K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Ohio
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 Ohio.

This guide profiles **Ohio**'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

OHIO — PART 1 OF 7

Education Overview

EDUCATION IN OHIO

Ohio educates roughly 1.6 million public K–12 students across about 610 school districts , overseen by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and the State Board. Ohio is one of the most choice-rich states in the country: its EdChoice voucher went universal in 2023 , it runs more voucher programs than any other state , it...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6 (by September 30)
- **End of compulsory age** — 18
- **Districts** — ~610 school districts
- **Satisfying it** — Public, chartered nonpublic, or home education

PRE-K IN OHIO

Ohio does not offer a universal pre-K program. State-funded early education runs primarily through Early Childhood Education (ECE) grants and publicly funded preschool for eligible (largely income-qualified) children, alongside Head Start and child-care assistance. Ohio rates program quality through its Step Up To Quality system and has...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Districts	~610
Testing	Ohio State Tests
Diploma	20 cr + seals
Choice	EdChoice

DISTRICTS & COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Ohio's largest districts include Columbus (the state's largest), Cleveland , Cincinnati , Toledo , and Akron . Ohio has a large community-school (charter) sector — public schools operated independently of districts — concentrated in urban areas, along with a number of statewide online "e-schools." Ohio also has one of the country's most...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN OHIO

- **Catholic & parochial schools** — A very large network across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and dioceses statewide (such as the Jesuit St. Ignatius in Cleveland and St. Xavier in...
- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as University School , Hawken, and Hathaway Brown (Cleveland area), Columbus Academy, and Cincinnati Country...
- **Other religious schools** — Lutheran, Jewish, Christian, and other faith-based schools
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

OHIO — PART 2 OF 7

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Ohio uses Ohio's State Tests (OST) in grades 3–8 and End-of-Course (EOC) exams in high school. The old Ohio Graduation Test is retired; today high-schoolers earn "graduation points" from EOC exams (and can use ACT/SAT and other options) as part of Ohio's graduation requirements. Tests are aligned to the Ohio Learning Standards and run by...

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **Ohio's State Tests (grades 3–8)** — English Language Arts and Mathematics each year; Science in grades 5 and 8
- **End-of-Course exams (high school)** — Algebra I (or Integrated Math I), Geometry (or Integrated Math II), English II, Biology, American History, and American Government
- **Ohio's Alternate Assessment (AASCD)** — For eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities
- **Ohio English Language Proficiency (OELPA)** — For multilingual/English learners

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

OST and EOC exams are computer-based (with paper for accommodations), combining multiple-choice and open-ended items. EOCs are subject end-of-course tests taken when students finish the matching course.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

Yes — through graduation points and pathways. Ohio students earn graduation points from the seven EOC exams and must reach a required total, or meet the requirement through alternate demonstrations — a qualifying ACT/SAT score, an industry credential plus a WorkKeys score, or other approved options. Students also earn diploma seals . The...

AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**Ohio's State Tests**
Subjects	**ELA, Math; Science gr 5 & 8**
High school	**End-of-Course (EOC)**
Grad model	**Graduation points + seals**
Grad requirement?	**Yes — earn EOC points**
Gr. 3 note	**Third Grade Reading Guarantee**

HOW IT 'S SCORED

OST and EOC results report performance levels (Limited, Basic, Proficient, Accelerated, Advanced). At the high-school level, each EOC contributes graduation points toward the total needed to graduate. Reports show subject strengths and gaps.

TESTING WINDOWS

Grades 3–8 tests are given in a spring window (the grade-3 ELA test also has a fall window tied to the reading guarantee). EOCs run in fall, spring, and summer windows as students complete courses. Exact dates are set by the state and district.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Practice tests & released items** — The state provides practice tests and released questions matching the real online format
- **Course-aligned review** — EOCs test the specific course content
- **Grade-3 reading support** — For the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, focus on reading fluency and comprehension early

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

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Ohio requires 20 credits plus two additional pieces: demonstrating competency (through state tests or alternatives) and earning two graduation seals . Ohio is one of the states that still ties graduation to assessment results.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Ohio's 20-credit minimum includes 4 English, 4 math (including Algebra II or equivalent), 3 science, 3 social studies, 1 health, 0.5 PE, 1 fine arts, and electives (with a half-credit of financial literacy). Districts may require more.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

Yes — students must "demonstrate competency" by meeting the score requirement on the Algebra I and English II state tests, or through approved alternatives (like a College Credit Plus course, a career credential + WorkKeys, military enlistment, or a work-based option).

