



# Montana

## Overall Rank

#10

Montana ranks #10 in overall education freedom. The state ranks #9 in return on investment and #12 in education choice.

## Education Choice Rank

#12

Montana ranks 12th for **education choice**, down two spots since 2023. Montana does well in empowering families to choose among private and district schools, as well as other learning environments, but could do more to expand education choice. Montana offers K-12 education savings accounts (ESAs) that families can use to customize the education of eligible students. Additionally, Montana generally respects the autonomy of homeschooling families. Montana could improve its ranking by boosting participation in its existing private education choice policy, enacting a charter school policy, and giving families more choices among traditional public schools beyond their assigned school.

## Transparency Rank

#6

Montana ranks sixth in **academic transparency**. In 2021, Attorney General Austin Knudsen issued a binding opinion that stated that educators' applications of critical race theory (CRT) can lead to violations of state and federal civil rights laws (binding opinions carry the force of law in Montana). The attorney general wrote: "It is obvious that CRT and antiracism programming take strident positions on some of the most controversial political, societal, and philosophical issues of our time. Compelling students, trainees, or anyone else to mouth support for those same positions not only assaults individual dignity, it undermines the search for truth, our institutions, and our democratic system." Montana lawmakers have also adopted a parental bill of rights.<sup>1</sup>

## Teacher Freedom Rank

#42

Montana ranks 42nd for **teacher freedom**. Only 4 percent of teachers in the state are alternatively certified, and Montana does not have full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. Educators in Montana are required to pass the Praxis test, a teacher certification exam administered by the Educational Testing Service. There are no school districts in Montana that enroll more than 15,000 students, so no "chief diversity officers" are reported. The Treasure State still uses Common Core-aligned tests. Montana can improve its teacher freedom ranking by allowing and fostering alternative teacher certification or by ending teacher certification requirements altogether, allowing full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states, ending the Praxis test requirement, and ending participation in the Common Core assessments.

## Return on Investment Rank

#9

Montana ranks ninth in **return on investment (ROI)** for education spending. Montana spends the 22nd-most per pupil among states, spending \$17,012 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Montana ranks 12th in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Treasure State employs 3.72 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Montana's unfunded teacher pension liability represents 6.7 percent of its state GDP. Montana can improve its ROI ranking by limiting growth in per-pupil spending and lowering its unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

### Montana: One-Year Rank Changes (2023-2024)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 7	▼ 2	0	▼ 5	▲ 17

#### NOTE:

1. [https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title\\_0400/chapter\\_0060/part\\_0070/section\\_0010/0400-0060-0070-0010.html](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0400/chapter_0060/part_0070/section_0010/0400-0060-0070-0010.html)