K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Missouri
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 Missouri.

This guide profiles **Missouri**'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 MISSOURI

Missouri educates roughly 870,000 public K–12 students across about 518 school districts , overseen by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the State Board. Missouri's choice landscape has expanded recently: its tax-credit-funded MOScholars education savings account went statewide in 2024 , and...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 7
- **End of compulsory age** — 17 (early release at 16 in some cases)
- **Districts** — ~518 school districts
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or home school

PRE-K IN MISSOURI

Missouri does not offer a universal pre-K program. State support for early education flows through the Missouri Preschool Program and, increasingly, through the school-funding formula (which lets districts count some eligible pre-K students for state aid to expand access), alongside Head Start and child-care assistance. Missouri rates...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 7–17
Districts	~518
Testing	MAP
Diploma	24 units
Choice	MOScholars ESA

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Missouri's largest districts include Springfield , Rockwood and Parkway (St. Louis suburbs), North Kansas City , Columbia , and Lee's Summit . A distinctive Missouri feature: charter schools are limited by law to Kansas City and St. Louis (which together have 60+ charters), with a narrow 2024 expansion allowing charters in certain...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN MISSOURI

- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as John Burroughs School and MICDS (St. Louis), and Pembroke Hill School (Kansas City)
- **Catholic & parochial schools** — A large network across the Archdiocese of St. Louis and dioceses statewide (such as the Jesuit St. Louis University High and Rockhurst)
- **Other religious schools** — A strong Lutheran (Missouri Synod, headquartered in St. Louis) network, plus Christian and other faith-based schools
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Missouri's testing is the MAP (Missouri Assessment Program): Grade-Level Assessments in grades 3–8 and End-of-Course (EOC) exams in high school. It's run by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **MAP Grade-Level (grades 3–8)** — English language arts and mathematics each year; science in grades 5 and 8
- **End-of-Course (high school)** — Algebra I, English II, Biology, and Government
- **MAP-A** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

MAP and EOC exams are online , combining multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response items. EOCs are taken when students finish the matching course.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Missouri doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; districts may count EOCs toward course grades, and Missouri has a separate civics/Constitution requirement. Confirm your district's policy.

HOW IT'S SCORED

MAP and EOC results report levels — Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced .

AT A GLANCE

System	**MAP**
Grades 3–8	**Grade-Level Assessments**
Science	**Gr 5 & 8**
High school	**EOC exams**
EOC subjects	**Algebra I, English II, Biology…**
Grad requirement?	**No exit-exam gate**

TESTING WINDOWS

Grade-level MAP is given in a spring window ; EOCs run in fall, spring, and summer windows tied to courses.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Practice forms & released items** — DESE provides practice materials matching the online format
- **Course-aligned review** — EOCs test the specific course

PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

Students in tested grades and courses 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 MISSOURI'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Missouri requires a state minimum of 24 units with no exit exam — but students must pass civics/constitution tests and complete a few other requirements. Districts often require more.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Missouri's 24 units include 4 English, 3 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, 1 fine arts, 1 practical arts, 1 PE, 0.5 health, 0.5 personal finance, and electives. Districts may require more.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Missouri students take state EOC assessments, but a passing academic score is not required to graduate. Students must, however, pass tests on the U.S. and Missouri constitutions and American civics .

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Missouri issues a standard diploma, with the Seal of Biliteracy available. Strong records support Bright Flight and A+ eligibility (see MO financial aid).

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Dual enrollment, AP/IB, and the A+ program offer accelerated and cost-saving pathways.

AT A GLANCE

Units	**24 (state minimum)**
Exit exam?	**No**
Required	**U.S. & Missouri civics/constitut...**
Also	**CPR training**
Confirm with	**Your district**

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Missouri requires passing the U.S. and Missouri constitution tests and an American civics test, a half-credit of personal finance , and CPR training . Confirm with your district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Missouri require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Missouri require a test to graduate?** — No academic exit exam — but students must pass U.S./Missouri constitution and civics tests.
- **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 MISSOURI'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
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MISSOURI — PART 4 OF 7

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Missouri rates schools and districts with the Annual Performance Report (APR) under the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) — a percentage of possible points earned , rather than a letter grade or star rating.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The APR awards points across areas like academic achievement, growth, English-learner progress, graduation/attendance, and college/career readiness , then reports the percentage of points earned . Read the area scores (especially growth) alongside the overall percentage.

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 Missouri School Report Card (via DESE's data portal). Review the APR area scores and the trend.

AT A GLANCE	
Format	APR points/percentage (MSIP)
Scale	Percentage of points earned
No	Single letter grade or stars
Tool	Missouri School Report Card
Look up at	apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS

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 Missouri rate schools?** — Missouri uses the APR (a percentage-of-points score under MSIP) — 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 MISSOURI'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Missouri has a tax-credit-funded scholarship program — MOScholars (Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts) — that helps eligible students with private-school and education expenses, plus a public charter sector in Kansas City and St. Louis.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

MOScholars provides scholarship accounts funded by donations for which donors receive a state tax credit . Eligible families can use the funds for tuition and approved expenses . It has eligibility rules (income and, in some cases, geography or disability) and a funding cap.

ELIGIBILITY

MOScholars targets income-eligible students (and students with disabilities), with priority rules. Confirm current income limits and any geographic requirements.

APPLYING

Apply through an approved educational-assistance organization under MOScholars. Confirm the list and requirements with the state treasurer's office.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

MOScholars has faced a legal challenge ; the program has operated during the litigation — confirm the current status.

AT A GLANCE

Program	MOScholars (Empowerment Scholars...
Type	Tax-credit-funded scholarship/ES...
Note	Under legal challenge
Plus	Public charters (KC & St. Louis)
Confirm with	An educational-assistance org

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 Missouri have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Missouri has MOScholars (tax-credit-funded scholarship accounts) for eligible students (under legal challenge).
- **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 MISSOURI'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
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Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Missouri certifies teachers through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) . You complete an approved program, pass the required MEGA assessments, and earn an Initial Professional Certificate , later a Career Continuous Professional Certificate .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **MoGEA** — Missouri General Education Assessment — often taken for program entry
- **Missouri Content Assessment** — The content test for your certification area
- **MoPTA** — Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment — 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	**Missouri DESE**
General education	**MoGEA**
Content	**Missouri Content Assessment**
Performance	**MoPTA**

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

READ MISSOURI'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Missouri administers state aid through the Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development (MDHEWD) , with a mix of need-based grants, a merit award, and a tuition-free community-college program for graduates of designated high schools.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Access Missouri Grant** — The state's need-based grant for Missouri residents at eligible in-state colleges.
- **Marguerite Ross Barnett Scholarship** — For students who work while attending college part-time.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Bright Flight** — A merit scholarship for Missouri residents with top ACT/SAT scores who attend an in-state college.
- **A+ Scholarship** — Covers tuition and fees at community and technical colleges for graduates of designated A+ high schools who meet the requirements (GPA, attendance...

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

The Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant helps adults earn credentials in high-demand fields .

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Missouri's MOST 529 Education Plan is the state's tax-advantaged plan (with a state tax deduction).

AT A GLANCE

Need-based	**Access Missouri Grant**
Merit	**Bright Flight**
Free community college	**A+ Scholarship**
Adults/high-demand	**Fast Track**
529 plan	**MOST**
Agency	**MDHEWD**

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with the MDHEWD** — 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.

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