

# Education News



## The ABCs Of ESAs: What Parents Need To Know

(NAPSA)—Improved student achievement and higher graduation rates are not as hard to achieve as one might think. They could become a reality with one simple policy: educational choice.

Robust parental choice in education is an idea that has taken root in more communities in the U.S. than ever before, and education savings accounts (ESAs) are the best mechanism to date for funding customized learning for students.

These accounts allow families to completely tailor their children's educational experience by funding students instead of physical school buildings and letting that funding follow children to any education provider of choice. This gives parents access to options that meet their children's unique learning needs.

For example, in Arizona, parents can withdraw their children from public or charter schools and 90 percent of the funds the state would have spent on them is deposited into an ESA (known in Arizona as an Empowerment Scholarship Account). Parents can then use these funds for such education-related expenses as:

- private school tuition and fees;
- education therapy services;
- textbooks and tutoring;
- online learning courses;
- Advanced Placement (AP) exams, achievement tests and college admission exams;
- contributions to a 529 college savings plan;
- college tuition and textbooks;
- individual public school classes and programs.

The funding can go to several education providers at once, an option that could become increasingly important as online learning proliferates.

This level of customization helps bring American education into the 21st century and can ensure that no



**The more choice parents have when it comes to their children's education, the happier they are and the better their kids learn.**

child is relegated to the limited effectiveness of a monopolistic system.

Parents can also “roll over” unused funds from year to year. ESAs are the only educational choice policy to date that affords consideration of “opportunity costs,” which encourage families to pursue the best education for the best value to maximize their ESA dollars.

A recent study by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice—a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization—discovered that when parents are able to choose where their children go to school, they're happier with the entire experience. School choice also leads to increased academic achievement, graduation rates and student safety.

In addition, the foundation says, educational choice options put competitive pressure on public school systems to improve and to meet the needs of students or risk losing pupils—and money.

### Learn More

Only five states currently have ESA programs. For a list of resources and more information about educational choice, visit [www.edchoice.org/parents-and-educators](http://www.edchoice.org/parents-and-educators).