



# North Carolina

## Overall Rank

#14

North Carolina ranks #14 in overall education freedom, up one spot from last year. The state saw a large gain in transparency, moving to #17.

## Education Choice Rank

#19

North Carolina ranks #19 for education choice, down eight spots, as lawmakers in other states expanded education choice options in 2023, while officials in North Carolina did not make any changes before the cutoff date for this year’s Education Freedom Report Card. Its recent school voucher expansion will be reflected in next year’s rankings. North Carolina does exceptionally well in giving families the freedom to choose among private schools and charter schools, as well as other learning environments, especially since expanding its K-12 education savings account (ESA) policy so that all families can use ESAs to customize the education of their children. North Carolina could improve its ranking by boosting participation in its K-12 ESAs, making it easier for charter schools to open and operate, removing excessive regulations on homeschooling families, and giving families a choice of traditional public schools beyond their assigned school.

## Transparency Rank

#17

In 2023, North Carolina legislators overrode the governor’s veto and adopted a parent bill of rights<sup>1</sup> that protects parental rights and provides more academic transparency. The new law says: “A parent has the right to...direct the education and care of his or her child” and “to direct the upbringing and moral or religious training of his or her child.” Lawmakers have not adopted proposals that specifically increase academic transparency or reject the prejudice caused by the application of critical race theory in schools.

## Teacher Freedom Rank

#12

North Carolina ranks 12th among states in teacher freedom. Although a strong 39 percent of teachers in the Tar Heel State made their way to the K-12 classroom through alternative teacher certification options, North Carolina does not allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. One-third of the state’s school districts with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” North Carolina does not use Common Core-aligned tests. In order for the state to improve its teacher freedom score, North Carolina should allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure—or eliminate teacher certification altogether—and should stop the growth of non-teaching staff, such as chief diversity officers.

## Return on Investment Rank

#9

North Carolina ranks ninth overall in return on investment (ROI) for education spending. North Carolina spends the 47th-most per pupil among states (meaning the 4th least per-pupil), spending \$11,385 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. North Carolina ranks 25th in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Tar Heel State employs 1.07 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. North Carolina’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 2.7 percent of its state GDP. North Carolina can further improve its ROI ranking by improving academic outcomes on the NAEP and further lowering its unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

### North Carolina: One-Year Rank Changes (2022-2023)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 1	▼ 8	▲ 17	▲ 1	▼ 6

**NOTE:**

1. <https://ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2023/S49>