

Expanding Educational Options: Emergent Policy Trends

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The pandemic has had a profound negative impact on student learning; recovery requires customized solutions

The pandemic's effect on student learning is not distributed evenly.

- Compared with pre-pandemic school years, more students are falling below grade-level expectations in reading and math; this trend is **more pronounced** in schools serving predominantly Black or Latino students, as well as schools in lower-income ZIP codes.
- Students who had **less access to in-person instruction** suffered greater performance drops in English language arts (ELA) and math scores.

Schools are facing challenges that could constrain their efforts to support learning recovery.

- The federal government provided **\$190 billion** in funding to public school systems to help address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but districts have limited capacity to plan effectively.
- Public school systems are pursuing interventions to address learning loss but are struggling to **hire tutors** or **other staff** to fully implement their learning recovery plans.
- Students coming back to school in the 2021-22 school year have demonstrated varying degrees of **learning loss**, **social-emotional needs**, and **other challenges**.

The scale and scope of needs calls for a broader set of educational options that allow families to access the support their children require.

The pandemic has already changed how families shape their children's educational experiences

During the pandemic, families explored and adopted a range of educational options for their children. Many want those options to remain available in the future.

- For three consecutive school years, **families have had to consider educational options** available to their children and make a choice. For some, that meant changing schools, switching to home-schooling, or pursuing supplementary options like learning pods or tutoring.
- Families considered options that extend **beyond traditional full-time school choice** at an unprecedented scale, including supplemental supports like pods and tutoring. The shift should change how policymakers and advocates work to meet student and family needs moving forward.
- Many states have already begun to address some of families' shifting educational priorities, including the expansion of existing school-based choice options *and* policies that support a **broader array of flexible learning options**.

To better meet student needs and be responsive to their constituents and advocates, policymakers and their advisers must work to:

- Expand their understanding of educational options to be inclusive of both full-time school choice *and* flexible learning options that can supplement or replace full-time school enrollment.
- Provide information and logistical support to ensure families have equitable access to the best choices for their children's education.

For decades, access to educational options meant “school choice” — it’s time to think broadly about “learning options”

ECOSYSTEM OF K-12 EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

School Choice

For decades, school choice policies, including open enrollment, charter schools, vouchers, and tax credit scholarship programs, have provided students and families with important opportunities to **enroll in schools of their choice on a full-time basis.**

Flexible Learning Options

In recent years, families have increasingly sought more flexible learning options for their children to **either supplement or replace their education in a traditional school setting.**

Some of these options are largely driven by families, community-based organizations, or businesses, such as microschools, learning pods, home-schooling, and tutoring services — options that can be supported through policies like Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). Others are typically provided by school districts, such as work-based learning and postsecondary-connected programs.

States are pursuing a variety of option-expanding policies, with some trends emerging since the pandemic began

School Choice Policy Trends	New and expanded private school choice programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States passed new programs that provide students with access to private school options.• States expanded the scope of programs that provide students with access to private school options, through increased funding and broader student eligibility.
	More equitable access to options beyond assigned schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States passed laws to provide more information and transparency about the opportunities available to students.• States worked to address the transportation gaps that can prevent students from having equitable access to options.
Flexible Learning Options Policy Trends	Funding and support for flexible learning options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States expanded work-based learning, dual enrollment, and postsecondary pathway programs.• States passed or expanded ESA programs to provide families with resources to pay for a broad range of educational expenses, including tuition and tutoring.• States passed or expanded programs that provide families with access to flexible learning options beyond traditional schools and classrooms.• States passed policies intended to preserve innovative options born from the pandemic era, such as learning pods.

Expanded eligibility criteria and greater funding are fueling the growth of existing private school choice programs

Since 2020, states have expanded already-established private school choice programs by:

1. Adopting broader student eligibility criteria for voucher and/or tax credit scholarship programs.
2. Increasing the amount of funding available for these programs.

Several of the expansions of private school choice programs focused on increasing access and/or funding to support special student populations, such as military families and students in foster care.

