



North Carolina

Overall Rank

#16

North Carolina ranks #16 in overall education freedom, down two spots from the previous year. The state dropped six spots to #23 in transparency.

Education Choice Rank

#16

North Carolina ranks 16th for **education choice**, up three spots since 2023. North Carolina does exceptionally well in empowering families to choose among private and charter schools, as well as other learning environments, especially since expanding its K-12 education savings accounts (ESAs) so that all families can customize the education of their children. North Carolina could improve its ranking by expanding eligibility and boosting participation in its K-12 education savings account policy, funding ESAs via the state education funding formula, making it easier for more charter schools to open and operate, removing excessive regulations on homeschooling families, and giving families more choices among traditional public schools beyond their assigned school.

Transparency Rank

#23

North Carolina ranks 23rd in **academic transparency**. In 2023, North Carolina legislators overrode the governor’s veto and adopted a parental bill of rights¹ that protects parents’ 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

#15

North Carolina ranks 15th in **teacher freedom**. Although a strong 33 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 have full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. Educators in North Carolina are required to pass the Praxis test, a teacher certification exam administered by the Educational Testing Service. Forty-two percent 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. To improve its teacher freedom score, North Carolina should eliminate its Praxis test requirement, allow full reciprocity of teacher licensure or eliminate teacher certification altogether, and stop the growth of non-teaching staff, such as chief diversity officers.

Return on Investment Rank

#11

North Carolina ranks 11th in **return on investment (ROI)** for education spending. North Carolina spends the 47th-most (meaning the fourth-least) per pupil, spending \$12,320 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 2.42 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. North Carolina’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 2.8 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 (2023–2024)



NOTE:

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