K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Michigan
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 Michigan.

This guide profiles **Michigan**'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 MICHIGAN

Michigan educates roughly 1.4 million public K–12 students across about 540 traditional school districts , plus roughly 370 charter schools and a layer of Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) that provide regional services. Public education is overseen by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the State Board. Michigan is a...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6 (by September 1)
- **End of compulsory age** — 18 — higher than most states
- **Districts** — ~540 traditional + ~370 charters + ISDs
- **Satisfying it** — Public, approved nonpublic, or homeschool

PRE-K & PREK FOR ALL

Michigan's state pre-K program is the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) — free, high-quality preschool for 4-year-olds. Michigan is expanding access toward "PreK for All," an initiative to offer free pre-K to every 4-year-old whose family wants it, adding seats and providers across the state. Michigan also offers Head Start , Great...

HOMESCHOOLING IN MICHIGAN

- **Option 1 — Home education exemption** — The most permissive route: no notification, no registration, no testing, no curriculum approval, and no teacher-qualification requirement . You...
- **Option 2 — Nonpublic school registration** — Register with the state and document your curriculum; this route requires a certified teacher unless you claim a religious exemption. Used less often.

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	**Ages 6–18**
Districts	**~540 + charters**
Testing	**M-STEP · SAT**
Diploma	**MMC · 18 credits**
Choice	**Schools of Choice**

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Michigan's largest districts include Detroit Public Schools Community District , Utica , Dearborn , Plymouth-Canton , and Grand Rapids . Michigan has one of the country's largest charter-school sectors — around 370 charters (Public School Academies) serving about 10% of students. A distinctive feature: Michigan charters can be authorized...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN MICHIGAN

- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Cranbrook Schools (Bloomfield Hills), Detroit Country Day School, University Liggett School, and Greenhills...
- **Catholic & parochial schools** — A large network across the Archdiocese of Detroit and dioceses statewide (such as University of Detroit Jesuit, Brother Rice, and Catholic Central)
- **Other religious schools** — A strong Christian Reformed (Dutch Reformed) network in West Michigan, plus Lutheran, Christian, and other faith-based schools
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Michigan uses the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) in grades 3–8, and a college-entrance-based battery in high school. In grade 11, students take the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) , built around the SAT plus M-STEP science and social studies and a WorkKeys job-skills assessment. Michigan also gives the PSAT 8/9...

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **M-STEP (grades 3–8)** — English language arts and mathematics; science and social studies at grades 5, 8, and 11
- **PSAT 8/9 & PSAT 10** — College Board practice tests in grades 8 and 10
- **Michigan Merit Examination (grade 11)** — The SAT, plus M-STEP Science & Social Studies and WorkKeys
- **MI-Access** — Alternate assessment for eligible students; WIDA ACCESS for multilingual learners

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

M-STEP is online with varied item types. The grade-11 SAT follows the national digital SAT format, giving students a real, college-usable score. Science and social studies use M-STEP.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No test-pass gate. Michigan does not require passing a state test to graduate; students must take the grade-11 MME/SAT and complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum course requirements. The SAT score is used for accountability and is available for college applications, but there's no minimum score to earn a diploma.

AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**M-STEP**
Subjects	**ELA, Math; Science & SS gr 5, 8…**
High school	**Michigan Merit Exam (SAT)**
Also	**PSAT 8/9 & PSAT 10**
Grad requirement?	**No test-pass gate**
Format	**Online**

HOW IT 'S SCORED

M-STEP reports performance levels (Not Proficient, Partially Proficient, Proficient, Advanced). The grade-11 SAT is scored 400–1600 like the national test.

TESTING WINDOWS

M-STEP and the grade-11 SAT/MME are given in a spring window ; the PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10 also run in spring. Exact dates are set by the state and district.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **SAT prep for grade 11** — Because the MME uses the SAT, our SAT guide and free Khan Academy Official SAT Practice apply directly
- **M-STEP practice** — The state provides sample items and online practice matching the real format
- **Everyday classwork** — M-STEP is aligned to grade-level standards

READ MICHIGAN'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Michigan graduation follows the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) — a set of required courses with no exit exam . It's known for including Algebra II, two years of world language, an online learning experience , and a financial-literacy requirement.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The MMC requires 4 English, 4 math (including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II), 3 science (including Biology and a physics/chemistry), 3 social studies , 1 health/PE, 1 visual/performing/applied arts, 2 years of world language (or an equivalent), and an online learning experience . A half-credit of personal finance is required (phasing...

