



How to Talk About:
EDUCATION FREEDOM

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Five Key Points About Education Freedom

1

Education freedom funds students, not systems. Unfortunately, school districts and unions hold all of the power in areas without education freedom, as the COVID pandemic made abundantly clear.

2

Education freedom holds schools accountable by giving parents leverage. Parents deserve more control over their children's education. Education freedom policies send a wake up call to school districts: serve students well, or the students *will* leave.

3

Education freedom creates opportunity. Residency-based assignments to government schools restrict opportunity to a zip code. Those who are underserved by the education monopoly stand to gain the most from choice, but educational freedom can benefit all children.

4

Education freedom cultivates innovation and entrepreneurship. In a large and diverse republic like the United States, no one education system can fairly serve all students well. Education freedom offers innovative, individual solutions.

5

Education freedom improves communities. From improved academic achievement to higher levels of civic altruism and tolerance for those different than oneself, and even lower crime rates among students later in life, school choice is changing lives and communities.

INNOVATION, OPTIONS, AND NEW IDEAS

- When we empower families with educational options, we best serve the unique talents, strengths, and interests of children. When students thrive in the educational system **that best fits them, they go on to do amazing things.**
- A solid K-12 education is the foundation for future success. More educational options mean new ideas, inventions, and **better outcomes for the next generation.**

STUDENT HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

- School choice benefits students who struggle in schools academically and socially by allowing them to **have mobility and freedom in finding the right fit for them.**
- Education freedom **empowers students** with the opportunity to switch schools for a better education, specialized programs, or safer social environments.
- Studies show that **safety** is a top concern for parents when considering schooling options for their children. Parents want safe school environments, and **education freedom allows them to escape violence and bullying.**

OPPORTUNITY AND FREEDOM

- Policies that allow for education freedom provide a **wide range of options** to parents and students.
- More than **three-quarters (76%) of parents surveyed in August 2022 support the creation of K-12 “education savings accounts” (ESAs)**, which provide parents with government-authorized savings accounts for educational purposes. Clearly, the **demand for school choice is growing**, and school choice programs should be created and expanded to **meet the needs of parents and students.**

FAMILY VALUES

- When funding follows students, parents can select education providers that **align with their family's values.**
- Two-thirds of private schools in the United States are **religiously affiliated**, and many faith-based private schools participate in school choice programs.

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IMPROVEMENT INCENTIVES

- Education freedom **introduces competition** in the marketplace of schooling, which **incentivizes public schools to improve.**
- Without competition, the public school system can be comfortable remaining as they are, rather than seeking out ways to **attract and retain students and families.**

Misperceptions v. Facts

MISPERCEPTION #1: School choice programs aren't accountable to taxpayers and participating families.

FACTS:

- All state school choice laws require some level of **administrative and financial accountability** from participating schools and scholarship funding organizations, and most programs include academic accountability requirements as well.
 - In many states, students enrolled in school choice voucher and tax credit scholarship programs participate in annual math and language arts testing, by taking either the state assessments or nationally norm-referenced tests that measure learning gains.
 - Private schools in every state must comply with health and safety regulations.
 - In addition, families *choose* to participate in private school choice programs and **can leave the program or the school their child attends if their needs are not being met**, ensuring the programs are directly accountable to the participating families.
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MISPERCEPTION #2: School choice programs drain money from public education.

FACTS:

- Private school choice programs **provide public funding to educate a child**, and therefore are an important component of “public education.” These programs save state and local governments and taxpayers millions of dollars annually.
- When a student attends a private school using a state-funded scholarship or education savings account (ESA), the government typically no longer pays the child's government-assigned school to educate that student. The cost to educate a child in a traditional public school almost always exceeds the public funding provided for each child's school choice scholarship.
- In fact, an **analysis** of 40 educational choice programs serving students in FY 2018 found that the **school choice programs cost an average of \$5,000 per**

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student, compared to the \$14,000 average per-student expenditure for students attending public K-12 schools.

- Funding for the traditional public school system has skyrocketed on an inflation-adjusted basis in the 30 years since the first school choice program was created.
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MISPERCEPTION #3: School choice does not benefit students with special needs.

