



Missouri

Overall Rank #15

Missouri ranks #15 in education freedom. However, the state dropped from #4 to #11 in education choice since 2022.

Education Choice Rank #11

Missouri ranks #11 for education choice, down seven spots from 2022, as lawmakers in other states expanded education choice options in 2023, while officials in Missouri did not. Missouri does well in giving families the freedom to choose among private, charter, and district schools, as well as other learning environments, but could do more to expand education choice. Missouri offers K-12 education savings accounts (ESAs) that families can use to customize the education of eligible students, and respects the autonomy of homeschooling families. Missouri could improve its ranking by expanding eligibility for and boosting participation in its K-12 ESAs, 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 #46

Missouri 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 #7

Missouri ranks high in terms of teacher freedom, coming in at seventh place. Twenty-three percent of the state’s teachers are alternatively certified, enjoying alternative pathways to the K-12 classroom. Missouri also allows full reciprocity of teacher licensure and does not use Common Core-aligned tests. However, 46 percent of its school districts with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” The Show-Me State can improve its teacher freedom ranking by stopping the growth in non-teaching staff, particularly chief diversity officers. And it should continue to foster alternative pathways to the K-12 classroom—or eliminate teacher certification requirements altogether—so that more aspiring teachers have options for entering the profession.

Return on Investment Rank #17

Missouri ranks 17th overall in return on investment (ROI) for education spending. Missouri spends the 33rd-most per pupil among states, spending \$13,983 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Missouri ranks 36th in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Show-Me State employs 1.23 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Missouri’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 5.7 percent of its state GDP. Missouri can improve its ROI ranking by improving academic outcomes on the NAEP and lowering its unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

Missouri: One-Year Rank Changes (2022-2023)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 2	▼ 7	▲ 5	0	▼ 9