

Frequently Asked Questions

Why school choice in Indiana?

One of every four elementary and middle school students fail to pass the ISTEP+. Three in ten dropout of high school. In our urban schools, the failure numbers are much higher. Parents need to be able to choose the right schools for their children, without being trapped in failing government schools assigned to them because of where they happen to live.

What do you mean by “school choice”?

School choice programs vary, but they provide parents with either a tax credit or scholarship representing part or all of the per-student spending in the local government schools. Parents can use these funds to select a public or private school of their choice.

Does Indiana have school choice programs?

While private scholarship programs exist, a significant statewide program is yet to be created. Charter schools - a type of public school of choice - do exist in some communities in the state.

Does it help children do better in school?

Absolutely! Objective studies of programs in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Florida, New York, Dayton and Charlotte have shown statistically significant gains in test scores by students who are in choice programs. For instance, a Harvard study found that in Milwaukee students in choice programs increased reading scores by six percentile points and math by eleven points.

What about the students staying in public schools?

The research shows that in communities with vibrant choice programs where government schools must compete for students, test scores and parent satisfaction increase in the government schools. Competition drives improvement across the board.

Is school choice constitutional?

Yes. In a 2002 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Cleveland's voucher program. When a parent uses public funds to make a choice in a school, it does not violate the First Amendment.

“If a child’s school does not meet their needs, parents should have the option to shop for a school that does. I think that’s a wonderful idea; a rational idea; it’s just a common sense idea.”

- Reverend Ken Sullivan
North Star Christian Academy

Indiana parents need and deserve educational choices.



School Choice Indiana is a partnership of many different organizations, both local and national, seeking to advance the debate about increasing educational options. We are non-partisan and will work with anyone who is willing to engage in efforts to promote educational freedom for Hoosier families.

Want to learn more?

Contact School Choice Indiana at
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or visit us on-line at
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SCHOOL CHOICE

Putting Children First



Every child should have real educational opportunities.

School Choice Indiana

Why aren't you allowed to choose your child's school?

Parents deserve and need school choices. Yet, for tens of thousands of Indiana parents the dream of providing a quality education for their children is out of reach.

Far too many find their children trapped in failing schools, assigned to them because of where they happen to live. Unless they can move to a district with successful public schools or pay for private school tuition, many parents have little choice in the education their children will receive.

Taxpayers today spend nearly \$10,000 per student a year in Indiana public schools. In the last decade, total K-12 school spending has risen 52%, but test scores have remained virtually unchanged.

It doesn't have to be this way. What if parents were able to use part or all of the money being spent on their children in the public schools to instead pay tuition at the private or public school of their choice?



Education As It Could Be . . .
Quality Schools for Parents to Choose From



SCHOOL CHOICE . . .

Improves student learning. Research shows test scores go up for children in choice programs.

Makes public schools better. Traditional public schools and the kids who stay actually improve when choice programs are created. Competition encourages excellence in all schools.

Helps disadvantaged and at-risk children. With extremely high dropout rates and low test scores, most choice programs focus first on those kids most at-risk and most in need of options.

Is what Hoosiers want. Polling shows that 85% of Indiana citizens favor giving parents the ability to choose the school their child attends. 72% support allowing the public funding of a child's education to follow them to the public or private school chosen by their parents.

Funding Should Follow the Child

If parents were given the purchasing power of all or even part of the average spent per student in the public schools, they could pay most or all of the tuition at a typical private school. They could even choose to enroll in another public school that is succeeding. Consider:

Comparison of Average Educational Costs	
Public Schools Average Per Pupil Spending	Average Catholic Schools Tuition Per Pupil
\$9,033 ^a	Elementary: \$2,607 ^b 9th Grade: \$5,870 ^c

a. Avg. Per Pupil Expenditure, Indiana schools, three year average 2003-05. Indiana Dept. of Education. Note that this does not include capitol and non-general fund expenditures.
b. & c. Source: National average. Council for American Private Education, citing Natl. Center for Education Statistics, 2004-05. 9th grade data was for 2003-04.

What is "School Choice"?

School choice programs allow parents to choose the public or private school their children will attend. Parents aren't forced to accept the public school assigned to them simply based on where they live and regardless of what the student really needs.

Choice programs come in a variety of forms. For instance, some programs provide parents with either tax credits or scholarships equal to part or all of the amount their local public schools spend per-student. Parents then use these funds to pay for the tuition at the private or public school of their choice.

Other school choice programs provide tax credits to donors of private scholarship funds to encourage significant private funding to underwrite tuition at schools parents choose.

School choice programs make it possible for parents to change the lives of their children through access to a quality education - public or private - from a school that is succeeding and/or meets their needs.

Children should not be denied access to quality schools because of where their parents live or their ability to pay.