



Rural School Choice Delivers Student & Community Opportunities

Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

Why should school choice be available to students in rural areas?

Every student has their own unique learning needs. A student's local district may not have all of the services students are looking for to meet these needs. Rural schools don't always have the scale to offer a wide breadth of learning options. Additional opportunities beyond the district can help rural families meet the needs of their children and strengthen the local community.

Do rural students want school choice?

Many rural students participate in school choice programs: Over 250,000 nationwide are [enrolled](#) in brick-and-mortar charter schools, and rural students are [more likely](#) than their suburban or urban counterparts to attend cyber charter schools. [Thousands](#) more students applied for rural Iowa's new ESA, covering all but two of the state's 99 counties.



Spotlight on Florida

One-sixth of Florida's rural students [chose](#) a charter school, private school, or homeschooling in 2021, a significant increase over the past decade. Rural families are [more likely](#) to use their ESA funds to customize learning for their children.

How does school choice work in rural areas?

Many rural areas already support both a traditional school district, along with a charter or private school. Rural regions host over 700 brick-and-mortar charter [schools](#), a popular form of public school choice. One-fifth of the nation's [private](#) schools are located in rural areas, with nearly 70% of rural families living within [10 miles](#). State-funded private options can give students access to more alternatives.

What about ESAs for rural students?

ESAs enable students to access curriculum and instructional materials, including online [AP courses](#), or other educational services and therapies which may not be available in local schools. ESAs also provide the opportunity for families to invest in a community's [educators](#) and local providers, boosting a town's economy.

How can school choice strengthen rural education?

Since the introduction of choice programs, Arizona's rural public school districts have seen an increase in NAEP [scores](#), while no districts have closed as a result. Additionally, [part-time enrollment](#) can keep students connected to their local school and access expanded courses or other services, [instead](#) of moving away to find a new option.



Outside the Lower 48

A choice school's flexibility can strengthen an area's history and culture. In [Hawaii](#) and [Alaska](#), alternative models provide immersive experiences in Native culture.

How can students in rural students access transportation to their chosen school?

Many states help manage transportation for rural students in choice programs. For example, 12 states allow ESA funds to pay for transportation and some reimburse eligible families for transportation costs. Other states support rural transportation through [grant](#) programs.

What are additional ExcelinEd resources?

To read and learn more: [Education Scholarship Accounts and Homeschooling: Bridging the Education Choice Spectrum](#).

Contact

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