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Michigan students take state assessments (M-STEP and the SAT), but a passing score is not required to graduate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Michigan issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. A Personal Curriculum can modify some MMC requirements for individual students.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

The Personal Curriculum option lets a student (with the school and family) modify certain MMC requirements to fit their needs and goals.

AT A GLANCE

Framework	**Michigan Merit Curriculum**
Exit exam?	**No**
Includes	**Algebra II, 2 world language**
Also	**Online learning; financial liter...**
Districts	**Set total credits**
Confirm with	**Your district**

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Michigan requires an online learning experience and (phasing in) a half-credit of personal finance . Confirm details with your district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

MICHIGAN — PART 4 OF 7

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Michigan uses the MI School Index — a 0–100 score across multiple components — plus a parent dashboard , rather than a single letter grade or star rating.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The MI School Index combines proficiency, growth, graduation rate, English-learner progress, school quality/student success (like attendance), and assessment participation into an index score . Michigan also identifies schools for support (CSI/TSI) under ESSA. There's no single grade — read the index and the components.

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 MI School Data (mischooldata.org) and the parent dashboard. Review the index components (especially growth and graduation) and the trend.

AT A GLANCE	
Format	**MI School Index + dashboard**
Scale	**0–100 index**
No	**Single letter grade or stars**
Tool	**MI School Data**
Look up at	**mischooldata.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 Michigan rate schools?** — Michigan uses the MI School Index (a 0–100 score) and a parent dashboard — not a letter 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 MICHIGAN'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Michigan does not have a private-school-choice program — the state constitution bars public funding for private-school tuition (and voters have declined to change it). Michigan does offer robust public choice: a large charter sector and the Schools of Choice open-enrollment program.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

There is no ESA, voucher, or tax-credit scholarship for private school in Michigan, due to the state's constitutional restriction. 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

Michigan's constitutional ban has blocked private-school vouchers; proposals face this hurdle. Confirm the current status if you've heard of a new development.

AT A GLANCE

Private choice?	**No (constitutional ban)**
Public choice	**Charters & Schools of Choice**
Charters	**A large public charter sector**
Open enrollment	**Schools of Choice program**
Confirm with	**Your district**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does Michigan have a private-school-choice program?** — No — Michigan's constitution bars private-school vouchers, but it has strong public choice (charters, Schools of Choice).
- **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 MICHIGAN'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Michigan certifies teachers through the Michigan Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required MTTC exams, and earn a Standard Certificate , later a Professional Certificate .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Professional Readiness Examination (PRE)** — Basic skills — often waivable with qualifying SAT/ACT or other scores
- **MTTC subject test(s)** — 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	Michigan Department of Education
Basic skills	Professional Readiness Exam (oft...
Subject	MTTC subject test(s)
Certificate	Standard — then Professional

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

READ MICHIGAN'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Michigan has built a coordinated state aid system around the Michigan Achievement Scholarship — a broad, FAFSA-linked program for recent high-school graduates — administered by MI Student Aid . The only way to find out what you qualify for is to file the FAFSA .

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Tuition Incentive Program (TIP)** — Tuition help for students who had Medicaid coverage, toward a certificate or degree.
- **Michigan Tuition Grant** — Need-based aid for students at private, nonprofit Michigan colleges.
- **Fostering Futures & Children of Veterans** — Targeted aid for foster youth and veterans' families.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Michigan Achievement Scholarship** — For recent Michigan high-school graduates (class of 2023+): up to $27,500 over five years at an in-state four-year college/university, or the...
- **Michigan Competitive Scholarship** — A need-and-merit award for students who graduated before 2023.

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Beyond state programs, Michigan is known for place-based "Promise" scholarships (like the Kalamazoo and Detroit Promise) in participating communities. Michigan Reconnect offers tuition-free community college to residents 25 and older.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Michigan offers the Michigan Education Savings Program (MESP) and the Michigan Education Trust (MET) prepaid plan.

AT A GLANCE

Flagship	**Michigan Achievement Scholarship**
4-year	**Up to $27,500 over 5 years**
Community college	**Tuition-free Guarantee**
Adults 25+	**Michigan Reconnect**
529 plan	**MESP / MET**
Agency	**MI Student Aid (MILEAP)**

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with MI Student Aid** — 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

File the FAFSA early, and note the Achievement Scholarship's 15-month enrollment window after high-school graduation. 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...

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