

EDUCATION WEEK

QUALITY COUNTS 2019

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Grading the States

The Nation's Schools: A Bird's-Eye View

September 3, 2019

Time now for the big reveal: Who's on top and who lags behind when it comes to the nation's K-12 school systems—and why?

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This third and final installment of *Quality Counts 2019* pulls together all the strands of Education Week's year-long dive into the strengths and weaknesses of K-12 education based on a wealth of national and state-level data, from test scores and diplomas to spending and socioeconomic factors that can affect student readiness for the K-12 system, for college, and for lifelong achievement.

Earlier installments issued partial grades for the states and the nation in the area of school finance and for the Education Research Center's trademark Chance for Success Index, which weighs a host of indicators aiming to gauge how education factors into lifelong opportunity. This latest report folds in reading and math performance, graduation rates, and other achievement data to come up with overall grades for the nation as a whole and for each of the states.

The picture that emerges is one of limited progress in a K-12 landscape that has been mired in mediocrity for the more than two decades that Quality Counts has been issuing grades for the nation and the individual states. While a handful of high-achievers continue to build on their success, and while some states that perennially fall short find ways to shine in key areas, the end result remains a C—keeping the issue of how to spark improvement before policymakers for another year.

This report unpacks the data behind that national grade and more. It offers snapshots of the top state performers and the challenges they still face; highlights what low-scoring states are doing to boost achievement for their students; and teases out regional patterns that continue to define the state of the nation's schools.

And for more detail on the individual states, including where each of them stand on the dozens of indicators that go into the report's Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, and School Finance Indexes, be sure to download the State Highlights Reports compiled by the Education Week Research Center.

—The Editors



QUALITY COUNTS 2019
Grading The States

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- Boosting School Quality Remains a Slog for States, Nation**
- Data: Mapping the States on This Year's Quality Counts**
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Published in Print: September 4, 2019, as **Nation's Schools: A Bird's-Eye View**

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QUALITY COUNTS 2019

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Grading the States

In National Ranking of School Systems, a New State Is On Top

Nation earns a grade of C amid mixed state showing

By Sterling C. Lloyd and Alex Harwin

September 3, 2019

New Jersey takes the top spot in the newly released "Quality Counts 2019," the 23rd annual report card of state education systems issued by the Education Week Research Center, while the nation as a whole once again earns a C grade despite some jockeying for position among individual states.

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The report, the third of three installments, synthesizes 39 indicators that capture a range of school finance, academic achievement, and socioeconomic factors that affect the quality of state school systems.

Other than a shuffle at the top, the final grades reflect some perennial patterns. In the category of academic achievement alone, no state topped Massachusetts' 88.4, and 44 states scored a C or lower. And top-ranking states are largely clustered in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, while Southern states with high poverty rates dominate the lower rankings.

The latest top-to-bottom grades show just how stubborn K-12 improvement challenges can be. But a deeper look at the data also shows bright spots even among some low-performing states, as well as a photo-finish for New Jersey, as it came in number one for the first time.

Keeping Score

The national score of 75.6 represents an increase of 0.5 points over last year, when the nation also earned a C on the summative report card. The slight uptick in the numerical score reflects modest gains in each of the three report card categories. But the result also continues a trend of mediocre performance, with large disparities between high- and low-scoring states.

OVERALL GRADES

TOP-RANKED

STATE	SCORE (GRADE)
New Jersey	87.8 B+
Massachusetts	87.8 B+
Connecticut	83.6 B
Maryland	83.1 B
New Hampshire	82.5 B

BOTTOM-RANKED

STATE	SCORE (GRADE)
Mississippi	68.5 D+
Louisiana	67.9 D+
Oklahoma	67.6 D+
Nevada	66.9 D+
New Mexico	66.4 D

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

New Jersey's first-place position with a B-plus and a score of 87.8 ends Massachusetts' four-year reign atop the Quality Counts rankings, in which Massachusetts also earned a B-plus. Massachusetts fell short of the top spot by just a few hundredths of a point on the combined scores.

Connecticut (83.6), Maryland (83.1), and New Hampshire (82.5) are next up, with the only B grades this year. New Mexico (66.4) is at the bottom of the rankings, with the only D. Six other states get marks of D-plus.

Overall, 32 states earn grades between C-plus and C-minus. Those results reflect the mix of strengths and weaknesses that most states display when evaluated on the comprehensive report card.

How the Ranking Works

The overall A-F letter grades on the report card reflect the average of numerical scores on a traditional 100-point scale for three custom indices developed by the research center:

The Chance for Success Index evaluates education-related opportunities throughout an individual's lifetime from cradle to career.

The school finance analysis gauges spending on education and equity in the distribution of funding across districts within each state.

The K-12 Achievement Index grades states on current academic results, trends over time, and poverty-based gaps.

This year's third installment of Quality Counts updates overall grades based on results from all three categories in the report card framework. To use the most current information available, the K-12 Achievement grades, which are determined largely by National Assessment of Educational Progress scores from 2017, have also been updated based on our most recent analysis of Advanced Placement test scores and the latest high school graduation rates. Grades for the **Chance for Success** and **School Finance** categories were published in the January and June installments, respectively.

Across the metrics, some key themes and trends emerge. Here are the research center's five takeaways from the analysis.

Money Matters

School finance results allowed New Jersey to eclipse Massachusetts as the top-ranked state. Funding grades also separated some other leading states from their peers.

New Jersey ranks third in the nation for school finance with a score of 89.3 (B-plus) and outpaces Massachusetts, which ranks 11th at 83.4 (B). New Jersey has an advantage over Massachusetts in both spending and equity. It ranks sixth for per-pupil expenditures at \$16,543, while Massachusetts is 13th at \$14,529 once figures are adjusted for regional cost differences.

Ultimately, state policymakers determine how much of the funding pie gets allocated to education. New Jersey devotes 4.8 percent of its total taxable resources to education, ranking third nationally. By contrast, Massachusetts commits just 3.3 percent of state resources to K-12 schools and ranks 31st.

While Massachusetts excels in many areas of student achievement, it doesn't lead the pack in the area of funding equity, ranking 41st in that category. Its wealth-neutrality score is 33rd in the nation, highlighting that wealthier districts in the state get more funding than their poorer peers and that the disparity is more significant than in most other states. In comparison, New Jersey places seventh on this measure.

Wyoming provides another example where funding grades have an impact in a state's overall score. Its sixth-place finish in the Quality Counts rankings is driven largely by its success in school finance. It finishes first, nationally, in the funding category—far ahead of its geographic neighbors. In comparison, Montana stands in 27th place for finance and Idaho finishes last. Wyoming has been the top state for school finance over the past decade largely because it has been the most successful in balancing strong spending with equity across districts—it finishes first for spending and seventh for equity. No other state lands in the top 10 for both categories. At \$18,090, its per-pupil spending (adjusted for regional cost differences) is third-highest in the nation.

