K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Texas
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 Texas.

This guide profiles **Texas**'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 TEXAS

Texas educates roughly 5.5 million public K–12 students — second only to California — across about 1,200 school districts , the most of any state (roughly 1,020 independent school districts plus around 180 open-enrollment charter districts). Public education is overseen by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) , the State Board of Education...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6 (by September 1)
- **End of compulsory age** — 19 (or graduation)
- **Districts** — ~1,200 — the most of any state
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

PRE-K IN TEXAS

Texas does not offer a universal pre-K program, but it funds free public prekindergarten for eligible 4-year-olds — children who are low-income, English learners, in foster care, homeless, or from military families (school districts must offer pre-K if they have at least 15 eligible children). Since House Bill 3 (2019) , eligible pre-K...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	**Ages 6–19**
Districts	**~1,200**
Testing	**STAAR**
Diploma	**26 cr + endorsement**
Choice	**ESA (new)**

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Texas's largest districts are among the biggest in the nation: Houston ISD (which the state took over in 2023), Dallas ISD , Cypress-Fairbanks , Northside (San Antonio), Austin ISD , and Fort Worth ISD . Texas also has one of the country's largest charter-school sectors — open-enrollment charter schools authorized by the state, including...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

- **Catholic & parochial schools** — Large diocesan systems (in Galveston-Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and beyond) and other church-affiliated schools
- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed, tuition-funded college-prep schools (such as St. Mark's, Hockaday, St. John's, Kinkaid, and Greenhill) — "independent"...
- **Other religious & Christian schools** — A wide range of faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori, Waldorf, and schools for specific learning needs

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

TEXAS — PART 2 OF 7

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Texas measures learning through the STAAR — the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness , run by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). STAAR checks whether students have learned the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, the state standards) and, in high school, whether they're on track for college and careers. It was...

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **STAAR grades 3–8** — Reading Language Arts (with writing built in) and Math every year in grades 3–8; Science in grades 5 & 8; Social Studies in grade 8. Spanish versions...
- **STAAR End-of-Course (EOC)** — Five high-school exams tied to courses: Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History.
- **STAAR Alternate 2** — For eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- **TELPAS** — A separate assessment of English proficiency for emergent bilingual/English-learner students.

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

STAAR is online (with rare paper exceptions) and untimed (most finish within a school day). The redesign added new question types beyond multiple choice — a state law caps multiple-choice at no more than 75% of points — plus an extended constructed response (essay) on the reading/English tests. English I and English II combine reading...

PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

Texas law requires students in tested grades and courses to participate in STAAR, and Texas does not have a formal opt-out process. Talk to your campus about make-up testing and any questions.

AT A GLANCE

Main test	**STAAR**
Grades	**3–8 + high school EOC**
Subjects	**Reading/Lang. Arts, Math, Scienc...**
HS EOCs	**Algebra I, Eng I, Eng II, Biolog...**
Format	**Online**
Grad requirement?	**Yes — 5 EOCs**

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

Yes. To graduate, Texas students must meet the passing standard on the five EOC exams — Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History. Students who don't pass get additional retest opportunities and required accelerated instruction , and there are other pathways in certain cases (for example, an Individual Graduation...

HOW IT 'S SCORED

STAAR reports performance in levels — commonly Did Not Meet, Approaches, Meets, and Masters Grade Level. "Approaches" is the basic passing bar for EOC graduation purposes; "Meets" and "Masters" signal stronger readiness. Online testing means faster results than the old paper test.

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

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Texas graduation runs on the Foundation High School Program — a base of 22 credits that students build on by choosing an endorsement (reaching 26 credits). Texas is one of the few states that still requires passing end-of-course exams to graduate.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Foundation program (22 credits) includes 4 English, 3 math (Algebra I, Geometry, +1), 3 science (Biology + 2), 3 social studies, 2 languages other than English, 1 PE, 1 fine arts, and electives. Adding an endorsement (26 credits) requires additional related courses. Endorsement areas: STEM; Business & Industry; Public Services; Arts...

TESTING TO GRADUATE

Yes — Texas requires passing five STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) exams : English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History. Students who don't pass can qualify through an Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) or other approved options.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Students who struggle with an EOC exam can pursue graduation through an Individual Graduation Committee , which reviews multiple measures. Credit-by-exam and credit recovery are also options.

