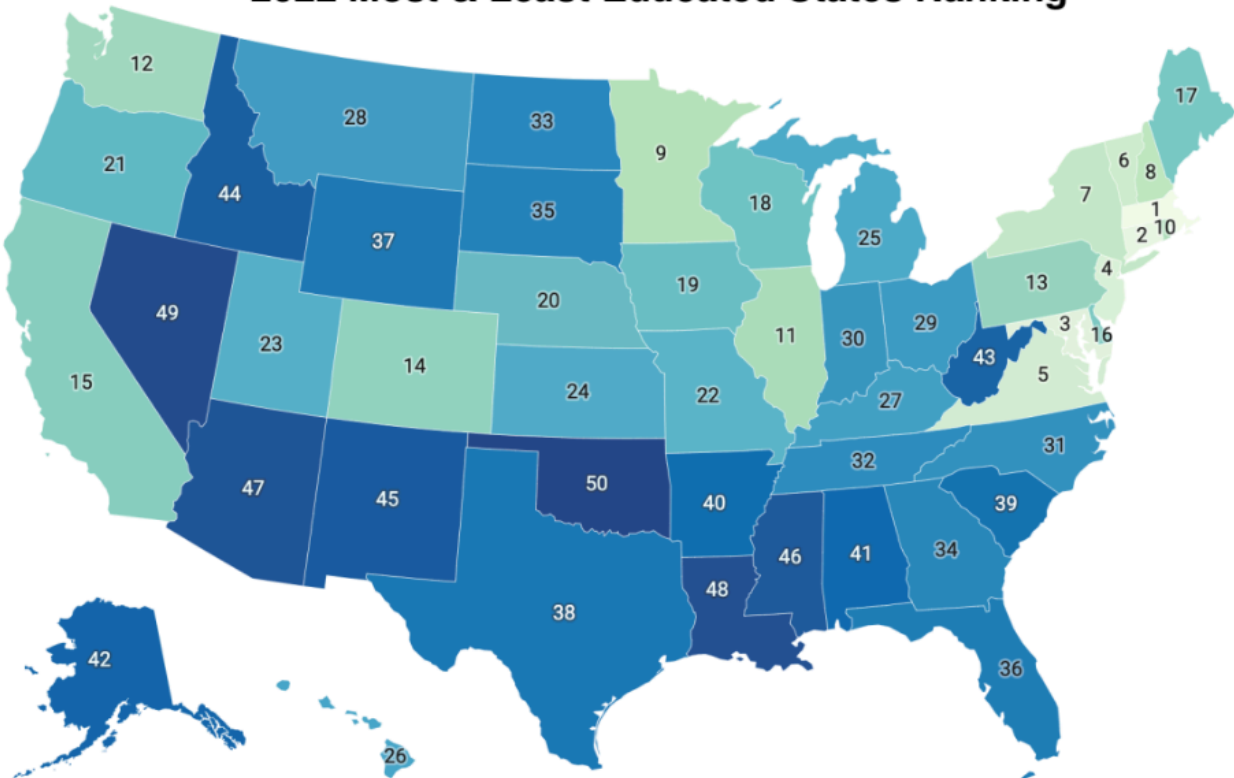


# Finding Hope in Nevada Schools

## 2022 Most & Least Educated States Ranking

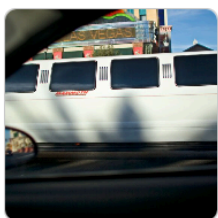


Courtesy: Scholaroo)

Growing up in Las Vegas as a product of the Clark County School District (CCSD), we were constantly reminded that our education system was at the bottom of the rankings. When I graduated in 2010, Nevada was ranked 50th out of 50 states for PreK-12 education, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. Now, as both an educator in CCSD and an aspiring data scientist, I can't help but wonder: is that still true today? If it is, what can we do to improve the data that demonstrates we're failing students?

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## How Does Nevada Rank Today?



## Nevada

#45 in Pre-K-12  
#33 in Best States Overall  
#37 in Education

Nevada is home to the infamous [Las Vegas](#) [READ MORE »](#)

#48	College Readiness	#43	High School Graduation Rate
#40	NAEP Math Scores	#28	NAEP Reading Scores
#45	Preschool Enrollment		

A quick search on *U.S. News & World Report* shows that over the past 15 years, Nevada has climbed five spots in educational rankings. While that's progress, the breakdown of the rankings caught my attention. *U.S. News* evaluates states based on five categories for PreK-12 education, and here's where Nevada stands:

- College Readiness: 48th
- High School Graduation: 43rd
- NAEP Math Scores: 40th
- NAEP Reading Scores: 28th
- Preschool Enrollment: 45th

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, is a standardized reading and math test given to a sample of 8th-grade students. For a state ranked 45th overall, I was genuinely surprised—and a little impressed—that we scored 28th in reading and 40th in math. It makes me wonder: what's working in those areas, and how can we apply it elsewhere?

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## The College Readiness Gap

College readiness paints a more sobering picture. This category measures the percentage of 12th graders scoring in the 75th percentile or above on the SAT, ACT, or both—tests designed to assess proficiency in math, reading, and writing. Nevada ranks 48th, or third to last.

This is puzzling when you consider our NAEP scores, which rank 28th in reading and 40th in math. Is there a disconnect between what these tests measure and how students are being prepared?