Within the equity arena, it finishes third for its wealth-neutrality score, indicating that it spends nearly the same amount on its property-poor districts and their more affluent counterparts. It devotes 5.1



percent of its total taxable resources to K-12 schooling, the second-highest share in the nation. In fact, Wyoming posts a top 10 ranking on five of the report card's eight finance indicators.

In stark contrast, one of Wyoming's neighbors in the region, Idaho, has consistently received the lowest finance scores since 2008. It's the only state to rank below 40th in both spending and equity.

Location Matters

Regional patterns continue to be clear-cut. Major differences in educational performance separate high-performing school systems in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions from lower-performing systems elsewhere in the nation. Where you grow up has an impact on the educational opportunities available to you.

Minnesota and Wyoming are the only states in the overall top 10 that aren't located in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic regions. By contrast, all 10 of the lowest-ranked states are in the South, Southwest, or West.

Results on the Chance for Success Index illustrate the continuing regional disparities that exist on key economic and educational indicators. Five of the six states with the best Chance for Success scores are located in an East Coast corridor between New Hampshire and Virginia. These states often top the rankings for both academic outcomes and the underlying socioeconomic factors that can contribute to them. For instance, Massachusetts, which has the highest 4th grade reading and 8th grade math test scores, is also third in family income and fourth in parental education levels. Similarly, New Hampshire is third in both 4th grade reading and 8th grade math scores. It's first in family income and third for parental education.

A snapshot of the lowest-scoring states on the grading map for Chance for Success would zero in on the South and Southwest, including Louisiana, Nevada, and New Mexico at the bottom of the grading scale. These states have poor test scores and fewer resources to support student success. Louisiana is last for 8th grade math test scores and 49th for family income. Nevada is on the lowest rung of the ladder for parental education and 42nd for 4th grade reading scores. Similarly, New Mexico has the lowest rank for family income and is last for 4th grade reading achievement.

But socioeconomic factors don't entirely predict a state's academic fortunes. Florida finishes 43rd for family income, but ninth for 4th grade reading achievement. Kentucky ranks 41st for family income and 39th for parent education, but stands 22nd in 4th grade reading.

The Best Get Better

Some top-tier states stand out because they continue to improve in certain areas despite already occupying a high place in the rankings.

These states typically have strong economies and well-educated populations serving as long-term advantages.

For instance, New Jersey, the top-ranked overall state in 2019, is 17th for improvement in its K-12 Achievement score from 2008 to 2019 with a solid gain of 4.5 points. Connecticut, ranked third overall in 2019, has the second-best improvement in K-12 Achievement over that span, an increase of 9.0 points. By contrast, 12 states declined by a point or more in K-12 Achievement during that period. Several traditionally high-performing states fell the most: Vermont (-5.0), North Dakota (-5.0), and Maryland (-4.6).

OVERALL GRADES

MOST IMPROVED

STATE	SCORE (GRADE)	CHANGE 2018 to 2019
Nevada	66.9 D+	1.8 ↑
District of Columbia	75.0 C	1.6 ↑
California	74.1 C	1.5 ↑
Oregon	72.0 C-	1.1 ↑
Washington	77.2 C+	1.0 ↑

LARGEST DECLINES

STATE	SCORE (GRADE)	CHANGE 2018 to 2019
West Virginia	71.5 C-	-0.7 ↓
New Hampshire	82.5 B	-0.4 ↓
Delaware	76.7 C+	-0.4 ↓
Hawaii	74.7 C	-0.3 ↓
Indiana	75.4 C	-0.3 ↓

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

Look to the West

Four of the five states with the greatest improvements in their overall scores since last year are in the West.

Nevada (+1.8), the District of Columbia (+1.6), California (+1.5), Oregon (+1.1), and Washington (+1.0) saw the largest overall gains from 2018 to 2019. Nevada's uptick moved it out of last place in the overall rankings for the first time since 2015. The increase in its high school graduation rate from 2014 to 2017

is the second-largest in the nation. It also made solid gains in adult educational attainment, parental education levels, and family income.

California improved its overall finance score the most since last year, gaining 3.3 points. Its gains were fueled by major increases in per-pupil spending and the percent of total taxable resources spent on education. The percent of students in districts with per-pupil expenditures at or above the U.S. average also increased from 23.8 percent in the 2018 analysis to 37.4 in this year's report.

Silver Linings—or Not

Viewed over more than a decade, the nation's overall performance hasn't changed much, but there has been greater progress on some indicators than others.

The 2019 results can be compared with data from the 2008 report, the year that the three current Quality Counts indices were first established with their present scoring system. Over that period, the nation's average score across those three categories has barely budged, increasing by just half a point.

A closer look at the data, however, reveals that outcomes on particular metrics making up those overall scores stand out for improvement, while results for others merely inched up or declined.

For instance, the percent of children with at least one parent holding a postsecondary credential increased by 7.5 points, and the percent of children with at least one parent who is steadily employed improved by 5.4.

But the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool over the past decade only grew by 1.9 percentage points. And the share of total taxable resources spent on education declined from 3.6 to 3.3 percent.



Vol. 39, Issue 03, Pages 8-9

Published in Print: September 4, 2019, as **N.J. Tops in National Ranking of K-12**

EDUCATION WEEK

QUALITY COUNTS 2019

[Complete Coverage ▶](#)

Grading the States

Boosting School Quality Remains a Slog for States, Nation

By **Evie Blad**

September 3, 2019

The nation's latest C grade on Education Week's annual Quality Counts report—the mark it's often received since the annual assessment of the country's K-12 system was created in 1997—is another sign that pursuing educational progress remains a slow and challenging task for many states. [◀ Back to Story](#)

While moving the needle on student achievement has always been a complicated task, educators and lawmakers have seen some changes in the landscape in recent years: Most recently, states have been handed renewed authority by federal policymakers under the **Every Student Succeeds Act**, and there are signs of an uptick of public concern about education.

If harnessed properly, that momentum could help jump-start the changes necessary to improve the work of schools, educators said. But there is no silver bullet, and it will take a consistent commitment to make lasting change.

Quality Counts synthesizes 39 factors related to school finance, academic performance, and broader conditions related to achievement, like family income and preschool enrollment.

The findings come as states continue to implement their plans under ESSA, the federal education law passed in 2015 that gives them broader flexibility in evaluating their schools.

They also come as the public shows continued concern about funding for public education and as teacher activists seek to harness the momentum they've generated in recent years through a wave of walkouts, protests, and strikes as they pushed for raises, policy changes, and more resources for their classrooms.

A Focus on the States

While much of the broader political discussion is focused on national issues, the crosscurrents of education policy debates put states at the center, educators, administrators, and policy advocates say. And, while improving the nation's educational outcomes is an urgent task, there are no easy answers. It will take sustained public pressure and thoughtful, multi-sector work by policymakers to drive improvements, regardless of how their states stack up in national rankings, in their view.

