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# BREAKING DOWN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT LINES

Policies, Perceptions, and Implications of Inter-District Open Enrollment

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**Susan Pendergrass**  
**Hanover Research**



## ABOUT EDCHOICE

EdChoice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing full and unencumbered educational choice as the best pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. EdChoice believes that families, not bureaucrats, are best equipped to make K-12 schooling decisions for their children. The organization works at the state level to educate diverse audiences, train advocates and engage policymakers on the benefits of high-quality school choice programs. EdChoice is the intellectual legacy of Milton and Rose D. Friedman, who founded the organization in 1996 as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Open enrollment is a form of school choice that gives families the opportunity to choose an educational setting or school within the public school system that is best for their children. In U.S. public school districts, students typically must attend the school that is in their neighborhood and often do not have a choice of attending a different school if there is not an open enrollment option. Open enrollment options, however, vary by state and region.

Open enrollment can be either intra-district or inter-district. *Intra-district open enrollment* allows students to transfer to another school within their resident district. *Inter-district open enrollment* allows students to transfer to another public school district, even if they live outside the choice district's attendance boundaries. Some states, like Florida and Arizona, require mandatory intra- and inter-district open enrollment program participation for all public-school districts. Others, like Indiana and Ohio, have more restrictive policies that allow districts the option to either provide or refuse opportunities for out-of-district open enrollment.

As these policies are adopted by more states, they have become increasingly popular with parents. Therefore, it is important to understand the impacts of inter-district choice on schools and students. As such, EdChoice partnered with Hanover Research (Hanover) to conduct a series of research projects around inter-district open enrollment and present implications for various stakeholders. The following capstone project summarizes the series of projects aimed to address the following research questions:

- Do most public school students still attend the school assigned to them based on their address?
- How do open enrollment policies vary?
- According to publicly available literature and in-depth interviews with district administrators, what are the inter-district open enrollment policies, procedures, and practices of public-school districts?

- What, if any, is the public perception and awareness of open enrollment?

- What impact, if any, has open enrollment had on the educational experiences of students?

Public school enrollment in the US has been steadily drifting away from assigned public schools. States began allowing families to choose schools, including outside of the district in which they live, in the late 1980s and charter schools began opening in the early 1990s. These options, along with existing magnet schools and, more recently, virtual schools now enroll more than one in ten public school students. The COVID-19 pandemic led to dramatically more families switching schools, including to private and homeschooling.

Families and students most often choose open enrollment based on the academic programming and school culture. Specialized academic programming can provide new opportunities for students to follow their passions and interests, and many participants in the study highlight the importance of giving students a sense of agency and ownership over their own educational path. Other common reasons for open enrollment transfers include district proximity to parents' workplace, athletic programs, and various school climate aspects.

School district administrators who were interviewed for this project feel competitive pressure from open enrollment and often referenced the need to "retain market share" through attracting students from nearby counties (e.g., from other public-school districts, charter schools, private schools). The heightened awareness has caused many school-sites to create new or enhance existing programs in order to increase and retain enrollment. Subsequently, districts and schools consistently demonstrated a strong utilization of marketing and communication strategies as they seek to market themselves and each school's unique programs to families within and beyond district boundaries.

At the same time, open enrollment policies have the potential to change community ties and neighborhood-school identities. Neighborhood schools which offer specialized programs run the risk of attracting so many choice students that the school may have to operate as exclusively specialized to meet the demand. Additionally, some participants in Hanover's qualitative study highlight instances in which families leverage open enrollment to avoid conflict resolution and relationship-building with school staff when students face social-emotional or disciplinary concerns.

Managing open enrollment requires a comprehensive district approach of data tracking, forward-planning, and marketing. Participants from Hanover's qualitative study explain the delicate balance districts must strike between accepting new out-of-district transfers and managing intra-district school choice transfers. Districts regulate inter- and intra-district enrollment mainly based on classroom capacity (i.e., available seats), and they will often use a lottery system that prioritizes certain tiers of applicants, such as in-district residency, on-site school employment, scholarship opportunities, or sibling choice school enrollment. From the perspective of students, open enrollment policies should make it easy for those who wish to transfer to do so.

In terms of challenges with current open enrollment policies, transportation is one of the greatest barriers that students face in exercising open enrollment opportunities. None of the state policies analyzed in Hanover's benchmarking report mandate that receiving districts provide transportation to open enrolled students; instead, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Some exceptions may exist in certain states for students from special populations, including students with disabilities or experiencing homelessness. However, Florida, Arizona, and Ohio state policies do reference various instances where a district can choose to offer transportation (e.g., along a regularly-scheduled bus route).

As such, available transportation highly influences student school choice options. The lack of access to transportation can disproportionately affect students from low-income families and ultimately prevent students from exercising their school choice. Understanding the limitations of fully transporting students from outside the district boundaries, districts can establish various, conveniently located satellite bus stops to encourage out-of-district families to enroll and to further increase the diversity within the district's student population. Particularly with new work-from-home opportunities for working parents, more families may seek out districts that offer nearby transportation services for open enrollment transfers. Moving forward, state policy leaders may wish to consider requiring transportation provisions within all state open enrollment policies to increase overall open enrollment participation and thus increase student access to educational opportunities.

While open enrollment can cause certain issues of equity and access for all states in this report, states with voluntary inter-district open enrollment tend to struggle most. Districts have more discretion to shape their student enrollment and demographics by choosing to accept or deny student transfers. For example, both Ohio and Indiana districts have a documented history and public perception of "cherry-picking" students they accept to maintain a high-achieving student body. State policy leaders should therefore establish more inclusive practices within inter-district policies. Creating provisions that allow more students—particularly those who would benefit from attending a higher-performing school—access to nearby open enrollment opportunities may reduce the current socioeconomic and racial inequities found in states with voluntary inter-district policies.

Notably, a lack of consensus characterizes the research literature on open enrollment. Studies draw different conclusions in terms of the characteristics of participating students, the impact on student academic and behavioral outcomes, the impact on parental involvement, and the impact on school quality. Areas in which consensus exist include tendencies for (1) students to transfer from poorly resourced, low-performing schools to well-resourced, high-performing schools and (2) students and parents to express high rates of satisfaction with their new school. Differing conclusions in other areas may reflect underlying differences in the nature of the open enrollment policies in the districts and schools examined (i.e., inter-district and/or intra-district transfers, mandatory or voluntary district participation, rights of refusal, etc.), as well as differences in how students get assigned to their default schools.

Researchers may seek to address several gaps in the literature moving forward. A first step could be to analyze national and state data to further understand the impacts of open enrollment on and the potential connection to student achievement. Through data analysis, the potential correlation between open enrollment and student achievement can be explored. The findings of such research could expand the current literature on open enrollment and school choice. Additionally, researchers should consider conducting a review of policies to identify enrollment patterns among various student demographics. Current research remains mixed over the impact of open enrollment on students of color or from low-income families; some studies find open enrollment expands access to high-quality education, while others find the opposite. Identifying patterns in the policies that foster greater inclusion and acceptance will help inform future initiatives in open enrollment policies.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last forty years, there has been a gradual, but steady, shift in public education towards letting parents choose their child's public school rather than assigning each child to one school based on their address. Although magnet schools and other desegregation efforts began moving students outside of their assigned public schools in the 1960's, the idea of letting parents decide which school is best for their families didn't start to take hold until the late 1980's and early 1990's when charter schools and open enrollment came on the scene.

Multiple forces are now converging that are likely to speed up the decline of address-based assignment to a single public school. First, most public-school students – whether they realize it or not – already have access to at least one option other than the school to which they are assigned based on their address.<sup>1</sup> Second, participation, public support, and innovation in school choice programs continues to grow.<sup>2</sup> Third, children who attended a school of their choosing grow up to be parents who expect to be able to do the same. Thirty years of public-school choice programs have made that a reality. Finally, there was the COVID-19 pandemic, which left so many parents so unhappy. Families moved from their assigned public school to charter schools, to private schools, to micro schools and to homeschooling in record numbers.

This paper focuses on just one type of choice for families—choosing any public school that has a program they desire and acceptable transportation access, also known as open enrollment. In 1988, the Minnesota legislature passed, and Governor Rudy Perpich signed, the first ever statewide open enrollment bill. Minnesota families were given the option of enrolling in any public school in the state, regardless of their address.<sup>3</sup> Participating students would carry \$3,600 in state funding (equivalent to \$9,000 in 2022) to the public school of their choice. The Governor's education adviser, Joe Nathan, predicted that at least 10 percent of Minnesota children would be crossing district lines within a few years.<sup>4</sup>

Nearly 35 years later, 43 states have similar laws, often referred to as inter-district choice, on their books.<sup>5</sup> In 24 of those states, allowing students to choose a school outside of their home district is mandatory, at least in some cases or for some groups of students. In the other states, districts can decide if they want to participate or not. Inter-district choice is expressly prohibited only in Illinois and North Carolina. In Alabama, Alaska, Maryland, and Virginia there is no mention of inter-district choice in the statutes. And, in Hawaii and the District of Columbia, the concept is not applicable, as they each only have a single district. In all, 86 percent of public students in the US live in states with inter-district choice programs and 41 percent live in states where its offering is mandatory.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to inter-district choice, many school districts in the US allow (in some cases require) families to choose any school from within the district in which they reside that offers the grade their child needs, also known as intra-district choice. Twenty-one states require districts to offer intra-district choice and seven more have laws that make participation by districts voluntary. In many large, urban districts unified enrollment systems, sometimes referred to as open choice, are becoming increasingly popular. These intra-district choice programs require families to complete applications that list their school preferences in order. Typically, unified enrollment systems have a common website, a common application, and a common deadline. Every family in the district must submit their top choice(s) and an algorithm creates a best match between parent choices and seat availability.

EdChoice is committed to understanding the impact of these open enrollment policies. This paper will describe trends in elementary and secondary enrollment and financing and how those trends interact with open enrollment in the US. We will then describe the open enrollment landscape at both the state and district level. We will then review the available literature on the participation and impact these policies have on students and school systems, followed by detailed case studies of inter-district choice programs in Arizona, Florida, Indiana, and Ohio to understand and gain insight on the processes and perceptions of administrators in the state. Finally, policy implications for improving access to and the impact of opening district boundaries will be summarized.



# TRENDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND FINANCING

The public school system in the United States in 2022 looks incredibly different than it did 100 years ago, yet many still cling to the belief that most children attend their neighborhood school which is mostly funded with local property taxes and is administered by a local, publicly elected, school board. A quarter of the way through the last century, there were about 25 million public elementary and secondary students attending about 250,000 public schools—or an average of about 100 students per school.<sup>7</sup> Astoundingly, there were over 100,000 school districts in the 1920’s, meaning each had one or two schools and served a few hundred students, and nearly 85 percent of school funding came from local sources.<sup>8</sup>

By the middle half of the last century, however, several political and cultural forces began to impact the structure, funding and delivery of education. Funding public education through property taxes meant that property-rich districts had access to significantly more money than property-poor districts. If education is the road to prosperity, not just for individuals, but for the nation, then this must be ameliorated. In fact, questions of equity and access to education resources was a foundational argument in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that ended the practice of assigning children to schools based on their race.<sup>9</sup> “Neighborhood school” began to be a loaded term. Poor children had poor neighborhood schools and wealthy children had well-resourced neighborhood schools. And academic results for students assigned to each were (are) not the least bit surprising.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1950’s, states began to intervene in the distribution of resources in an effort to create balance. Most states now provide at least half of the funding for public schools and often through a formula that takes local tax capacity into account and uses state funds to make up the difference in property-poor areas.<sup>11</sup> Most states have faced at least one lawsuit regarding the equity that results from these formulas or, more recently, the adequacy of the funding they produce.<sup>12</sup>

While the US Constitution relegates responsibility for public education to the states, the War on Poverty brought the federal government into the effort to equalize public education resources. Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides grants to school districts based on the number or percentage of students living below the poverty line that they serve.<sup>13</sup> Additional federal funding for English-language learners, rural schools, students with disabilities, and the school lunch program—to name a few—have resulted in approximately 10 percent of total funding coming from the federal government.<sup>14</sup>

In more recent decades, however, a new approach has emerged to address unequal access to educational resources—letting students and their families choose the school they attend. This began with the creation of magnet schools in 1968, which, at least initially, had the twin goals of giving students access to programs that their neighborhood school didn’t provide and desegregating high-minority districts.<sup>15</sup> Magnet schools, however, select their students.

