

K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Idaho

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 Idaho.

This guide profiles **Idaho'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 IDAHO

Idaho educates roughly 315,000 public K–12 students across about 115 school districts (plus public charter LEAs), overseen by the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), the elected State Superintendent, and the State Board of Education. Idaho leans strongly toward local control and educational freedom. It has the shortest...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- ✓ **Start age** — 7 — the latest required start in the U.S.
- ✓ **End of compulsory age** — 16
- ✓ **Districts** — ~115 districts + charter LEAs
- ✓ **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

PRE-K IN IDAHO

Idaho is one of only a handful of states with no state-funded prekindergarten program — the state does not appropriate funds for public pre-K. Early learning is instead provided through federal Head Start, local pre-K collaboratives and grants (in some communities), and private preschools and child care. Because there's no statewide...



AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Districts	~115
Testing	ISAT
Diploma	46 credits
Choice	Tax Credit

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Idaho's largest districts include West Ada (Meridian) — the state's largest — Boise , Nampa , Idaho Falls , and Coeur d'Alene . Idaho has a robust public charter-school sector (authorized largely by the Idaho Public Charter School Commission), including virtual charter schools serving students statewide, and the state also explicitly...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN IDAHO

- ✓ **Catholic & parochial schools** — Diocese of Boise schools (such as Bishop Kelly High School)
- ✓ **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Riverstone International School (Boise)
- ✓ **Christian schools** — A range of Christian and classical-Christian academies (such as The Ambrose School)
- ✓ **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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



State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Idaho uses the ISAT (Idaho Standards Achievement Test), built on Smarter Balanced , for ELA and math in grades 3–8 and grade 10, plus ISAT Science . Idaho also offers a college-entrance test (SAT, with ACT options) in grade 11. Run by the Idaho State Department of Education.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- ✓ **ISAT ELA & Math** — Grades 3–8 and grade 10 (computer-adaptive with a performance task)
- ✓ **ISAT Science** — Science in grades 5, 8, and 11
- ✓ **College-entrance test (grade 11)** — A free SAT (with ACT options) for juniors
- ✓ **IDAA** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

ISAT is computer-adaptive ; the grade-11 SAT follows the national digital SAT format.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No test-pass gate. Idaho doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; students complete course and credit requirements (and take a college-entrance test). The grade-11 SAT provides a college-usable score.

HOW IT'S SCORED

ISAT reports four levels (Level 3+ meets standard); the grade-11 SAT is scored 400–1600.



AT A GLANCE

System	ISAT (Smarter Balanced)
Grades	3–8 and 10
Science	ISAT Science gr 5, 8, 11
High school	SAT/ACT (grade 11)
Grad requirement?	No test-pass gate
Format	Computer-adaptive

TESTING WINDOWS

ISAT is given in a spring window ; the grade-11 SAT is also administered in spring.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ **SAT prep for grade 11** — Our SAT guide and free Khan Academy Official SAT Practice apply
- ✓ **ISAT practice** — The state provides free practice tests for the computer-adaptive format

PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

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

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 IDAHO'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Idaho requires 46 semester credits (about 23 year-long credits), a college entrance exam , and a senior project . There's no single exit exam , though students demonstrate proficiency.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Idaho's 46 semester credits include 8 English, 6 math (through the senior year), 6 science, 5 social studies (including government and economics), 2 humanities/foreign language, 1 health, and electives. Districts may require more.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

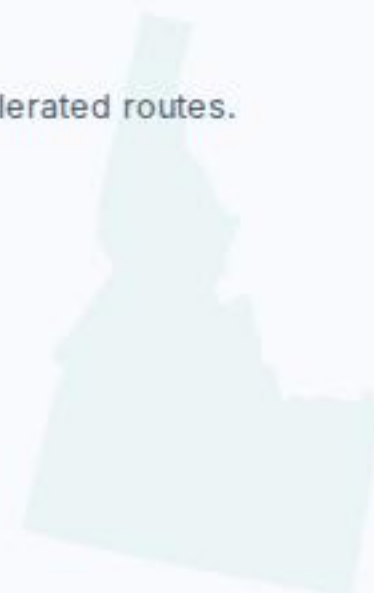
No single exit exam. Idaho students take the ISAT and are required to take a college entrance exam (SAT or ACT) . Proficiency is demonstrated through the state test or approved alternatives — a passing academic score isn't a strict gate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Idaho issues a standard diploma, with honors and the Seal of Biliteracy available. Strong records support Idaho scholarship programs (see ID financial aid).

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Students complete a senior project and a college/career plan . Dual credit and AP offer accelerated routes.



AT A GLANCE

Credits	46 semester credits
Exit exam?	No (proficiency via options)
Required	College entrance exam (SAT/ACT)
Also	Senior project
Confirm with	Your district

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Idaho requires a college entrance exam and a senior project . Confirm details with your district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How many credits does Idaho require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- ✓ **Does Idaho require a test to graduate?** — No single exit exam — but students must take a college entrance exam (SAT/ACT) and complete a senior project.
- ✓ **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 IDAHO'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Idaho publishes the Idaho 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

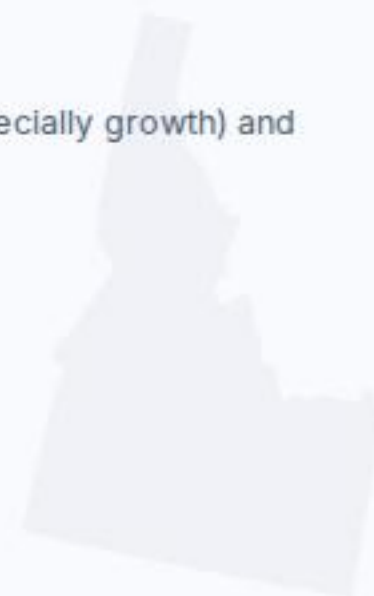
The Idaho Report Card shows proficiency, growth, graduation, college/career readiness, English-learner progress, and attendance, and the state identifies schools for comprehensive or targeted support. Read across the indicators and any support status.