"There's beginning to be an awakening that Washington isn't going to come in and help on this issue," said David Sciarra, executive director of the Education Law Center, which advocates for school funding and equity in New Jersey. "People are starting to wake up to the fact that the unit of authority that can

[Highlights From the Report](#)

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change things is in the state capital, and in order to change the trajectory in a state, it's going to take time, and it requires a high level of sustained effort and advocacy on multiple fronts."

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Maryland	83.1 B
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Oklahoma	67.6 D+
Nevada	66.9 D+
New Mexico	66.4 D

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

Sciarra, whose organization led a long-running legal challenge to New Jersey's school funding system, credits such ongoing efforts, dating back to the 1990s, for his state's consistent presence at the top of national rankings.

A strong public prekindergarten program, separate state capital funding for school construction, and a funding formula that accounts for the needs of high-poverty schools have helped promote equity and high achievement in New Jersey, Sciarra said.

And New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, recently signed a budget that increases state aid to districts by \$191 million, helping more high-poverty school systems reach adequacy under the state's formula. But there is still work to be done, Sciarra said.

"We've learned over the years that you can't just sit back and say, 'Well that's enough. We don't need to do any more,'" he said. "What we've learned is that the drive for equity is never achieved."

OVERALL GRADES

MOST IMPROVED

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SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

Continued Effects of Activism

Just as states like New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Maryland are motivated to build on their positions at the top of the Quality Counts rankings, educators in states that often score at the bottom of national indicators of education and well-being say they are equally driven to improve their systems.

In Oklahoma, which ranks among the bottom five states, teachers used bold permanent markers to display examples of the Sooner State's national standings in areas like teacher pay and per-pupil spending on protest signs they carried outside of the state capitol in April 2018. In a sometimes tense standoff with state lawmakers, they walked out of their classrooms, some shutting down entire schools as they pushed for a \$10,000 teacher pay increase after 10 years of no raises. They continued with their plans, even after state lawmakers proposed a \$6,000 pay increase.

Other states at the bottom of the rankings, including Mississippi and Nevada, also saw teacher activism in recent years.

Polling data suggest the public supports many of their aims. A recent annual survey by the journal Education Next found that, among respondents who considered themselves "informed" about average teacher salaries in their state, the share of those supporting a pay hike grew from 49 percent in 2018 to 56 percent in 2019. And respondents to PDK International's poll of public attitudes for education have ranked school funding among schools' biggest problems for 18 consecutive years.

Oklahoma districts are feeling the effects of their teachers' activism and increased public engagement in education, Caney Valley Superintendent Rick Peters said. The district, which has "more cows than kids," had to close down for 10 days for the walkouts, but Peters understood his teachers' frustrations. Beyond the \$6,000 raises, they won new attention from some lawmakers, who are more active in consulting with educators and administrators about their decisions today, Peters said.

"Oklahoma had a decade of—for lack of a better word—brutal funding, brutal everything," he said. "We were at the bottom of the food chain. We were not well thought of. But everything goes in cycles, and I think we are on an upswing."

Still, Oklahoma's amount of per-pupil funding, \$9,250, ranks 46th among the states in the Quality Counts analysis. The national average was \$12,756. Peters hopes that the attention on school funding will continue into future state budgets, allowing superintendents to recruit and retain more-qualified teachers who can help move the needle on student achievement.

"There were teachers getting jobs in our state who would not have gotten an interview prior to this debacle," he said. "I would say we turned the corner."

A Surge in Interest

Building strong state education systems requires adequate funding, but it also requires setting high standards, enacting strong school-improvement strategies, and determining how to measure and evaluate success, said Paul Reville, who served as Massachusetts' education commissioner from 2008 to 2013.

Increased public attention to education has added heat to debates over issues like charter schools, testing, and governance, said Reville, who is now the founding director of the Education Redesign Lab at Harvard Graduate School of Education. And that's driven some policymakers away from the steady work it takes to improve education, he said. While some state leaders used to seek to be known as "education governors," many now find that to be a "no-win" position, Reville said.

Noting that many states with poor academic outcomes also score low on well-being indicators, Reville said it would take broader efforts from other sectors, like health care and business, to really reach equity. He pointed to initiatives like community schools and children's cabinets at the state level. The nation as a

whole got a C-plus on **Quality Counts' Chance for Success Index**, which relies on 13 indicators that measure factors like parental education, preschool enrollment, and family income.

"I think that we've proved that schools alone—no matter how much you reform them—are, in general, not strong enough to change the kinds of outcomes that you measure in this report," he said. "In order for students to benefit from school reform, a lot of other factors have got to line up."

ESSA was designed to acknowledge the importance of such nonacademic factors by requiring schools to track issues like chronic absenteeism, and by allowing states to add nonacademic indicators to their accountability systems. But, without strong research about measuring and promoting such factors, many states were cautious about how they approached the federal law, crafting modest plans, Reville said.

"As a field, we haven't really developed the indicators," he said. "We aren't really ready for prime time."

Moving forward, even high-performing states will need to innovate to maintain a competitive edge in a global economy, said Susanna Loeb, the director of the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. It takes continued focus to maintain success, and there is no quick way to turn around struggling systems, she said.

"I think what we've learned from the states that have done well, is that it is hard work to have a good education system," Loeb said.



Vol. 39, Issue 03, Pages 9, 11

Published in Print: September 4, 2019, as **Challenging Slog Toward Boosting School Quality**

Grading Scale and Methodology: How We Graded the States

September 3, 2019

How We Graded the States

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The overall A-F letter grades in "Quality Counts 2019" are based on the average of scores on a traditional 100-point scale for three custom indices developed by the Education Week Research Center: Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, and School Finance. Each category carries equal weight in the grading.

The overall grades incorporate the most recent information available for all three categories that make up Quality Counts' full report-card framework and reflect original analyses of federal data for 39 distinct indicators.

Best-in-Class Grading

The Chance for Success Index, K-12 Achievement Index, and School Finance Index are scored using a best-in-class rubric. Under this approach, the leading state on a particular indicator receives 100 points, and other states earn points in proportion to the gaps between themselves and the leader. This calculation is straightforward for indicators with a clearly bounded measurement scale. Examples of such indicators include the 100-point scale for the percent of students proficient in reading, or states' per-pupil expenditures expressed in positive dollar amounts.

But some of the indicators—such as those related to the equity of education spending—use more-complex scales for which minimum or maximum values are not as clearly defined. For such indicators, we evaluate a particular state based on its performance relative to the minimum and maximum values on that indicator. Those indicators are scored on a 50-point base, meaning that all states start with 50 points rather than zero.

To compute a state's score for a given category, we average points across the applicable set of indicators. On a best-in-class scale, a state's overall score for a category can be gauged against an implicit standard where 100 points would correspond to a state that finished first in the nation on each and every measure.

