

K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



# Alaska Education Guide

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A complete profile — schools, testing, graduation, accountability, school choice, teacher certification & financial aid, each in depth.



**Find Your Community**

2026 EDITION

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

# Everything about school in Alaska.

This guide profiles **Alaska's** education system in seven parts, each a two-page deep dive with the key facts, plain-English explanations, and a link to the full, regularly-updated guide online. From K12 Academics, the world's largest education resource, online since 2004.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Education Overview · State Testing · Graduation Requirements · Accountability & Report Cards · School Choice · Teacher Certification · Financial Aid

## SEARCH 200+ DIRECTORIES

K-12 Schools · Colleges & Universities · Vendors · Summer Programs · International Programs · Performers

# Education Overview

## EDUCATION IN ALASKA

Alaska educates roughly 130,000 public K–12 students across 54 school districts spread over the largest, most remote geography in the nation — from big borough and city districts to Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAs) serving village schools reachable only by plane or boat. Public education is overseen by the Alaska Department...

## WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- ✓ **Start age** — 7 years old
- ✓ **End of compulsory age** — 16
- ✓ **Districts** — Boroughs, cities, and rural REAs
- ✓ **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

## PRE-K IN ALASKA

Alaska does not offer a universal state prekindergarten program; publicly funded early education is more limited and varies by community. The state supports Pre-Elementary (Pre-K) grants to some districts, and Head Start (including Alaska Native Head Start programs) serves many eligible children, alongside private preschools and child...

## ALASKA'S TWO HOMESCHOOL PATHS

- ✓ **1 · Independent homeschool (total freedom)** — Under Alaska Statute § 14.30.010(b)(12) , a child is exempt from compulsory attendance simply by being educated at home by a parent or guardian....
- ✓ **2 · Correspondence program (with an allotment)** — Enroll in a state-approved public/charter correspondence program (such as IDEA, PACE, Raven, or Alaska Gateway). A certified teacher advises you, the...

## AT A GLANCE

|            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| Compulsory | Ages 7–16    |
| Districts  | 54 (+ REAAs) |
| Testing    | AK STAR      |
| Diploma    | District-set |
| Homeschool | Allotments   |

## DISTRICTS, REAAS & CHARTERS

Alaska's 54 school districts include borough and city districts plus Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) covering the vast unorganized rural areas. The largest is the Anchorage School District (by far the biggest), followed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough...

## PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN ALASKA

- ✓ **Catholic & parochial schools** — Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau schools (such as Lumen Christi Catholic High School and Holy Rosary Academy)
- ✓ **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Pacific Northern Academy (Anchorage)
- ✓ **Other religious & Christian schools** — Lutheran, Christian, and other faith-based options
- ✓ **Specialty schools** — Montessori and small alternative programs

READ ALASKA'S FULL EDUCATION OVERVIEW GUIDE  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# State Testing

## WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Alaska uses AK STAR (the Alaska System of Academic Readiness) in grades 3–9 for ELA and math, plus science at designated grades. Run by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Alaska retired its former graduation qualifying exam, so there's no exit-exam gate.

## WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- ✓ **AK STAR ELA & Math** — English language arts and mathematics in grades 3–9 (adaptive)
- ✓ **Alaska Science Assessment** — Science in grades 5, 8, and 10
- ✓ **Alaska Alternate** — For eligible students

## FORMAT & SUBJECTS

AK STAR is online and adaptive with varied item types.

## IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit exam. Alaska doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; districts set course and credit requirements.

## HOW IT'S SCORED

AK STAR reports achievement levels and growth information.

## AT A GLANCE

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| System            | AK STAR                     |
| Grades            | 3–9                         |
| Subjects          | ELA, Math; Science 5, 8, 10 |
| Grad requirement? | No exit exam                |
| Format            | Online, adaptive            |
| Standards         | Alaska Standards            |

## TESTING WINDOWS

Testing runs in a spring window set by each district.

## HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ **Practice materials** — The state provides practice tests matching the adaptive online format
- ✓ **Everyday classwork** — AK STAR is aligned to the Alaska standards

## PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

Students in tested grades participate. Ask your district about make-up windows and any questions.

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Accommodations follow a student's IEP or 504 plan ; eligible students take the state's alternate assessment. Multilingual learners take an English proficiency test (WIDA ACCESS or the state equivalent) and may receive designated supports.

**READ ALASKA'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE**  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# Graduation Requirements

## AT A GLANCE

Alaska requires a state minimum of 21 credits with no exit exam — the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam was eliminated. Students must take a college/career readiness assessment (but not pass it). Districts often require more.

## CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Alaska's 21-credit minimum includes 4 English, 3 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, 1 arts/CTE, 1 health/PE, and electives. Districts set the total and may require more.

## TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Alaska students must take a college and career readiness assessment (such as the SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys), but a passing score is not required to graduate.

## DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Alaska issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. Strong records support the Alaska Performance Scholarship (see AK financial aid).

## ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Dual credit and CTE offer accelerated pathways; the Alaska Performance Scholarship rewards a rigorous course of study.

## AT A GLANCE

|              |                                     |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Credits      | 21 (state minimum)                  |
| Exit exam?   | No                                  |
| Also         | College/career readiness exam (t... |
| Districts    | Often require more                  |
| Confirm with | Your district                       |

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How many credits does Alaska require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- ✓ **Does Alaska require a test to graduate?** — No — Alaska has no exit exam; students take a readiness assessment but a passing score isn't required.
- ✓ **Are there different diploma types?** — Yes — plus honors designations and seals; see the diplomas section.
- ✓ **What if my student is behind on credits?** — Talk to the counselor about credit recovery and alternative pathways.
- ✓ **Where do I confirm the exact requirements?** — Your school counselor, district, and the state department of education.

**READ ALASKA'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE**  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# Accountability & Report Cards

## AT A GLANCE

Alaska publishes a state report card and identifies lower-performing schools for support under ESSA — rather than assigning a single letter grade or star rating.

## HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Alaska reports proficiency, growth, graduation, English-learner progress, and school-quality measures (like attendance and, for high schools, readiness), and identifies schools for comprehensive or targeted support. Read across the indicators and any support status.

## WHAT GETS MEASURED

- ✓ **Academic achievement** — How students score on state tests (proficiency in reading/ELA and math)
- ✓ **Academic growth / progress** — How much students improve year to year — not just where they land
- ✓ **Graduation rate** — For high schools (the 4-year cohort rate)
- ✓ **English-learner progress** — How English learners are progressing toward proficiency
- ✓ **School quality / student success** — An extra indicator — often attendance/chronic absenteeism, college/career readiness, or similar

## FINDING & READING THE REPORT CARD

Look up any school on the Alaska DEED Report Card (via the Department of Education & Early Development). Review the indicators (especially growth) and the trend.

## AT A GLANCE

|            |                                                                 |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Format     | Report card + support identifica...                             |
| No         | Single grade or stars                                           |
| Tool       | Alaska DEED Report Card                                         |
| Look up at | <a href="https://education.alaska.gov">education.alaska.gov</a> |

## HOW FAMILIES SHOULD USE RATINGS

- ✓ **Read it in context** — A school's score reflects its students' circumstances too, not only its quality
- ✓ **Look at growth, not just scores** — Growth shows how much a school moves students — often more telling than raw proficiency
- ✓ **Check the trend** — Is the school improving over time?
- ✓ **Look past the summary** — Dig into the underlying data (subgroups, attendance, readiness)
- ✓ **Then visit** — Data raises questions; a visit answers them (see our guide on evaluating a school)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How does Alaska rate schools?** — Alaska uses a report card plus federal support identification — not a single grade or stars.
- ✓ **What do the ratings measure?** — Test scores, growth, graduation rate, English-learner progress, and a school-quality indicator.
- ✓ **Where do I look up my school?** — On the state's official report-card portal (see below).
- ✓ **Should I choose a school by its rating alone?** — No — use it as a starting point, weigh growth and context, and visit.
- ✓ **What are CSI and TSI?** — Federal labels for schools flagged for Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement.

**READ ALASKA'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE**  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# School Choice

## AT A GLANCE

Alaska does not have a traditional private-school voucher or ESA. It has a distinctive correspondence-school allotment system — families enrolled in state correspondence (homeschool) programs receive an allotment for approved educational materials and services. How those allotments may be used (including for private-school classes) was...

## THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

Rather than a private-school voucher, Alaska's notable feature is the correspondence-program allotment, used within state homeschool/correspondence programs. Alaska's constitution has a strict clause limiting public aid to private schools, which shapes what's possible. Families seeking a private school generally pay tuition (with...

## PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE, TOO

- ✓ **Open enrollment / transfers** — Attend a public school outside your zone, where allowed (see our finding-your-school guide)
- ✓ **Charter schools** — Tuition-free public schools of choice (where available)
- ✓ **Magnet schools** — Tuition-free public schools with a specialized focus
- ✓ **Homeschooling** — Legal in all 50 states (rules vary)

## LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

The use of correspondence allotments for private classes was challenged in court, and rules may change. Confirm the current status with your district and the state.