Charter schools, autonomous public schools which cannot select their students, began in 1992. These schools were proposed as an outlet for teachers, and others, to innovate in the delivery of public education.<sup>16</sup> Students were there by choice and the school had a limited amount of time to hit the performance targets outlined in their charter. In exchange they were freed from many of the rules and regulations under which district school operate.

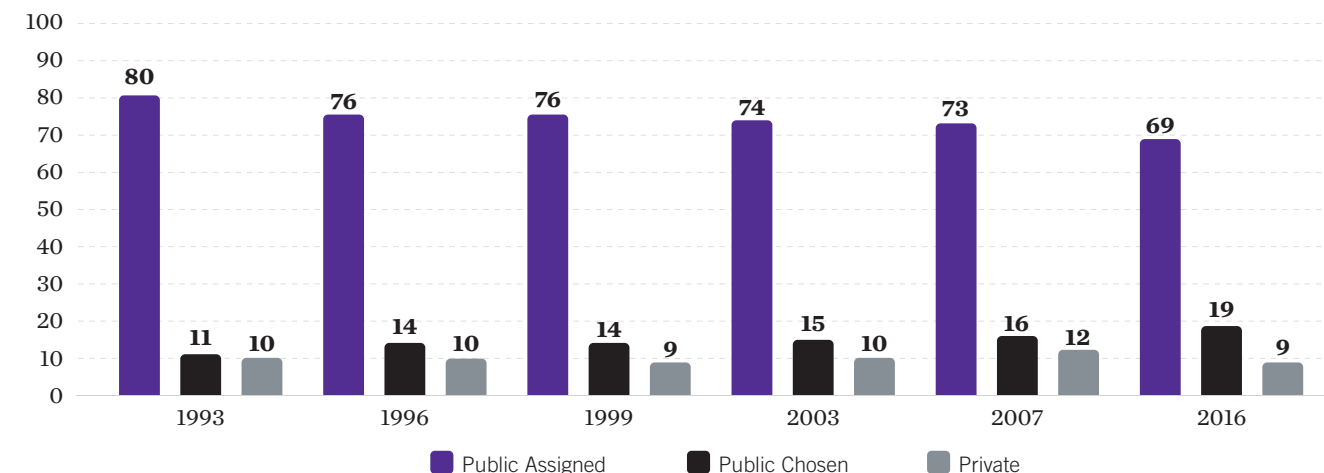
Because they are autonomous schools, the number of and enrollment in magnet and charter schools can be tracked. In the 2020-21 school year (the latest available), there were 7,809 charter schools enrolling 3,682,000 students and 2,946 magnet schools enrolling 2,207,000 students.<sup>17</sup> In all, these six million students are more than 13 percent of public-school enrollment.<sup>18</sup>

It’s a bit trickier to track students who choose a different public school than the one assigned to them based on their address, but we do have information on overall trends. The US Department of Education periodically survey US households regarding their education experiences. Looking at the data from the National Household Education Survey (NHES) regarding what

**FIGURE 1**

Percentage distribution of students ages 5 through 17 attending kindergarten through 12th grade, by school type: Selected years, 1993 through 2016

*Key takeaway – K-12 enrollment has been steadily shifting from assigned schools to schools of choice*



Note: The survey instrument was revised in 2019 and responses are not comparable to earlier years.

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Parent Survey and Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (Parent-NHES: 1993, 1996, 1999 and PFI-NHES 2003, 2007, and 2016). Missing percentages represent homeschooled students.

type of school their child attends suggests that overall, the percentage of students attending a public school has declined slightly in the last thirty years, from 91 percent in 1993 to 87.5 percent in 2016. Further, the percentage of public school parents who report that they chose their child’s public school has increased from 11 percent to 19 percent. If one considers that in 2021, some 13 percent of public school students attended a charter, magnet or virtual school, then the percentage of public school students participating in inter- or intra-district choice programs could be as high as 7 percent, or 3.5 million students.

As more parents have moved their children away from assigned public schools to a public school of their choice, funding formulas have begun to transform as well. At the national level, the portion of public school revenue from all local sources has declined from over 85 percent in 1919 to 45 percent in 2019, with just 36.5 percent of total funding coming from property taxes.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, several states, most notably California in 2013 and Tennessee in 2022, have streamlined their public education funding to move away from funding programs towards funding students. This allows for a greater share of total funding to move with the student to the school of their choice.

Unfortunately, federal funding for disadvantaged students has gotten exponentially complicated since 1965 and the increasing use of school choice has only led to it being less well matched to need. There have been calls to make federal funding portable, but they have not yet made it to even pilot program status.

## The Great Disruption

As the school choice train was moving steadily away from the station and state legislatures began tailoring their funding to keep up, a global pandemic hit. Slowing the spread of COVID-19 led nearly every school in the country to halt in-person instruction. Once the initial shock wore off, parents began to absorb what they were learning from the experience of homeschooling their children and many weren’t pleased.

Between spring 2020 and spring 2022, public school enrollment dropped by 1.27 million students.<sup>20</sup> Districts that stayed remote the longest suffered the biggest losses. Many families decided to just homeschool their children, rather than have them attend their district’s virtual program. Estimates suggest that the number of homeschooling families doubled between the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2020.<sup>21</sup> Parents of the youngest

public school students—pre-K and kindergarten – simply chose not to enroll them for a chaotic first year of school.

Within the public school system, many families decided to switch schools. A survey conducted in January 2022 found that more than half of parents were at least considering, or had considered, switching schools in the previous year.<sup>22</sup> And one-third of those parents indicated that their consideration for switching was due to the pandemic disrupting their child’s education. An estimated 240,000 students switched from a traditional public school to a charter school. It’s difficult to know if, or how many, students switched from one traditional school to another, but at least three states allowed parents an emergency option to do so if they disagreed with a district’s mask or vaccine policy.

What we do know is that support for letting parents choose their child’s school, rather than be assigned to one based on their address, is higher than ever. As part of their Schooling in America Survey, EdChoice asked respondents whether they favor allowing a student enrolled in a public school to select and transfer to a public school of their choice, rather than attend a school based on where they live. Seventy-four percent of all respondents and 81 percent of parent respondents were in favor of allowing this.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, parents are increasingly rejecting having their child attend the school that is assigned to them based on their address in favor of the growing public and private options that are available. Meanwhile, state and federal funding, which is still only half of total public education funding, is beginning to evolve to be more student based, but still falls far short. Even in the most ideal case, a student’s formula funding is debited from their home district to be credited to the school or district of their choice, while federal funds barely reflect these movements. As will be discussed more later, the system at large needs institutional-level reform that provides parents with multiple options with funding following each child to the school of their choice.

## STATE OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICIES

As was previously mentioned, some states require every district to participate in open enrollment, usually given a set of conditions, while other make it voluntary. Appendix A outlines the policies for inter-district and intra-district choice in each state.

Of the 24 states in which inter-district choice is mandatory, some, like Arizona, have very parent friendly policies. Schools must post their open seats available on their website and the numbers must be updated every 12 weeks. This proactive approach eliminates the possibility of districts using capacity as a reason to deny a transfer request after the fact. On the other end of the spectrum, many states allow districts to accept or reject transfer students for “specified regulations, requirements, and adopted standards,” leaving the door wide open for cherry picking students. A recent report by the Reason Foundation delineates open enrollment best practices and grades each state accordingly.<sup>24</sup> According to this report, only 11 states have open enrollment laws that allow students to easily transfer. And while capacity can be a limiting factor even in mandatory states, it should be noted that capacity is not a limiting factor for students who move to the district.

Arkansas, California, Louisiana, and New Mexico mandate that students in low-performing, in some cases “F,” schools may transfer to a higher performing school in another district. However, in California, these students can be rejected for program, class, grade, or building capacity or if it would have an adverse financial impact. Mississippi, Missouri, and Montana have geographical restrictions in the open enrollment policies. For example, in Montana, a student is allowed to transfer out of district if they live closer to the school of their choice in the receiving district and at least 3 miles from their assigned public school or if there are geographic conditions between a student’s house and their assigned school which make transportation impractical. In Maine and Vermont only high school students can participate in the program and in Maine only if their home high school doesn’t offer at least two foreign language courses.

While intra-district choice policies in most states mirror their inter-district choice plans, a growing number of large urban districts are completely eliminating attendance zones in favor of unified enrollment systems.<sup>25</sup> In these districts, parents complete an online application listing of their top school choices and students are assigned based on a computer algorithm. The benefit to these systems is that parents don’t have to identify and then apply to a school, or schools, of their choice. In some cases, such as Denver, CO and Camden, NJ, parents have the option of enrolling their child in their neighborhood school rather than filling out the unified enrollment application. In others, such as New Orleans, LA, all families must submit an application. Regardless, when properly designed, unified enrollment systems can empower all parents to be invested in where their children are educated.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

There isn’t a strong body of research regarding the academic impact of open enrollment policies, which likely reflects the underlying differences in the nature of the open enrollment policies in the districts and schools examined (i.e., inter-district and/or intra-district transfers, mandatory or voluntary district participation, rights of refusal, etc.), as well as differences in how students get assigned to their default schools. However, in the 30 years since they were first introduced conclusions have been reached about aspects of the policies.

### Who Participates in Open Enrollment?

To a certain extent, parents with the means to do so can simply move to their neighborhood school of choice. In fact, in the 2019 National Household Education Survey NHES), one in five parents reported that they had done just that.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, participation in open enrollment programs is more likely for those who may have more limited resources or residential options. Research on programs across multiple states confirms this.

A 2015 study of the Michigan Schools of Choice (SoC) program found that historically disadvantaged students, in this case low-income and African American students, were the most likely to request an inter-district transfer.<sup>27</sup> A second Michigan study found the same, but also identified participating students as lower performing on state exams.<sup>28</sup> Early studies of Minnesota’s open enrollment program found that students were more likely to transfer from urban to suburban districts and from low-income to higher-income districts.<sup>29</sup> Minnesota’s rural districts were also more likely to experience a net gain of open enrollment students. An analysis of Wisconsin’s open enrollment program, which served over 70,000 students in 2021, found that with low-income districts experience the highest rates of outmigration.<sup>30</sup>

### How Do Families Choose an Open Enrollment School?

No surprisingly, most parents cite school quality as their primary reason for choosing to send their child to a public school other than the one assigned to them based on their address.<sup>31</sup> This is followed closely by school safety and school environment. Beyond that, families cite proximity to work, home or day care as reasons to request a transfer.

### What Is the Impact of Open Enrollment on Participating Students and Families?

The results of studies examining open enrollment’s effects on student outcomes also differ; for example, some studies detect evidence of higher academic achievement, while other studies find academic achievement unchanged or even lower.<sup>32</sup> However, studies examining the impact of open enrollment on parents typically find increased satisfaction with their child’s new school except with respect to transportation.<sup>33</sup> Many parents note the difficulty of their child’s transport to and from their new school. Regarding parent involvement in their child’s education

following their transfer, some studies detect an increase, some studies find no effect, and other studies find mixed effects (e.g., some forms of involvement increase whereas others decrease or remain unchanged).<sup>34</sup>

## What is the Impact of Open Enrollment on Participating Districts?

A common concern with open enrollment policies is that allowing students to leave low-performing schools will lead to greater racial and economic segregation. Some studies have found that, indeed, open enrollment can result in greater stratification by socioeconomic status and racial balance across schools.<sup>35</sup> However, a 2021 study of open enrollment in Wisconsin found that open enrollment can actually increase diversity in the receiving schools and districts.<sup>36</sup>

Some surveys and interviews indicate that administrators perceive positive changes in curriculum and instruction, educational programming, etc., as schools aim to become more competitive in the 'educational marketplace' created by open enrollment.<sup>37</sup> Others find that administrators see no such effects.<sup>38</sup>

Open enrollment also creates a financial impact. Sending districts lose funding (and the student) and receiving districts gain funding (and the student). However, a well-designed program can ensure that these transfers of dollars don't create disincentives for districts to participate.

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# STATE CASE STUDIES

We now turn to an up-close look at four states' inter-district open enrollment practices, focusing on state policies, public perception, and impacts on students' educational experiences. Arizona and Florida are known for their willingness to trust parents to choose how their children are educated.<sup>39</sup> Indiana and Ohio have been making inroads towards this goal.

