



Illinois

Overall Rank

#32

Illinois ranks #32 overall, and its school choice rank declined 13 points. The state is below average in education choice, transparency, and return on investment.

Education Choice Rank

#34

Illinois ranks #34 for education choice, down 13 spots from 2022 as lawmakers in other states expanded education choice options in 2023, while officials in Illinois did not. Previously, Illinois had done well in allowing families to choose among private schools, but in 2023, the legislature failed to act to extend the state’s tax-credit scholarship policy, which is set to sunset at the end of the year. Illinois generally respects the autonomy of homeschooling families. Illinois could improve its ranking by enacting a K-12 education savings account (ESA) policy, making it easier for charter schools to open and operate, and giving families a choice of traditional public schools beyond their assigned school.

Transparency Rank

#38

Illinois lawmakers have not adopted proposals to increase academic transparency, create a parent bill of rights, or that reject the prejudice caused by the application of critical race theory in schools.

Teacher Freedom Rank

#21

Illinois ranks an unimpressive 21st in teacher freedom. Just 5 percent of its teachers are alternatively certified. However, the state does allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure, and no longer uses Common Core-aligned assessments. A significant 82 percent of its school districts with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” Illinois can improve its teacher freedom score by ending the continual hiring of non-teaching administrative staff, particularly chief diversity officers, allowing alternative teacher certification through routes into the K-12 classroom other than university-based colleges of education, or by ending certification requirements altogether.

Return on Investment Rank

#36

Illinois ranks 36th overall in return on investment (ROI) for education spending. Illinois spends the 11th-most per pupil among states, spending \$18,507 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Illinois ranks 19th in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Land of Lincoln employs 1.07 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Illinois’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 17.8 percent of its state GDP. Illinois can improve its ROI ranking by lowering per-pupil spending, improving academic outcomes on the NAEP, and addressing its significant unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

Illinois: One-Year Rank Changes (2022–2023)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 10	▼ 13	▲ 3	▲ 25	▲ 8