The Grading Scale

Using the scoring rules already described, each state receives a numerical score for each of the indicator categories. After rounding scores to the closest whole-number values, we assign letter grades based on a conventional A-F grading scale, as follows:



[Magnification from this report](#)

[In National Ranking of School Systems, a New State Is On Top](#)

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A = 93 to 100

A-minus = 90 to 92

B-plus = 87 to 89

B = 83 to 86

B-minus = 80 to 82

C-plus = 77 to 79

C = 73 to 76

C-minus = 70 to 72

D-plus = 67 to 69

D = 63 to 66

D-minus = 60 to 62

F = Below 60

SOURCES & NOTES

Chance for Success

The Chance for Success Index combines information from 13 indicators intended to offer perspective on the role that education in a state plays as a person moves from early childhood through the formal pre-K-12 school system and ultimately into post-secondary education and/or the workforce.

Several indicators, such as family income and parent education, examine educational foundations in early childhood. Measures of participation and performance include reading and math scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, high school graduation rates, and other indicators. Outcomes in adulthood, such as educational attainment and annual income, form an additional component of the analysis. Most data for the index are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey.

K-12 Achievement

The K-12 Achievement Index examines 18 distinct measures of reading and math performance, high school graduation, and success on Advanced Placement tests. It scores states on current performance, changes over time, and poverty-based gaps. Data for the index are largely drawn from the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

School Finance

The school finance analysis evaluates two dimensions of state performance: spending and equity.

To assess state spending patterns in K-12 education, the Education Week Research Center analyzes results on four metrics: per-pupil expenditures adjusted for regional cost differences, percent of students in districts with per-pupil spending at or above U.S. average, Spending Index, and percent of total taxable resources spent on education. State expenditures are adjusted by factors such as regional cost differences to facilitate apples-to-apples comparisons.

For the equity component of the grading, the Research Center conducts an analysis to capture the degree to which education funding is equitably distributed across the districts within a state. Equity is measured by four distinct indicators: Wealth-Neutrality Score, McLoone Index, Coefficient of Variation, and Restricted Range.

The finance analysis is based on the most recent information available from federal agencies, which is from 2016.

Additional indicator-by-indicator details for all three graded categories can be found in the full Sources & Notes page, [located here](#).

Vol. 39, Issue 03, Pages 10-11, 14-15

Published in Print: September 4, 2019, as **Grading Scale & Methodology**

Sources and Notes: How We Graded the States

January 15, 2019 | Updated: September 4, 2019

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K-12 ACHIEVEMENT

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

NAEP Mathematics 2017 (4th and 8th grades): Percent of public school students who score at or above the "proficient" level in mathematics on the 2017 State NAEP assessment. National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2017.

NAEP Reading 2017 (4th and 8th grades): Percent of public school students who score at or above the "proficient" level in reading on the 2017 State NAEP assessment. Ibid.

ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

NAEP Mathematics Change 2003-2017 (4th and 8th grades): Change in NAEP scale scores for public school students between 2003 and 2017. Ibid.

NAEP Reading Change 2003-2017 (4th and 8th grades): Change in NAEP scale scores for public school students between 2003 and 2017. Ibid.

POVERTY GAP

Poverty Gap (4th grade reading and 8th grade math): Scale-score difference in 2017 NAEP achievement between public school students eligible and noneligible for the National School Lunch Program. Larger values indicate wider gaps in performance with higher scores for non-eligible students. Ibid.

Poverty-Gap Change 2003-2017 (4th grade reading and 8th grade math): Change in the size of the poverty gap for public school students between 2003 and 2017. Negative values indicate a narrowing gap. Ibid.

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

NAEP Mathematics 2017 Percent Advanced (8th grade): Percent of public school students who score at the "advanced" level in mathematics on the 2017 State NAEP assessment. Ibid.

NAEP Mathematics Percent Advanced Change 2003-2017 (8th grade): Change in the percent of students scoring at the NAEP "advanced" level in mathematics between 2003 and 2017. Ibid.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

High School Graduation Rate: Percent of public high school students who graduated on time with a standard diploma for the 2016-17 school year. *Quality Counts 2018* uses graduation rates calculated by states with the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) method, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education.

Change in Graduation Rate: Change in public high school graduation rate between 2014 and 2017. Ibid.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

High AP Test Scores: Number of high AP test scores (3 or above) per 100 students in grades 11 and 12. Analysis is specific to public school students. Education Week Research Center analysis using: College Board's AP Summary Reports 2017; U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data 2017.

Change in High AP Scores: Change in the ratio of high AP scores for public school students between 2000 and 2017. Ibid.

SCHOOL FINANCE

EQUITY

The Education Week Research Center conducted an original analysis to calculate four distinct indicators that capture the degree to which education funding is equitably distributed across the districts within a state. Calculations for each equity indicator take into account regional differences in educational costs and the concentrations of low-income students and those with disabilities, whose services are more expensive than average. Students in poverty receive a weight of 1.2; students with disabilities receive a weight of 1.9.

Wealth-Neutrality Score: This indicator captures the degree to which a school district's revenue (state and local sources) is correlated with its property-based wealth. Positive values indicate that wealthier districts have higher revenue levels. Education Week Research Center analysis using: U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 (district-level data); ACS Comparable Wage Index 2013-2015, as updated by Lori Taylor of Texas A&M University; U.S. Census Bureau's Public Elementary- Secondary Education Finance Data for 2016; U.S. Census Bureau's Small-Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2016. U.S. Department of Education's School District Demographics data from the five-year 2016 American Community Survey.

McLoone Index: Indicator value is the ratio of the total amount spent on pupils below the median to the amount that would be needed to raise all students to the median per-pupil expenditure in the state. The index defines perfect equity as a situation in which every district spends at least as much as the district serving the median student in the state (ranked according to per-pupil expenditures). Education Week Research Center analysis using: U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) 2013-14, 2014-2015, and 2015-16 (district-level data); ACS Comparable Wage Index 2013-2015, as updated by Lori Taylor of Texas A&M University; U.S. Census Bureau's Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data for 2015; U.S. Census Bureau's Small-Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2016.

Coefficient of Variation: This indicator measures the level of variability in funding across school districts in a state. The value is calculated by dividing the standard deviation of per-pupil expenditures (adjusted for regional cost differences and student needs) by the state's average spending per pupil. Ibid.

Restricted Range: The restricted range is the difference between spending levels for the districts serving students at the 5th and 95th percentiles of the per-pupil-expenditure distribution. Ibid

SPENDING

Adjusted Per-Pupil Expenditures: Adjusted Per-Pupil Expenditures: Average statewide per-student spending, adjusted for variations in regional costs using the NCES Comparable Wage Index 2016, as updated by Lori Taylor of Texas A&M University. Education Week Research Center analysis using: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Education Finances: Fiscal Year 2016.