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# ARIZONA

## State Policy

Arizona state law mandates both intra-district and inter-district open enrollment. In 1994, the Arizona State Legislature first passed the Arizona Revised Statute §15-816, which allowed students the opportunity to attend a school outside their neighborhood district boundaries without paying tuition.<sup>40</sup> Districts are allowed to enter into voluntary agreements for tuition payments with other educational institutions. This law also coincided with the allowance of charter school operation.<sup>41</sup>

Districts are responsible for establishing their own “admission criteria, application procedures, and transportation provisions.”<sup>42</sup> These procedures must be developed and adopted by each district’s governing board. However, Arizona state law outlines certain requirements and guidelines for accepting student enrollment. For example, Arizona requires that all districts reserve capacity for students within the district boundaries (i.e., “resident pupils”), students returning to the school from the previous year, and siblings of students already enrolled.<sup>43</sup> Districts may also give enrollment preference to and/or reserve capacity for students who meet the following criteria:<sup>44</sup>

- Pupils in foster care;
- Pupils who meet the definition of unaccompanied youth prescribed in the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act;
- Pupils who attend a school that is closing;
- Pupils who are children of persons who are employed by or at a school in the school district;
- Resident transfer pupils and their siblings; and
- Pupils who meet additional criteria established and published by the school district governing board pursuant to subsection A of this section.

Beyond these criteria, districts must accept all applications based on school capacity (i.e., classroom seats, staff availability). Districts must consistently and clearly update their current open enrollment status, including which schools and/or grade levels are accepting open enrollment students and which are at capacity. The district must then follow an “equitable selection process,” such as a lottery system, to select students from open enrollment applications.<sup>45</sup> Violations of open enrollment laws include:<sup>46</sup>

- School districts failing to give enrollment preference and reserve capacity for resident students, students returning to the same school from the prior year, or siblings of already enrolled students. School districts not selecting students through an equitable process if capacity is insufficient to enroll all students such as a lottery. School districts limiting admission based on ethnicity or race, national origin, sex, income level, disabilities, proficiency in the English language, or athletic ability.

Despite these efforts to create fair and equitable open enrollment processes, some gaps in district practices exist. Only recently did the Arizona State Senate introduce legislation to prohibit open enrollment discrimination toward students with disabilities.<sup>47</sup> Several news articles by Arizona parents outline the various open enrollment decisions their children have received; for example, one child without disabilities was admitted to their choice school, but their sibling with disabilities was denied admission based on “program capacity.”<sup>48</sup> Now with the recent Arizona State Senate bill (S.B. 1685), districts may not ask parents to disclose their students’ IEP status when applying for open enrollment.<sup>49</sup>

According to state law (Arizona Revised Statute §15-816.01), the Arizona Department of Education should provide reports of open enrollment transfer rates across the state:

“The department of education shall provide an annual report that informs the public and policymakers of the open enrollment participation rate by school district, school and county, including the number of pupils, by student subgroup designation, in each school and school district that are open enrolled as resident pupils, resident transfer pupils or nonresident pupils for each school district and the school districts and zip codes from which students are enrolling. By fiscal year 2022-2023, this participation report shall also include the number of pupils enrolled in charter schools and the school districts from which those pupils are enrolling.”<sup>50</sup>

However, report card data from the Arizona Department of Education indicates that neither the state nor individual districts consistently report student open enrollment transfers.<sup>51</sup> Several articles also state that, historically, the state has not tracked the number of families who participate in open enrollment and individual districts have not been required to track every student within their district boundaries.<sup>52</sup> However, some districts may choose to track open enrollment transfers to better understand enrollment patterns.

### FIGURE 2

Spotlight: Phoenix Union High School District

*Phoenix Union High School District demonstrates a common trend of developing specialized programming to attract open enrollment students*

## THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

In 2007, Phoenix Union High School District opened a specialty school called Bioscience High, which specifically offers students the opportunity to choose an engineering or biomedical pathway. The school has since become an A-rated school within the state

## Public Perception

Because Arizona has implemented open enrollment policies for almost three decades, various challenges and benefits have been identified over time. Advocates for open enrollment often cite the programmatic improvements schools and districts will often undergo in order to attract and retain students.<sup>53</sup> The increase in competition in turn affects districts’ accountability to provide innovative and strong educational opportunities for students. For example, districts often create specialty academic programs—“magnet programs” or schools—that support a certain academic subject or career pathway. Magnet schools can become schools of choice for students both within the district boundaries and outside, and the success of one program can often lead districts to create additional ones.

Choosing schools that best meet each students’ needs improves overall parent and student satisfaction. In fact, according to research from the Center for Education Reform (CER)—a school-choice advocate—Arizona ranks second in the nation for parent perceptions around school choice and innovation.<sup>57</sup> This school choice not only pertains to academic opportunities, but also to family situations. Particularly due to rapidly changing population settlements and housing markets, a recent news article highlights how people who move to or within Arizona tend to have positive perceptions of open enrollment because they can live in an area they can afford, but still send their student to their district of choice.<sup>58</sup>

and has an impressive record for sending students to college after graduation. In fact, an Arizona Board of Regents study from 2021 found that Bioscience High ranked sixteenth in the state for sending students to college—second among public school districts. Phoenix Union has since opened additional magnet schools, such as the Phoenix Coding Academy, which are highly rated on Niche.com.<sup>56</sup>

Sources: Ryman, A. “20 Years of School Choice: How Arizona Has Evolved.” The Arizona Republic, October 30, 2015. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/education/2015/10/30/arizona-education-school-choice-history/73409664/>; “Postsecondary Attainment Report: Fiscal Year 2021.” Arizona Board of Regents, November 18, 2021. p. 10. [https://www.azregents.edu/sites/default/files/reports/2021-postsecondary-attainment-report\\_0.pdf](https://www.azregents.edu/sites/default/files/reports/2021-postsecondary-attainment-report_0.pdf); “Phoenix Coding Academy.” Niche. <https://www.niche.com/k12/phoenix-coding-academy-phoenix-az/>

Students also pursue open enrollment transfers for both academic and non-academic opportunities. While Arizona open enrollment policies pertain only to academics, students may apply to schools to gain increased athletic or extracurricular opportunities. One news article examines the benefits a high-school football player received after transferring to a larger district with more opportunities to be scouted by college football coaches.<sup>59</sup> However, the Arizona Interscholastic Association has introduced new policies to limit the number of students who use open enrollment to pursue new opportunities just for athletics, particularly as the state law prohibits districts from basing open enrollment admissions upon athletic ability. Since 2016-2017, student-athletes who transfer to a new school must sit out at least 50 percent of an athletic season.<sup>60</sup>

While open enrollment proponents often speak of the equitable access to highly ranked schools, critics often take issue with this interpretation for a few reasons. As discussed in the earlier subsection, parents in Arizona have experienced perceived discrimination from districts denying their students' open enrollment application due to their disability. Additionally, critics may take issue with using school or district rankings to choose open enrollment opportunities. For instance, the U.S. News and World Report rankings of

elementary schools in Arizona “almost exclusively” use standardized tests to measure math and English/language arts achievement at a school. However, rankings that rely on test scores may not adjust for important factors, such as student poverty or diversity. In essence, if parent and student open enrollment choice is based primarily on school rankings and test scores, more students may be directed towards wealthier districts. Over time, this could have profound effects on lower-income communities and their districts.<sup>61</sup>

As Hanover discovered during its qualitative in-depth interview study, open enrollment may also affect the sense of communities within a district. One Arizona community member highlights the difficulties his district experiences with boosting morale at sporting events, because many of the athletes on the team are from different towns or cities.<sup>62</sup>

### Impact on Educational Experiences of Students

Given the statewide mandate allowing multiple forms of school choice through open enrollment, all students in Arizona are affected by open enrollment in some way. While the number of students participating in open

enrollment across the state is not publicly available, several sources indicate the rate of open enrollment at local levels. For example, a 2017 study analyzed the open enrollment rates within Maricopa County, which contains the Phoenix metropolitan area. When excluding public charter school enrollment, the Center for Student Achievement found that about 37 percent of students in the area participated in open enrollment (including inter- and intra-district).<sup>63</sup> Indeed, when analyzing the percentages of open enrollment participation across the study's nine attendance zones, results ranged from 15 percent to 57 percent of students.

Because school choice has become an established practice within the state of Arizona, it is necessary for schools and districts to market themselves to retain current students and attract new students. Additionally, families must take opportunities to “shop” around for the best educational institution that fits their students' needs. Students must consider several aspects of a given school's educational experience when choosing to enroll. The Arizona Charter Schools Association created the following “Parent Guide to School Choice,” which has been reproduced in Figure 3 below.

**FIGURE 3** Parent Guide to School Choice

*Parents and students must consider various factors about a district when utilizing school choice.*

<b>Performance</b>	The state annually grades all of Arizona's public schools (both district and charter). The letter grades, which range from A to F, can serve as a guide to how students perform on standardized tests.
<b>Grades Served</b>	If grade configuration is important to you and/or your child, then determine whether the school is a good match (K-6, K-8, etc.) for your expectations.
<b>Class Size</b>	Class size and student teacher ratios can have an impact on student learning. On the other hand, small schools can also have their limitations to resources and programs.
<b>Programs</b>	The school should have the types of programs (sports, art, music, etc.) that are most meaningful to your child.
<b>Learning Style</b>	Find a school that best fits your child's learning style or interests. Knowing if you're looking for a specific type of instructional program will help focus your search.
<b>Culture</b>	Every campus has a unique culture. Evaluate whether the school maintains a welcoming and safe environment, which should include high expectations for learning.

Sources: Figure reproduced verbatim from: “Parent Guide to School Choice.” Arizona Charter Schools Association. [https://education.azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/parent-guide-to-school-choice-combined\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://education.azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/parent-guide-to-school-choice-combined_2_0.pdf)

**TABLE 1** Counts by School Choice Option in Nine Maricopa County Attendance Zones

*Nearly 40 percent of Maricopa County students participate in open enrollment.*

Attendance Zone	Total K-12 Enrollment	District Open Enrollment	Charter School Enrollment	Total School Enrollment
1	50,961	14,324	6,730	21,054
2	17,719	6,969	2,770	9,739
3	34,497	8,912	6,187	15,099
4	7,311	1,131	3,705	4,836
5	7,776	4,462	1,799	6,261
6	12,451	4,815	1,237	6,052
7	6,736	1,619	365	1,984
8	19,561	6,973	2,401	9,374
9	2,811	729	301	1,038
<b>Total</b>	<b>159,823</b>	<b>49,934</b>	<b>25,503</b>	<b>75,437</b>

Sources: Powell, K. and I. Laczko-Kerr. “Are District Attendance Zones Obsolete?” Arizona Charter Schools Association, November 2, 2017. <https://azcharters.org/2017/11/02/are-district-attendance-zones-obsolete/>

## State Policy

Like Arizona, Florida mandates offerings of inter-district and intra-district open enrollment.<sup>64</sup> All school districts—and charter schools—must develop and adopt a “controlled open enrollment plan” that allows students the opportunity to enroll in the school of their choice, regardless of typical attendance boundaries.<sup>65</sup> Controlled open enrollment opportunities depend on the available capacity (e.g., class size) at receiving schools and typically accept applications using a lottery system. Districts and charter schools must define their capacity determinations and clearly post them on their respective websites.<sup>66</sup> Receiving districts are not required to provide transportation to any open enrolled students, but they may if they so choose.<sup>67</sup>

Notably, the Florida Legislature recently updated its controlled open enrollment laws. Beginning in 2017, inter-district and intra-district open enrollment shifted from being voluntary to mandatory for school districts and charter schools.<sup>68</sup> The new legislation also created enrollment priority lists districts need to follow when accepting open enrollment applications. These enrollment priorities, listed below, outline the four student groups who must be given “preferential treatment” by the receiving district.<sup>69</sup>

- Dependent children of active-duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders;
- Children who have been relocated due to a foster care placement in a different school zone;
- Children who move due to a court-ordered change in custody due to separation or divorce, or the serious illness or death of a custodial parent; and
- Students residing in the school district.

