



New Jersey

Overall Rank

#42

New Jersey remains in the bottom ten at #42. Like last year, the state ranks near the bottom in transparency and return on investment.

Education Choice Rank

#32

New Jersey ranks #32 for education choice. New Jersey does fairly well in allowing families to choose among charter schools, but could do more to expand education choice. New Jersey respects the autonomy of homeschooling families. New Jersey 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

#41

New Jersey 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

#32

New Jersey ranks 32nd among states in terms of teacher freedom. Although 21 percent of teachers in the state are alternatively certified, making their way to the K-12 classroom through something other than a university-based college of education, the state does not allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. No school districts that enroll more than 15,000 students employ “chief diversity officers,” though the Garden State still uses Common Core-aligned tests. New Jersey can improve its teacher freedom score by fostering alternative teacher certification options—or by eliminating teacher certification requirements altogether—and by allowing full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states, and by exiting the Common Core-aligned tests.

Return on Investment Rank

#49

New Jersey ranks 49th in return on investment (ROI) for education spending. New Jersey spends the fifth-most per pupil among states, spending \$20,811 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. However, New Jersey ranks second in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Garden State employs 0.94 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. New Jersey’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 20.5 percent of its state GDP. New Jersey can improve its near-bottom ROI ranking by lowering per-pupil spending, stopping growth in non-teaching staff, and addressing its significant unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

New Jersey: One-Year Rank Changes (2022–2023)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 7	▲ 7	▲ 3	▼ 3	▲ 1