FACTS:

- Twenty-three scholarship programs in 14 states exist specifically to serve students with disabilities. Students receiving the scholarships use them to attend private elementary and secondary schools that provide the academic instruction and support services they need.
 - **In the 2020-21 school year, over 80,000 students benefited from private choice programs for children with disabilities.**
 - Families in ten states can use K-12 education savings accounts (ESAs) for a variety of education purposes, including tuition, therapies, and curriculum. Indiana's program, for example, provides ESAs to parents of students with Individualized Education Plans accounts. The accounts are worth 90% of what the state would have spent on a particular child at a public school and the child's additional special needs funding. **ESAs allow education dollars to fund children rather than bureaucratic systems, and represent the next wave of school choice.** The flexible accounts can be particularly helpful for students with disabilities who require customized learning opportunities.
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MISPERCEPTION #4: School choice does not help the students left behind in the public schools.

FACTS:

- The evidence shows that **academic results in nearby public schools improved as a result of students having a choice option.** In fact, **31 of 33 empirical studies** evaluating the impact of school choice programs on public school academic performance have

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found a positive influence. Traditional public schools are inspired to serve students better in response to competition. Families empowered with alternatives to the traditional public school can leave if the system fails to serve them well.

- School choice benefits both the students who use the programs and those who choose to remain in their traditional public schools.
 - **Another important result of competition between schools for students and education dollars is leverage for parents.** For example, private schools mostly remained open throughout the COVID era, while traditional public schools in many areas remained closed for far too long. **The private school knew parents would leave their school if they did not educate students. Leverage works.**
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MISPERCEPTION #5: School choice students may be less tolerant of a variety of different viewpoints or identities as a result of attending private school.

FACTS:

- Studies have shown that **participation in school choice programs improves civic tolerance and positively affects students' character.**
 - Students who have benefited from school choice are more likely to volunteer, vote, and participate in other civic activities.
 - In addition, **school choice gives parents more control to push back against divisive lessons or curricula.**
-

MISPERCEPTION #6: There are no improvements to the life outcomes for students who use a school choice scholarship.

FACTS:

- A **study** of students who had used Milwaukee's voucher program found that they were 79% less likely to have been convicted of a felony as young adults, compared with a public school student matched on socioeconomic indicators, incoming test scores, and residential neighborhood. Similar massive drops in conviction rates were found for drug and theft convictions, 93% and 87%, respectively.

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- These numbers represent fewer lives—both victims and perpetrators—torn apart by the effects of crime, and show that one of the best ways to reduce crime is to offer opportunities through school choice.
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MISPERCEPTION #7: School choice programs must be highly regulated in order to be held accountable.

FACTS:

- Policymakers often want to attach government regulations to school choice programs and options to ensure that students are learning. But this well-meaning impulse is misguided, and often ends up limiting choices, homogenizing schools, and generally making the same mistakes that plague the current public school system.
 - Two program evaluations showing negative academic results from state-funded school choice programs come from the Louisiana voucher program, which is so heavily regulated that only a fraction of the private schools in the state choose to accept voucher students.
 - **Overall, parents know, better than policymakers or regulators, what is and isn't working for their children.** While it's absolutely important to make sure education providers are accountable for taxpayer dollars, regulations that second-guess parent decision-making often end up backfiring.
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MISPERCEPTION #8: Education freedom aims to further enrich already-wealthy people, and does not help low-income families.

FACTS:

- **Education freedom primarily helps students from low- and middle-income backgrounds who could not otherwise afford to escape their government-assigned school.**
- Most state school choice programs have income eligibility caps and prioritize lower-income families who have been trapped in their government-assigned schools.

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- Higher-income families have already been able to choose the best education option for their child, either by moving to a neighborhood with “good” public schools or paying directly for a private school.
- School choice programs seek to empower parents and are crafted for the benefit of parents and students, not the education provider. Funding is provided through ESAs, vouchers, or scholarship tax credit programs that parents can access to choose an option for their child.

MISPERCEPTION #9: Education freedom doesn’t benefit students in rural areas, because, unlike big cities, there aren’t a lot of schools from which to choose.

