K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Rhode Island
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 Rhode Island.

This guide profiles **Rhode Island**'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

RHODE ISLAND — PART 1 OF 7

Education Overview

EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island educates roughly 135,000 public K–12 students across about 64 school districts (local, regional, charter, and state-operated), overseen by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Notably, the state has directly operated the Providence Public Schools since a 2019...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6 (by September 1)
- **End of compulsory age** — 18
- **Districts** — ~64 (local, regional, charter, state-operated)
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or approved home instruction

PRE-K IN RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island funds a growing RI Pre-K program — free, high-quality state preschool that has expanded steadily (seats are typically filled through an application/lottery, prioritizing communities and families with greater need) — alongside Head Start and other early-learning programs. Rhode Island has been increasing pre-K classrooms...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Districts	~64
Testing	RICAS
Diploma	20 credits
Choice	Charters

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Rhode Island's largest districts include Providence (state-operated since 2019), Cranston , Warwick , and Pawtucket . Rhode Island has a charter-school sector that includes "mayoral academies" (such as Blackstone Valley Prep) serving students across municipal lines. Rhode Island is also home to The Met (the Metropolitan Regional Career...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN RHODE ISLAND

- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Moses Brown School (Quaker), Wheeler School, and Lincoln School (Providence area) — plus boarding schools...
- **Catholic & parochial schools** — Diocese of Providence schools (such as La Salle Academy, Bishop Hendricken, and Mount St. Charles)
- **Other religious schools** — Christian and other faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Rhode Island uses RICAS (the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System) for ELA and math in grades 3–8, the NGSA science test, and the PSAT (grade 10) and SAT (grade 11) . Run by the Rhode Island Department of Education. There's currently no exit-exam gate (Rhode Island is moving toward readiness-based graduation requirements).

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **RICAS (grades 3–8)** — English language arts and mathematics
- **Next-Generation Science Assessment (NGSA)** — Science in grades 5, 8, and 11
- **PSAT (grade 10) & SAT (grade 11)** — College-readiness testing — the grade-11 SAT gives a college-usable score
- **DLM** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

RICAS and NGSA are online ; the grade-11 SAT follows the national digital SAT format.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate currently. Rhode Island is phasing in readiness-based graduation requirements ; students complete course and credit requirements. The grade-11 SAT provides a college-usable score. Confirm your district's current diploma requirements.

HOW IT'S SCORED

RICAS reports performance levels; the grade-11 SAT is scored 400–1600.

AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**RICAS (ELA & Math)**
Science	**NGSA gr 5, 8, 11**
High school	**PSAT (10) & SAT (11)**
Grad requirement?	**No exit-exam gate**
Format	**Online**
Standards	**RI standards**

TESTING WINDOWS

Testing runs in a spring window set statewide.

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 RHODE ISLAND'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Rhode Island requires about 20 Carnegie units with no exit exam (the state removed the requirement to pass a state test). Students demonstrate proficiency through multiple pathways and complete an Individual Learning Plan .

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Rhode Island's requirements include 4 English, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, and additional courses — with proficiency demonstrated through coursework and performance. Districts set the total and specifics.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Rhode Island students take state assessments (including the SAT/PSAT), but a passing score is not required to graduate. Proficiency is shown through multiple pathways (coursework, performance-based diploma assessments, and more).

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Rhode Island issues a standard diploma, with a Commissioner's Seal, the Seal of Biliteracy, and honors available.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Every student completes an Individual Learning Plan ; dual enrollment, AP, and CTE offer accelerated routes (see RI Promise in our financial-aid guide).

AT A GLANCE

Credits	~20 (Carnegie units)
Exit exam?	No
Proficiency	Via multiple pathways
Also	Individual Learning Plan
Confirm with	Your district

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Rhode Island require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Rhode Island require a test to graduate?** — No — Rhode Island has no exit exam; proficiency is shown through multiple pathways.
- **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 RHODE ISLAND'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Rhode Island rates schools with star ratings (1 to 5 stars) on the Rhode Island Report Card , based on a points system across indicators.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Rhode Island awards points across proficiency, growth, English-learner progress, graduation, and school-quality measures (like attendance and, for high schools, 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 Rhode Island Report Card (reportcard.ride.ri.gov) . Review the points breakdown (especially growth) and the trend, not just the stars.

AT A GLANCE

Format	**Star ratings (1–5)**
Tool	**Rhode Island Report Card**
Look up at	**reportcard.ride.ri.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 Rhode Island rate schools?** — Rhode Island uses 1–5 star ratings based on a points system across several measures.
- **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 RHODE ISLAND'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

RHODE ISLAND — PART 5 OF 7

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Rhode Island has a small corporate tax-credit scholarship program that funds private-school scholarships for income-eligible students, plus a public charter sector. It does not currently have an ESA or voucher.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

Under Rhode Island's tax-credit scholarship , businesses donate to scholarship organizations in exchange for a tax credit, and those organizations award private-school scholarships to income-eligible students . The program is capped and relatively small, so scholarships are limited.

ELIGIBILITY

Scholarships are for income-eligible students, subject to the program cap. Confirm current income limits and availability.

APPLYING

Apply through a participating scholarship organization . Confirm the list and requirements.

AT A GLANCE	
Program	Tax-credit scholarship (corporat...
Type	Tax-credit scholarship (income-l...
No	ESA or voucher
Plus	Public charters
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 Rhode Island have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes (limited) — Rhode Island has a small corporate tax-credit scholarship (no ESA or voucher).
- **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 RHODE ISLAND'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Rhode Island certifies teachers through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams (and a reading test where applicable), and earn an Initial Certificate , later a Professional Certificate .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your certification area
- **Foundations of Reading** — Required for elementary, reading, and special-education candidates
- **Note** — Basic-skills requirements may be met via qualifying scores/coursework — confirm current options

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	Rhode Island Department of Educa...
Content	Praxis Subject Assessments
Reading	Foundations of Reading
Certificate	Initial — then Professional

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

Most states offer alternative routes for career-changers and those with a degree in another field. In Rhode Island, 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)...

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 Rhode Islands agency and your current state

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

Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Rhode Island's state aid is coordinated by the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) , with a free-community-college program and a newer program covering the junior/senior years at Rhode Island College.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Rhode Island State Grant** — Need-based aid for Rhode Island residents at eligible in-state (and some regional) colleges.

PROMISE & FREE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Rhode Island Promise makes tuition/fees free for eligible recent high-school graduates at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). The Hope Scholarship covers tuition for the junior and senior years at Rhode Island College for eligible students.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Rhode Island's CollegeBound Saver 529 plan offers a state income tax deduction for residents.

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.

AT A GLANCE

Free community college	**Rhode Island Promise**
Free jr/sr year	**Hope Scholarship (RIC)**
Need-based	**RI State Grant**
529 plan	**CollegeBound Saver**
Agency	**RI OPC**

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner** — 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

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How do I get Rhode Island state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Rhode Island 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 Rhode Island aid is for in-state schools; check each program.
- **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official state programs only.

READ RHODE ISLAND'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
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