## AT A GLANCE

|                      |                                     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Private voucher/ESA? | No traditional program              |
| Distinctive          | Correspondence-school allotments    |
| Note                 | Allotment use recently litigated    |
| Public choice        | Charters, homeschool, correspond... |
| Confirm with         | Your district                       |

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **Does Alaska have a private-school-choice program?** — No traditional voucher/ESA — but Alaska has a distinctive correspondence-allotment system (recently litigated), plus charters and homeschooling.
- ✓ **What's the difference between an ESA and a voucher?** — A voucher pays a private school directly; an ESA is a flexible parent-managed account for many approved expenses.
- ✓ **What is a tax-credit scholarship?** — Donors get a tax credit for giving to organizations that fund private-school scholarships.
- ✓ **Is there public school choice too?** — Yes — open enrollment, charters, and magnets (plus homeschooling).
- ✓ **Where do I confirm the details?** — On the official state program site (see below).

**READ ALASKA'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE**  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# Teacher Certification

## HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Alaska certifies teachers through the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams, complete Alaska-specific coursework, and earn an Initial Certificate , later a Professional Certificate .

## WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- ✓ **Praxis Core** — Basic skills — or satisfied with qualifying scores
- ✓ **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your endorsement area
- ✓ **Alaska studies & multicultural education** — Required coursework specific to Alaska (a distinctive state requirement)
- ✓ **Note** — Requirements vary by area — confirm your specific tests

## WHAT YOU NEED TO GET LICENSED

- ✓ **A bachelor's degree** — From an accredited college or university
- ✓ **A state-approved teacher-preparation program** — Completed at a college or through an approved alternative route
- ✓ **Student teaching / clinical practice** — Supervised classroom experience
- ✓ **Pass the required exams** — See the exams section above
- ✓ **A background check** — Fingerprint-based criminal background check
- ✓ **Apply to the state** — Submit your application and documents to the licensing agency

## AT A GLANCE

|             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Agency      | Alaska Dept. of Education & Earl... |
| Content     | Praxis Subject Assessments          |
| Also        | Alaska studies & multicultural c... |
| Certificate | Initial — then Professional         |

## OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

Most states offer alternative routes for career-changers and those with a degree in another field. In Alaska, these typically let you start teaching while completing licensure requirements — through district or university alternative-certification programs, residencies, or emergency/provisional permits. Requirements (and the exams) are...

## RECIPROCITY & OUT-OF-STATE LICENSES

- ✓ **Interstate agreements** — Most states participate in the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement, which eases (but doesn't guarantee) recognition of an out-of-state license
- ✓ **You may still owe exams** — States often require you to meet their own testing (or coursework) requirements, sometimes within a grace period
- ✓ **Check both states** — Confirm the specific steps with Alaskas agency and your current state

READ ALASKA'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



# Financial Aid

## THE STATE AID PICTURE

Alaska's state aid is administered by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) , combining a tiered merit scholarship and a need-based grant.

## NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- ✓ **Alaska Education Grant (AEG)** — Alaska's need-based grant for residents at eligible in-state colleges — file the FAFSA early, as funds are limited.

## MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- ✓ **Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)** — A merit award with award levels based on a student's high-school curriculum, GPA, and test scores , usable at eligible Alaska colleges and...

## COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

The Alaska 529 (University of Alaska College Savings Plan) is the state's tax-advantaged plan (Alaska has no state income tax), with a tuition-value guarantee option for the University of Alaska.

## APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- ✓ **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- ✓ **Register with Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education** — Create the state agency's student account to track and claim awards
- ✓ **Confirm your details** — Verify residency, GPA, and enrollment as required
- ✓ **Meet any extra requirements** — Some programs need a separate form, GPA, or service commitment
- ✓ **Reapply every year** — State aid is awarded annually

## AT A GLANCE

|            |                                |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Merit      | Alaska Performance Scholarship |
| Need-based | Alaska Education Grant         |
| 529 plan   | Alaska 529                     |
| Agency     | ACPE                           |

## DEADLINES & TIMING

State deadlines are typically much earlier than the federal FAFSA deadline , and some aid is first-come, first-served until funds run out. File the FAFSA as soon as it opens (in the fall) and confirm the state's specific priority date.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How do I get Alaska aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education administers the programs.
- ✓ **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Alaska offers need-based and merit programs.
- ✓ **Are the deadlines earlier than federal?** — Usually yes — file early, as some aid is first-come.
- ✓ **Can I use it out of state?** — Most aid is for in-state schools (with exceptions); check each program.
- ✓ **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official programs only.

**READ ALASKA'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE**  
[tools.k12academics.com](https://tools.k12academics.com)



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