



Virginia

Overall Rank #19

Virginia’s overall rank in education freedom rose three spots to #19. The state ranks #39 in education choice but #2 in transparency.

Education Choice Rank #39

Virginia ranks 39th for **education choice**, down two spots since 2023. Virginia does fairly well in empowering families to choose among private schools but could do much more to expand education choice. Virginia could improve its ranking by enacting a K-12 education savings account (ESA) policy, expanding eligibility for and boosting participation in its existing private education choice policy, making it easier for more charter schools to open and operate, removing excessive regulations on homeschool families, and giving families more choices among traditional public schools beyond their assigned school.

Transparency Rank #2

Virginia ranks second in **academic transparency**. In January 2022, Governor Glenn Youngkin (R) issued an executive order¹ that declares: “Critical race theory and related concepts are teaching our children to engage in the very behavior the Constitution prohibits.” The Governor’s order added: “Executive Employees shall be prohibited from directing or otherwise compelling students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to inherently divisive concepts.” In 2023, the state Department of Education released guidance² that included provisions similar to those of The Heritage Foundation’s Given Name Act. Virginia lawmakers adopted a parental bill of rights³ in 2013.

Teacher Freedom Rank #26

Virginia ranks 26th in **teacher freedom**. Just 10 percent of teachers in the Old Dominion made their way to the K-12 classroom through alternative teacher certification routes, and the state does not have full reciprocity of teacher licensure with other states. Educators in Virginia are required to pass the Praxis test, a teacher certification exam administered by the Educational Testing Service. Moreover, 69 percent of school districts in the state with more than 15,000 students employ a “chief diversity officer.” Virginia does not use Common Core-aligned tests. Virginia can improve its teacher freedom score by increasing the number of aspiring teachers who make their way to the K-12 classroom through alternative teacher certification routes, by allowing full reciprocity of teacher licensure or by eliminating teacher certification requirements altogether, and by eliminating the Praxis test requirement. Virginia should also stop the growth in non-teaching administrative staff in schools, such as chief diversity officers.

Return on Investment Rank #24

Virginia ranks 24th in **return on investment (ROI)** for education spending. Virginia spends the 36th-most per pupil among states, spending \$14,748 in cost-of-living-adjusted terms annually. Virginia ranks 23rd in its combined fourth-grade and eighth-grade math and reading average NAEP score. The Old Dominion employs 2.51 teachers for every non-teacher in its public schools. Virginia’s unfunded teacher pension liability represents 3.2 percent of its state GDP. Virginia can improve its ROI ranking by improving academic outcomes on the NAEP, stopping growth in non-teaching staff, and addressing its unfunded teacher pension liabilities.

Virginia: One-Year Rank Changes (2023–2024)

OVERALL	EDUCATION CHOICE	TRANSPARENCY	TEACHER FREEDOM	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
▲ 3	▼ 2	0	0	▲ 8

NOTES:

- <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?131+ful+HB1642ER>
- <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/46509/638252918535370000>
- <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?131+ful+HB1642ER>