FACTS:

- The supply of education providers is not fixed at a set number and type of education options. **By allowing education funding to follow the child, the supply of options available can increase.**
- With education savings accounts, parents are not limited to using the funding at a brick-and-mortar private school. **Families can direct their children’s education dollars to the education providers that meet their needs. That could be a private school, microschool, tutoring, online education provider, instructional materials, home-based curriculum, etc.**
- With public school teachers leaving the profession in response to their concerns about schools’ lack of discipline, low-quality curriculum, and woke culture concerns, there is a growing supply of educators available to launch and staff new private schools, microschools, and learning pods.
- Churches, for example, can easily launch a new school, especially ones that serve only a limited number of grades initially, by using available Sunday school classrooms.

QUESTION #1: What policies advance educational freedom?

ANSWER: Education freedom policies allow education funding to follow students to the option that best meets their needs. Most of these policies are implemented at the state level, and they include a wide array of school choice policies that increase parents' leverage—including scholarships, charter schools, homeschooling, microschools, and education savings accounts.

QUESTION #2: Do school choice advocates oppose public schools?

ANSWER: No. Traditional public schools can be a great fit for many students, especially in communities where schools are prioritizing academic instruction rather than divisive ideology. Education, however, is not one-size-fits-all. Many students could greatly benefit from the opportunity to attend a school other than the one assigned to them by the government. **Education freedom is about giving families more choices, not restricting them to a single option.**

QUESTION #3: How can we improve public schools?

ANSWER: Education freedom introduces competition into the marketplace of schooling options. **School choice is actually a tool to improve public schools because it puts pressure on schools to compete with one another to attract and retain students.** Studies have shown that public schools **improve** in areas where school choice programs have been introduced.

QUESTION #4: Will school choice impact funding for public education?

ANSWER: When a student chooses not to attend their assigned public school, public school enrollment declines. This isn't "defunding public education;" it is a natural consequence of the K-12 public school system not meeting the needs of all children. Also, public funding for K-12 education provides for the education of school-

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age children, and, therefore, school choice programs are an important component of “public education.”

State-funded school choice programs actually save state and local governments and taxpayers millions of dollars annually because the government typically no longer pays the participating child’s government-assigned school to educate that student and instead provides a lower amount of public funding for each child’s school choice scholarship or ESA.

QUESTION #5: How are school choice programs accountable?

ANSWER: Most importantly, **school choice programs are directly accountable to the parents who have chosen to send their children to them.** In the education freedom movement, parents are empowered to choose where they want their children to attend school. Schools must perform in accordance with what parents want, or else risk losing students.

QUESTION #6: Does my state offer school choice programs?

ANSWER: Most states offer a variety of school choice programs, including public charter and magnet schools and state-funded scholarship and education savings account programs. Use this [resource](#) to see what is available for your family.

QUESTION #7: How does school choice empower low-income families?

ANSWER: Since public schools are assigned based on geographic location, many families, due to financial constraints, have no choice but to attend their government-assigned schools. **School choice programs that fund students directly make it possible for families to send their children to a different school or education option based on their needs and values.**

State-funded scholarships or education savings accounts allow students to attend alternative schools using the funding allocated by the government.

Education Freedom in 60 Seconds

WHAT IS EDUCATION FREEDOM?

Education freedom funds students, not systems. Unfortunately, school districts and unions hold all of the power in areas without education freedom, as the COVID pandemic made abundantly clear.

Education freedom holds schools accountable by giving parents leverage. Parents deserve power over their children's education. Education freedom policies send a wake-up call to school districts: serve students well, or the students will leave.

Education freedom creates opportunity. Residency-based assignments to government schools restrict opportunity to a zip code. Those who are underserved by the education monopoly stand to gain the most from choice, but educational freedom can benefit all children.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Student Health and Happiness: School choice benefits students who struggle in schools academically and socially by allowing them to have mobility and freedom in finding the right fit for them.

Education freedom empowers students with the opportunity to switch schools for a better education, specialized programs, or safer environments.

Opportunity and Freedom: **More than three-quarters** (76%) of parents surveyed in August 2022 support the creation of K-12 "education savings accounts" (ESAs), which provide parents with government-authorized savings accounts for educational purposes.