Examples of private school choice program eligibility expansions

Georgia SB 47

Expands Special Needs Scholarship Program, which originally served only students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), to include students with 504 Plans.

Removes requirement of prior attendance in Georgia public schools for students with a parent in active military service and students recently placed in foster care.

Florida HB 7045

Expands Family Empowerment Scholarship eligibility for low-income students and prioritizes military, foster, and adopted students.

Indiana HB 1001

Doubles the income requirement threshold from 150% to 300% of the federally subsidized meal (FRL) limit.

Examples of private school choice program funding increases

Florida HB 7045

Increases funding for McKay and Gardiner scholarship programs. Expands services eligible for coverage.

Increases Family Empowerment Scholarship amounts to 100% of per-pupil state funding.

Indiana HB 1001

Increases voucher amounts to 90% of state per-pupil spending for all eligible students.

Montana HB 279

Increases tax credit cap for donations to private school scholarship program.

State policymakers are expanding access to public schools beyond those that are residentially assigned

Many states have policies on the books to provide families with schooling options beyond their residentially assigned school, such as open enrollment or public charter schools. But administrative hurdles and transportation challenges can limit access to those options.

Policymakers are working to make it easier for families to access more schooling options by decreasing administrative barriers in open enrollment programs and creating more flexible transportation policies to help families access the best schooling opportunities for their children.

Examples of recent legislation to reduce administrative barriers

[Colorado HB 1217](#)

Guarantees open enrollment access for military families.

[Tennessee SB 788](#)

Requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to conduct a 30-day open enrollment period, publicize seat availability (grade, class, programs), and conduct a lottery if needed.

[West Virginia SB 375](#)

Limits reasons for the denial of open enrollment applications to 1) lack of grade-level capacity, or 2) applicant failure to follow application process.

Examples of recent legislation to reduce transportation barriers

[Arizona HB 2898](#)

Allows districts and charter schools to provide grants directly to parents or neighborhood groups to support student transportation.

[New Hampshire SB 147](#)

Allows districts to contract with a carrier for transportation to school-related activities.

[Texas SB 204](#)

Allows districts to provide open enrollment inter-district transportation to bring students to better-performing schools.

Flexible learning options are increasingly available thanks to policymakers' greater financial and regulatory support

States with ESA programs — both new and expanded — provide families with additional financial resources to pursue flexible learning options for their children. Other states are working to support options beyond the walls of schools, such as learning pods and work-based learning.

Examples of states that passed financial supports for flexible options

[Florida HB 7045](#)

Consolidates two private choice programs for students with special needs into the Family Empowerment Scholarship, which also expands eligibility and per-pupil funding levels.

[Indiana HB 1001](#)

Establishes an ESA program for students with IEPs from families with incomes below 300% of the FRL limit.

[New Hampshire HB 2](#)

Creates Education Freedom Accounts — an ESA program for students from families with an income below 300% of the FRL limit.

[West Virginia HB 2013](#)

Establishes the Hope Scholarship Program, which will make ESAs available to all students who attended 45 days of public school the prior year or students who are entering kindergarten.

Examples of states that passed regulatory supports for flexible options

[Georgia SB 246](#)

Defines learning pods in statute and protects them from laws and regulations that apply to schools and day care centers, other than provisions relating to issues such as civil rights, insurance, and physical health and safety of students.

[Louisiana HB 421](#)

Establishes guidelines for public schools to establish learning pods.

[Mississippi HB 1336](#)

Allows districts to offer elective credit for apprenticeship, internship, or pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

[Montana HB 246](#)

Provides opportunities for students to engage in and earn credit for work-based learning partnerships.

Equitable access to educational options will require going beyond funding and eligibility to address other barriers

Sharing information about educational options

- In order to enroll their children, families must be aware of programs in which their children are eligible to participate and how to sign up.
- Families must have information about the expanding range of school options and learning options, including how those options 1) are compatible with their children's needs and 2) contribute to a cumulatively coherent education.
- Policymakers should provide financial support to public or private entities to build robust infrastructure to support awareness of and enrollment in learning options.

