K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES

# Nevada
# Education Guide

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

K12 ACADEMICS

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2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

# Everything about school in Nevada.

This guide profiles **Nevada**'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

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K-12 Schools · Colleges & Universities · Vendors · Summer Programs · International Programs · Performers

# Education Overview

## EDUCATION IN NEVADA

Nevada educates roughly 485,000 public K–12 students in an unusually consolidated structure: 17 school districts — one for each of the state's 16 counties, plus Carson City — overseen by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the State Board. One district dominates: Clark County (Las Vegas) is the fifth-largest district in the...

## WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 7
- **End of compulsory age** — 18
- **Districts** — 17 (one per county + Carson City)
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

## PRE-K IN NEVADA

Nevada does not offer a universal pre-K program. State-funded early education runs primarily through Nevada Ready! State Pre-K — for eligible (largely at-risk and income-qualified) 4-year-olds through participating districts and community providers — alongside Head Start and child-care assistance. Nevada rates program quality through the...

## AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| Compulsory | **Ages 7–18** |
| Districts | **17 counties** |
| Testing | **Smarter Bal. · ACT** |
| Diploma | **23 credits** |
| Choice | **Charters / tax-credit** |

## DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Because Nevada's districts are county-wide, most students attend just a few very large systems: the Clark County School District (Las Vegas) enrolls the large majority of the state's students, followed by the Washoe County School District (Reno). Nevada also has a substantial, statewide charter-school sector — brick-and-mortar and...

## PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN NEVADA

- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as The Meadows School and Alexander Dawson School (Las Vegas), and Sage Ridge School (Reno)
- **Catholic & parochial schools** — Diocese of Las Vegas and Diocese of Reno schools (such as Bishop Gorman)
- **Other religious & Christian schools** — A range of Christian and faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

NEVADA — PART 2 OF 7

# State Testing

## WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Nevada uses the Smarter Balanced assessment for ELA and math in grades 3–8, the Nevada Science test, and the ACT in grade 11. Run by the Nevada Department of Education. There's no exit-exam gate (Nevada retired its old proficiency exams).

## WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **Smarter Balanced — ELA & Math** — Grades 3–8 (computer-adaptive with a performance task)
- **Nevada Science** — Science in grades 5, 8, and once in high school
- **ACT (grade 11)** — The statewide high-school test — a real, college-usable score
- **Nevada Alternate** — For eligible students

## FORMAT & SUBJECTS

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

## IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Nevada doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; students complete course and credit requirements (and can pursue a College & Career Ready diploma). The grade-11 ACT provides a college-usable score.

## HOW IT'S SCORED

Smarter Balanced reports four levels (Level 3+ meets standard); the grade-11 ACT is scored 1–36.

## AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| Grades 3–8 | **Smarter Balanced** |
| Science | **Nevada Science gr 5, 8, HS** |
| High school | **ACT (grade 11)** |
| Grad requirement? | **No exit-exam gate** |
| Format | **Computer-adaptive** |
| Standards | **Nevada Academic Standards** |

## TESTING WINDOWS

Testing runs in a spring window set by each district.

## HOW TO PREPARE

- **ACT prep for grade 11** — Our ACT guide and free official ACT practice apply
- **Smarter Balanced practice** — The state provides free practice and training tests

## PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

Students in tested grades 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 NEVADA'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE**
tools.k12academics.com →

NEVADA — PART 3 OF 7

# Graduation Requirements

## AT A GLANCE

Nevada offers several diplomas — Standard , Advanced , and College and Career Ready — with the Standard diploma requiring about 23 credits . Nevada students take end-of-course exams and the ACT, but a passing score is not required to graduate.

## CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Standard diploma (about 23 credits) includes 4 English, 4 math (including Algebra II), 3 science, 3 social studies, 2 PE, 0.5 health, 1 arts/CTE/humanities, and electives. The Advanced and College and Career Ready diplomas require more credits and higher benchmarks.

## TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam gate. Nevada students take end-of-course exams and the ACT (given statewide), but a passing score is not required to earn a Standard diploma — scores can matter for the Advanced and College and Career Ready diplomas.

## DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Nevada's three diploma tiers (Standard, Advanced, College and Career Ready) recognize increasing levels of achievement, plus the Seal of Biliteracy . Strong records support Millennium Scholarship eligibility (see NV financial aid).

