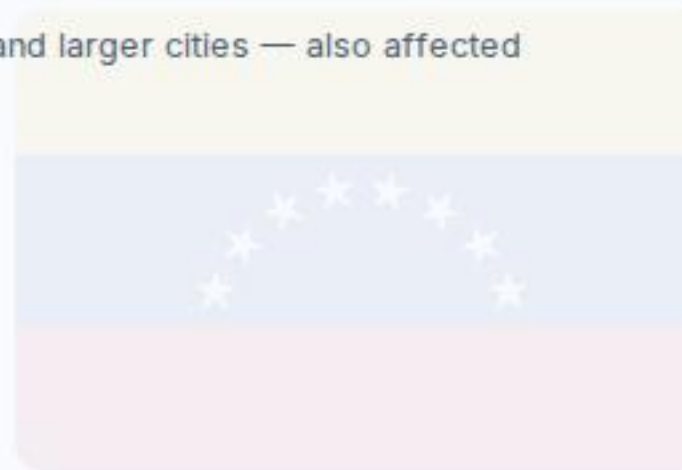
Education is, in principle, free and compulsory through primary and media, beginning around age 6. The school year traditionally runs September to July . In practice, attendance and delivery have been heavily disrupted by the crisis.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , taught in Spanish. The public system, once relatively strong, has been strained by economic collapse, low teacher pay, and emigration.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Venezuela has a private and religious school sector , concentrated in Caracas and larger cities — also affected by the crisis.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Media
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Central Univ. (UCV)
Currency	Bolívar (VES)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and English , on a national model.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete the bachillerato to finish secondary school, the basis for university admission; universities set their own admission processes.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education includes the historic Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in Caracas (a UNESCO World Heritage campus) and other public and private universities — institutions that have been strained by funding cuts and the departure of faculty and students.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Special-education provision exists but is strained by the wider crisis.

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