Meeting students' transportation needs

- As students pursue different full-time or part-time educational options, their physical proximity to those opportunities may limit their ability to participate. Transportation policies and practices must better meet the increasingly complex movement of students to and from various educational settings.
- Policymakers should help by developing more robust public transportation systems and providing safer pedestrian and bike infrastructure between neighborhoods and schools or other education settings.

Providing secure and portable student data

- Students' academic records and transcripts are typically managed by the school they attend, but as students engage with full-time or part-time learning options, maintaining accurate and comprehensive records becomes more complicated. Policymakers should consider supporting mechanisms that allow families to securely share and update student academic records as they engage with different education providers.



School choice policies continue to provide meaningful options to students and families

Charter schools

Charter schools are public schools typically operated by nonprofit organizations.

Open enrollment

Open enrollment allows students to attend any public school, outside of their residentially assigned school, within their district and/or state.

Tax credit scholarships

Individuals or corporations donate money to a scholarship-granting organization (SGO). The individual or corporation receives a tax credit and the donation funds scholarships to eligible students to cover tuition and other fees to attend a private school.

Vouchers

Voucher programs provide funding to families, which families use for tuition and other fees to attend a private school.

Home-schooling

Home-school students are educated at home by a parent and/or tutor selected by the parent.



Charter schools offer students a schooling option beyond traditional district-operated public schools

How these policies work

- Charter schools receive public funding and are typically operated by nonprofit organizations.
- Charter schools are governed by a charter, or contract, between a board that oversees the school's management and an independent authorizer. These contracts typically offer greater operational autonomy in exchange for greater accountability for student outcomes when compared with traditional public schools.
- If more students apply for enrollment in a charter school than there are available seats, admission is typically determined by a random lottery.

Supporting access and equity

- Unified applications that allow parents to apply for multiple public schools at one time — including traditional public schools and charter schools — can increase access for students.
- Weighted lotteries allow charter schools to prioritize at-risk student populations and ensure greater levels of access for those student populations.
- States should ensure equitable resources for charter schools, including per-pupil funding, facilities, and transportation.

Example state policy: Indiana

- The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools **rank**s Indiana's charter school laws first in the nation for having no cap on charter school growth, multiple independent authorizers, strong autonomy and accountability measures, and for efforts to provide more equitable funding for charter schools.
- Four **types of entities** may authorize charter schools in Indiana: 1) the Indiana Charter School Board, 2) LEAs (i.e., school boards), 3) state four-year postsecondary institutions, and 4) the executive of a consolidated city (i.e., a mayor).
- **Indiana has** 104 charter schools that serve a collective 49,813 students, **about 5%** of the state's public school population.
- Indianapolis' unified application process — **EnrollIndy** — allows students to apply for up to 10 charter schools and/or traditional public schools using a single application.



Open enrollment expands opportunities to enroll in public schools beyond a student's residentially assigned school

How these policies work

- In some states districts can voluntarily participate in interdistrict open enrollment policies where they enter into agreements with other districts to receive transferring students. Other states require districts to participate.
- Most states allow districts to set their own policies regarding how to apply for open enrollment and what the admission criteria are. States may or may not allow districts to place parameters beyond what is required by federal law.
- Sometimes states and/or districts will prioritize select student groups, such as economically disadvantaged students, students attending low-performing public schools, and students with special needs.

Example state policy: Florida

- Florida has a statewide mandatory interdistrict and intradistrict **open enrollment policy**. Any parent can apply to transfer their child to another school within their home district or to a different school district within the state, so long as the school's capacity allows for additional students to enroll.
- Each school district in Florida is **required to post its open enrollment policies** on its website, which must allow parents to declare their school preferences; provide for a lottery to determine student

Supporting access and equity

- States should require all districts to participate in open enrollment.
- Direct transportation or financial resources should be provided to parents so that they can arrange transportation for children participating in open enrollment.
- There should be uniform enrollment and transfer policies and a unified application process within metro areas and/or states to make the process easier for students and families to navigate.

