

K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



West Virginia 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 West Virginia.

This guide profiles **West Virginia'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 WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia educates roughly 240,000 public K–12 students across exactly 55 school districts — one for each of the state's 55 counties — overseen by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and the State Board. The county-based structure is unusually simple. West Virginia has become a national leader in school choice: its Hope...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- ✓ **Start age** — 6
- ✓ **End of compulsory age** — 17
- ✓ **Districts** — 55 — one per county
- ✓ **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or home instruction

UNIVERSAL PRE-K

West Virginia is one of the few states with truly universal prekindergarten . WV Universal Pre-K offers free, voluntary preschool to all 4-year-olds (and 3-year-olds with an IEP), and West Virginia has among the highest pre-K enrollment rates in the nation . Programs are delivered collaboratively — through public schools, Head Start...



AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 6–17
Districts	55 counties
Testing	WVGSA · SAT
Diploma	24 credits
Choice	Hope Scholarship

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Because West Virginia's districts are county-wide, students attend one of 55 county school systems — the largest being Kanawha (Charleston), Berkeley (Eastern Panhandle), Monongalia (Morgantown), Cabell (Huntington), and Wood (Parkersburg). West Virginia authorized charter schools relatively recently; a small but growing sector —...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN WEST VIRGINIA

- ✓ **Catholic & parochial schools** — The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston operates schools statewide (such as Wheeling Central Catholic and Charleston Catholic)
- ✓ **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed, tuition-funded schools — most notably The Linsly School in Wheeling, a long-established college-prep day and boarding...
- ✓ **Other religious & Christian schools** — A range of faith-based options
- ✓ **Specialty & microschools** — Montessori programs and a growing number of microschools (many now participating in the Hope Scholarship)

READ WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL EDUCATION OVERVIEW GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

West Virginia uses the WV General Summative Assessment in grades 3–8 for ELA and math (plus science), and the SAT School Day for all 11th graders. Run by the West Virginia Department of Education. There's no exit-exam gate.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- ✓ **WV General Summative (grades 3–8)** — English language arts and mathematics; science in grades 5 and 8
- ✓ **SAT School Day (grade 11)** — A free, in-school SAT — a real, college-usable score
- ✓ **WV Alternate** — For eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

The WV assessment is online ; the grade-11 SAT follows the national digital SAT format.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. West Virginia doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; students complete course and credit requirements. The free grade-11 SAT provides a college-usable score.

HOW IT'S SCORED

The state assessment reports performance levels; the grade-11 SAT is scored 400–1600.



AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	WV General Summative
Subjects	ELA, Math; Science 5 & 8
High school	SAT School Day (gr 11)
Grad requirement?	No exit-exam gate
Format	Online
Standards	WV College- & Career-Ready

TESTING WINDOWS

Testing runs in a spring window set statewide.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ **SAT prep for grade 11** — Our SAT guide and free Khan Academy Official SAT Practice apply to the grade-11 test
- ✓ **State practice tests** — The state provides free practice tests matching the real format

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 WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

West Virginia requires about 24 credits with no exit exam , and every student develops a Personalized Education Plan .

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

West Virginia's requirements include 4 English, 4 math, 3 science, 4 social studies, 1 arts, 1 PE, 1 health, and electives (with a CTE or advanced-academic focus). Districts may require more.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. West Virginia students take state assessments (including the SAT), but a passing score is not required to graduate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

West Virginia issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. Strong records support the PROMISE Scholarship (see WV financial aid).

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Every student develops a Personalized Education Plan ; dual credit, AP, and CTE offer accelerated routes.



AT A GLANCE

Credits	~24
Exit exam?	No
Also	Personalized Education Plan
Districts	May require more
Confirm with	Your district

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ✓ **How many credits does West Virginia require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- ✓ **Does West Virginia require a test to graduate?** — No — West Virginia has no exit exam; a passing test score is not required to graduate.
- ✓ **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 WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

West Virginia uses the WV Balanced Scorecard , which shows each measure with a color (green/yellow/red) — rather than a single letter grade or star rating.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The Balanced Scorecard reports indicators such as proficiency, growth, graduation, attendance/behavior, English-learner progress, and college/career readiness , each shown by color to signal how the school is doing on that measure. There's no single grade — read the colors across measures .

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 WV Balanced Scorecard (via ZoomWV). Review the measure colors (especially growth) and the trend.



AT A GLANCE

Format	Balanced Scorecard (color indica...
Colors	Green / yellow / red by measure
No	Single grade or stars
Tool	WV Balanced Scorecard
Look up at	zoomwv.k12.wv.us

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 West Virginia rate schools?** — West Virginia uses the WV Balanced Scorecard (color-coded by measure) — 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 WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



School Choice

AT A GLANCE

West Virginia launched the Hope Scholarship in 2021 — the nation's first universal Education Savings Account (ESA) . It gives eligible families a state-funded account for private-school and approved education expenses, and is now fully universal . West Virginia also has a newer public charter sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Hope Scholarship (ESA) provides an account (reported around \$5,000 per student) for tuition, curriculum, tutoring, and other approved expenses. After a phase-in, it is now universal — available to essentially all West Virginia K-12 students.

ELIGIBILITY

The Hope Scholarship is now universal (all West Virginia K-12 students eligible). Confirm current amounts and requirements.

APPLYING

Apply through the Hope Scholarship program (administered via the State Treasurer). Watch the window and confirm requirements.



AT A GLANCE

Program	Hope Scholarship (ESA)
Milestone	First universal ESA (2021)
Type	Universal ESA (~\$5,000)
Plus	Public charters (newer sector)
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 West Virginia have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — West Virginia's Hope Scholarship was the first universal ESA (2021) and is now fully universal.
- ✓ **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 WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

West Virginia certifies teachers through the West Virginia Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams, and earn an Initial Professional Certificate .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- ✓ **Praxis Core** — Basic skills — or satisfied with qualifying scores
- ✓ **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your certification area
- ✓ **Praxis PLT** — Principles of Learning and Teaching (pedagogy) for your grade band
- ✓ **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	West Virginia Department of Educ...
Basic skills	Praxis Core (or qualifying score...
Content & pedagogy	Praxis Subject + PLT
Certificate	Initial Professional

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

Most states offer alternative routes for career-changers and those with a degree in another field. In West Virginia, 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...

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 West Virginias agency and your current state

READ WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

West Virginia's state aid is administered by the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) , combining a lottery-funded merit scholarship, a need-based grant, and a free-community-college program.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- ✓ **WV Higher Education Grant** — Need-based aid for West Virginia residents at eligible in-state (and some regional) colleges.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- ✓ **PROMISE Scholarship** — A lottery-funded merit scholarship covering much of tuition/fees at WV colleges for students meeting GPA and ACT/SAT requirements.

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

WV Invests covers tuition/fees (last-dollar) for adults and recent graduates pursuing certificates/associate degrees in high-demand fields at WV community and technical colleges.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

West Virginia's SMART529 plan offers a state income tax deduction for residents.



AT A GLANCE

Merit	PROMISE Scholarship
Need-based	WV Higher Education Grant
Free CC (high-demand)	WV Invests
529 plan	SMART 529
Agency	WV HEPC

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- ✓ **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- ✓ **Register with West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission** — 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

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.

READ WEST VIRGINIA'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
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