Family Values: When funding follows students, parents can select education providers that align with their family's values.

Improvement of Incentives: Education freedom introduces competition in the marketplace of schooling, which incentivizes public schools to improve.

Without competition, public schools can be comfortable remaining as they are, rather than seeking out ways to attract and retain students and families.

Ideas for Action

1. Connect with other parents advocating for school choice.
 - [A Family's Guide to Grassroots Activism](#)
2. Connect with other parents concerned about their community's public schools. Expose problems in your public schools.
 - [Parents Defending Education: Indoctrination Map](#)
 - [Christopher Rufo](#)
3. Join a community.
 - [Independent Women's Network](#)
 - [Moms for Liberty](#)
 - [Building Education For Students Together](#)
4. Learn about state school choice programs and legislative initiatives.
 - [School Choice by State](#)
 - [School Choice in America](#)
 - [Active School Choice Legislation Map](#)
5. Research home education options in your community.
 - [HSLDA: Homeschool Laws by State](#)
 - [HSLDA: Homeschool Communities by Zip Code](#)
6. Attend local school board meetings and speak to elected officials.
 - [How To Engage with Legislators and Public Officials](#)
7. Propose creating new educational options.
 - [Microschools](#)
 - [Classical Education](#)
 - [The 2021 Curious Parent's Guide to Education Options](#)
8. Publicize your support for education freedom/write letters to the editor and op-eds.
 - [How to Write an Op-Ed](#)
 - [How to Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

Additional Reading

IWF Policy Focus: Parents Taking Control of Children's Education

By Ginny Gentles

IWF Policy Focus: What is School Choice?

By Inez Stepman

IWF Policy Focus: The Impact of COVID on the Education System

By Inez Stepman

IWF Policy Focus: Charter Schools

By Inez Stepman

The Parent Movement Needs School Choice

By Ginny Gentles

Choosing Something Better *(for children with special needs)*

By Ginny Gentles

School Choice Myths: Setting the Record Straight on Education Freedom

By Corey DeAngelis and Neal McCluskey

Glossary of Terms

Charter Schools are independently-operated public schools that have some flexibility around hiring, curriculum, and school structure. Charters operate under the oversight of a local or state charter school authorizer.

Course Choice, or course access, allows K-12 students to use state funds to enroll in individual courses offered by public and private providers.

Education Freedom empowers parents to take their children's taxpayer-funded education dollars to the education providers of their choosing—whether it be public, private, charter, or homeschool.

Education Savings Accounts programs (ESAs) give parents the power to use their child's state education dollars on approved education expenses including tuition and fees, textbooks, and tutoring. Families receive funds in an account and are able to customize education to their child's specific needs.

Homeschooling is parent-directed education that is customized to meet the child's and the family's needs. Homeschooling is primarily home-based, but the homeschooling movement offers an array of options and arrangements.

Hybrid Homeschooling provides a combination of at-home learning and formal classroom instruction.

Magnet Schools are public schools that offer specialized programs or instruction. Some magnet programs have competitive entrance requirements and others are designed to diversify the student population.

Microschools are very small, privately operated institutions that often offer students a highly personalized and often project-based education.

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Private Schools are managed by private or faith-based organizations and almost always charge tuition or offer scholarships to attend.

Scholarship Tax Credit Scholarships give families greater access to private schools by providing scholarships. The state creates tax credit incentives for businesses and individuals to donate to nonprofit organizations that provide scholarships to students. Currently 18 states have a scholarship tax credit program.

School Choice is the process that allows families to choose the K-12 educational options that best fit their children.

Virtual Schools, or online education, allow students to take one or all school courses online, allowing for more flexibility.

Voucher Programs allow education dollars to “follow the child,” giving parents the opportunity to choose a private school for their child and receive a state-funded scholarship to pay tuition. Thirteen states in addition to Washington, D.C. have a school voucher program.

Social Media Kit

Post the below messages, videos, and graphics to social media and make your voice heard.