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 Idaho Report Card (idahoschools.org). Review the indicators (especially growth) and the trend.



AT A GLANCE

Format	Report card + support identifica...
No	Single grade or stars
Tool	Idaho Report Card
Look up at	Idahoschools.org

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 Idaho rate schools?** — Idaho 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 IDAHO'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Idaho enacted its first private-school-choice program in 2025 — the Idaho Parental Choice Tax Credit , a refundable tax credit for private and home education expenses. It was upheld by the Idaho Supreme Court in early 2026. Idaho also has a public charter sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Parental Choice Tax Credit gives families a refundable credit of up to \$5,000 per child (\$7,500 for students with disabilities) for private-school tuition and other approved expenses. It is capped at about \$50 million annually and prioritizes lower-income families (up to about 300% of the federal poverty level).

ELIGIBILITY

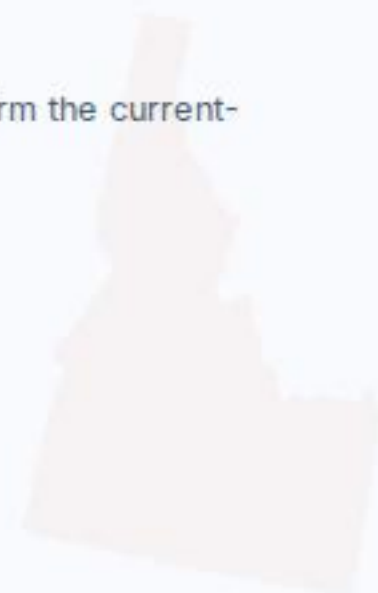
The credit prioritizes lower-income families and is subject to the funding cap. Confirm current income priorities and amounts.

APPLYING

Apply/claim through the Idaho State Tax Commission's program. Watch the window (funds are capped) and confirm requirements.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

The program is new (2025) and was upheld by the Idaho Supreme Court in early 2026. Confirm the current-year rules and funding.



AT A GLANCE

Program	Idaho Parental Choice Tax Credit
Type	Refundable tax credit (new, 2025...
Amount	Up to \$5,000 (\$7,500 for disabil...
Cap	\$50M annually; income priority
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 Idaho have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Idaho's new refundable Parental Choice Tax Credit (up to \$5,000/\$7,500), capped and income-prioritized.
- ✓ **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 IDAHO'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Idaho certifies teachers through the Idaho State Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams (and a teaching performance assessment), and earn a certificate.

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- ✓ **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your endorsement area
- ✓ **edTPA** — A teaching performance assessment (confirm current status)
- ✓ **Reading** — A reading/literacy requirement applies for elementary candidates
- ✓ **Note** — Requirements vary by endorsement — 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	Idaho State Dept. of Education
Content	Praxis Subject Assessments
Performance	edTPA (confirm current status)
Certificate	Initial — then renewable

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

READ IDAHO'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Idaho's state aid is administered by the Idaho State Board of Education , with a large workforce grant and a renewable opportunity scholarship.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

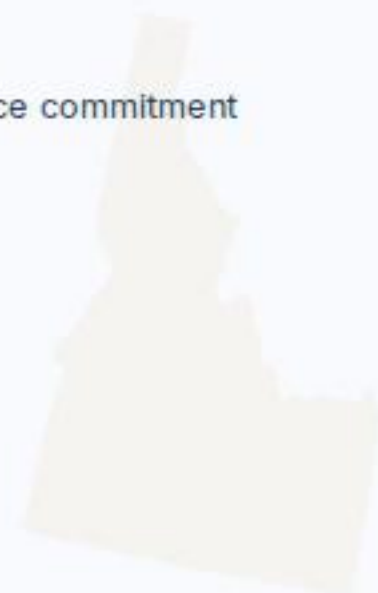
- ✓ **Idaho LAUNCH Grant** — Up to \$8,000 (\$4,000 the first year) covering up to 80% of tuition/costs for Idaho high-school graduates pursuing in-demand degrees and certificates .
- ✓ **Idaho Opportunity Scholarship** — A need- and merit-based scholarship of up to \$3,500/year (up to \$14,000 over four years) for Idaho high-school graduates, renewable with a 2.7 GPA.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Idaho's IDeal 529 plan offers a state income tax deduction for contributions.

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- ✓ **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- ✓ **Register with Idaho State Board of 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

In-demand degrees	Idaho LAUNCH (\$8,000)
Need + merit	Idaho Opportunity Scholarship
529 plan	IDEAL
Agency	Idaho State Board of Ed

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 Idaho state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Idaho State Board of Education administers the programs.
- ✓ **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Idaho 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 Idaho 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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