Percent of Students in Districts with PPE at or Above U.S. Average: Expenditures are adjusted for regional differences in educational costs and the concentrations of low-income students and students with disabilities. Education Week Research Center analysis using: U.S. Census Bureau's Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data for 2016; CCD district-level data 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 (district-level data); ACS Comparable Wage Index 2013-2015, as updated by Lori Taylor of Texas A&M University; and U.S. Census Bureau's Small-Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2016.

Spending Index: Index gauges state spending according to the percent of students served by districts spending at or above the national average as well as the degree to which lower-spending districts fall short of that national benchmark. Expenditures are adjusted for regional differences in educational costs and the concentrations of low-income students and students with disabilities. Ibid.

Percent of Total Taxable Resources Spent on Education: Percent of Total Taxable Resources Spent on Education: Share of state resources spent on K-12 education. Education Week Research Center analysis using: state and local revenues from the U.S. Census Bureau, Public Education Finances: Fiscal Year 2016; 2016 gross-state-product data from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

CHANCE FOR SUCCESS

EARLY FOUNDATIONS

Family Income: Percent of dependent children (under 18 years of age) who live in above-low-income families. Low income is defined as 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which depends on the size and composition of the family. Education Week Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2017.

Parent Education: Percent of dependent children with at least one parent who holds a two- or four-year postsecondary degree. Ibid.

Parental Employment: Percent of dependent children with at least one parent who is steadily employed, defined as working full time (at least 35 hours per week) and year-round (at least 50 weeks during the previous year). Those not in the labor force are excluded from calculations. Active-duty military service is considered participation in the labor force. Ibid.

Linguistic Integration: Percent of dependent children whose parents are fluent speakers of English. Fluency is defined as being a native speaker or speaking the language "very well." All resident parents must be fluent in English for a family to be considered linguistically integrated. Ibid.

SCHOOL YEARS

Preschool Enrollment: Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds who are attending preschool, based on a three-year average. Both public and private education programs are counted. Education Week Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Kindergarten Enrollment: Percent of eligible children attending public or private kindergarten programs, based on a three-year average. The size of the entering kindergarten cohort is calculated based on the number of 5- and 6-year-olds in a state. Ibid.

Elementary Reading Achievement: Percent of 4th graders in public schools who scored at or above the "proficient" level in reading on the 2017 State NAEP assessment. National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2017.

Middle School Mathematics Achievement: Percent of 8th graders in public schools who scored at or above the "proficient" level in mathematics on the 2017 State NAEP assessment. Ibid.

High School Graduation Rate: Percent of public high school students who graduated on time with a standard diploma for the 2016-17 school year. *Quality Counts 2019* uses graduation rates calculated by states with the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) method, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education.

Young-Adult Education: Percent of young adults (ages 18 to 24) who either are currently enrolled in a postsecondary education program or have already earned a postsecondary credential. Those still enrolled in high school programs are excluded from the calculation. Education Week Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2017.

ADULT OUTCOMES

Adult Educational Attainment: Percent of adults (ages 25 to 64) who have earned a postsecondary degree. Calculations include all individuals whose highest level of attained education is an associate, bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. Ibid.

Annual Income: Percent of adults (ages 25 to 64) whose annual personal income reaches or exceeds the national median (\$40,448 in 2017 dollars). Only individuals in the labor force are included in calculations. Ibid.

Steady Employment: Percent of adults (ages 25 to 64) who are steadily employed, defined as working full time (at least 35 hours per week) and year-round (at least 50 weeks during the previous year). Those not in the labor force are excluded from calculations. Active-duty military service is considered participation in the labor force. Ibid.

How We Graded the States

Best-in-Class Grading

Quality Counts is scored using a best-in-class rubric. Under this approach, the leading state on a particular indicator receives 100 points, and other states earn points in proportion to the gaps between themselves and the leader.

This calculation is straightforward for indicators with a clearly bounded measurement scale. Examples of such indicators include the 100-point scale for the percent of students proficient in reading, or states' per-pupil expenditures expressed in positive dollar amounts.

But some of the indicators—such as those related to the equity of education spending—use more-complex scales for which minimum or maximum values are not as clearly defined. For such indicators, we evaluate a particular state based on its performance relative to the minimum and maximum values on that indicator. Those indicators are scored on a 50-point base, meaning that all states start with 50 points rather than zero.

To compute a state's score for a given category, we average points across the applicable set of indicators. On a best-in-class scale, a state's overall score for a category can be gauged against an implicit standard where 100 points would correspond to a state that finished first in the nation on each and every measure.

The Grading Scale

Using the scoring rules already described, each state receives a numerical score for each of the indicator categories. After rounding scores to the closest whole-number values, we assign letter grades based on a conventional A-F grading scale, as follows:

A = 93 to 100

A-minus = 90 to 92

B-plus = 87 to 89

B = 83 to 86

B-minus = 80 to 82

C-plus = 77 to 79

C = 73 to 76

C-minus = 70 to 72

D-plus = 67 to 69

D = 63 to 66

D-minus = 60 to 62

F = Below 60

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QUALITY COUNTS 2019

Grading the States

Complete Coverage ▶

September 3, 2019

Data: Mapping the States on This Year's Quality Counts

New Jersey and Massachusetts earn the nation's highest overall marks on the "Quality Counts 2019" report card, with grades of B-plus. New Mexico gets the nation's lowest grade, a D. In all, 32 states receive grades between C-plus and C-minus.

For a description of what these education indicators mean, [view the grading scale and methodology](#).

Related Story: ["In National Ranking of School Systems, a New State Is On Top"](#)

[Interactive Map](#) [Grading Summary](#) [Top-to-Bottom Rankings](#)

Nation Earns a C for School Performance

New Jersey ranks first, with a B-plus and a score of 87.8. The overall A-F letter grades reflect the average of numerical scores on a traditional 100-point scale for three custom indices: Chance for Success (2019), School Finance (2019), and K-12 Achievement (2019).

> Click on the tabs below to see grades for each of those distinct categories.

States are ranked by overall score, which is the average of the three graded categories.