Districts also must address several aspects of the open enrollment process and adopt board-approved policies in line with state law. For example, students who attend a new school based on open enrollment will be eligible to remain in the school up to the highest grade level offered. The following bullet points list the additional priorities the state requires districts to consider:<sup>70</sup>

- Adhere to federal desegregation requirements;
- Allow parents to declare school preferences, including placement of siblings within the same school;
- Provide a lottery procedure to determine student assignment and establish an appeals process for hardship cases;
- Afford parents of students in multiple session schools preferred access to controlled open enrollment;
- Maintain socioeconomic, demographic, and racial balance;
- Address the availability of transportation;
- Allow transfer students to be immediately eligible to participate in extracurricular activities. However, students may not participate in a sport if the student participated in the same sport at another school during the school year, unless the student meets certain criteria; and
- Identify schools in the district that have not reached capacity.

According to the new legislation, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) requires districts to report the number of students utilizing controlled open enrollment and school choice; however, this data is not publicly available on FDOE’s website. In 2019, a news source found that only 48 of the 75 districts consistently reported their student open enrollment data over last three years.<sup>71</sup>

## Public Perception

Similar to Arizona, Florida ranks highly among school choice advocates. In fact, according to the CER Parent Power Index, Florida is the top-ranked state in the county for school choice opportunities, primarily due to its strong charter school and open enrollment laws.<sup>72</sup>

Some districts may be opposed to controlled open enrollment, however, based on financial and student performance impacts.<sup>73</sup> While each district receives local funding based on the students residing within its attendance boundaries, it will not receive additional local funding for any transfer students it accepts. As Hanover discovered in its qualitative study on open enrollment, communities may perceive non-resident students as utilizing district resources without paying for them through county taxes. At the same time, these districts will benefit from enrolling additional students because they will receive more state funding based on

their increased student enrollment count. On the other hand, districts who lose resident students to nearby districts and have a net negative enrollment rate may also oppose controlled open enrollment because they receive less state funding; these districts tend to be smaller and lower performing.<sup>74</sup>

Districts may also take advantage of the discretion given in the open enrollment laws around setting school capacity limits to protect “more desirable” schools. For example, while most Florida districts in Hanover’s qualitative study set capacity limits between 90-95 percent, some districts in the state set capacity much lower at 75 percent.<sup>75</sup> While the capacity limits can be developed for a number of reasons, lower limits do necessarily restrict access for non-resident students seeking to utilize open enrollment transfer opportunities.<sup>76</sup>

**FIGURE 4**

Florida Choice Scholarship Programs

*Florida offers several school choice scholarship opportunities.*

<b>Family Empowerment Scholarship</b>	<p><b>Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options</b> is based on family income and provides the option for K-12 students to attend a participating private school.</p> <p><b>Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities</b> will be effective July 1, 2022, as the updated McKay Scholarship Program (see below). Designed to offer families of students with disabilities, as young as 3 years of age, access to additional education options. Families may choose to enroll their student in another public school, or they may take the opportunity to receive a personal education savings account (ESA) for their student to fund not only items such as private school tuition and fees, but also online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses, and other approved customized learning services and materials.</p>
<b>Florida Tax Credit Scholarship</b>	Expands educational opportunities for children of families that have limited financial resources and to enable children in this state to achieve a greater level of excellence in their education, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program in 2001. The law provides for state tax credits for contributions to nonprofit scholarship funding organizations, (SFOs). The SFOs then award scholarships to eligible children of low-income families.
<b>McKay Scholarship</b>	Provides nearly 30,000 Florida students with special needs the opportunity to attend a participating private school or transfer to another public school. As of July 1, 2022, the McKay Scholarship Program has been replaced by the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program.
<b>Opportunity Scholarship</b>	Offers students who attend or who are assigned to attend failing public schools the option to choose a higher performing public school
<b>Hope Scholarship</b>	For students in grades kindergarten through 12 who are enrolled in a Florida public school and have been bullied, harassed, assaulted, threatened and or other violent acts to transfer to another public school or enroll in an approved private school

Sources: Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor alterations, from: [1] “K-12 Scholarship Programs.” Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/> [2] “Family Empowerment Scholarship.” Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2022. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/fes/> [3] “Florida Tax Credit Scholarships.” Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ftc/> [4] “McKay Scholarship.” Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/mckay/> [5] “Opportunity Scholarship Program.” Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/osp/> [6] “The Hope Scholarship.” Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/hope/>



## Impact on Educational Experiences of Students

Given the relatively recent statewide mandate of open enrollment, research and data about the impacts of open enrollment on students' educational experiences remain limited. However, a few sources reveal emerging trends of student enrollment patterns. For example, students generally transfer to high-achieving districts and schools. In one report, more than 90 percent of students in 2018 who utilized inter-district open enrollment transferred to "A" or "B" rated school districts.<sup>77</sup>

While not directly related to open enrollment, Florida does offer several scholarship opportunities that expand the school choice abilities of its students. Figure 4 describes the six school-choice scholarship programs Florida currently provides:

## INDIANA

*Note: Indiana uses alternate terms to describe various aspects of the enrollment process. Indiana tends to refer to open enrollment as transfer agreements, school districts as corporations, and home residences as legal settlement.<sup>78</sup>*

### State Policy

Indiana has more complex open enrollment laws than most other states benchmarked in this report. Inter-district and intra-district open enrollment is mostly voluntary across the state. The exception is Indianapolis Public Schools, which is required to accept both inter-district and intra-district transfers.<sup>79</sup> While it is not mandatory for districts to adopt a policy either accepting or rejecting open enrollment students, any district without a set policy would be required to accept students who meet certain enrollment criteria and apply for a transfer. If a school district does decide to accept inter-district open enrollment transfers and establish a policy, the district must establish and clearly publish the number of transfer students it will accept.<sup>80</sup>

All inter-district transfer requests are valid for only one school year; students must apply for an out-of-district transfer every year.<sup>81</sup> Students who wish to apply for inter-district open enrollment transfers have several criteria to meet before their application is accepted by a receiving district. First and foremost, parents must send in a written request to the choice district asking for their student's transfer to be accepted. Whether the transfer request is accommodated or not is up to the receiving district and its established capacity policies; the sending district (i.e., home district) does not have to "approve" the transfer.<sup>82</sup> The acceptable reasons for an open enrollment transfer request include:<sup>83</sup>

- Crowded conditions at the home district;
- Curriculum offerings at the high school level that are important to the vocational or academic aspirations of the student;
- Alternative education placement (per 2016 legislative update);
- Medical reasons; or
- If the student's home school is not fully accredited.

Indiana also outlines several priority enrollment criteria that participating and non-participating districts must accommodate. Districts may not deny enrollment based on academics or disability status, but they can deny or revoke enrollment to a student who has been suspended or expelled. For voluntary inter-district open enrollment, children of school personnel and siblings of a current student should be given priority acceptance to a choice district, if capacity allows. Even districts that do not typically accept open enrollment transfers must accept students who meet all of the following criteria:<sup>86</sup>

- The student attended a private school in the district's attendance area for at least the two preceding school years;
- The student is transferring because the student's resident district does not offer grades 9-12;
- The majority of students in the same grade at the nonpublic school of the transferring student are residents of the school district; and
- The district has capacity to accept students.

As noted above, these voluntary policies apply to all districts in the state except for Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). Historical records explaining the reasoning behind this stipulation are limited; however, school choice reforms specifically related to IPS improvement efforts first occurred between 1993 and 1995.<sup>87</sup> Currently, IPS has extensive intra-district choice opportunities as well as priority criteria (e.g., proximity to a choice school) during the enrollment lottery process.<sup>88</sup> IPS follows the same inter-district enrollment criteria listed above.

Indiana mandates all school districts to report the number of inter-district student transfers every fall and spring semester.<sup>89</sup> Each school district reports the total number of state-funded students residing within its boundaries, also known as "students with legal settlement." Then, the district also reports the number of students who transferred into or out of their district. These transfers can be identified as "public" or "non-public" transfers; public transfers include parent choice



**TABLE 2** Indiana Corporation Net Transfers

*Indiana's Fall 2020-2021 Transfer Report provides an example of student transfer data tracking and collecting.*

Corporation Name	State Funded Students with Legal Settlement	Resident Enrollee	Public Transfers: Incoming	Public Transfers: Outgoing	Net Public Transfers	Non-Public Transfers: Outgoing (Choice Scholarship)	Net Public and Choice Scholarship Transfers
North Lawrence Community Schools	4,639	4,182	106	357	-251	100	-351
Beech Grove City Schools	2,068	1,768	1,190	192	998	108	890
Indianapolis Public Schools	46,339	21,652	564	20,906	-20,342	3781	-24,123

Sources: Figure contents reproduced verbatim from: "Fall 2020-2021 Public Corporation Transfer Report." Indiana Department of Education, 2021. <https://www.in.gov/doe/files/Archived-Public-Corp-Transfer-Report.pdf>

through open enrollment or charter school enrollment, while non-public transfers include Indiana's voucher program, called the Choice Scholarship.<sup>90</sup> Table 2 below provides an example of a standard Transfer Report.

Notably, according to the Indiana General Assembly, districts have the option of charging out-of-district families tuition. Indiana's tuition policy varies significantly from all other states benchmarked in this report:

**“When the transferee school elects to charge tuition to the requesting parents or student, the tuition determined under subsection (b) must be paid by the parents or the student before the end of the school year in installments as determined by the transferee corporation...If the transferee school elects not to charge transfer tuition to the parents or student under this section, the transferee school may not charge transfer tuition or fees to the transferor school.”<sup>91</sup>**

## Public Perception

Particularly over the last decade, Indiana has made several improvements to its open enrollment policies. For instance, in 2013, Indiana passed an update to its open enrollment law (IC 20-26-11-32) that prohibited districts and schools from using certain admissions criteria to accept or deny student transfer applications.<sup>92</sup> Districts now are not able to use academic performance, test scores, most disciplinary records, disability, or any other factor besides capacity as a basis for admission. Severe student discipline infractions (i.e., consecutive suspensions, expulsions, unexcused absences) can still be used.<sup>93</sup> In the wake of the new law, several districts decided to stop allowing open enrollment transfers, citing the loss of local control.<sup>94</sup> However, educator and student reports of these very districts “cherry-picking” their students in the name of local control prompted Indiana lawmakers to create the law and expand school choice access in the first place.<sup>95</sup>

The state of open enrollment in Indiana several years ago was often one of decentralization and ambiguity. A 2015 qualitative study of IPS found significant barriers exist for parents wishing to utilize open enrollment at the district.<sup>96</sup> Chief among the barriers are a lack of transparency and communication regarding district policies, and parent frustration over not being aware of opportunities to transfer their children to alternate schools outside their assigned school. Additionally, the study found evidence of both covert and overt “screening” practices, wherein some IPS magnet schools and charter schools set strict admission criteria (e.g., admissions test, online application) or even delivered suspensions or expulsions to “hard-to-educate” students in order to shape the school’s student body.<sup>97</sup> However, the open enrollment process at IPS is now completely centralized online with greater transparency around lotteries, priority criteria, waiting lists, and application timelines.<sup>98</sup>

into or out of public school districts.<sup>101</sup> In other words, over 9 percent of the 1.03 million public school students enrolled in Indiana have utilized open enrollment, a marked increase from previous years.<sup>102</sup>

## Impact on Educational Experiences of Students

While Indiana allows districts to voluntarily opt in or out of accepting out-of-district transfers, virtually all districts are affected by open enrollment in some way. For example, even if a district does not accept transfer students, students from within the district may take open enrollment opportunities at a nearby district, thus affecting the home district.

Additionally, participation in inter-district open enrollment dramatically increased after 2008 when Indiana mostly eliminated local property taxes as a source of the general fund education revenue.<sup>99</sup> One report finds that inter-district open enrollment increased from 3,000 students in 2009 to more than 11,000 two years later.<sup>100</sup> According to the most recent Transfer Report from the Indiana Department of Education from the fall of 2021, over 105,000 students across the state utilized open enrollment to transfer

**State Policy**

Similar to Indiana, inter-district open enrollment is mostly voluntary across the state of Ohio.<sup>103</sup> However, Ohio mandates inter-district and intra-district open enrollment for students attending alternative schools.<sup>104</sup> Ohio requires all districts to develop inter-district and intra-district open enrollment policies; however, the voluntary aspect of the law allows districts the choice of adopting varying levels of open enrollment acceptance. Districts can choose from the following inter-district open enrollment policies:<sup>105</sup>

- Entirely prohibit enrollment of students from other districts;
- Permit the enrollment of students only from adjacent districts; or
- Permit the enrollment of students from all districts (i.e., statewide open enrollment).