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

In addition to credits and competency, students must earn two diploma seals — at least one state-defined seal (such as the OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal, Industry-Recognized Credential Seal, or College-Ready Seal) plus one more from the state or locally defined list.

AT A GLANCE

Credits	**20 minimum**
Exit test?	**Yes — competency in Algebra I &...**
Plus	**Two graduation seals**
Backups	**Alternative competency demonstra...**
Confirm with	**Your district**

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

The alternative competency demonstrations (credentials, work-based learning, military, College Credit Plus) give students multiple routes beyond the tests.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Ohio requires a half-credit of financial literacy and civics/government coursework. Confirm specifics with your district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Ohio require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Ohio require a test to graduate?** — Yes — you must demonstrate competency (Algebra I & English II tests) or use an approved alternative, plus earn two seals.
- **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 OHIO'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Ohio rates schools with star ratings (from 1 to 5 stars, in half-star increments), a change made in 2023 from the old A-F system. Ratings appear on the Ohio School Report Cards .

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Ohio gives star ratings on several components — Achievement, Progress (growth), Graduation, Gap Closing , and Early Literacy — plus an overall star rating. More stars mean stronger performance; the Progress component captures growth.

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 Ohio School Report Cards portal. Review the component stars (especially Progress/growth and Early Literacy) and the trend, not just the overall stars.



AT A GLANCE

Format	**Star ratings (1–5)**
Components	**Achievement, Progress, Grad, Gap…**
Tool	**Ohio School Report Cards**
Look up at	**reportcard.education.ohio.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 Ohio rate schools?** — Ohio uses star ratings (1–5 stars) across components and overall (it moved from A-F to stars in 2023).
- **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 OHIO'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Ohio has a large voucher -based school-choice system — the EdChoice Scholarship , which was expanded to broad (near-universal) eligibility — plus targeted scholarships and a big public charter ("community school") sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The EdChoice Scholarship provides vouchers to help pay private-school tuition, now available to a broad range of families (with award amounts scaled by income above certain levels). Ohio also runs the Cleveland Scholarship , the Autism Scholarship , and the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship .

ELIGIBILITY

EdChoice eligibility is now broad/near-universal , with full awards for lower-income families and partial awards higher up the income scale. Confirm current income tiers and amounts.

APPLYING

Apply through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's scholarship programs (often via the participating private school). Confirm windows and requirements.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

Ohio's voucher expansion is the subject of ongoing litigation . The program has continued during the legal challenge — confirm the current status.

AT A GLANCE

Flagship	**EdChoice Scholarship (voucher)**
Eligibility	**Expanded to broadly universal**
Also	**Cleveland, autism & special-need…**
Note	**Under legal challenge**
Plus	**Public charters (community schoo…**
Confirm with	**The scholarship program**

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 Ohio have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Ohio has the EdChoice voucher (broadly expanded), plus targeted scholarships (currently 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 OHIO'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Ohio issues teaching licenses through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce . You complete an approved program, pass the required OAE exams, and earn a Resident Educator License , later advancing to a Professional License .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Assessment of Professional Knowledge (APK)** — The pedagogy/professional exam
- **OAE subject assessment(s)** — Content test(s) for your licensure area
- **Foundations of Reading** — Required for early-childhood/primary and some other candidates
- **Note** — Requirements vary by license 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	**Ohio Dept. of Education & Workfo...**
Pedagogy	**OAE APK**
Content	**OAE subject test(s)**
Reading	**Foundations of Reading (elementa...**

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

READ OHIO'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Ohio administers state financial aid through the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) . Its main need-based program is the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) , complemented by the STEM-focused Choose Ohio First scholarship.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)** — Ohio's main need-based grant for residents at eligible Ohio (and a few adjacent) colleges.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Choose Ohio First** — A competitive scholarship for students in STEM and STEMM fields at participating Ohio institutions.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Ohio's CollegeAdvantage 529 is the state's tax-advantaged college-savings plan, with a state tax deduction for Ohio taxpayers.

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

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

AT A GLANCE

Need-based	**Ohio College Opportunity Grant**
STEM merit	**Choose Ohio First**
529 plan	**CollegeAdvantage**
Agency	**ODHE**
Apply by	**FAFSA**

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.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How do I get Ohio state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; the ODHE administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Ohio offers need-based grants and merit scholarships.
- **Are the deadlines earlier than federal?** — Usually yes — file early, as some aid is first-come.
- **Can I use it out of state?** — Most Ohio aid is for in-state schools; check each program.
- **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official state programs only.

READ OHIO'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

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