K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Delaware Education Guide

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

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Everything about school in Delaware.

This guide profiles **Delaware**'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 DELAWARE

Delaware is a small state with a compact but distinctive education system — roughly 140,000 public K–12 students across just 19 school districts (plus a robust set of charter schools and three vocational-technical districts), overseen by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and the State Board of Education. Despite its size...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 5 (by August 31)
- **End of compulsory age** — 16 — shorter than most states
- **Districts** — 19 districts + charters + 3 vo-tech districts
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or registered homeschool

PRE-K IN DELAWARE

Delaware does not offer a universal pre-K program. Publicly funded early education is targeted through the Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) — a state-funded pre-K program for income-eligible and at-risk children — along with Purchase of Care (child-care assistance) and Head Start . Delaware rates program quality through Delaware...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	**Ages 5–16**
Districts	**19 + charters**
Testing	**DeSSA · SAT**
Diploma	**24 credits**
Choice	**School Choice**

DISTRICTS, CHARTERS & VO-TECH

Delaware's 19 school districts include the state's largest — Christina , Red Clay Consolidated , Brandywine , Colonial (in the Wilmington/New Castle County area), Capital , and Indian River (in Kent and Sussex counties). Delaware also has a substantial charter-school sector (over 20 tuition-free charters serving roughly 12% of students...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN DELAWARE

- **Catholic & parochial schools** — Diocese of Wilmington schools — a large network including Salesianum, Padua Academy, Ursuline Academy, and the Norbertine Archmere Academy
- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Wilmington Friends School (Quaker), Tower Hill School, and Tatnall — plus the boarding St. Andrew's School...
- **Other religious schools** — Christian and other faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

READ DELAWARE'S FULL EDUCATION OVERVIEW GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Delaware's testing is DeSSA (Delaware System of Student Assessments): the Smarter Balanced ELA and math tests in grades 3–8, a science test, and the SAT in grade 11 (given free during the school day). Run by the Delaware Department of Education. There's no exit-exam gate.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **Smarter Balanced — ELA & Math** — Grades 3–8 (computer-adaptive with a performance task)
- **Science (DeSSA)** — Grades 5, 8, and 10
- **SAT (grade 11)** — A free, in-school SAT — a real, college-usable score
- **DLM** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

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

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Delaware 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

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

AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**Smarter Balanced (DeSSA)**
Science	**Gr 5, 8, 10**
High school	**SAT (grade 11)**
Grad requirement?	**No exit-exam gate**
Format	**Computer-adaptive**
Standards	**Delaware Standards**

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

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Delaware requires 24 credits with no exit exam , plus a career pathway (a sequence of related courses) and a Student Success Plan .

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Delaware's 24 credits include 4 English, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, 2 world language, 1 PE, 0.5 health, 3 in a career pathway , and electives.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

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

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Delaware issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. Strong records support SEED/INSPIRE eligibility (see DE financial aid).

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Every student completes a career pathway and a Student Success Plan ; dual enrollment and AP offer accelerated routes.

AT A GLANCE

Credits	24
Exit exam?	No
Also	Career pathway + Student Success...
Districts	May require more
Confirm with	Your district

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Delaware require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Delaware require a test to graduate?** — No — Delaware 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 DELAWARE'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Delaware rates schools with star ratings (1 to 5 stars) on the Delaware Report Card , based on a points system across indicators.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Delaware awards points across proficiency, growth, English-learner progress, graduation, college/career readiness, and school-quality measures (like chronic absenteeism), then assigns a 1–5 star rating . More stars mean stronger performance; growth is a key component.

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 Delaware Report Card (reportcard.doe.k12.de.us) . Review the points breakdown (especially growth) and the trend, not just the stars.

AT A GLANCE

Format	**Star ratings (1–5)**
Tool	**Delaware Report Card**
Look up at	**reportcard.doe.k12.de.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 Delaware rate schools?** — Delaware uses 1–5 star ratings based on a points system across several measures.
- **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 DELAWARE'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Delaware does not have a private-school-choice program (no ESA, voucher, or tax-credit scholarship). But it has strong public choice: a statewide school-choice / open-enrollment law, a charter sector, and vocational-technical schools.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

There is no ESA, voucher, or tax-credit scholarship for private school in Delaware. Its strength is public choice — Delaware's School Choice program lets families apply to public schools outside their zone, and there are charters and vo-tech options. Families seeking a private school pay tuition (with financial aid often available).

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

Private-choice proposals have not been enacted in Delaware. Confirm the current status if you've heard of a new proposal.

AT A GLANCE

Private choice?	**No statewide program**
Public choice	**Strong statewide open enrollment**
Also	**Charters & vo-tech schools**
Homeschool	**Legal (registered)**
Confirm with	**Your district**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does Delaware have a private-school-choice program?** — No — Delaware has no private program, but strong public open enrollment and charters.
- **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 DELAWARE'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Delaware licenses teachers through the Delaware Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams (and a teaching performance assessment), and earn an Initial License , later a Continuing License .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Praxis Core** — Basic skills — or satisfied with qualifying SAT/ACT/GRE scores
- **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your certification area
- **edTPA** — A teaching performance assessment (confirm current status)
- **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	**Delaware Department of Education**
Basic skills	**Praxis Core (or qualifying score...**
Content	**Praxis Subject Assessments**
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 Delaware, 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 Delawares agency and your current state

READ DELAWARE'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Delaware's state aid is administered by the Delaware Higher Education Office , and its signature programs make an associate degree tuition-free for eligible residents.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Scholarship Incentive Program (ScIP)** — Delaware's need- and merit-based grant for residents at eligible in-state (and some regional) colleges.

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

The SEED Scholarship covers tuition for a first associate degree at Delaware Technical Community College (or the University of Delaware Associate in Arts) for recent Delaware graduates with a 2.5 GPA who enroll full-time. The INSPIRE Scholarship provides similar support at Delaware State University.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Delaware's DE529 Education Savings Plan is the state's tax-advantaged college-savings plan.

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

Free associate degree	**SEED Scholarship**
Delaware State Univ.	**INSPIRE Scholarship**
Need-based	**Scholarship Incentive Program**
529 plan	**DE529**
Agency	**DE Higher Education Office**

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Delaware Higher Education Office** — 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 Delaware aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Delaware Higher Education Office administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Delaware 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 DELAWARE'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

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