



Pennsylvania

Overall Rank

#30

Pennsylvania ranks #30 in overall education freedom, but ranks #42 in return on investment. The state ranks #21 in education choice, but lawmakers have failed to improve the state’s education options in recent years.

Education Choice Rank

#21

Pennsylvania ranks #21 for education choice. Pennsylvania does well in allowing families to choose among private schools and charter schools but could do more to expand education choice. Pennsylvania could improve its ranking by enacting a K-12 education savings account (ESA) policy, expanding eligibility for and boosting participation in its private education choice policies, 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

#24

Pennsylvania law¹ requires school district officials to adopt policies that allow parents to view school curricula, though the provision should be expanded to include taxpayers, policymakers, and voters. State officials have not adopted a proposal that rejects the application of critical race theory’s prejudice through compelled speech, nor have lawmakers approved a parent bill of rights.

Teacher Freedom Rank

#34

Pennsylvania ranks 34th among all states for teacher freedom. Just 7 percent of teachers in the Keystone State made it to the classroom through alternative teacher certification routes, largely relying instead on university-based colleges of education. Pennsylvania does not have full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. Sixty percent of school districts in the state with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” Pennsylvania does not use Common Core-aligned tests. To improve its teacher freedom score, Pennsylvania should enable aspiring teachers to enter the K-12 classroom through more alternative certification routes—or eliminate teacher certification requirements altogether—and policymakers should allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure. Pennsylvania should also stop the growth in non-teacher staff, including chief diversity officers.

Return on Investment Rank

#42

Pennsylvania ranks 42nd overall in return on investment (ROI) in education spending. Pennsylvania spends the seventh-most per pupil among states, spending \$19,458 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Pennsylvania ranks 21st in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Keystone State employs 0.97 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Pennsylvania’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 8.6 percent of its state GDP. To improve its ROI rank, Pennsylvania should reduce per-pupil spending, improve academic outcomes on the NAEP, and address its considerable unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

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

| OVERALL | EDUCATION CHOICE | TRANSPARENCY | TEACHER FREEDOM | RETURN ON INVESTMENT |
|---------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| ▲ 7 | ▲ 8 | ▲ 7 | ▼ 1 | ▼ 4 |

NOTE:

1. <http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/022/chapter4/s4.4.html&d=reduce>