**AT A GLANCE**

| | |
|---|---|
| Diplomas | **Standard, Advanced, College & Ca...** |
| Credits | **~23 (Standard)** |
| Exit exam? | **No (passing not required)** |
| Also | **ACT taken statewide** |
| Confirm with | **Your district** |

## ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

The higher diploma tiers (Advanced, College and Career Ready) reward students who take more rigorous coursework and meet college-readiness benchmarks.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Nevada require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Nevada require a test to graduate?** — No — Nevada requires taking end-of-course exams and the ACT, but a passing score is not required for the Standard diploma.
- **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 NEVADA'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE**
tools.k12academics.com →

# Accountability & Report Cards

## AT A GLANCE

Nevada rates schools with star ratings (1 to 5 stars) under the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) , published on the Nevada Report Card .

## HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Nevada's NSPF awards points across academic achievement, growth, English-learner progress, graduation rate, and school-quality measures (like attendance and college/career readiness), 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 Nevada Report Card (nevadareportcard.nv.gov) . Review the NSPF point breakdown (especially growth) and the trend, not just the stars.

**AT A GLANCE**

| | |
|---|---|
| Format | **Star ratings (1–5)** |
| Framework | **Nevada School Performance Framew...** |
| Tool | **Nevada Report Card** |
| Look up at | **nevadareportcard.nv.gov** |

## 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 Nevada rate schools?** — Nevada uses 1–5 star ratings under the Nevada School Performance Framework.
- **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 NEVADA'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE**
tools.k12academics.com →

# School Choice

## AT A GLANCE

Nevada has the Opportunity Scholarship , a tax-credit scholarship program (with a funding cap) that helps income-eligible students attend private schools. (A 2015 universal ESA law passed but was never funded and is effectively inactive.) Nevada also has public charters and open enrollment.

## THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Opportunity Scholarship is funded by business donations for which donors receive a tax credit; scholarship-granting organizations then award private-school scholarships to income-eligible students . The program is capped , so availability is limited. Nevada's 2015 ESA was never funded.

## ELIGIBILITY

Scholarships are for income-eligible students (generally below set income thresholds), subject to the funding cap. Confirm current income limits and availability.

## APPLYING

Apply through a state-approved scholarship organization . Because of the cap, availability is limited — confirm the current window and funds.

**AT A GLANCE**

| | |
|---|---|
| Program | Opportunity Scholarship (tax-cre... |
| Type | Tax-credit scholarship (capped) |
| Note | 2015 ESA passed but never funded |
| Plus | Public charters & open enrollmen... |
| Confirm with | A scholarship organization |

## 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 Nevada have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes (limited) — Nevada has the capped Opportunity Scholarship tax-credit program (its 2015 ESA was never funded).
- **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 NEVADA'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE**
tools.k12academics.com →

# Teacher Certification

## HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Nevada licenses teachers through the Nevada Department of Education (Office of Educator Licensure). You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams, and earn a license.

## WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Praxis Core** — Basic skills — or satisfied with qualifying scores
- **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your endorsement area
- **Praxis PLT** — Principles of Learning and Teaching (pedagogy) for your grade band
- **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 | **Nevada Department of Education** |
| Basic skills | **Praxis Core (or qualifying score...** |
| Content & pedagogy | **Praxis Subject + PLT** |
| License | **Standard** |

## OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

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

# Financial Aid

## THE STATE AID PICTURE

Nevada's state aid combines a merit scholarship, a need-based grant, and a community-college promise, coordinated by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and the State Treasurer.

## NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Silver State Opportunity Grant** — Nevada's need-based grant for students at community and state colleges, using a shared-responsibility model.

## MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship** — A merit award (funded by the tobacco settlement) for Nevada high-school graduates meeting GPA requirements, usable at Nevada colleges.

## PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

The Nevada Promise Scholarship is a last-dollar award making community college tuition/fees free for eligible recent high-school graduates who complete the steps (mentoring, service).

## COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Nevada offers several 529 college-savings plans (including SSGA Upromise 529 and Vanguard 529) — Nevada has no state income tax.

## AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| Merit | **Millennium Scholarship** |
| Need-based | **Silver State Opportunity Grant** |
| Free community college | **Nevada Promise** |
| 529 plan | **Nevada 529 plans** |
| Agency | **NSHE / State Treasurer** |

## APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Nevada System of Higher Education / State Treasurer** — 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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