Overall	Chance For Success	School Finance	K-12 Achievement
New Jersey			87.8(B+)
Massachusetts			87.8(B+)
Connecticut			83.6(B)
Maryland			83.1(B)
New Hampshire			82.5(B)
Wyoming			82.3(B-)
Vermont			81.7(B-)
New York			81.7(B-)
Pennsylvania			81.6(B-)
Minnesota			80.5(B-)
Virginia			80.3(B-)
Rhode Island			79.8(B-)
Maine			79.0(C+)

North Dakota	78.8(C+)
Illinois	78.4(C+)
Wisconsin	78.2(C+)
Washington	77.2(C+)
Nebraska	77.2(C+)
Delaware	76.7(C+)
Iowa	76.3(C)
Ohio	76.0(C)
U.S.	75.6(C)
Indiana	75.4(C)
Colorado	75.2(C)
District of Columbia	75.0(C)
Hawaii	74.7(C)
Florida	74.6(C)
Kansas	74.3(C)
California	74.1(C)
Montana	73.5(C)
Georgia	73.5(C)
Utah	73.4(C)
Alaska	73.2(C)
Michigan	73.0(C)
Missouri	72.6(C)
South Dakota	72.6(C)
Kentucky	72.4(C-)
North Carolina	72.0(C-)
Oregon	72.0(C-)
West Virginia	71.5(C-)
Tennessee	71.1(C-)
Texas	71.0(C-)
Arkansas	70.9(C-)
South Carolina	70.2(C-)
Alabama	69.9(C-)
Idaho	69.5(D+)
Arizona	69.1(D+)
Mississippi	68.5(D+)
Louisiana	67.9(D+)
Oklahoma	67.6(D+)
Nevada	66.9(D+)
New Mexico	66.4(D)

Notes: States are ranked based on unrounded scores.

The District of Columbia and Hawaii are single-district jurisdictions. They are not issued grades for school finance, which analyzes the distribution of funding across districts within a state.

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

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- Having trouble viewing this? [Download the grading summary \(PDF | 180KB\)](#)
- [Get more information on individual states with State Highlights Reports](#)
- [View the grading scale, methodology, sources, and notes](#)
- See Also: [In National Ranking of School Systems, a New State Is On Top](#)
- See Also: [Boosting School Quality Remains a Slog for States, Nation](#)

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QUALITY COUNTS 2019**Grading the States**[Complete Coverage](#)

September 3, 2019

State Grades on K-12 Achievement: Map and Rankings

Examine the grades and scores that states and the nation earned on the K-12 Achievement Index in Quality Counts 2019, along with how they scored on a host of indicators that go into those rankings.

For a description of what these education indicators mean, [view the grading scale and methodology](#).

[Interactive Map](#) | [Grading Summary](#) | [Top-to-Bottom Rankings](#)

Nation Earns a C for K-12 Achievement

Massachusetts ranks first, with a B-plus and a score of 88.4. The overall A-F letter grades reflect the average of numerical scores on a traditional 100-point scale for three custom indices: Current Performance (Status), Change, and Poverty Gap.

> Click on the tabs below to see grades for each of those distinct categories.

States are ranked by overall score, which is the average of the three graded categories.

Overall	Status	Change	Equity
Massachusetts			88.4(B+)
New Jersey			85.1(B)
Virginia			80.1(B-)
Florida			78.5(C+)
Maryland			77.9(C+)
New Hampshire			77.5(C+)
Minnesota			76.9(C+)
Pennsylvania			76.5(C)
Indiana			76.2(C)
Connecticut			75.2(C)
Washington			75.0(C)
Wyoming			74.8(C)
Georgia			74.4(C)
Illinois			74.3(C)
Utah			74.3(C)
Vermont			74.2(C)
Colorado			74.0(C)

Ohio	73.9(C)
Wisconsin	73.8(C)
Nebraska	73.4(C)
New York	73.2(C)
U.S.	73.0(C)
California	72.5(C)
North Carolina	72.3(C-)
Idaho	72.0(C-)
Hawaii	71.4(C-)
Tennessee	71.4(C-)
Maine	71.2(C-)
Texas	71.1(C-)
Arizona	71.0(C-)
Rhode Island	71.0(C-)
Kentucky	70.9(C-)
Iowa	70.0(C-)
Delaware	69.7(C-)
Kansas	69.4(D+)
Nevada	69.1(D+)
South Dakota	68.9(D+)
Montana	68.8(D+)
North Dakota	68.4(D+)
Missouri	68.4(D+)
Michigan	68.2(D+)
District of Columbia	67.2(D+)
Arkansas	67.1(D+)
Alabama	67.0(D+)
Oregon	66.3(D)
West Virginia	66.1(D)
Oklahoma	64.7(D)
Mississippi	64.1(D)
South Carolina	63.9(D)
Alaska	63.0(D)
New Mexico	61.8(D-)
Louisiana	60.7(D-)

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

- [Having trouble viewing this? Download the grading summary \(PDF | 263KB\)](#)
- [Get more information on individual states with State Highlights Reports](#)
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- [See Also: In National Ranking of School Systems, a New State Is On Top](#)
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QUALITY COUNTS 2019: GRADING THE STATES
Chance for Success[Complete Coverage ▶](#)

STATE EDUCATION REPORTS & RANKINGS

Educational Opportunities and Performance in New Hampshire

January 16, 2019 | Updated: September 4, 2019

Based on a comprehensive analysis of data, the *Quality Counts* [Back to Story](#) report card answers a key question: Where does my state rank for educational opportunities and performance?

States are graded and ranked in three categories: Chance for Success (January), School Finance (June), and K-12 Achievement (September). A state's overall grade, published in September, is the average of its scores on the three separate indices tracked for the report card.

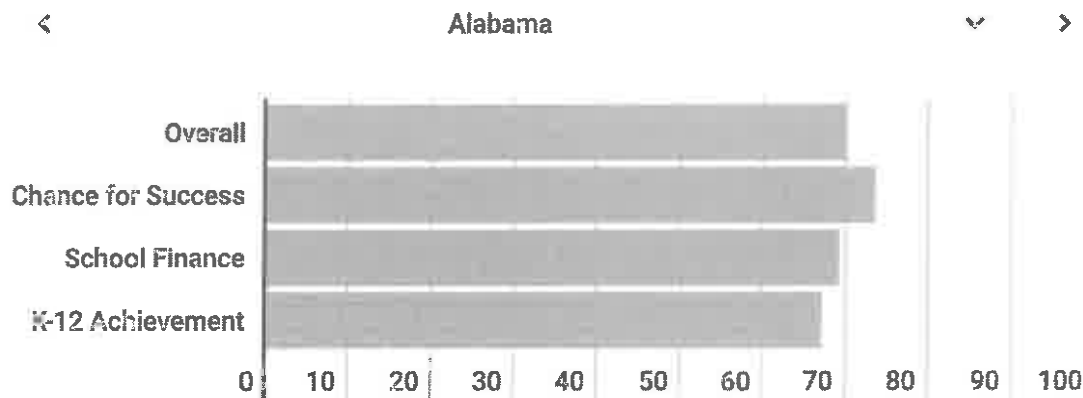
State Overview

This year, New Hampshire finishes fifth among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, with an overall score of 82.5 out of 100 points and a grade of B. The nation as a whole posts a grade of C.

