

# Education News



## Understanding Your Choices

(NAPSA)—For many families, few things are more important than schooling—and an increasing number are taking it into their own hands.

They're welcoming the idea of more ways for children to be educated than simply by going to the district school. In schools, online, at home, with a tutor or through a combination, families use school choice options to meet each child's particular educational needs.

Families that can afford it may move to a desired school district. But there are many more ways to choose the best educational setting for your kids.

Here's a look at a few of the more popular:

**1. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)** let parents withdraw their children from public schools and get public funds paid into government-authorized savings accounts—often via secure debit card—to cover private school tuition, online learning, private tutoring, higher education expenses, and other approved services and materials.

**2. School Vouchers** let parents choose a private school using all or part of the public money set aside for their children's education. Funds typically expended by a school district are allocated to the family instead in the form of a voucher for tuition at private schools, including religious and nonreligious options.

**3. Magnet schools** are public schools offering specialized curricula and programs. They're designed to attract students with a common interest or skill set, and students must apply and be accepted.

**4. Charter schools** are independently run public schools exempt from many rules and regulations in exchange for increased accountability. Typically, if charters get more applications than they have open seats, they accept students based on a lottery. Families don't need to use ESAs, vouchers or tax-credit scholarships for charter schools because they're publicly funded. Charter schools put families in charge of choosing their child's education, principals in charge of running their schools, and teachers in charge of leading their classrooms. They also tend to have high standards for every student and give them the support they need to meet those standards.

According to a Columbia University study, charter schools provide:



**School choice lets parents pick the kind of education, such as charter schools, they want their kids to have.**

- **Increased Innovation.** Charter schools have the independence to try new forms of teaching and experiment with the best way to reach their students.
- **Increased Efficiency.** Charter schools avoid myriad challenging government regulations.
- **Greater Accountability.** Charter schools must attract students to succeed, or their charter can be taken away.
- **Increased Competition.** Like other choice schools, charter schools must compete for families as customers. This is an ultimate form of accountability.
- **Private Resources.** Many charter schools have attracted considerable philanthropic gifts to support more robust programs.

**5. Other types of school choice** include homeschooling, online learning, and tax-credit scholarships that let taxpayers—individuals or businesses—get full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships. In addition, individual tax credits and deductions let parents get state income tax relief for approved educational expenses, such as tuition, books, supplies, computers, tutors and transportation.

### Learn More

You can get further information about school choice and what it can mean for your kids from the experts at EdChoice, an organization that advocates for the best education possible for students and for parents to have control over their children's education as a pathway to successful lives and a stronger society.

A national leader in school choice research, its premise is: The more people know about and understand educational choice, the more they can help advance the movement. You can find it at [www.edchoice.org](http://www.edchoice.org).