All students who enroll under an open enrollment policy will not pay tuition fees.<sup>106</sup> If a district does participate in inter-district open enrollment, its board must adopt further policies for admitting students and notifying families of the application process. These policies include establishing capacity limits and priority application criteria (e.g., resident students). Districts can establish their own capacity limits based on various factors, including grade level, school building, and education programs.<sup>107</sup> The state, however, outlines specific priority criteria for districts to follow when accepting open enrollment students: resident students and previously-enrolled students will have priority acceptance over first-time applicants, and districts may deny enrollment to students “who have been suspended or expelled by the sending district for 10 consecutive days or more in the current or proceeding term.”<sup>108</sup>

Districts may not adopt policies that limit admission based on academic or extracurricular ability, proficiency in the English language, or disability. However, students with disabilities may be required to attend a different

district school than the student applied for based on where appropriate services are provided within the receiving district.<sup>109</sup> If a receiving district is unable to meet the needs of a student, then the student’s original “home” district remains responsible for providing services, either through physical services or funding the receiving district to provide the services.<sup>110</sup>

Notably, Ohio also requires all enrollment districts to establish procedures that “ensure that appropriate racial balance is maintained” in schools.<sup>111</sup> The state law, however, does not indicate the specifications of a racial balance or imbalance, leaving room for wide interpretation.<sup>112</sup> Districts who have voluntary procedures can limit open enrollment based on this provision; in this way, districts can also “object” to any of their students who apply for open enrollment in another district.<sup>113</sup> According to one district’s board policy, objecting to a student’s open enrollment choice will allow the district to keep the student’s allocated state funding, even if the student attends a different district.<sup>114</sup> More discussion on desegregation efforts and open enrollment is located later in this section.

Ohio requires participating districts to maintain several records and reports related to open enrollment. Essentially, districts need to show the Ohio Department of Education evidence of compliance with the multi-faceted open enrollment state law. Figure 5 outlines the various reports districts must send so the Ohio Department of Education can track open enrollment usage and monitor implementation.

**Public Perception**

Perhaps the most widespread perception of Ohio’s open enrollment practices relates to their impact on racial and economic segregation. Currently, over 90,000 students participate in inter-district open enrollment in Ohio.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, around 80 percent of districts across the state participate in voluntary open enrollment.<sup>116</sup> However, a 2017 study found that suburban districts around Ohio’s eight major cities—Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown—exclusively do not

**FIGURE 5** Ohio District Reporting and Monitoring Requirements  
*Ohio districts are required to maintain records of student transfer applications, admission procedures (including procedures to maintain racial balance), and enrollment data.*

Reporting and Monitoring Requirements	Description of Requirements
Each school district with an inter-district open enrollment policy shall maintain but not be limited to, the following records:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual student applications and a summary of those student applications for a school year;</li> <li>• Evidence of parental informational meetings; and</li> <li>• Evidence of notification of parents and school building administrators.</li> </ul>
Each school district shall provide the Ohio department of education with the following upon request:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written application and admission procedures and the application form used by the district;</li> <li>• Written procedure for establishing district capacity limits by grade level, school building, and educational program;</li> <li>• Written procedure to ensure that an appropriate racial balance is maintained in the district schools; and</li> <li>• Any complaints filed or received regarding its inter-district policy.</li> </ul>
A school district that has adopted a resolution permitting open enrollment shall report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the date specified in section 3317.03 of the Revised Code, the number of adjacent district, other district, or other district joint vocational district students enrolled, the classes or grade levels assigned, and dates of enrollment to the Ohio department of education. Each native student's date of enrollment in an adjacent or other district shall also be reported.</li> <li>• By the first day of September of each year, the number of adjacent district, other district, or other district joint vocational district students enrolled, the classes or grade levels assigned, and dates of enrollment to the superintendent of the student's native district. Students enrolling after said day shall be reported in a like manner.</li> </ul>
All school districts shall report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the fifteenth day of June of each year, to the Ohio department of education, the number of native students enrolled in adjacent or other school districts and in an adjacent or other joint vocational school district and the number of adjacent or other school district students and adjacent or other joint vocational school district students enrolled pursuant to section 3313.98 of the Revised Code. Student average daily membership shall be reported on the basis of full-time equivalence.</li> </ul>

Sources: Figure contents cited verbatim, with minor alterations, from: "Rule 3301-48-02 - Inter-district Open Enrollment Programs." Ohio Laws and Administrative Rules, June 28, 2018. <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-3301-48-02>

participate in open enrollment, effectively becoming “walled” districts.<sup>117</sup> Notably, while these eight cities serve many low-income students and more than 63 percent of students of color, the surrounding suburban districts have fewer than 18 percent students of color.<sup>118</sup> The study finds that non-open enrollment districts also exhibit some of Ohio’s highest achievement levels and affluence. As such, public perception generally perceives these suburban districts to be intentionally preventing students from nearby urban centers from enrolling and thus “perpetuat[ing] school segregation” and barring access to high-quality education.<sup>119</sup>

## Impact on Educational Experiences of Students

Unfortunately, voluntary inter-district open enrollment policies in Ohio have allowed affluent, high-achieving suburban districts to opt-out of accepting students from outside their district boundaries, thereby eliminating one of the core benefits of open enrollment policies: increasing access to high-quality education to students regardless of their residence. The aforementioned 2017 study found that non-participating districts enroll significantly more white students than Black and Hispanic students, as well as significantly fewer students classified as ELL, economically disadvantaged, or with disabilities.<sup>120</sup> Table 3 below shows this trend in Ohio Department of Education data from the 2013-2014 school year which includes the most recent publicly available data.

When students do have the opportunity to utilize open enrollment, studies show some promising impacts on student academic achievement. The 2017 report by the Thomas B. Fordham institute—a school-choice advocate—found moderate positive impacts of open enrollment on Ohio students. Notably, African American students who participated in open enrollment consistently made significant gains within the study period.<sup>121</sup>

Student participation in open enrollment in Ohio has gradually increased over time, but in general, Ohio lags behind other states listed in this report in terms of the percentage of students exercising open enrollment. For example, over 9 percent of Indiana’s total public school student population has utilized open enrollment, while under 5 percent of Ohio’s public-school students do the same.<sup>122</sup> Table 4 shows student enrollment data between 2013 and 2018:

As indicated earlier in this report, transportation is one of the largest barriers for students to access open enrollment. However, similar to Arizona, Ohio allows receiving districts to provide transportation to non-resident students in certain circumstances.<sup>123</sup> First, districts will transport non-resident students on a regular bus route within the district so long as the students can reach a bus stop within the district boundaries. Additionally, districts may establish stipends or reimbursements for low-income families to transport their transfer student(s) to and from these bus stops.<sup>124</sup> Finally, districts may be required to provide transportation to open enrollment students to be in compliance with existing desegregation plans.

**TABLE 3**

Ohio District Characteristics, By Open Enrollment Participation and Year

*Ohio’s suburban districts have historically denied open enrollment to students in urban city centers.*

Characteristic	No Open Enrollment	Open Enrollment Allowed from Adjacent Districts	Open Enrollment Allowed from Any Districts	“Big 8” Cities
Mean Enrollment	4,440	1,648	2,208	23,542
% Economically Disadvantaged	31.2	43.5	46.4	88.9
% White	74.1	91.4	88.8	28.9
% Black	14.8	3.9	4.0	54.7
% Hispanic	3.7	2.0	3.2	8.0
% Other Race	7.4	2.7	4.1	8.5
% With Disabilities	12.8	14.1	14.8	19.5
% ELL	2.3	0.4	0.9	5.5
Mean Reading Score	0.546	-0.018	-0.148	-2.240
Mean Math Score	0.497	0.027	-0.142	-2.133

Sources: Figure contents reproduced verbatim, with minor alterations, from: “Inter-district Open Enrollment in Ohio: Participation and Student Outcomes.” The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, June 6, 2017. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/research/inter-district-open-enrollment-ohio-participation-and-student-outcomes>

**TABLE 4**

District and Student Participation in Ohio’s Inter-District Open Enrollment Program (2013-2018)

*Student participation in open enrollment is slowly increasing in Ohio, but the state lags many of its peers due to its voluntary open enrollment policies.*

Year	Districts						Open Enrolling Students	
	Accept Open Enrollers from Any District		Accept Open Enrollers from Adjacent Districts		Do Not Accept Open Enrollers			
	Number	% of OH School Districts	Number	% of OH School Districts	Number	% of OH School Districts	Number	% of OH Public School Students
2013-14	424	70.5%	63	10.3%	118	19.2%	75,464	4.1%
2015-16	449	73.0%	50	8.1%	116	18.9%	82,141	4.4%
2016-17	482	73.9%	53	8.1%	117	17.9%	84,585	4.6%
2017-18	476	72.8%	56	8.6%	122	18.7%	86,484	4.7%

Sources: Figure contents quoted verbatim from: “Open Enrollment and Student Diversity in Ohio’s Schools.” The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, January 2021. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/research/open-enrollment-and-student-diversity-ohios-schools>



## STATE CASE STUDY KEY FINDINGS

- **Arizona and Florida have the least restrictive open enrollment state policies.** Both states mandate all public-school districts to adopt inter-district and intra-district open enrollment policies, resulting in widespread school choice freedoms for families. While Arizona has had nearly three decades of open enrollment history, Florida has only recently adopted mandatory inter-district open enrollment state policies.
- **Indiana and Ohio have more restrictive open enrollment environments because inter-district open enrollment is voluntary, in most cases.** Districts have the option to adopt policies accepting or rejecting open enrollment transfer applications. The states do outline certain instances wherein a district must accept inter-district open enrollment: Indiana mandates Indianapolis Public Schools allow inter- and intra-district open enrollment, and Ohio mandates the same for students in alternative education settings. While open enrollment transfers have steadily increased over the years in these two states, the percentage of students utilizing open enrollment falls between just 5 to 10 percent of the total public school student population.
- **Transportation is one of the greatest barriers that students face in exercising open enrollment opportunities.** None of the state policies analyzed in this report mandate that receiving districts provide transportation to open enrolled students; instead, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Some exceptions may exist in certain states for students from special populations, including students with disabilities or experiencing homelessness. However, Florida, Arizona, and Ohio state policies do reference various instances where a district can choose to offer transportation.
  - Florida districts have discretion as to whether they provide transportation to non-resident students.
  - Arizona districts must provide transportation of up to 20 miles each way to students with a disability or an individualized education plan (IEP). Additionally, districts can choose to offer “income-eligible” students with up to 20 miles of transportation if the student lives in a bordering district.
  - Ohio districts may offer open enrolled students transportation along a regularly scheduled bus route. District can choose to reimburse low-income families with transportation costs to and from the district bus route. Additionally, court-approved desegregation plans may require districts to provide transportation to open enrolled students.
  - Qualitative data from four participating districts in Arizona, Florida, and North Carolina offer “satellite” bus stops in various convenient locations across the district boundaries in which out-of-district and/or out-of-zone students can be dropped off and transported to their school of choice.
- **While open enrollment can cause certain issues of equity and access for all states in this report, states with voluntary inter-district open enrollment tend to struggle most.** Both Ohio and Indiana districts have a documented history and public perception of “cherry-picking” students they accept to maintain a high-achieving student body.
  - In Indiana, within the past decade, districts could accept or deny students based on their academic achievement, discipline records, and even test scores. After a state law banned this practice, many districts ceased to accept open enrollment transfers.
  - In Ohio, the affluent and suburban districts that surround the largest eight cities generally do not accept open enrollment students. These practices effectively bar students from within the urban centers—largely students of color and from low-income families—from benefiting from open enrollment opportunities.

## Findings from Administrator Interviews<sup>1</sup>

The following bullet points represent key findings from Hanover’s qualitative in-depth interview study with district administrators. These findings are based off of interviews with eight (8) district administrators from Arizona, Florida, Indiana, and North Carolina.