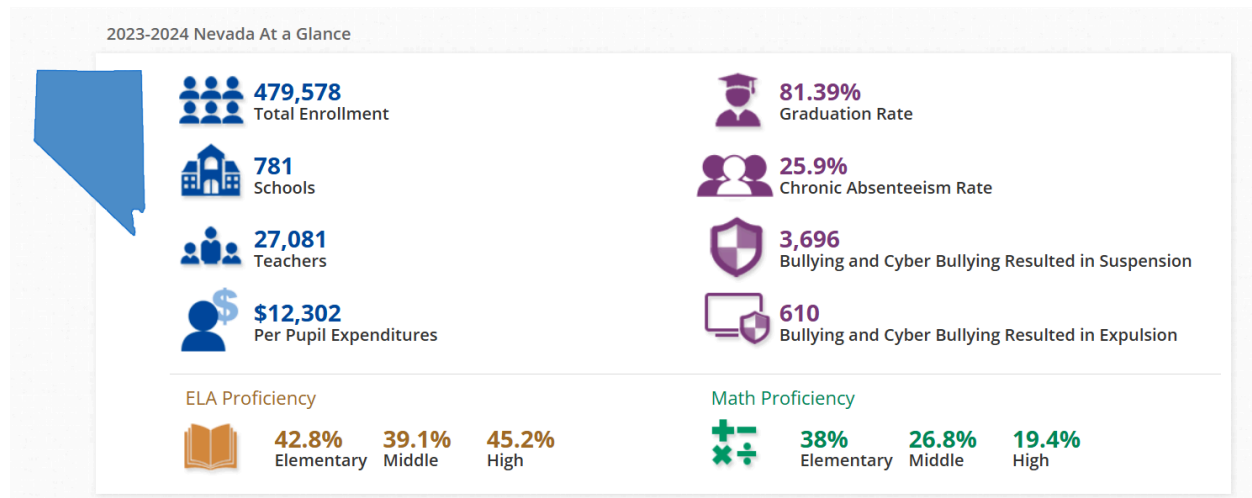
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## High School Graduation and Early Education

High school graduation rates are calculated by tracking how many students entering 9th grade graduate by the end of 12th grade. Nevada ranks 43rd, which reflects not only a lack of college readiness but also a systemic issue with students completing high school altogether.

Preschool enrollment, another key factor, measures the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in nursery or preschool programs. Nevada ranks 45th here, highlighting the state's challenges in providing access to early education—a critical foundation for future success.

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## A Closer Look at the Numbers


To dig deeper into these rankings, I turned to the Nevada Report Card, a website created to meet state and federal mandates for data tracking. Here's what I found:

- Graduation Rate: 81.39% (1 in 5 students don't graduate high school)
- State Assessment Proficiency:
  - ELA (English Language Arts): 42.4%
  - Math: 28.1%

This raises a critical question: how does Nevada stack up against neighboring states? Are we the only ones struggling with numbers this low, or is this part of a broader trend?

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## How Does Nevada Compare to Its Neighbors?

State Comparison Data 				
State	% Reading Proficiency	% Math Proficiency	% NAEP Reading	% NAEP Math
Nevada	42.4%	28.1%	28%	24.5%
Utah	44.3%	31.8%	36.5%	38.5%
California	47.04%	35.54%	30.5%	26.5%
Arizona	40%	32%	29.5%	28%
NV / UT	-1.9%	-3.7%	-8.5%	-14%
NV / CA	-4.64%	-7.44%	-2.5%	-2%
NV / AZ	2.4%	-3.9%	-1.5%	-3.5%

Looking at our closest neighbors, the numbers tell an interesting story:

- State Assessment Reading Proficiency:
  - 1.9% lower than Utah
  - 4.64% lower than California
  - 2.4% higher than Arizona (hey, I'll take any win we can get!)
- State Assessment Math Proficiency:
  - 3.7% lower than Utah
  - 7.44% lower than California
  - 3.9% lower than Arizona

When it comes to NAEP scores, the gaps widen:

- NAEP Reading Proficiency:
  - 8.5% lower than Utah
  - 2.5% lower than California
  - 1.5% lower than Arizona
- NAEP Math Proficiency:
  - 14% lower than Utah
  - 2% lower than California
  - 3.5% lower than Arizona

While we're not terribly far behind our peers (except for Utah in NAEP testing), even a few percentage points represent tens of thousands of students who aren't proficient but should be. That's a gap we can't afford to ignore.

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## Final Thoughts

This is part 1 of a series dedicated to diving deep into Nevada's educational data to uncover insights and identify ways our state can improve. We know that we can improve when it comes to each area: college readiness, high school graduation rate, NAEP scores, and Preschool attendance (I'll save this as the last one, as it will require massive funding increases and huge changes in our education system. I'll also need to look into what other states have done to increase their preschool attendance rate.) The goal is to highlight positive trends and shining examples of success within our schools. I'll also reach out to administrators and schools to learn more about what's working so that others can emulate these effective practices.

Nevada's educational challenges are undeniable, but they're not insurmountable. The data highlights both areas of concern and pockets of hope—like our stronger-than-expected NAEP reading and math scores. By digging deeper into what's working and addressing the systemic issues holding us back, we can begin to close the gaps and create a brighter future for our students.

If you're as passionate about education as I am, I encourage you to follow my page and join the conversation about how we can improve education.

Links to where I found each piece of information:

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/nevada>

<https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/nv/2024>

<https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data>

<https://reportcard.schools.utah.gov/State/OverallPerformance?StateID=99&SchoolLevel=HS&schoolyearendyear=2024>

<https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/DashViewReportSB?ps=true&lstTestYear=2024&lstTestType=B&lstGroup=1&lstSubGroup=1&lstSchoolType=A&lstGrade=13&lstCounty=00&lstDistrict=00000&lstSchool=0000000>