



Overall Rank

#3

Utah ranks #3 in overall education freedom in 2024, maintaining its ranking from the previous year. The state remains in the top 10 for education choice, transparency, and return on investment.

Education Choice Rank

#10

Utah ranks 10th for **education choice**, down two spots since 2023. Utah does well in empowering families to choose among private, charter, and district schools, as well as other learning environments, especially after enacting a K-12 education savings account (ESA)-style policy this year. Additionally, Utah generally respects the autonomy of homeschooling families. Utah could improve its ranking by allowing scholarship families to save unused funds for future expenses, boosting participation in its existing private education choice policies, and making it easier for more charter schools to open and operate.

Transparency Rank

#8

Utah ranks eighth in **academic transparency**. Utah lawmakers adopted H.R. 901¹ in 2021. This resolution says that legislators “strongly recommend” that the Utah Board of Education review school curricula and teacher professional development content and remove racially biased ideas that are part of critical race theory. State officials should consider a provision that prohibits compelled speech, which would prevent any teacher or student from being compelled to affirm or believe critical race theory’s prejudiced ideas, and also consider provisions that would make academic content more transparent for families and taxpayers. Utah lawmakers have also adopted a parental bill of rights² that says, in part, “It is the public policy of this state that parents retain the fundamental right and duty to exercise primary control over the care, supervision, upbringing, and education of their children.” In 2023, state officials adopted a bill³ that says “no policy or action” of a school board or district may “shield a student’s education record from the student’s parent” or “without written parental consent make changes to a student’s education record regarding a student’s gender identity that does not conform with the student’s sex,” adopting a policy that is similar to The Heritage Foundation’s Given Name Act.

Teacher Freedom Rank

#24

Utah ranks 24th in **teacher freedom**. Just 9 percent of teachers in the Beehive State made their way to the K-12 classroom through alternative teacher certification options, and the state does not have full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. Educators in Utah are required to pass the Praxis test, a teacher certification exam administered by the Educational Testing Service. Two-thirds (67 percent) of school districts in the state with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” The state does not use prescriptive Common Core-aligned tests. Utah can improve its teacher freedom score by increasing opportunities for aspiring teachers to enter the K-12 classroom through options other than a traditional university-based college of education program, allowing full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states or by eliminating teacher certification requirements altogether, and by eliminating the Praxis test requirement. Utah should also stop growth in non-teaching staff in schools, such as chief diversity officers.

NOTES:

1. <https://le.utah.gov/-2021Y1/bills/static/HR0901.html>
2. URL: https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title80/Chapter2A/80-2a-S201.html?v=C80-2a-S201_2022050420220901#:~:text=Rights%20of%20parents%20--%20Children
3. <https://le.utah.gov/-2023/bills/static/SB0100.html>

Return on Investment Rank

#2

Utah ranks second in **return on investment (ROI)** for education spending. Utah spends the 50th-most (meaning it spends the second-least) per pupil, spending \$11,420 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Utah ranks fourth in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Beehive State employs 2.46 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Utah's unfunded teacher pension liability represents 1.2 percent of its state GDP. Utah can further improve its strong ROI ranking by ending growth in non-teaching staff and further reducing its unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

Utah: One-Year Rank Changes (2023-2024)

| OVERALL | EDUCATION CHOICE | TRANSPARENCY | TEACHER FREEDOM | RETURN ON INVESTMENT |
|---------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 0 | ▼ 2 | ▲ 1 | ▼ 5 | 0 |