- **Most districts regulate inter- and intra-district enrollment solely based on classroom capacity (i.e., available seats).** Districts that receive a high number of open enrollment applications will often use a lottery system that prioritizes certain tiers, such as in-district residency, on-site school employment, scholarship opportunities, or sibling choice school enrollment. Most schools will accept student transfers until they reach 90-95% capacity. Districts demonstrating stagnant or declining enrollment, on the other hand, will often accept all student applications and will not run a lottery. Notably, Arizona districts may sometimes use criteria outside classroom seat capacity to accept enrollment applications, such as attendance, discipline, or academic records. All other participants in the other states perceive such criteria as antithetical to public school education, with the exception of reviewing previous expulsion or suspension records.
- **All participants agree that open enrollment positively impacts families’ and students’ educational experiences through school choice opportunities.** Families and students most often choose open enrollment based on the academic programming, but other common reasons for open enrollment transfers include district proximity to parents’ workplace, athletic programs, and various school climate aspects. In fact, many participants demonstrate an awareness that in order to retain and attract open enrollment students, their district must be welcoming and attentive to the needs of their stakeholders and the larger community. While many participants confirm the importance of giving parents/guardians educational choices, many especially highlight the importance of giving students a sense of agency and ownership over their own educational path.
- **Nearly all participants highlight the impact open enrollment has on district competition, program enhancement, and community engagement.** Participants often reference the need to “retain market share” through attracting students from nearby counties (e.g., from other public-school districts, charter schools, private schools). The heightened awareness has caused many school-sites to create new or enhance existing programs in order to increase and retain enrollment. Subsequently, districts and schools consistently demonstrate a strong utilization of marketing and communication strategies as they seek to market themselves and each school’s unique programs to families within and beyond district boundaries.
- **All participants speak to the challenges of maintaining a cohesive district system considering open enrollment and school choice policies.** Due to fluctuations in open enrollment demands, districts must constantly manage school resources and capacity, including staff, classroom space, transportation, finances, and materials. Moreover, participants explain the delicate balance districts must strike between accepting new out-of-district transfers and managing intra-district school choice transfers. To combat these challenges, districts will often limit or pause open enrollment application periods as well as set 90-95% capacity caps.
- **Open enrollment policies have the potential to erode community ties and neighborhood-school identities.** Neighborhood schools which offer specialized programs run the risk of attracting so many choice students that the school may have to operate as exclusively specialized to meet the demand, thus disenfranchising the neighborhood residents who may not wish to participate in the program. Additionally, some participants highlight instances in which families leverage open enrollment to avoid conflict resolution and relationship-building with school staff when students face social-emotional or disciplinary concerns.



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The extent to which an open enrollment program can benefit families and school systems is dependent upon the structure of the program. In this section, we discuss the implications of inter-district open enrollment practices, focusing on state policies. In addition, we provide action items for various stakeholders, including families, district policy leaders, state policy leaders, researchers, journalists, and advocates.

State policy leaders hold a great responsibility of shaping open enrollment policies and practices, and ultimately, the educational choices of U.S. students. While some states are currently more permissive of inter-district open enrollment than others, state policy leaders should consider the following implications when creating or reviewing open enrollment policies:

- **All inter- and intra-district choice programs should be mandatory.** With voluntary policies, districts have more discretion to shape their student enrollment and demographics by choosing to accept or deny student transfers. Creating provisions that allow more students—particularly those who would benefit from attending a higher-performing school—access to nearby open enrollment opportunities is not only better for all families, but it may reduce the current socioeconomic and racial inequities found in states with voluntary inter-district policies.
- **Reliable transportation remains a significant barrier for students wishing to take advantage of inter-district open enrollment opportunities.** Most state policies leave the responsibility with parents/guardians. Moving forward, state policy leaders should consider requiring transportation provisions within all state open enrollment policies. This is not to imply that yellow school buses must crisscross district lines to get every child where they choose to be. Rather, provisions could include reimbursing parents for transporting their own children, as is done in Wisconsin. Alternatively, pick up and drop off “kiss and ride” locations could be established and maintained that are shared across multiple districts.
- **Open enrollment should be offered to all students without conditions.** Regardless of their circumstances, there is a positive benefit of giving students the agency with which to decide their educational path. Access to superior academic programs can help struggling students. Proximity to work or childcare can ease family stress. Specialized academic programming can provide new opportunities for students to follow their passions and interests. The reasons are many and don’t apply to only some groups of students.
- **Funding flexibility is key.** Many existing state funding formulas are ill-equipped to allow students to move between districts without creating disincentives. For example, property-wealthy districts may be reluctant to accept students for only their state foundation formula amount. Ideally, these programs should have funding that is outside of the formula. In Wisconsin, there is a legislatively-determined amount (currently \$8,224) that follows each open enrollment student to the district of their choice. Their home district continues to count them in their enrollment and receive formula funding for them and they retain all local funding. Receiving districts receive an amount that is equivalent to state funding, plus some local funding. This funding could then be adjusted for student characteristics, such as low-income students, students learning English as a second language or students with IEPs.
- **If capacity is included as a restriction, open seats must be transparent and easy to find.** When a family moves into a school district, the district must enroll them regardless of capacity – so it can be done. However, most open enrollment programs do not require districts to make space for transfer students if it does not already exist. Several states, such as Arizona, Florida and Oklahoma, require districts to post their open seats by school, grade and program and to update those numbers on a specified schedule. This prevents districts using capacity as an excuse to deny a seat to an incoming transfer request. Policymakers should follow this approach when designing or improving an open enrollment program.

## Implications for District Policy Leaders

Open enrollment policies create an opportunity for district leaders to lean into the program and attract students, if growing their district and serving more students is a priority. District leaders should consider implications of open enrollment policies:

- **Available transportation highly influences student school choice options.** However, most state policies do not require districts to provide transportation to out-of-district students. The lack of access to transportation can disproportionately affect students from low-income families and ultimately prevent students from exercising their school choice. To address this issue, some districts offer satellite bus stops for out-of-district or out-of-zone transfer students. Understanding the limitations of fully transporting students from outside the district boundaries, districts can establish various, conveniently located satellite bus stops to encourage out-of-district families to enroll and to further increase the diversity within the district’s student population.
- **School culture, as well as academic programming, matter to potential transfer students.** Open enrollment opportunities invite districts to create more welcoming and positive environments to attract potential and retain currently enrolled students. Additionally, being fully transparent about each school’s unique culture, expectations, and programming will help open enrolled students verify their school choice is right for them. As such, district leaders should design a standard welcome and induction process for all open enrollment transfers. Training school staff to orient new families and create meaningful relationships will ultimately support efforts in community engagement and student retention.
- **Managing open enrollment requires a comprehensive approach of data tracking, forward-planning, and marketing.** Schools within a district must have a balanced allocation of specialized programs so as to avoid dramatic demands in open

enrollment applications for a minority of schools. For example, a district that operates only one “specialized” school or program may receive more open enrollment applications than other schools and thus create an imbalance of resources and demand. As such, each school should develop and market its unique programming to better spread the enrollment demand of students and thus the allocation of resources. In this way, districts can develop a multi-step, strategic plan to approach the management of open enrollment and intra-district school choice.

## Implications for Researchers

The current state of research regarding open enrollment remains rather limited and inconsistent. Areas with a lack of consensus include open enrollment’s impact on student academic achievement, district demographics, and school quality. Therefore, future research studies should seek to close these gaps through the following recommendations:

- **Analyze national and state data to further understand the potential correlation between open enrollment and student achievement relative to equity.** By conducting descriptive and predictive data analyses, researchers can explore the potential correlation between open enrollment and student achievement. The findings of such research could expand the current literature on open enrollment and school choice.
- **Conduct a review of policies to identify enrollment patterns among various student demographics.** Current research remains mixed over the impact of open enrollment on students of color or from low-income families; some studies find open enrollment expands access to high-quality education, while others find the opposite. Identifying patterns in the policies that foster greater inclusion and acceptance will help inform future initiatives in open enrollment policies.

- **Seek to collect data on resource allocation and the impacts of open enrollment through survey on school climate.** Focus groups with district administrators across the US may illuminate detailed trends regarding district competition, resource allocation, programming, and funding. Additionally, a nationwide survey to district administrators and parents/guardians could address both the internal and external impacts of open enrollment related to resources, support and climate and impact on school quality.

## Implications for Advocates

Open enrollment brings several benefits to students and parents in terms of school choice and educational opportunities. At the same time, current policies and practices can always be improved. Advocates can thus focus on the following implications:

- **Families may experience a lack of access to transportation when utilizing open enrollment.** In some cases, lack of reliable transportation to a school may cause students to be unable to exercise their school choice. Advocates can appeal to individual districts, public transit systems, and alternative organizations to improve transportation options for out-of-district students.
- **There is room for improvement for states and districts to foster more inclusive open enrollment practices.** Some state policies have historically allowed districts to engage in exclusionary practices that limit certain students from participating in open enrollment, such as permitting districts to “cherry-pick” students among open enrollment applications or set restrictive classroom capacity limits. Advocates for expanding school choice opportunities for families can appeal to state policy leaders to examine and revise current open enrollment laws.

## CONCLUSION

There is a clear trend, both stated and demonstrated, in public education in the United States away from accepting a school assigned to children based on their address and towards choosing a school that best fits their needs. A well-designed open enrollment system, in which parents can choose any public school with acceptable transportation availability and adequate funding, works with that trend rather than trying to turn back the clock to when every district was given a geographic monopoly. Not only does this meet parents on the road to which they’re headed anyway, it can mitigate the failed efforts of state and federal policymakers to distribute educational resources to districts in a fair and equitable manner. Equality of opportunity comes not from trying to level the playing field between bureaucratic institutions, but from circumventing the institutions and empowering those whom they serve.

Massive upheavals like a global pandemic may speed up the process. But, it’s the steady momentum from children whose parents chose their school growing up to be parents who fully expect to choose their child’s school and from parents moving from states with mandatory public school choice to those without it asking why that is making school choice the default, not the exception.

<sup>1</sup>Note: Qualitative research is exploratory and designed to add insight and a depth of understanding to a particular question or topic. Qualitative findings provide commonalities and trends but are not intended to be statistically significant or to provide generalizable conclusions.

# APPENDIX 1

## State Inter-District Choice Policies

State	Interdistrict	Mandatory	For Who
Alabama	Not specified.	-	It is permitted if a student enrolled in a failing school is unable to enroll in a nonfailing school within their districts.
Alaska	Not specified.	-	-
Arizona	Yes	Yes	Up to school capacity which must be updated every 12 weeks.
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity. Transfers must not exceed 3% of enrollment, except for students in foster care or students assigned to an "F" school. Students in districts classified as being in facilities distress may transfer to districts not in facilities distress.
California	Yes	Yes	Students in low-achieving can transfer to higher achieving schools in another district. District can reject for program, class, grade, building capacity or adverse financial impact. Students who are bullied can transfer and only be rejected for capacity. Students in active-duty military families and bullied students are guaranteed transfers regardless of district limitations. Otherwise voluntary, but districts must register as a school district of choice. Sending districts may limit transfers if transfers out exceed a threshold or if they affect district financial stability.
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity.
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	In four regions in the state. Programs are operated by regional educational service centers.
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Student may be rejected for capacity if at 85% +.
District of Columbia	N/A	N/A	-
Florida	Yes	Yes	Districts must determine capacity and post on website.
Georgia	Yes	No	Districts may allow if the transportation time to the student's assigned school is 45 minutes longer than the receiving and the distance to the students assigned school is at least 15 miles further than the receiving school.
Hawaii	N/A	N/A	-
Idaho	Yes	Yes	Districts may decide not to accept transfer students but cannot prevent students from transferring out. Otherwise, up to capacity.
Illinois	No	Not permitted.	-
Indiana	Yes	No	Districts can participate or not.
Iowa	Yes	Yes	Districts must accept up to capacity.
Kansas	Yes	No	Two or more districts can enter into an open enrollment agreement for up to five years.
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	Every district must have a policy for accepting transfer students up to capacity.
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Mandatory up to capacity for students in D or F schools to go to A, B, or C schools. Otherwise voluntary for school districts that opt to accept transfer students and for students at least an hour from their assigned public school.
Maine	Yes	Yes	For students in districts with no elementary or secondary school appropriate to the age of the student or with 10 or fewer students. Also for high school students if their school does not offer two foreign language courses.
Maryland	Not specified.	-	-
Massachusetts	Yes	No	Districts can decide to participate or not.
Michigan	Yes	No	Districts can decide to participate or not.
Minnesota	Yes	No	Districts can decide to participate or not. They can limit enrollment of transfer students to one percent of total enrollment.
Mississippi	Yes	Yes	District employees' children may transfer and students living more than 30 miles from their assigned public school.
Missouri	Yes	Yes	If a district does not have a high school offering instruction through 12th grade students can transfer to an accredited high school in another district. Otherwise, districts are allowed to create cooperative agreements with another district. Receiving districts may deny transfers who live more than 10 miles from the receiving district or if the physical structure of their assigned school is closer than the one in the receiving district.
Montana	Yes	Yes	Out-of-district attendance agreements are mandatory in the following situations: when a student lives closer to a school of their choice in the receiving district, and more than 3 miles from the school the child would attend in the district they reside in; when geographic conditions between a student's house and the school that child would attend in their district make attendance impractical, as determined by the county transportation committee following specified criteria; when the student is a member of a family that must send another child outside of the district; when the student is under the protective care of a state agency; or when the child is required to attend school outside of the district as a result of foster care placement. Trustees of a receiving district may disapprove an out-of-district attendance agreement if they find that, because of insufficient room and overcrowding, the accreditation of the school would be affected by the acceptance of the child - unless the child is a child with a disability.
Nebraska	Yes	Yes	Districts may accept or reject transfer students for "specified regulations, requirements, and adopted standards."
Nevada	Yes	Yes	A student who resides on a reservation located in two or more counties must be allowed to attend the school nearest to his or her residence. Otherwise voluntary.
New Hampshire	Yes	No	Districts may designate one or more schools as open enrollment for students from outside the district.
New Jersey	Yes	No	Sending districts may limit transfers to 10% of students per grade level and 15% of total enrollment per year.

