K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Maine
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 Maine.

This guide profiles **Maine**'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 MAINE

Maine educates roughly 170,000 public K–12 students across about 260 School Administrative Units (SAUs) — a large number of mostly small, geographically dispersed units (regional school units, municipal school departments, and unions) reflecting Maine's rural population. Public education is overseen by the Maine Department of Education...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6
- **End of compulsory age** — 17 (may end at 15 under conditions)
- **Districts** — ~260 School Administrative Units (SAUs)
- **Satisfying it** — Public, approved private, or home instruction

PRE-K IN MAINE

Maine funds Public Preschool for 4-year-olds through participating SAUs and has been steadily expanding access toward broader availability (though it is not yet fully universal). For young children with disabilities, Maine's Child Development Services (CDS) provides early-intervention (birth–2) and preschool special education (ages 3–5)....

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	**Ages 6–17**
Districts	**~260 SAUs**
Testing	**MEA · SAT**
Diploma	**Local**
Choice	**Town tuitioning**

SAUS & CHARTERS

Maine's largest districts include Portland , Lewiston , Bangor , and South Portland , but most SAUs are small — Maine has long grappled with school consolidation given its declining, dispersed student population. Maine has a small charter-school sector (capped by law at around 10 charters, overseen by the Maine Charter School...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN MAINE

- **Town academies** — Independent (nonprofit, board-governed) schools such as Thornton Academy, Fryeburg Academy, Lincoln Academy, and Maine Central Institute — many...
- **Independent day & boarding schools** — Schools such as Waynflete (Portland), Berwick Academy, and Kents Hill School
- **Catholic & religious schools** — Diocese of Portland schools (such as the Jesuit Cheverus High School), plus other faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Maine uses the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) — a through-year model (checkpoints across the year) for ELA and math in grades 3–8, a science test, and the SAT in grade 11. Run by the Maine Department of Education. There's no exit-exam gate.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **MEA ELA & Math (grades 3–8)** — A through-year assessment with checkpoints across the year
- **MEA Science** — Grades 5, 8, and once in high school
- **SAT (grade 11)** — The statewide high-school test — a real, college-usable score
- **MSAA** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

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

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Maine doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; districts set course and credit requirements. The grade-11 SAT provides a college-usable score.

HOW IT'S SCORED

MEA reports achievement levels; the grade-11 SAT is scored 400–1600.

AT A GLANCE

System	**Maine Educational Assessment**
Grades 3–8	**ELA & Math (Through Year)**
Science	**Gr 5, 8, HS**
High school	**SAT (grade 11)**
Grad requirement?	**No exit-exam gate**
Format	**Online**

TESTING WINDOWS

The through-year MEA has checkpoint windows across the year; the grade-11 SAT is given in spring. Confirm with your district.

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 MAINE'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

MAINE — PART 3 OF 7

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Maine sets minimum course requirements but leaves much to districts . There is no exit exam . Maine previously mandated a proficiency-based diploma , but that statewide mandate was repealed , returning flexibility to districts.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Maine's state minimum includes 4 English, 2 math, 2 science, 2 social studies (including U.S. history and government), 1 fine arts, 1 health/PE, and additional locally set requirements. Districts set the total credits.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Maine students take state assessments, but a passing score is not required to graduate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Maine issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. Districts may add honors.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Dual enrollment and CTE offer accelerated routes; the Maine Free College Scholarship helps community-college-bound students (see ME financial aid).

AT A GLANCE

Model	**State minimums + local control**
Exit exam?	**No**
Note	**Proficiency-based mandate repeal...**
Districts	**Set specifics**
Confirm with	**Your district**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

MAINE — PART 4 OF 7

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Maine publishes school and district data and identifies lower-performing schools for support under ESSA — rather than assigning a single letter grade or star rating.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Maine reports proficiency, growth, graduation, English-learner progress, and school-quality measures (like chronic absenteeism), 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 Maine DOE data dashboards (via the Maine Department of Education). Review the indicators (especially growth) and the trend.

AT A GLANCE	
Format	Data reporting + support identif...
No	Single grade or stars
Tool	Maine DOE Data Dashboard
Look up at	maine.gov/doe

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 Maine rate schools?** — Maine uses state data reporting 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 MAINE'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Maine has a distinctive, long-standing town tuitioning system: towns that do not operate their own public school at some grade levels pay tuition for their students to attend another public school or an approved private school. Since the U.S. Supreme Court's Carson v. Makin (2022) decision, eligible private schools can include religious...

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

Under town tuitioning , if your town doesn't run a school for your child's grade, it pays tuition to a public or approved private school you choose (up to a set amount). This is geographically specific — it applies only to students in "tuition towns." Maine does not have a statewide ESA or voucher for all families.

ELIGIBILITY

Town tuitioning applies to students who live in a town without its own public school for their grade level. Whether you qualify depends on your town. Confirm with your town or School Administrative Unit (SAU).

APPLYING

Work through your town / SAU to use town tuitioning. Confirm eligibility, approved schools, and tuition amounts.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

After Carson v. Makin (2022) , Maine cannot exclude religious schools from town tuitioning solely because they are religious. Confirm the current rules with your SAU.

AT A GLANCE

Program	**Town tuitioning**
How	**Towns without schools pay tuitio…**
Since Carson v. Makin	**Can include religious schools**
No	**Statewide ESA or voucher**
Confirm with	**Your town/SAU**

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 Maine have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes (town tuitioning) — Maine's tuition towns pay for students to attend other schools (which can now include religious schools); no statewide ESA.
- **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 MAINE'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Maine certifies teachers through the Maine Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams, and earn a Provisional 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
- **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	**Maine Department of Education**
Basic skills	**Praxis Core (or qualifying score...**
Content	**Praxis Subject Assessments**
Certificate	**Conditional/Provisional — then P...**

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

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

Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Maine's state aid is administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) , with a need-based grant and a free-community-college scholarship for recent graduates.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Maine State Grant** — Maine's main need-based grant for residents at eligible in-state (and some New England) colleges — file early, as funds are limited.

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

The Maine Free College Scholarship covers community-college tuition (last-dollar) for eligible recent Maine high-school graduating classes at the Maine Community College System.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Maine's NextGen 529 plan offers matching grants and initial deposits for eligible Maine children (the Harold Alfond College Challenge).

LOAN FORGIVENESS & SERVICE PROGRAMS

Maine runs targeted programs like Doctors/Educators for Maine's Future and loan-repayment initiatives to keep graduates working in the state — check current offerings.

AT A GLANCE

Need-based	Maine State Grant
Free community college	Maine Free College Scholarship
529 plan	NextGen
Agency	FAME

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Finance Authority of Maine** — 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 MAINE'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

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