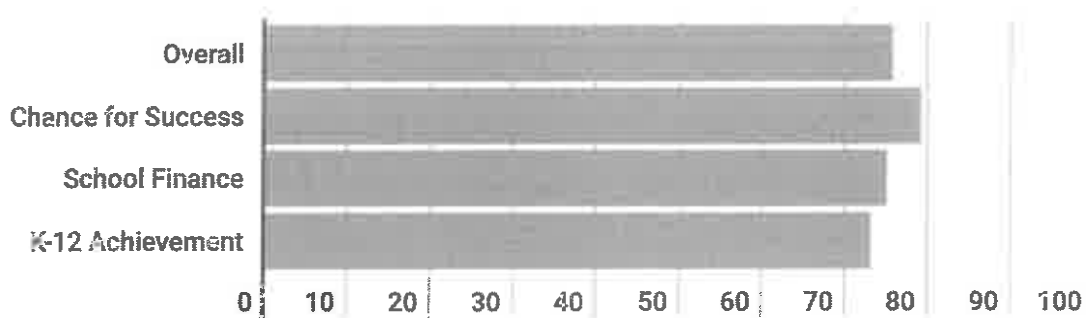
Diving into the findings for the three graded indices, New Hampshire earns a B-plus in the Chance-for-Success category and ranks third. The average state earns a C-plus. In School Finance, New Hampshire receives a B-minus and ranks 13th. For the K-12 Achievement Index, it finishes sixth with a grade of C-plus. The average state earns a grade of C in both School Finance and K-12 Achievement. More details on results in these categories are reported below.

Overall Scores by State

> Use the top bar to navigate to the states that interest you.



U.S. Score



SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

This highlights report features data in three categories: **Chance for Success**, **School Finance**, and **K-12 Achievement**.

Chance for Success: Gauging Educational Opportunities

The Education Week Research Center developed the Chance-for-Success Index to better understand the role that education plays in promoting positive outcomes across an individual's lifetime. Based on an original state-by-state analysis, this index combines information from 13 indicators that span a person's life from cradle to career. Those indicators fall into three sub-sections: early foundations, school years, and adult outcomes.

The index evaluates each state using a range of measuring sticks, including:

- How educated are parents?
- What share of 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool?
- Are K-12 students proficient in reading and math?
- What's the high school graduation rate?
- What percentage of adults have steady employment?

Diving into the findings, New Hampshire earns a B+ in the Chance-for-Success category and ranks third. The average state earns a C-plus.

Early Foundations: Are Kids Getting Off to a Good Start?

For early foundations, which examines factors that help children get off to a good start, New Hampshire earns an A and ranks second. The average state posts a B.

School Years: How Are Students Faring in School?

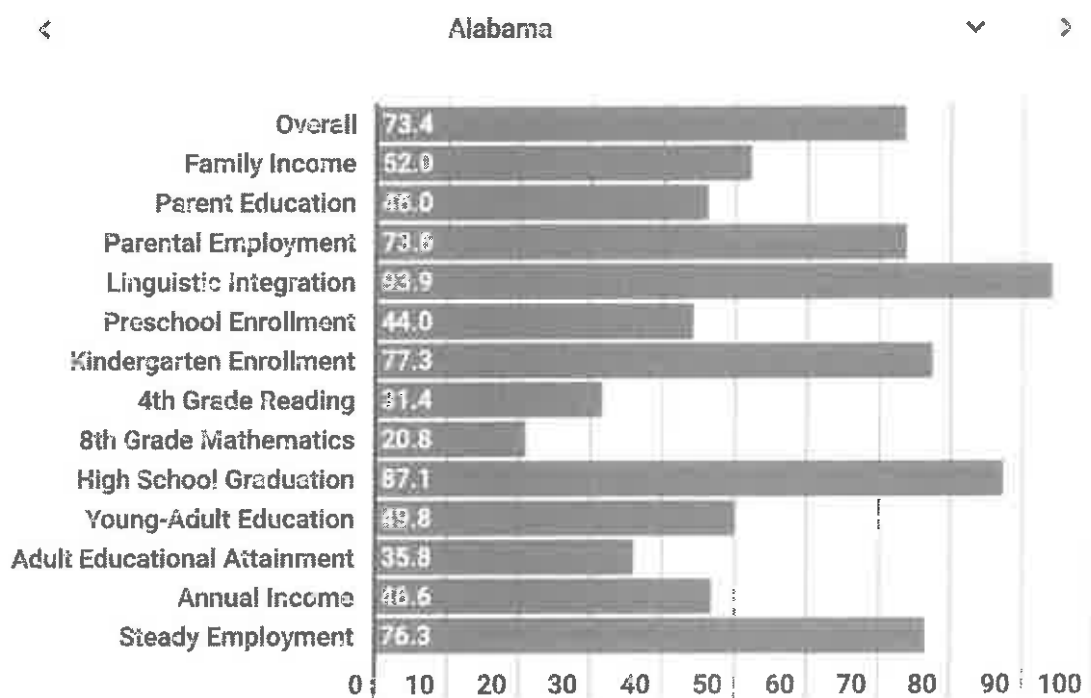
New Hampshire receives a B for the school years, a sub-category focusing on metrics related to pre-k enrollment through postsecondary participation. It finishes fourth in the nation in this area. By comparison, the nation as a whole earns a C-plus.

Adult Outcomes: Are Adults Finding Opportunities for Success?

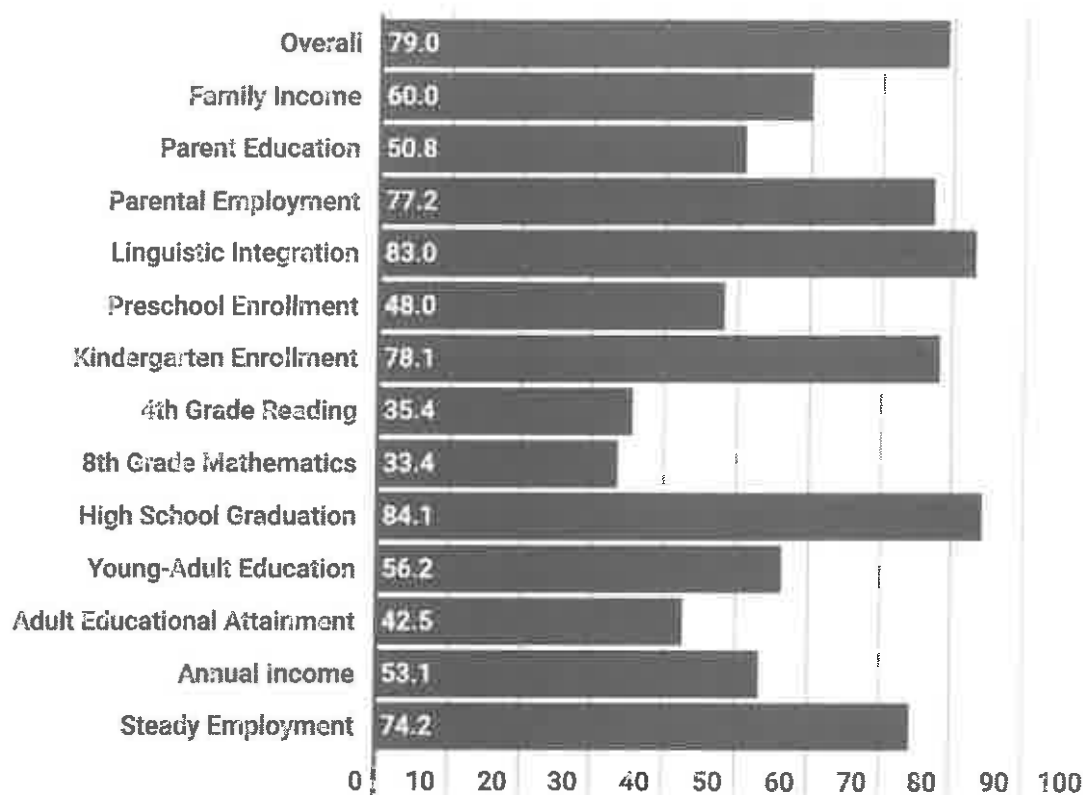
In the area of adult outcomes, based on postsecondary educational attainment and workforce indicators, New Hampshire's grade is a B. It ranks ninth in the nation. The national average is a C-plus.