# APPENDIX 1

## State Inter-District Choice Policies *(continued)*

State	Interdistrict	Mandatory	For Who
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	For students in F schools for 2 of the last 4 years. Otherwise voluntary.
New York	Yes	No	A voluntary inter-district urban-suburban transfer program, allowing school districts to accept students from another school district to reduce racial isolation. Districts seeking to be approved for such a program must complete the following requirements: demonstrate that the program will reduce racial isolation; receive assurances from participating district superintendents that nonpublic school students in the district will have the opportunity to participate if this would contribute to reducing racial isolation; and provide assurances that specified pupil participation requirements will be met.
North Carolina	No	Not permitted.	-
North Dakota	Yes	No	-
Ohio	Yes	No	School districts must adopt a policy prohibiting enrollment from students in adjacent or other districts; permitting enrollment from adjacent districts only; or permitting enrollment from adjacent or other districts. The policy must include application procedures and district capacity limits by grade level, school building, and education program.
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	The Education Open Transfer Act allows students to transfer to another school at any time, provided the district has capacity. Students may transfer to other districts with the approval of the receiving district's board of education, and boards must automatically approve transfers for students seeking to enroll in a grade not offered by the sending district. Participating school districts must create policies for accepting or rejecting transfer applications, including criteria about the availability of programs, staff, or space.
Oregon	Yes	No	The district school board may contract with the district school board of any other district for the admission of pupils in schools of the other district. The contract shall be in writing upon forms furnished by the Department of Education. An expense incurred shall be paid out of the school funds of the district sending such pupils that are nonresidents.
Pennsylvania	Yes	No	-
Rhode Island	Yes	No	-
South Carolina	Yes	No	If school children in one county reside closer to schools in an adjacent county, they may attend such schools upon the school authorities of the county of their residence arranging with the school officials of the adjacent county for such admission and upon payment of appropriate charges as herein authorized.
South Dakota	Yes	Yes	Local school boards must create standards for accepting and rejecting applications, which may only address the capacity of a program, class, grade level or school building. Local school boards accept applications and must grant transfer requests unless the transfer would violate the receiving district's standards or unless the receiving district cannot meet the student's special education services.
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	A school district shall not admit a nonresident student seeking to transfer into the LEA from outside the LEA before all applications for transfer have been acted upon. A school district may enroll a nonresident student who is the child of a parent who teaches at the respective school before all applications for transfer.
Texas	Yes	No	-
Utah	Yes	Yes	"School boards of receiving districts must adopt policies governing acceptance and rejection of transfer applications and designate which schools and programs are available for open enrollment during the following school year. Schools are open for enrollment of nonresident students if the school's enrollment level is at or below the open enrollment threshold, although school boards may allow nonresident students in schools operating above the threshold. Standards for accepting or rejecting may include: <b>Lack of capacity in a grade level (for elementary schools) or other special program, Maintaining reduced class sizes, Maintaining a heterogeneous student body.</b> "
Vermont	Yes	Yes	Only for high school students. Districts must set guidelines that include limits based on financial impact and the capacity of the program, class, and building.
Virginia	Not specified.	-	-
Washington	Yes	No	"A district is strongly encouraged to honor the request of a parent or guardian for his or her child to attend a school in another district or the request of a parent or guardian for his or her child to transfer as a student receiving home-based instruction. A district shall release a student to a nonresident district that agrees to accept the student if: financial, educational, safety, or health condition affecting the student would likely be reasonably improved as a result of the transfer; or <b>Attendance at the school in the nonresident district is more accessible to the parent's place of work or to the location of child care; or, There is a special hardship or detrimental condition; or, The purpose of the transfer is for the student to enroll in an online course or online school program offered by an online provider</b> "
West Virginia	Yes	No	-
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	"All school districts must adopt policies for accepting and rejecting interdistrict transfers and determine the number of spaces available. Criteria may include availability of space in schools, programs, classes, or grades. Districts may also consider class size limits, student-teacher ratios, and enrollment projections. Sending districts may limit the number or percentage of resident students transferring to other school districts. Open enrollment applications and determinations must follow a timeline specified by the state. Students may only apply for open enrollment in three nonresident districts per application period. The following students may apply for open enrollment at any time: <b>Students who have been a victim of violent crime, Students who have experienced bullying or harassment, Students relocating as a result of military orders, Students who have relocated to the state in the past 30 days, Students who have relocated due to a change in custody or because the pupil was placed in or removed from foster care., Students who have received approval for a transfer deemed in their best interest by a parent or LEA</b> "
Wyoming	Yes	No	-



# APPENDIX 1

## State Intra-District Choice Policies

State	Intradistrict	Mandatory	For Who
Alabama	Not specified	-	-
Alaska	Not specified	-	-
Arizona	Yes	Yes	Up to school capacity which must be updated every 12 weeks.
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity. Students in "F" schools must be notified that they may transfer to nearest non-F school to their residence.
California	Yes	Yes	Students in low-achieving can transfer to higher achieving. District can reject for program, class, grade, building capacity or adverse financial impact. Students who are bullied can transfer and only be rejected for capacity.
Colorado	Yes	Yes	-
Connecticut	Yes	No	-
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Student may be rejected for capacity if at 85% +.
District of Columbia	Yes	Yes	Done by lottery. Chancellor sets standardized practice for determining number of lottery seats.
Florida	Yes	Yes	Districts must determine capacity and post on website.
Georgia	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity. Parents must notify parents annually of this option.
Hawaii	Yes	No	-
Idaho	Yes	Yes	-
Illinois	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity.
Indiana	Yes	Yes	-
Iowa	Not specified	-	-
Kansas	Not specified	-	-
Kentucky	Not specified	-	-
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Mandatory up to capacity for students in D or F schools to go to A, B, or C schools. Otherwise voluntary.
Maine	Not specified	-	-
Maryland	Not specified	-	-
Massachusetts	Not specified	-	-
Michigan	Yes	Yes	Mandatory for schools unaccredited for 3 consecutive years. Otherwise voluntary.
Minnesota	Not specified	-	-
Mississippi	Not specified	-	-
Missouri	Yes	No	-
Montana	Not specified	-	-
Nebraska	Not specified	-	-
Nevada	Not specified	-	-
New Hampshire	Yes	No	-
New Jersey	Not specified	-	-
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	For students in F schools for 2 of the last 4 years. Otherwise voluntary.

# APPENDIX 1

## State Intra-District Choice Policies *(continued)*

State	Intradistrict	Mandatory	For Who
New York	Not specified	-	-
North Carolina	No	Not permitted	-
North Dakota	Not specified	-	-
Ohio	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity for grade level, building, and educational level.
Oklahoma	Not specified	-	-
Oregon	Not specified	-	-
Pennsylvania	Not specified	-	-
Rhode Island	Not specified	-	-
South Carolina	Not specified	-	-
South Dakota	Yes	Yes	Up to inability to provide a quality educational program.
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	Up to capacity.
Texas	Yes	Yes	Mandatory for students who attend a school with an unacceptable performance rating. Otherwise voluntary.
Utah	Yes	Yes	-
Vermont	Yes	Yes	Only for high school students. Districts must set guidelines that include limits based on financial impact and the capacity of the program, class, and building.
Virginia	Yes	No	-
Washington	Yes	Yes	-
West Virginia	Yes	No	-
Wisconsin	Yes	No	-
Wyoming	Not specified	-	-