- assignment when demand exceeds capacity; identify schools that have not yet reached capacity; outline eligibility criteria; and address the availability of transportation.
- Districts and charter schools **may provide transportation** for open enrollment students, but it is not required.



Tax credit scholarship programs provide access to private schooling options

How these policies work

- Tax credit scholarship policies allow individuals and corporations to receive a tax credit for donations to an SGO.
- SGOs use donated funds to award scholarships to students to cover expenses associated with attending a private school within the state.
- Most states limit tax credit scholarships to select student groups, such as economically disadvantaged students, students attending low-performing public schools, and students with special needs.

Supporting access and equity

- Scholarships awarded by SGOs should cover the full cost of tuition at participating private schools for economically disadvantaged families to ensure their participation is not constrained by finances.
- Schools accepting tax credit scholarship students should ensure admission requirements do not limit equitable access.
- SGO scholarships should be awarded without donor favor or preference, rather than allowing donors to direct scholarships to specific schools or students.

Example state policy: Alabama

- Alabama's **Education Scholarship Program** awards scholarships to students whose family's total annual income does not exceed 185% of the federal poverty level. Students **assigned to** low-performing public schools receive priority for scholarships.
- The total amount of tax credits awarded in Alabama are **capped** at \$30 million annually. Donors can claim a credit up to 100% of the total contributions made to an SGO.
- Scholarship amounts are determined by SGOs; **scholarships are capped** at \$6,000 for elementary students, \$8,000 for middle school students, and \$10,000 for high school students. Alabama's **average private school tuition** is \$7,446 per year.
- Alabama **prohibits** SGOs from accepting donations intended for a specific student or participating private school to ensure that scholarships are awarded in a fair and equitable manner.



Voucher programs provide access to private schooling options

How these policies work

- Voucher programs allow students to use state funds toward tuition and other fees to attend a private school.
- Most state voucher programs limit participation to select student groups, including economically disadvantaged students, students attending low-performing public schools, and/or students with special needs.

Example state policy: Louisiana

- The [Louisiana Scholarship Program](#) was created in 2008 and targets economically disadvantaged students attending low-performing public schools, providing them with scholarships to attend a participating private school.
- Participating private schools are [required to use an open admissions process](#) and cannot require students to meet any additional eligibility criteria. This increases access to students who might otherwise be discouraged from applying or denied admission because of previous academic achievement, discipline record, or other reasons.
- Louisiana also [requires](#) participating private schools to administer state standardized assessments to voucher students. Private schools can have their voucher student enrollment restricted if they do not meet [academic performance standards](#).

Supporting access and equity

- Vouchers should cover the full cost of the average private school tuition and/or be accepted as full tuition to support equitable access for students from economically disadvantaged families.
- In many states, students must meet eligibility criteria set by a participating private school in order to receive admission and use the voucher, which may limit voucher students' access to some schools.

- Participating private schools in Louisiana are [required](#) to accept vouchers as full payment of all educational costs, including incidental or supplementary fees.
- The requirements on private schools to participate in Louisiana's voucher program reduce logistical and financial barriers for eligible students, provide academic transparency, and limit tuition costs, but they may also disincentivize private schools from participating in the program. Only one-third of Louisiana's private schools [participate](#) in the state's voucher program.



Home-schooling allows families to design and implement instruction to meet the specific needs of their children

How these policies work

- In many states, families must notify the local school district or state department of education of their intent to home-school their child. Other states do not require notification in order to begin home-schooling a child.
- Home-schooling families are typically responsible for all aspects of the child's education, including the selection of a curriculum and delivery of instruction.
- Some states set other requirements for home-schoolers, such as minimum of days or hours of instruction and academic recordkeeping.