AT A GLANCE

Program	Foundation High School Program
Credits	22 (foundation) / 26 (with endor...
Exit exam?	Yes — 5 STAAR EOC exams
Endorsements	5 areas to choose from
Top honor	Distinguished Level of Achieveme...
Confirm with	Your district

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Texas recognizes three levels: the Foundation program , Foundation with an endorsement , and the Distinguished Level of Achievement (requires Algebra II and an endorsement). The Distinguished level is required to be eligible for automatic top-10% admission to Texas public universities. Performance Acknowledgments (for AP/IB, dual credit...

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Texas embeds personal financial literacy in economics coursework and may have additional locally set requirements. Confirm specifics with your district.

READ TEXAS'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

TEXAS — PART 4 OF 7

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Texas rates every school and district with an A-F letter grade (established in 2017). Much like a report card, letter grades in key areas combine into an overall grade, published on TXschools.gov .

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The A-F rating is built from three domains: Student Achievement (test results and college/career/military readiness), School Progress (academic growth and relative performance), and Closing the Gaps (how well the school serves all student groups). The better of Achievement or Progress is combined with Closing the Gaps for the overall A –...

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

AT A GLANCE

Format	A-F letter grades
Domains	Achievement, Progress, Closing t...
Tool	TXschools.gov
Since	2017 (HB 22)
Look up at	txschools.gov

FINDING & READING THE REPORT CARD

Look up any school or district on TXschools.gov . You'll see the overall grade, the domain grades, and underlying data. Read the domain grades (especially School Progress/growth) alongside the overall letter.

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)

READ TEXAS'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Texas enacted a universal Education Savings Account (ESA) program in 2025 (Senate Bill 2) — one of the largest single school-choice expansions in the country — scheduled to launch in the 2026–27 school year . Texas also has a large public charter sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The new ESA program gives eligible families a state-funded account (reported at roughly $10,000 per student) to spend on approved education expenses — private-school tuition, tutoring, materials, and more. It's funded at about $1 billion to start and designed to be broadly available. Because it's new and launching , confirm the exact...

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is broad (aimed at most Texas students), though — as with many programs — funding is capped , so not every applicant is guaranteed a funded seat, especially early on. Confirm current eligibility and priority rules.

APPLYING

Applications will run through the state's ESA administrator. Watch for the application window ahead of the 2026–27 launch, and confirm requirements on the official site.

AT A GLANCE

New program	**Universal ESA (SB 2)**
Launches	**2026–27 school year**
Amount	**~$10,000 per student**
Type	**Education Savings Account**
Plus	**Public charters & open enrollmen...**
Confirm with	**The state 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)

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

The program is newly launching , and details (amounts, eligibility, timelines) are being finalized and may be subject to legal or legislative change. Confirm the current status.

READ TEXAS'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Texas educator certification is overseen by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) . You complete an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP) , pass the required TExES exams, and earn a Standard Certificate .

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **TExES PPR** — Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities — the core teaching exam
- **TExES content exams** — A subject/grade-level content test for your certification area
- **Science of Teaching Reading (STR)** — Required for early-childhood and elementary candidates
- **Note** — Some candidates may also complete edTPA-style or performance requirements through their program — confirm with your EPP

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	TEA / SBEC
Core exams	TExES (PPR + content)
Reading	Science of Teaching Reading (STR...
Certificate	Standard (after probationary/int...

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

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

TEXAS — PART 7 OF 7

Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Texas administers its state financial aid through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) , with need-based grants for different sectors of higher education. Students who aren't eligible for federal aid can apply using the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) instead of the FAFSA.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **TEXAS Grant** — The state's main need-based grant (Toward EXcellence, Access & Success) for students at public universities.
- **Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG)** — Need-based aid for students at public two-year (community/technical) colleges.
- **Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG)** — Need-based aid for Texas residents attending private, nonprofit Texas colleges.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Texas offers the Texas College Savings Plan (a 529 investment plan) and the Texas Tuition Promise Fund (a prepaid tuition plan).

LOAN FORGIVENESS & SERVICE PROGRAMS

Texas runs targeted loan repayment/forgiveness programs for high-need fields (such as teaching and nursing) through the THECB — check current programs and eligibility.

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

Universities	**TEXAS Grant**
Community college	**TEOG**
Private colleges	**Tuition Equalization Grant**
529 plan	**Texas College Savings Plan**
Prepaid	**Texas Tuition Promise Fund**
Agency	**THECB**

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with the THECB** — 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 Texas state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; the THECB administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Texas 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 Texas aid is for in-state schools; check each program.
- **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official state programs only.

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

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