Purpose
State educational policies and programs address the need for education of citizens. The founding fathers believed that U.S. democracy would not work without an educated citizenry. This concern filtered down to the states; virtually all state constitutions provide for education.

Programs
Elementary and Secondary Programs

State Authority
The state legislature enacts the basic laws governing the public school system.
States are essential middlemen between federal aid and the schools.
The states’ responsibilities, which have increased greatly in recent years, are enumerated here.
1. Regulate taxes that school districts may levy and the amount they may borrow
2. Stipulate the number of days school will be in session
3. Screen the quality of educational materials
4. Mandate the types of courses to be offered and curriculum covered, with number of years and course credits required for graduation
5. Establish qualifications and certification requirements for teachers

Local Management
1. Local government has the primary responsibility for operations.
2. The chief governing body of the public school is the elected school board.
3. Local property taxes provide the bulk of the revenue for funding public schools.
4. The value of taxable property can lead to great disparity in the funds available to school districts. State governments have begun to address this problem.

Higher Education Programs
1. Every state has its own higher education system.
2. States usually authorize governing boards, either appointed or elected.
3. The state provides large appropriations to finance operating costs.
4. Most state systems charge residents much lower tuition fees.
5. Non-resident fees are usually much lower than those of private institutions.

Highlights in the Development of State Education Programs

1785 Georgia founds University of Georgia, the first state-funded institution of higher education.
1852 Massachusetts takes the lead in implementing compulsory education laws.
1862 The Morrill Act establishes land-grant colleges in every state; it gives land and money to state colleges specializing in agriculture and the mechanic arts.
1918 Mississippi is last state to make elementary education compulsory.