K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES



Utah
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 Utah.

This guide profiles **Utah**'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

UTAH — PART 1 OF 7

Education Overview

EDUCATION IN UTAH

Utah educates roughly 680,000 public K–12 students across just 41 school districts (relatively few, but large) plus more than 130 charter schools , overseen by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) . Utah's fast-growing, young population sits mostly along the Wasatch Front. Utah has one of the country's broadest school-choice...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 6 (by September 1)
- **End of compulsory age** — 18
- **Districts** — ~41, plus 130+ charter schools
- **Satisfying it** — Public, private, or homeschool

PRE-K & UPSTART

Utah has historically invested modestly in state preschool and has no universal pre-K . It funds targeted High Quality School Readiness preschool grants (largely income-based) and is nationally known for UPSTART — a distinctive at-home, technology-based kindergarten-readiness program that families use on a computer or tablet, designed to...

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	**Ages 6–18**
Districts	**~41 + charters**
Testing	**RISE · ACT**
Diploma	**24 credits**
Choice	**Utah Fits All**

DISTRICTS & CHARTERS

Because Utah has so few districts, most students attend a handful of very large systems along the Wasatch Front — Alpine , Davis , Granite , Jordan , Canyons , and Nebo . Utah also has a large charter-school sector : more than 130 charter schools serving over 65,000 students — among the highest charter enrollment shares in the country —...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN UTAH

- **Catholic & parochial schools** — Diocese of Salt Lake City schools (such as Judge Memorial and Juan Diego Catholic High) and other church-affiliated schools
- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed, tuition-funded schools (such as Rowland Hall, McGillis, and Waterford) — "independent" meaning not owned by a church or...
- **Other religious & Christian schools** — A range of faith-based options
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

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

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Utah uses RISE (Readiness, Improvement, Success, Empowerment) in grades 3–8, Utah Aspire Plus in grades 9–10, and the ACT in grade 11. Run by the Utah State Board of Education. There's no exit-exam gate.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **RISE (grades 3–8)** — English language arts, mathematics, and science
- **Utah Aspire Plus (grades 9–10)** — A college-readiness test in English, reading, math, and science (an ACT-aligned measure)
- **ACT (grade 11)** — The statewide high-school test — a real, college-usable score
- **DLM** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

RISE is online and computer-adaptive ; Utah Aspire Plus and the grade-11 ACT are college-readiness measures.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

No exit-exam gate. Utah doesn't require passing a state test to graduate; students complete course and credit requirements. The grade-11 ACT provides a college-usable score.

HOW IT'S SCORED

RISE reports proficiency levels; Utah Aspire Plus and the grade-11 ACT report college-readiness scores (the ACT on the 1–36 scale).

AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**RISE**
Subjects	**ELA, Math, Science**
Grades 9–10	**Utah Aspire Plus**
High school	**ACT (grade 11)**
Grad requirement?	**No exit-exam gate**
Format	**Online, adaptive**

TESTING WINDOWS

RISE, Aspire Plus, and the ACT are given 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
- **RISE practice** — USBE provides practice tests matching the adaptive format

PARTICIPATION & OPTING OUT

Utah allows parents to excuse their child from state assessments; ask your district about the process.

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 UTAH'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Utah requires 24 credits with no exit exam . Requirements include financial literacy and digital studies , and districts may add more.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Utah's 24 credits include 4 English, 3 math, 3 science, 3.5 social studies, 1.5 PE, 0.5 health, 0.5 financial literacy, 0.5 digital studies, 1.5 arts, 1 CTE, and electives.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

No exit exam. Utah students take state assessments (Utah Aspire Plus / RISE and the ACT), but a passing academic score is not required to graduate.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

Utah issues a standard diploma, with honors and the Seal of Biliteracy available. Districts may add designations.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Concurrent enrollment, AP/IB, and CTE offer accelerated and cost-saving pathways.

AT A GLANCE

Credits	24
Exit exam?	No
Also	Financial literacy & digital stu...
Districts	May require more
Confirm with	Your district

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Utah requires financial literacy and digital studies courses. Confirm details with your district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Utah require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Utah require a test to graduate?** — No — Utah has no exit exam; a passing test score is not required to graduate.
- **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 UTAH'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Utah publishes a school report card showing performance across measures. Utah moved away from a single A-F letter grade toward a dashboard-style report — so you read the measures rather than one grade.

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

Utah's report card shows proficiency, growth, graduation rate, English-learner progress, and readiness measures, and identifies schools for support under ESSA. Rather than one summary grade, it presents the full picture — read across the measures, especially 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 Utah School Report Card . Review the measures (especially growth) and the trend.

AT A GLANCE

Format	**Report-card dashboard**
Note	**Utah moved away from A-F**
Tool	**Utah School Report Card**
Look up at	**utahschoolgrades.schools.utah.go…**

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 Utah rate schools?** — Utah uses a report-card dashboard and moved away from a single A-F letter grade.
- **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 UTAH'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Utah created the Utah Fits All Scholarship , a universal-eligible Education Savings Account (ESA) that gives eligible families funds for private-school and approved education expenses. The program is currently the subject of ongoing litigation . Utah also has a large public charter sector.

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Utah Fits All Scholarship (ESA) provides a state-funded account (reported around $8,000 per student) for tuition, curriculum, tutoring, and other approved expenses. It is designed to be broadly available, though funding is capped . Because of the litigation, confirm the current status, amounts, and rules.

ELIGIBILITY

The program is universal-eligible but capped , so not every applicant is guaranteed funding. Confirm current eligibility and priority rules.

APPLYING

Apply through the program's administrator. Watch the application window and confirm requirements — and check the program's legal status first.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

AT A GLANCE

Program	**Utah Fits All Scholarship (ESA)**
Type	**Universal-eligible ESA**
Note	**Under legal challenge**
Plus	**Public charters**
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)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does Utah have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Utah has the universal-eligible Utah Fits All ESA, 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 UTAH'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Utah licenses teachers through the Utah State Board of Education . You complete an approved program (or an alternative pathway), pass the required Praxis content exam(s), and earn a Professional License . Utah offers several routes, including an Associate license.

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your license area — the primary testing requirement
- **Elementary** — Includes a reading component reflecting Utah's literacy emphasis
- **Note** — Utah generally does not require a separate stand-alone basic-skills test — confirm current requirements

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	**Utah State Board of Education**
Content	**Praxis Subject Assessments**
License	**Associate/Professional pathways**
Note	**Multiple licensure routes**

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

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

READ UTAH'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Utah's state aid is coordinated by the Utah Board of Higher Education (Utah System of Higher Education) , with a need-based promise scholarship and a merit scholarship for rigorous coursework.

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **Utah Promise Scholarship** — A need-based, last-dollar scholarship for Utah residents at public colleges (with a community-college focus).

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Opportunity Scholarship (formerly Regents' Scholarship)** — A merit award for Utah students who complete a rigorous high-school course of study and meet GPA requirements.
- **T.H. Bell Teaching Incentive** — Aid for future Utah teachers.

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Utah's my529 is a nationally top-rated plan and offers a state income tax credit for Utah taxpayers.

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Utah Board of Higher Education** — 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	**Utah Promise Scholarship**
Merit	**Opportunity Scholarship (Regents...**
529 plan	**my529**
Agency	**Utah Board of Higher Ed**

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 Utah state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Utah Board of Higher Education administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Utah 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 Utah aid is for in-state schools; check each program.
- **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official state programs only.

READ UTAH'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
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