Supporting access and equity

- Policymakers should provide families with clear information on home-schooling requirements.
- When families choose to home-school their children, states should provide access to instructional supports, including curricular materials, assessments, and other educational resources.
- States should ensure that home-schooled students have access to opportunities provided by public schools through part-time enrollment or participation in extracurricular activities.

Example state policy: Colorado

- Colorado has three options: 1) home-based, 2) home-schooling with an independent school, or 3) home-schooling with a certified teacher.
- Under the **home-based option**, parents must provide notification 14 days before they begin home-schooling, provide an average of four hours of instruction 172 days a year, and keep attendance and testing records. Parents must test their children in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 using a nationally standardized achievement test or have their child evaluated by a qualified professional. The results of those assessments must be submitted to the local school district or a nonpublic school of the parent's choosing. If a student tests below the 13th percentile, they will be required to attend a public or nonpublic school until the next testing period.
- If parents choose to home-school with an **independent school**, they are responsible for teaching the child at home under the independent school's supervision. Independent schools are treated as private schools under the law.
- Parents choosing to home-school with a **certified teacher** can hire someone who holds a valid Colorado teaching certificate to provide instruction to their child. There are no notification, assessment, or other requirements for this option.



Policies that expand flexible learning options also help meet a diversity of needs and preferences

Career and technical education (CTE)

CTE programs are a sequence of specialized courses designed as part of a career pathway.

Concurrent/dual enrollment

Concurrent and dual enrollment programs allow students to enroll in college-level courses and, upon successful completion, earn credit from both the postsecondary institution and their public school district.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

ESAs allocate public funding to individual accounts that can be used by eligible families to pay for private schooling, home-schooling, tutoring, or other prescribed education expenses.

Work-based learning (WBL)

WBL (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, or similar experiences) allows students to explore careers of interest and demonstrate employability and technical skills in a real-world setting.

Extended learning

Extended learning provides opportunities for students to demonstrate learning and receive credit for internships, projects, and other experiences that occur beyond the classroom.



CTE provides students with skills and certifications tied to workforce needs

How these policies work

- Students choose a career pathway or program of study and enroll in a sequence of specialized courses to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to transition directly to the workforce or to pursue a postsecondary credential.
- CTE students can participate in WBL, earn early postsecondary credit, and/or earn industry-recognized credentials.
- States receive significant federal funding through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which is distributed to local CTE programs.

Supporting access and equity

- Ensuring that all students are aware of CTE program opportunities can help improve access, but districts should also identify other potential access barriers.
- Collection and publication of high-quality data on CTE enrollment, concentration, and completion status can support efforts to identify and address equity and access gaps.
- States should invest in programs to support students from historically marginalized populations who wish to enroll in and complete high-quality CTE programs.

Example state policy: Georgia

- Students in Georgia's Career, Technical, and Agriculture Education (CTAE) programs can earn a **Pathway Career Seal** on their high school diploma to demonstrate to employers that they are prepared to participate in the workforce.
- Students earn a Pathway Career Seal by completing a pathway in one of Georgia's 17 **Career Clusters** and one of the following: earning an industry-recognized credential, completing a state-approved work-based learning program, completing all components of a career-related capstone project in their CTAE pathway, earning a military rank of E5 or above, or earning a technical college diploma or associate degree through a dual enrollment program.
- In the 2019-20 school year, 67% of high school students and 63% of middle school students **participated in CTAE**. These students largely **reflect the demographics of Georgia public schools**: 40% white, 39% Black, 15% Latino, and 3% Asian or Pacific Islander.
- Georgia has **two intervention programs** — Coordinated Career Academic Education and Project Success — that support students in special population groups who are enrolled in a CTAE program and determined to be at risk of failure or dropping out.



Concurrent and dual enrollment programs offer opportunities to earn college credit while in high school

How these policies work

- Dual enrollment programs allow students to earn postsecondary credit for courses taught by a high school instructor approved by a postsecondary institution.
- Concurrent enrollment programs allow high school students to take courses like a postsecondary student.
- Students who successfully complete a concurrent/dual enrollment course are awarded credit by both their school district and the postsecondary institution.
- After high school, students' concurrent/dual enrollment credits typically count toward degree programs at in-state public postsecondary institutions.

