

K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Georgia Education Guide

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 Georgia.

This guide profiles **Georgia'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 GEORGIA

Georgia educates roughly 1.75 million public K–12 students across about 180 school districts (159 county systems plus city systems and state charter schools), overseen by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), the elected State School Superintendent, and the State Board of Education. Georgia is notable on several fronts. It was a...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- ✓ **Start age** — 6 (by September 1)
- ✓ **End of compulsory age** — 16
- ✓ **Districts** — 159 county + city systems + state charters
- ✓ **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

GEORGIA'S UNIVERSAL PRE-K

Georgia is a national pioneer of universal prekindergarten : Georgia's Pre-K Program , launched in 1995 and funded by the state lottery, offers free, voluntary preschool to all 4-year-olds regardless of family income — one of the country's first and longest-running universal pre-K programs. Programs run in public schools, private...



AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Districts	~180
Testing	Milestones
Diploma	23 units
Choice	Promise ESA

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Georgia's largest school districts are concentrated in metro Atlanta — Gwinnett County (the state's largest), Cobb County , DeKalb County , Fulton County , and Atlanta Public Schools — alongside districts statewide. Georgia has a growing charter-school sector , including locally approved charters and state charter schools authorized by...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN GEORGIA

- ✓ **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as The Westminster Schools , Pace Academy, The Lovett School, Woodward Academy, and Holy Innocents' (Atlanta)...
- ✓ **Catholic & parochial schools** — Archdiocese of Atlanta and Diocese of Savannah schools (such as Marist School, St. Pius X, and Benedictine)
- ✓ **Other religious & Christian schools** — A large network of Christian and faith-based schools
- ✓ **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

READ GEORGIA'S FULL EDUCATION OVERVIEW GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Georgia uses the Georgia Milestones Assessment System — End-of-Grade (EOG) tests in grades 3–8 and End-of-Course (EOC) tests in key high-school courses. Milestones measures the Georgia Standards of Excellence and is run by the Georgia Department of Education. Georgia does not have a separate high-school exit exam; instead, EOC results...

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- ✓ **End-of-Grade (grades 3–8)** — English Language Arts and Mathematics each year; Science in grades 5 and 8; Social Studies in grade 8
- ✓ **End-of-Course (high school)** — Milestones EOC in American Literature & Composition, Algebra: Concepts & Connections, Biology, and United States History
- ✓ **Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0)** — For eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities
- ✓ **ACCESS for ELLs** — English proficiency assessment for multilingual learners

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

Milestones is given online and includes multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response items, plus writing on the ELA tests. EOCs are subject end-of-course exams taken when a student finishes the matching course.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Georgia students are not required to pass a state test to graduate. Instead, each EOC counts as a portion of the final grade in that course (a percentage set by state policy), so it affects the course grade — and thus credit — rather than serving as a separate pass/fail graduation hurdle. Districts set course and...

AT A GLANCE

System	Georgia Milestones
Grades 3–8	EOG (ELA, Math + Sci/SS)
High school	EOC in 4 courses
EOC weight	Portion of course grade
Grad requirement?	No exit-exam gate
Format	Online

HOW IT'S SCORED

Milestones reports four levels — Beginning, Developing, Proficient, and Distinguished Learner — with Lexile measures for reading. "Proficient" indicates on-grade-level readiness. EOC scale scores convert into the course-grade contribution.

TESTING WINDOWS

EOG tests are given in a spring window. EOCs have multiple windows (winter, spring, summer) tied to course completion. Exact dates are set by the state and district.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ **Experience Online Testing Georgia** — The state's official practice platform lets students rehearse the real online format and item types
- ✓ **Study/resource guides** — GaDOE publishes content descriptors and study guides for each Milestones test
- ✓ **Course-aligned review** — EOCs test the specific course; strong classwork plus targeted review works best

READ GEORGIA'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Georgia requires 23 units to graduate — and there is no exit exam (the Georgia High School Graduation Test was eliminated). End-of-course Georgia Milestones assessments count toward the course grade rather than serving as a separate graduation gate.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Georgia's 23 units include 4 English, 4 math, 4 science, 3 social studies, 1 CTE/world language/fine arts, 1 health/PE, and electives. Districts may set additional requirements.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Students take Georgia Milestones end-of-course assessments in certain courses, and the score counts as part of the course grade — but there is no separate test to pass to graduate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Georgia issues a standard high school diploma. Recognitions include the Seal of Biliteracy and Georgia's career/graduation seals; high achievers may qualify for HOPE/Zell Miller scholarship eligibility (see Georgia financial aid).

