

Your Question:

You were interested in how states structure their state education systems. Specifically, you were interested in information about state education agencies, state boards of education, and consolidated governance structures.

Our Response:

State education governance structures, including the way state superintendents and members of state boards of education are selected, vary quite a bit among states. ECS has two resources that will provide you with a nice overview of the different ways states structure their education governance models.

- [K-12 Governance Structures, 50-state comparison](#), 2013 – this 50-state overview provides information about how each state’s K-12 education system is structured.
- [State Education Governance Models](#), 2013 – This is a more in-depth overview of states’ governance models.

ECS also continuously tracks state legislation on a variety of topics, including governance, through our state policy database. Our website provides summaries of enacted legislation.

- For our interactive map of enacted and vetoed state legislation from the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions, please [click here](#).
- For governance legislation prior to 2016, please [click here](#).

You may also be interested in the following resources from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE):

- [State Education Governance Matrix](#) (NASBE, January 2017) – Includes core information about state boards of education, including member and chair selection, terms, authority, and more.
- [State Education Governance Models: Comparative Chart](#) (NASBE, August 2015) – Defines four models of state education governance structures, as well as other models for states that do not fit those four categories.

CONSOLIDATED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The ECS brief, “[P-20 Governance](#)” (2011) identifies states that have consolidated K-12 (in some cases P-12) and postsecondary governance under a single board/state agency. Since 2011:

- **New Hampshire** eliminated the New Hampshire Postsecondary Education Commission. Postsecondary leadership is now under the [Division of Higher Education - Higher Education Commission](#), whose Division Director is housed in the New Hampshire Department of Education.

Governance Structures: Quick Reference Guide

The following resources provide detailed information on state K-12 governance structures:

- [ECS State Policy Database](#) (ECS, 2017) and [Governance Legislation](#) archives (ECS, 2015)
- [State Education Governance Matrix](#) (NASBE, January 2017)
- [State Education Governance Models: Comparative Chart](#) (NASBE, August 2015)
- [State Education Governance Models: Diagrams and Brief](#) (ECS, August 2013)
- [50-state comparison of K-12 governance structures](#) (ECS, August 2013)
- [P-20 Governance](#) (ECS, 2011)

- **Rhode Island** has consolidated its K-12 and higher education governing boards into the 17-member [Rhode Island Board of Education](#). However, the [Rhode Island Department of Education](#) and [Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner](#) remain separate agencies, each with its own director.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

Unfortunately, we are not aware of any resources providing a 50-state comparison of the organization and/or staffing of state education agencies (SEAs). We did, however, find information for each state on the number of employees working in the department of education and the distribution of education decision-making authority.

Organization and Staffing

Our research indicates that state education agencies vary in size and scope based on individual state preferences for local or state control over education policies. [SEA websites](#) usually include some information about the structure and staffing of the department, but may be incomplete. [State education governance models](#) – the relationship between governors, state boards, and SEAs – may help explain SEA structures. You may find it useful to consider the organization and staffing levels of SEAs in states with a governance model similar to that of Oregon.

The [State Government Employment for Selected Functions \(2014\)](#) chart from the Council of State Governments shows how many state employees worked in various departments or functions in 2014. It divides education into higher education and other education, but is not curriculum and instruction specific.

Authority

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute's [Schools of Thought: A Taxonomy of American Education Governance](#) examines if the state or local level has more authority in education decision-making. Unfortunately, there appears to be little or no correlation between the structure state departments of education and the level of authority bestowed to the state department of education within the state governance structure.

STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Selection of State Board Members

The [2017 State Education Governance Matrix](#) chart from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) demonstrates that states vary in how they select State Board of Education (SBE) members.

APPOINTED:

- The governor appoints the members of the state boards of education in 32 states (**Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming**).
- Four other states appoint their state board members, but not solely through the governor:
 - **Mississippi** – 5 appointed by governor and 4 appointed by legislature.
 - **New Hampshire** – appointed jointly by governor and executive council.
 - **New York** – appointed by legislature.

- **South Carolina** – appointed by legislature.
- It is important to note in states that appoint members, state legislatures frequently vote to confirm their membership.

ELECTED:

- Five states (**Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Texas, and Utah**) elect SBE members through partisan ballots.
- Two states (**Nebraska and District of Columbia**) elect their SBE members through a nonpartisan election.

MIXED:

- Five states have a mix of elected and appointed SBE members:
 - **Indiana** – 10 members appointed by governor, plus elected state superintendent.
 - **Louisiana** – 8 elected through nonpartisan ballot and 3 are appointed by the governor.
 - **Nevada** – 4 are elected and 7 are appointed.
 - **Ohio** – 11 are elected through nonpartisan ballot and 8 are appointed by the governor.
 - **Washington** – 5 are elected by local school boards, 7 are appointed by the governor, and private schools elect 1 member.

NO BOARD:

- Three states (**Minnesota, New Mexico, and Wisconsin**) do not have state boards.

Responsibilities of State Boards of Education

The scope of board authority varies by state. However, most state boards of education share the following common areas of [jurisdiction](#):

- Setting statewide curriculum standards.
- Establishing high school graduation requirements.
- Determining qualifications for professional education personnel.
- Establishing state accountability and assessment programs.
- Establishing standards for accreditation of local school districts and preparation programs for teachers and administrators.
- Implementing and administering federal laws and assistance programs.
- Developing rules and regulations for the administration of state programs.

The [NASBE Governance Matrix](#) demonstrates that despite these commonalities, jurisdiction is not uniform in all states. For instance, some states provide teacher licensure authority to a standards board or an independent board rather than the SBE. Additionally, the matrix shows that standards adoption authority may rest with the state education agency or chief state officer rather than the SBE. State law dictates the final scope of SBE authority.