

# EDUCATION NEWS & NOTES

## K-12 Education Savings Accounts And How They're Changing Kids' Lives

(NAPSA)—If you're like many American parents, you may not be aware of a way to give your children a better education at little or no cost to you.

### How It Works

A program known as education savings accounts (ESAs) lets parents withdraw their children from a public district or charter school that's not working for them and get a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted but multiple uses. Those funds—often distributed via debit card—can cover private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses and other approved customized learning services and materials. Some ESAs can even be used to pay for a combination of public school courses and private services.

### One Girl's Story

Consider the case of Valerie McMurray from Arizona. Her birth mother was a heroin addict and an alcoholic all throughout her pregnancy, and because of that, she was born prematurely and with cerebral palsy—a muscle disorder caused by damage to the brain, normally before birth. McMurray was adopted and struggled to learn to walk and talk.

Growing up, she said school was never something that came easy for her, whether in public or private schools. She was not getting the one-on-one care she needed as a student.

Finally, her adoptive mother was approached about the ESA program in her state, through which she would get government grants to learn at home.

McMurray discovered she did best at visual learning. She said she enjoys learning now, at her own speed—it



### Valerie McMurray uses education savings accounts to customize her education in Arizona.

doesn't scare her anymore. "I like having one-on-one attention from my tutors," McMurray said. "I ask questions without the fear of being made fun of or feeling embarrassed. My tutors teach me at my own speed." She also said she is happy she no longer has to sit still in one spot for hours at a time. She enjoys being able to go on field trips whenever her parents and tutor think it's best for her lesson plan.

Another thing McMurray loves about learning at home is that she doesn't have to deal with bullies anymore. "In public school, kids can be really mean," McMurray said. "At home, I am surrounded by people who are kind, understanding and actually care about my well-being. They don't make me feel uncomfortable about the way I walk or speak."

McMurray said the ESA program helped her self-esteem, not only through learning, but in the real world. She now has so much confidence in areas where she used to be confused.

### Learn More

For more information about ESAs and to find out if your state offers families educational choice options, visit [www.edchoice.org](http://www.edchoice.org).