Supporting access and equity

- States and LEAs can cover the costs of tuition, books, and other fees to ensure there are no financial barriers to student participation in concurrent or dual enrollment.
- High-quality data on student participation and outcomes should be collected, disaggregated, and published to identify/address issues in access/equity.
- States and LEAs can work to reduce practical barriers to student participation in concurrent and dual enrollment programs by providing transportation options or stipends to participating students.

Example state policy: Ohio

- In 2014, the Ohio Legislature created **College Credit Plus**, a statewide dual enrollment program that provides students in grades 7-12 (including home-schooled and private school students) the opportunity to earn college and high school credits at the same time by taking courses at Ohio colleges or universities.
- Public school students are **not required** to cover the costs of tuition, instructional tools, fees, or supplies at public colleges. Nonpublic and home-school students may apply to receive state funds for tuition.
- 76,973 **students participated** in College Credit Plus during the 2019-20 school year, **representing** about 8% of grade 7-12 public and nonpublic school students.
- 93% of College Credit Plus students **earned passing grades** during the 2019-20 school year, with an average GPA of 3.35.
- Students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities **are underrepresented** in College Credit Plus.



ESAs provide access to a range of flexible learning options

How these policies work

- ESAs provide families who withdraw from public school access to a state-funded individual account that can be used for authorized expenses.
- States authorize a range of approved uses for ESA funding, including private school tuition, curricular materials to support home-schooling, exam fees, tutoring, and other prescribed education supports.
- Most state ESA programs limit participation to select student groups, such as economically disadvantaged students, students attending low-performing public schools, and students with special needs.

Supporting access and equity

- ESAs should cover the full cost of the average private school tuition to ensure that students from economically disadvantaged families can access the full spectrum of K-12 education options available in their communities.
- States should rigorously evaluate and publish data on the quality of eligible service providers for authorized ESA expenditures.
- Policymakers should ensure that eligible families are informed about ESAs and how they support their children's education.

Example state policy: Florida

- Florida's [Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities](#) provides students with special needs a state-funded ESA to pay for various education services including private school tuition, tutoring, online education, home education, curriculum, therapy, and postsecondary education in Florida. Priority is given to students whose household income does not exceed 185% of the federal poverty level, are in foster care, or are in out-of-home care.
- School districts are [required to notify](#) families of their child's scholarship options within 10 days of the adoption of their child's IEP or 504 Plan.
- Over 17,000 students [received an ESA](#) in fall 2020; approximately 10% of students statewide are eligible for an ESA.
- The [average ESA](#) is valued at \$10,515, which is more than Florida's per-student expenditure of [\\$9,645](#) (in FY 2019) for traditional students, but less than the average per-student funding for students with special needs.



WBL provides real-world opportunities for students to explore careers and develop skills

How these policies work

- WBL opportunities allow students to explore careers of interest and build technical skills in real-world settings through internships, apprenticeships, or similar experiences.
- State boards of education typically work with employers to define and provide WBL opportunities that align with their state's workforce needs.
- State policy typically establishes requirements for WBL experiences to count as academic credit.

Supporting access and equity

- Policymakers should ensure that all students are aware of WBL opportunities available in their school systems.
- States should collect and analyze longitudinal data on WBL participants to better understand which WBL opportunities lead to the strongest postsecondary and workforce outcomes.
- Policymakers should permit and potentially subsidize paid WBL opportunities to ensure low-income students are able to participate.