Tag us so we can RT/Share your post:

- [@IWV](#) (Twitter)
- [@IndependentWomensVoice](#) (Facebook)
- [@IndependentWomensVoice](#) (Instagram)

Hashtags to include:

#schoolchoice #fundstudentsnotschools #edchoice #educationfreedom #edfreedom

VIDEOS:



**Empowering Parents by
Expanding Educational Opportunity**



**Corey DeAngelis on Empowering
Parents Through Education Freedom**



**The Past and Present of the
Education Freedom Movement**



**The Future of the
Education Freedom Movement**

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VISUALS: Include these and other visuals with any Twitter, Facebook or Instagram posts.

Download



"Every parent, regardless of income or zip code, needs to have options when it comes to the education of their children. The local school may serve them well and be a great fit; but if that's not the case, all parents deserve the self-determination that comes with having options. That is educational freedom."

Erika Sanzi
Director of Outreach
Parents Defending Education

Independent Women's Forum® iwf.org



"As a parent and a long-time school choice advocate, I strongly believe that education funding should follow students to the education option that best meets their needs."

Ginny Gentles
Director, Education Freedom Center

Independent Women's Forum® iwf.org



"Public schools desperately need competition and students need schools that will put their needs first. We need schools that know we have the option to take our dollars elsewhere if a school isn't meeting the needs of our children. It's time to put parents and students back in the driver's seat."

Jenny George
Education Freedom Ambassador

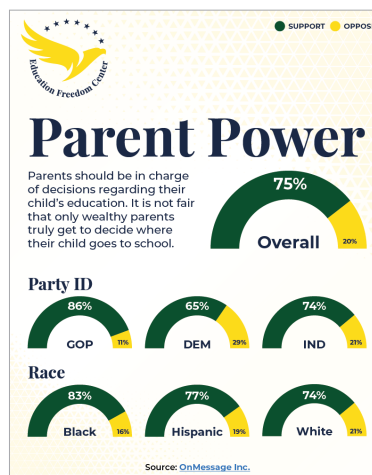
Education Freedom Center



"Education is not a one-size-fits all issue, and children's needs vary greatly, even within families. Every parent - no matter the letter next to their name - wants their child to thrive, and we want to make informed choices so that we can select the best solution for our loved ones."

Nicole Neilly
President and Founder
Parents Defending Education

Independent Women's Forum® iwf.org




"Parents are battling a rising tide of rhetoric that our Constitution is invalid, should be ignored, or is inherently biased and irreparably flawed together with public educators who gloss over the tenets of freedom, fairness, and rule of law for all. You, as a parent, know this is wrong."

Xanthe Larsen
Education Freedom Ambassador

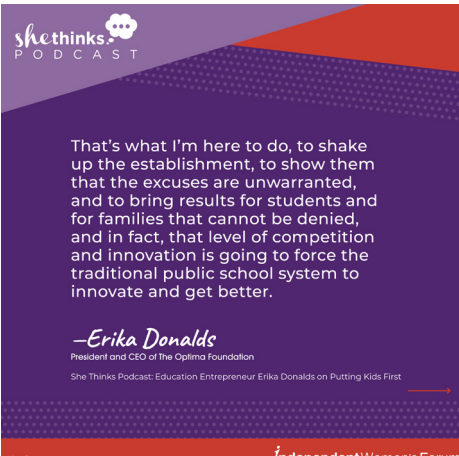
Education Freedom Center



Xi Van Fleet
IWF Education Freedom Ambassador

"The Left has no idea that they have awakened a sleeping giant, an army of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and concerned citizens. We are the warriors who will fight like hell to take back our schools and make school choice available for every parent."

Independent Women's Forum® iwf.org



she thinks. PODCAST

That's what I'm here to do, to shake up the establishment, to show them that the excuses are unwarranted, and to bring results for students and for families that cannot be denied, and in fact, that level of competition and innovation is going to force the traditional public school system to innovate and get better.

-Erika Donalds
President and CEO of The Optima Foundation
She Thinks Podcast: Education Entrepreneur Erika Donalds on Putting Kids First

iwf.org Independent Women's Forum®



"The takeover of many public schools by left-wing interests demonstrates more than ever the importance of school choice. If you don't insulate your child against woke indoctrination, public school will insulate them against your values instead."

Nicole Solas
Education Freedom Center Fellow

Independent Women's Forum® iwf.org