Chance-for-Success Results by State

> The bar charts below provide results for each of the 13 indicators making up the Chance-for-Success Index. Use the top bar to navigate to the states that interest you.



U.S. Score



SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

EDUCATION WEEK

School Finance: Grading the States on Spending and Equity

This year, New Hampshire finishes 13th out of 49 states receiving overall school finance rankings, with an overall score of 81.3 out of 100 points and a grade of B-minus. The nation as a whole posts a grade of C. Because they are single-district jurisdictions, the District of Columbia and Hawaii do not receive overall rankings for school finance, which analyzes the distribution of funding across districts within a state.

The school finance analysis examines two critical aspects of school spending. Of the eight indicators in this category, four assess school spending patterns, while the remaining metrics gauge equity in the distribution of funding across the districts within each state.

Spending: How Much Are States Devoting to Education?

The spending metrics shed light on major questions, such as:

- What does the state spend per-pupil when adjusted for regional cost differences?
- What percent of students are in districts with per-pupil spending at or above the U.S. average?
- What share of total taxable resources are spent on education?

Across the spending indicators, New Hampshire finishes with a B-minus compared with a national average of D. New Hampshire ranks 14th in the nation in this area.

Equity: How Are Funds Distributed Across Districts?

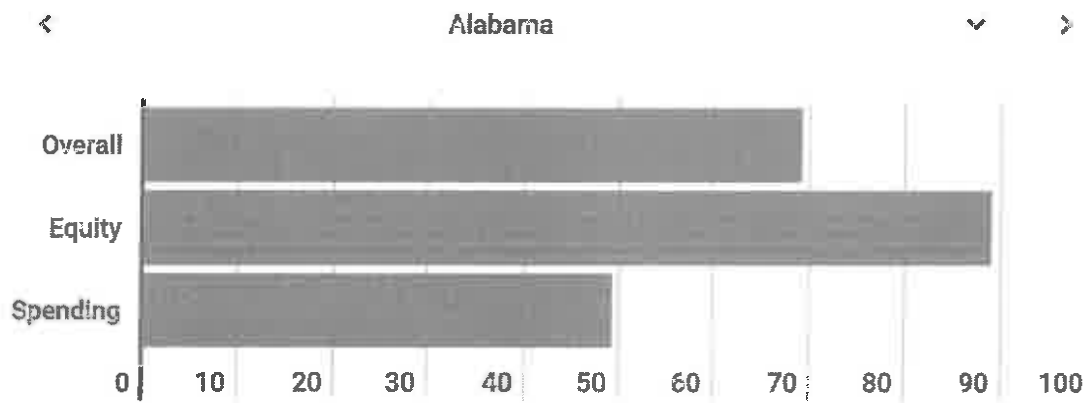
For each state, topics covered by the equity analysis include:

- To what degree does funding for property-poor districts differ from that of their wealthier counterparts?
- How different are the spending levels of the highest- and lowest-spending districts?

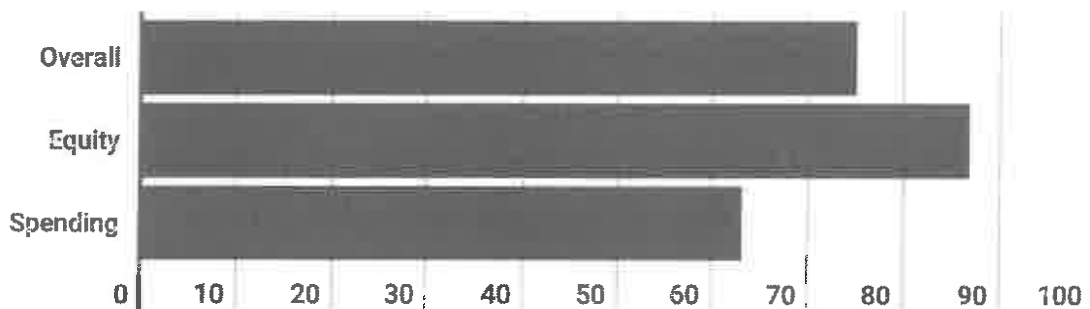
On the equity measures, New Hampshire receives a B-minus, which places it 47th in the national rankings. The nation as a whole earns a B-plus.

School Finance Scores by State

> Use the top bar to navigate to the states that interest you.



U.S. Score



SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

[View more 2019 reports on states and the nation >](#)

K-12 Achievement

The K-12 Achievement Index examines 18 distinct achievement measures related to reading and math performance, high school graduation rates, and the results of Advanced Placement exams. The index assigns equal weight to current levels of performance and changes over time. It also places an emphasis on equity, by examining both poverty-based achievement gaps and progress in closing those gaps.

Indicators in the index can be broken down into three sub-categories: status, change, and equity.

The index provides information on key questions, such as:

- What percentage of 4th and 8th graders are proficient in reading and math?
- How has student achievement changed over time?
- How large are achievement gaps between low-income students and their more affluent peers? Have those gaps narrowed over time?

Status: How Are Students Performing Today?

Measures in the status sub-category evaluate a state's current performance. New Hampshire receives a B-minus in this area and ranks fifth in the nation. The average state earns a D-plus.

Change: Has State Achievement Improved Over Time?

The change sub-category examines a state's improvement over time. In this area, New Hampshire posts a D-plus and ranks 23rd. The national average is a C-minus.

Equity: How Large Are Poverty-Based Achievement Gaps?

In the equity sub-section, states are graded based on achievement gaps between low-income students and their more affluent peers. New Hampshire's grade on those poverty-gap measures stands at a B-plus. Nationally, it ranks 13th in this area. The nation as a whole receives a B.

K-12 Scores by State

> Use the top bar to navigate to the states that interest you.

U.S. Score

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2019

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