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Georgia offers pathways through CTE, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement/IB , and credit recovery for students who fall behind.



AT A GLANCE

Units	23 required
Exit exam?	No (eliminated)
Milestones	Count toward course grade
Seals	Blliteracy & others
Districts	May require more
Confirm with	Your district

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How many credits does Georgia require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- ✓ **Does Georgia require a test to graduate?** — No — Georgia has no exit exam; Milestones scores count toward the course grade only.
- ✓ **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 GEORGIA'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Georgia rates schools with the CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) — a 0–100 score built from several components, rather than a letter grade or stars.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The CCRPI combines: Content Mastery (test proficiency), Progress (academic growth and English-learner progress), Closing Gaps , Readiness (attendance, literacy, college/career readiness), and (for high schools) Graduation Rate . The components combine into an overall score out of 100 .

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



AT A GLANCE

Format	CCRPI Index (0–100)
Components	Content Mastery, Progress, Clos...
Tool	Georgia CCRPI / report cards
Look up at	gadoe.org / gosa.georgia.gov

FINDING & READING THE REPORT CARD

Look up any school's CCRPI on the Georgia Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement report cards. Read the component scores (especially Progress) and the trend alongside the overall number.

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)

READ GEORGIA'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Georgia has several choice programs: the newer Georgia Promise Scholarship (an ESA), a long-running tax-credit scholarship , and the Special Needs Scholarship (a voucher). It also has a public charter sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Georgia Promise Scholarship (ESA) provides about \$6,500 for eligible students — initially targeted to students zoned to lower-performing public schools (not universal), and subject to a funding cap. The Qualified Education Expense tax-credit scholarship funds private-school scholarships via donor tax credits, and the Georgia Special...

ELIGIBILITY

The Promise Scholarship is eligibility-limited (students zoned to designated lower-performing schools, income priorities, and a cap). The tax-credit and special-needs programs have their own rules. Confirm current eligibility.

APPLYING

Apply for the Promise Scholarship through the state program; for the tax-credit scholarship via a student scholarship organization; for the special-needs voucher via the Georgia DOE. Confirm windows and requirements.



AT A GLANCE

Newest	Georgia Promise Scholarship (ESA...
ESA eligibility	Zoned to low-performing schools
Also	Tax-credit scholarship + special...
Plus	Public charters
Confirm with	The state program

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)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **Does Georgia have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Georgia has the Promise Scholarship ESA (zoned to low-performing schools), a tax-credit scholarship, and a special-needs voucher.
- ✓ **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 GEORGIA'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Georgia certification is issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) . You complete an approved program, pass the required GACE assessments and the Georgia Ethics assessment, and earn an Induction certificate, later a Professional certificate.

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- ✓ **Program Admission Assessment** — Basic skills (often waivable with qualifying SAT/ACT/GRE scores)
- ✓ **GACE content assessment(s)** — Content test(s) for your certification field
- ✓ **Georgia Ethics Assessment** — Required entry and exit modules on educator ethics
- ✓ **edTPA** — A teaching performance assessment (confirm current status)

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	GA Professional Standards Commis...
Content	GACE content assessment(s)
Ethics	Georgia Ethics Assessment
Performance	edTPA (confirm current status)

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

Most states offer alternative routes for career-changers and those with a degree in another field. In Georgia, 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 Georgias agency and your current state

READ GEORGIA'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Georgia's famous lottery-funded HOPE and Zell Miller programs reward academic achievement, administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) through GAfutures.org . They're primarily merit-based , with awards for both degree and technical/certificate students.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- ✓ **HOPE Grant & Zell Miller Grant** — For students in technical certificate/diploma programs (not tied to a degree GPA).
- ✓ **HOPE Career Grant** — Additional aid for students in designated high-demand career fields.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- ✓ **HOPE Scholarship** — Merit aid toward tuition at eligible Georgia colleges for students meeting the GPA requirement.
- ✓ **Zell Miller Scholarship** — A higher award (up to full standard tuition) for top students meeting stricter GPA and test-score requirements.
- ✓ **Dual Enrollment** — Funds eligible high-school students taking college courses.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Georgia's Path2College 529 Plan is the state's tax-advantaged college-savings plan (with a state tax deduction for Georgia taxpayers).

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.

AT A GLANCE

Merit	HOPE & Zell Miller Scholarships
Technical/certificate	HOPE & Zell Miller Grants
High-demand fields	HOPE Career Grant
529 plan	Path2College 529
Agency	GSFC / GAfutures
Funded by	State lottery

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- ✓ **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- ✓ **Register with GSFC (GAfutures)** — 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

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

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