Example state policy: Tennessee

- [Tennessee Pathways](#) is a statewide initiative to create alignment between K-12, postsecondary education, and employers to help students develop the knowledge and skills to successfully transition to postsecondary education and the workforce, including through high-quality work-based learning.
- The [Work-Based Learning Policy Guide](#) and [Work-Based Learning Framework](#) approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education provide clear guidelines and expectations of LEAs for the implementation of WBL programs.
- Participation in a [WBL capstone course](#) can satisfy the three-credit “elective-focus” portion of Tennessee’s graduation requirements.
- Tennessee relies on school-based [WBL coordinators](#). These staff are [responsible](#) for supporting the successful implementation of WBL programs by overseeing for-credit WBL programs, ensuring that students receive appropriate placements aligned to their goals and programs of study, and supporting students to be successful in achieving the objectives of their WBL experience.



Extended learning policies provide students with academic credit for learning that happens outside of school

How these policies work

- Extended learning policies establish a procedure for recognizing learning experiences that happen beyond school walls to count as school-recognized credit.
- State policies will typically set minimum standards for alternative learning experiences in order for credit to be awarded to students.
- Providers or individual students can then apply for a program or independent study project to be approved as a credit-bearing experience.

Supporting access and equity

- Policymakers should ensure that financial and logistical barriers do not prevent students from pursuing extended learning opportunities.
- Families should be informed of all approved extended learning opportunities available in their community.
- Data should be collected on long-term student outcomes of extended learning opportunities to support program improvement and ensure high-quality learning experiences.

Example state policy: New Hampshire

- New Hampshire's [Learn Everywhere](#) program allows for-profit and nonprofit organizations to be approved to offer educational programs that lead to credits that count toward the state's high school graduation requirements.
- Prospective providers must submit applications that detail their program's academic goals, such as how student learning will be assessed and expected student outcomes. Applicants must also provide information related to their qualifications, facilities, admissions processes, and compliance with health and safety regulations.
- The State Board of Education must approve or conditionally approve applications. After programs gain approval, they are evaluated by the Department of Education during their first year of operation, after which their approval can be extended by five years.
- All schools in New Hampshire must allow Learn Everywhere program credits to count for at least one-third of graduation requirement credits.



Access and equity issues can be addressed to improve how families interact with the ecosystem of options

Access and Equity in a Complex Ecosystem

Ensuring a robust supply of high-quality educational options — both school-based and more flexible options — is critical to a well-functioning choice ecosystem, but policymakers and advocates must also ensure that families have equitable access to those options.



Information, transportation, and student data provide the foundation for equitable access

How these policies work

- Ensuring a robust supply of high-quality educational options — both school-based and more flexible options — is critical to a well-functioning choice ecosystem, but families' access and experience with those options can be limited by financial and logistical barriers.
- The price of exercising educational choice sometimes involves a financial cost — those barriers should be minimized where possible.
- Logistical barriers are common — families often have different levels of information about choice programs while others may struggle to secure safe and reliable transportation for their children.

Supporting access and equity

- Families should be informed of the range of educational options their children can access, including clear information about what programs offer to students and how families can enroll their children.
- Policymakers should establish more flexible transportation policies and practices to better meet the demand for safe, reliable transportation to and from schools and other education providers.
- Data system infrastructure should be developed to allow families and educational providers with secure mechanisms to input, store, and share data related to students' academic records.

Example state policy: Arizona

- In 2020, [HB 2898](#) established two new transportation options for Arizona students attending public schools through open enrollment or public charter schools.
- Only 24% of Arizona students [get to and from school](#) on district-provided buses — this grant program is targeted at reducing the transportation barriers that may prevent families from accessing the best schooling option for their children.

- The legislation allows school districts or charter schools to convert a portion of their funding to direct grants to families to subsidize transportation costs. Grants can also be made to neighborhood organizations that organize student carpools.

More work is needed not only to support school choice and flexible learning options, but also to ensure the development of infrastructure for equitable access, such as informing parents, providing transportation, and improving data systems.

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Bellwether Education Partners is a national nonprofit focused on dramatically changing education and life outcomes for underserved children. We do this by helping education organizations accelerate their impact and by working to improve policy and practice. Bellwether envisions a world in which race, ethnicity, and income no longer predict opportunities for students, and the American education system affords all individuals the ability to determine their own path and lead a productive and fulfilling life.

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