# APPENDIX 2

## Impacts of Open Enrollment, 1990–2015

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Abstract
"Dynamic Participation in Inter-district Open Enrollment: Evidence from Michigan 2005-2013"	J. Cowen, B. Creed, and V. Keesler	The Education Policy Center at Michigan State University	2015	Research Organization Report	Neutral	"This paper considers the determinants of student participation in Michigan's large inter-district open enrollment system, known as Schools of Choice (SoC). Employing a rich dataset from the Michigan Department of Education, we examine the population of public school students in resident and non-resident school districts between the 2005-06 and 2012-13 academic years. We find substantial evidence that historically disadvantaged students are those most likely to participate in Schools of Choice: African American students and low-income students are more likely than their peers in their resident districts to make an inter-district transfer; they are, however, also the most likely among other Schools of Choice participants to exit the program. In addition, students who are relatively low-performing on the state's standardized exam--especially in mathematics--are most likely to both participate in Schools of Choice and, among participants, the most likely to exit. We conclude by noting that these patterns are similar to those found among the determinants of more general forms of student mobility."
Districts Say Convenience for Parents, Not Competition, Is Result of Open Enrollment	Not Specified	Public Policy Forum	2002	Research Organization Report	Negative	"Wisconsin's Open Enrollment program, which policymakers hope will improve educational performance by introducing competition to public schools, allows students to enroll in any district in the state, provided space is available. First implemented in the 1998-1999 school year, the program now includes 1% of all Wisconsin K-12 students. In its first year, 2,464 students transferred districts. In 2001-2002, a total of 8,390 students transferred, a 240% growth in four years. This Public Policy Forum survey of school district administrators finds few that view Open Enrollment as an incentive to compete for students by improving their educational offerings or performance. Half of the respondents feel Open Enrollment does not make public schools more competitive and three-fourths feel it does not improve education in their district. Parental convenience is the most commonly cited reason administrators give for student participation in the program. Changes that administrators would like to see include: (1) Less paperwork; (2) Count transfer students as residents for aid purposes; (3) Simplify special education costing; (4) Extend enrollment timeframe; (5) Enforce compliance by parents; (6) Create a wait list; (7) Enforce compliance by districts; and (8) Fund actual per pupil costs of receiving district. Seven percent of responding administrators indicate that no change is needed, and 11% would prefer to see the program eliminated."
Meaningful Competition? A Study of Student Movement under Interdistrict Open Enrollment in Ohio.	F.C. Fowler	American Educational Research Association	1996	Conference Paper	Mixed	"This paper presents findings of a study that analyzed participation patterns and the movement of students and state funds in Ohio during the 1993-94 school year, the first year during which Ohio's interdistrict open-enrollment law was fully implemented. The theoretical framework for the study was drawn from economics and business theories of markets and competition. Methodology included analysis of government records based on Ohio Department of Education data. The findings suggest that the "educational market" is an imperfect one in which it will be difficult to achieve meaningful competition in certain contexts. One of the major effects of Ohio's interdistrict open-enrollment policy was to move state funds away from school districts that served relatively larger percentages of poor and minority children. The study raises serious doubts about the potential for underfunded school-choice policies to bring about meaningful competition in large metropolitan areas. It also suggests that the most vulnerable districts under such choice policies may be small and medium-sized city districts that have higher percentages of poor and minority children than their neighbors. Meaningful competition and education improvement may, however, occur in rural areas. There is a need for longitudinal studies of school choice in a variety of contexts, similar to those that have been conducted in the United Kingdom."
Hidden Consequences of School Choice: Impact on Programs, Finances, and Accountability	L. Jimerson	American Educational Research Association	1998	Conference Paper	Mixed	"This study examined how eight rural, high-impact Minnesota school districts (defined as those losing or gaining a high percentage of student population due to school-choice implementation in fiscal year 1995) responded to school choice policy. Data from semistructured interviews with each district's superintendent were sorted and analyzed. In each case, financial shifts in revenue due to school choice have substantially affected programs, staffing, and resources. High-loss districts reported increased class sizes, elimination of specific academic programs, and cuts in extracurricular offerings. High-gain districts were able to decrease class size, expand field trips and curricula, and equip schools with the latest technology. Also, high-loss districts have shouldered proportionally more special-education costs, leaving less money available for regular programs. Some parents use the threat of school choice transfer as a bargaining chip in power struggles. Open enrollment opens schools to harsher criticism. Some superintendents view neighboring district heads as rivals, not colleagues. Choice, a "fait accompli," seems a nonissue for tenured teachers. The requirements of a voluntary free-exchange system or competitive market model may not conform with the reality of school choice policy as implemented in Minnesota."
Participation of Different Categories of Students with Special Needs in Enrollment Options	J.E. Ysseldyke and C.M. Lange	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1992	Research Organization Report	Neutral	"A random sample of Minnesota school districts participated in a study that examined the participation rates of students with disabilities in school choice options and tuition agreements. Surveys were sent to 100 Directors of Special Education; the response rate was 74%. The Directors of Special Education were asked to document the number of students with disabilities transferring in or out of their districts by means of open enrollment, high school graduation incentives (HSGI), tuition agreements between boards, and any other enrollment option. A large majority of students with disabilities were found to be transferring school districts using tuition agreements. Students demonstrating emotional/behavioral disorder were found to be the largest disability group (31%) transferring schools and utilizing both open enrollment and tuition agreements between boards. The greatest number of students (73%) were transferring schools using tuition agreements between boards. Very few participants used the HSGI option to transfer schools. Significant differences were found in participation rates between districts of differing enrollments with districts having enrollments over 20,000 also having the greatest percentage of students transferring in. Possible reasons for the high numbers of students with emotional and behavior disorders are discussed."
Minnesota's Open Enrollment Option	M.C. Rubenstein et al.	Policy Studies Associates, Inc.	1992	Research Organization Report	Positive	"This document examines the implementation and early effects of Minnesota's open-enrollment option, which allows families to apply to enroll their children in a public school in any nonresident school district in the state. During 1989-90, surveys were mailed to 2,663 participating families, 1,966 secondary school students, and all 432 district superintendents. Usable responses were received from 1,377 families, 645 students, and 338 superintendents. Findings indicate that very few of the participating districts reported significant changes in their enrollments. Also, the information dissemination strategies used most often by districts were not the most effective means of reaching minority families. Parents identified the school's academic reputation as the most important reason for using the open-enrollment option. However, minority parents also considered the availability of child care and extracurricular activities, while low-income families were concerned with school proximity. Overall, the initial impacts appear to be modest, but in a positive direction. Other trends include a slight migration of families from urban to suburban districts and from lower-income to higher-income districts, and ambiguities that exist between regulations for federal categorical programs and state interdistrict choice programs."
The Status of School Choice in Arizona 1991-92	Not Specified	Arizona Department of Education	1992	Government Report	Mixed	"In recent years, open enrollment and school choice have been major issues in the debate over educational reform. Arizona is considering what role school choice should play in its efforts to improve education. Current state law allows school districts to enroll students from another district "upon terms such as it prescribes," but does not cover the transfer of students between schools within a district. The Arizona Department of Education conducted a survey of enrollment characteristics in the state's 221 school districts. School districts reported 10,115 inter-district student transfers and 29,971 intradistrict transfers. Statewide enrollment is 683,648. The highest intra- and inter- district transfers were reported in the Phoenix and Tucson areas. The most common reason cited for interdistrict transfers was general academics followed by proximity to home, work, or day care. Availability of specialized programs was the most common reason cited for intradistrict transfers. The ethnicity of interdistrict transfer students, both statewide and in specific districts, is different from the overall ethnic composition of the state's public school enrollment. Most district superintendents support open enrollment, and the majority of districts can accommodate additional nonresident students."
Looking at School Choice: Parents' Comments on Open Enrollment and Their Children with Disabilities	J.E. Ysseldyke et al.	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1992	Research Organization Report	Positive	"Ninety-nine parents of students with special needs who participated in Minnesota's 1990-91 open enrollment program responded to a survey item which asked for their comments on their child's participation in the program. Twelve broad topics were identified within the content of these responses: teacher/administration attitudes, transportation/location of schools, educational programs for special student needs, students' attitude and behavior change as a result of transfer, social and educational continuity for the student, changes in students' academic performance as a result of transfer, social environment of schools, responsiveness of school administrators, parent empowerment, physical environment of the school and funding, effectiveness of teachers, and curricula and extracurricular activities of schools. The majority of respondents reported satisfaction with the open enrollment program. Responses of parents of students with disabilities (n=80) are compared to responses of parents of students served in gifted programs (n=19), and responses of parents living in rural areas (n=47) are compared to responses of parents in urban and suburban areas (n=52)."

# APPENDIX 2

## Impacts of Open Enrollment, 1990–2015 (continued)

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Abstract
Capitalization under School Choice Programs: Are the Winners Really the Losers?	R. Reback	The National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education at Columbia University	2002	Research Organization Report	Mixed	"This study identified the capitalization effects of public school choice programs, using data on an inter-district, open enrollment program in Minnesota. The study examined changes in property tax bases in Minnesota as a result of the shift from local monopolies of public schooling to open enrollment. It investigated the effect of transferring patterns in the first school year of statewide open enrollment (1990-91) on changes in property tax bases between 1989-90 and 1996-97. Data came from the Minnesota Department of Families, Children, and Learning's "School District Profiles," district level student transferring data, and the 1990 School District Databook based on the 1990 Census. Results indicated that property tax bases declined in desirable districts that accepted transfer students, while property tax bases increased in districts where students were able to transfer to preferred districts. The capitalization effects were of sufficient magnitude that a district losing students because of transferring did not actually lose much financially, or may have even had a moderate gain, as a result of school choice. The converse was true for districts gaining transfer students."
Charter Schools as a Response to Student Drop-Out Phenomena in the Regular Public Schools	M.L. Supley	American Educational Research Association	2001	Conference Paper	Positive	"Extensive studies over a long period have shown that students have chosen to drop out of school for a variety of reasons. These studies range from a general look at student dropouts to those that focus on specific groups. This paper reports primarily on "At Risk of Dropping Out" data derived from the Texas Education Agency Reports. Selected agency tables from these reports are reproduced in the appendices. The Texas Education Agency data presented in appendices 2 through 9 give a clear indication of the role of the charter-school movement as one response to the "at risk/drop out" student. It does appear that charter schools do serve as a dropout intervention to some degree."
Participation in Ohio's Interdistrict Open Enrollment Option: An Investigation of the Supply-Side of Choice	F.C. Fowler	American Educational Research Association	1995	Conference Paper	Mixed	"People inspired by rational-choice theory are advocating choice policies. Their recommendations are based on implicit assumptions about how school leaders would respond to a choice system. This survey research study investigated the demographic characteristics of open and closed districts during Ohio's first year of full interdistrict open enrollment. It also investigated the reasons superintendents gave for their district's decision to open or remain closed. The following demographic characteristics typified open districts: declining enrollment, rural location, low enrollment, racial homogeneity, and/or below-average per pupil expenditure. In contrast, closed districts were typified by above-average per pupil expenditure, suburban location, growing enrollment, and/or a minority enrollment of 11 to 20%. The superintendents indicated that lack of space and financial considerations (not academic quality) were their major concerns. These findings partially supported the assumptions of rational-choice theorists, but also suggested that those assumptions may not be valid in areas where significant social stratification along income and race lines has occurred."
Recent Experience with Urban School Choice Plans	P.W. Cookson, Jr. and S.M. Shroff	ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education	1997	Government Report	Mixed	"School choice plans have been widely adopted, and most urban areas have a limited choice plan of some sort. This digest presents an overview of different choice strategies by reviewing the experiences of several urban areas. Minnesota has statewide open enrollment for all students, making all public schools throughout the state open to all students, provided that the receiving school has room and the transfer does not harm racial integration efforts. In 1995, 15% of the state's students participated in various school choice programs. There is mixed evidence about the impact of this program, but it appears that there is little validity to the theory that choice prompts schools and districts to reform programs to meet the demands of families. New York City has instituted a policy of citywide choice. Parents may transfer their children to any city public school if space is available, but the program has received little publicity, and is not widely known. Some districts have published their choice plans, and others rely on magnet schools to promote school choice. In Massachusetts, choice has primarily been a means to achieve racial and ethnic balance in the schools. Acknowledging the negative effects of a choice system based only on magnet schools, the state has expanded its early efforts to include other choice options. The controlled choice option in Boston (Massachusetts) divides the city into three geographic areas for elementary and middle school assignment, but high school choice is citywide. Critics feel that there are so many controls for race, ethnicity, and gender that real school choice by parents is compromised. In Milwaukee (Wisconsin), a voucher system has provided educational alternatives to many low-income students. Pilot voucher programs in other cities are being implemented, and early reports indicate that they can increase educational effectiveness and opportunity, as do other school choice plans."
The Participation of Students Who Are Identified as Gifted and Talented in Minnesota's Open Enrollment Option	M.Y. Lau et al.	Journal for the Education of the Gifted	1994	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"The extent to which students who were identified as gifted and talented participating in Minnesota's Open Enrollment Option was investigated. Information was drawn from surveys on 26 students who were identified as gifted and talented and transferred to nonresident schools through Open Enrollment during the 1990–91 school year. Parental involvement in school before and after the transfer, reasons for transferring, and other experiences in exercising the option were studied. The results were compared to those of students without special needs (n=60). Parents of students with special talents moderately increased their involvement at their chosen school. Academic and educational concerns were some of the main reasons that prompted these students to transfer. The most valuable sources of information about the option were the mass media and the school principal. Most parents expressed satisfaction with the option-, yet, many experienced transportation problems. Important applications for these findings were discussed."
What Really Happened? Minnesota's Experience with Statewide Public School Choice Programs	W. Lowe Boyd, D. Hare, and J. Nathan	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	2002	Research Organization Report	Positive	"This report examines what has happened since 1985 with four statewide Minnesota public school choice laws. These include open enrollment, postsecondary enrollment options, second chance options, and charter public schools. Data collected over 2 years via interviews with and surveys of key stakeholders, including students at postsecondary institutions, indicated that the number of students participating in Minnesota's statewide public school choice options increased substantially from 1985 to 2001-2002. The greatest growth occurred in alternative schools serving students who were not succeeding in traditional secondary schools. While second chance programs served the most students, they were possibly the least examined of the options. Many stakeholders agreed that public school choice options were now widely accepted and generally had beneficial effects. Some schools and districts had changed, at least in part, due to the effects of choice programs. Participants in choice programs expressed great satisfaction. The report notes that several modifications are urgently needed, and if they are not made, state money will not be spent effectively and students will suffer. It recommends that Minnesota retain, strengthen, and improve choice options."
A Comparison of Families of Students with and without Disabilities Who Use Open Enrollment Options To Transfer Schools	J.E. Ysseldyke et al.	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1992	Research Organization Report	Mixed	"A survey was conducted of Minnesota families of students with disabilities (n=60) and without disabilities (n=60), and responses were compared to identify practices related to public school choice. Results indicated that the media were the primary source of information for families of general education students, while principals and teachers were the main source for special education students. Primary reasons for changing schools were quality of services, the new school's location, academic and athletic reputation, course variety, and climate for learning. For the most part, the reasons for transfer identified by families of students with and without disabilities were similar. School personnel seldom participated in transfer decisions by families of students without disabilities, but were heavily involved in such decisions for students with disabilities. Families of students with disabilities reported school visits as being helpful in making the enrollment decision more often than did families of students without disabilities. Families of students with disabilities reported more improvement in academic performance than did other families. Family involvement for both groups remained relatively constant after the enrollment change."
Participation of Rural Students with Disabilities and Rural Gifted Students in Minnesota's Open Enrollment Program	T.J. Delaney et al.	Rural Special Education Quarterly	1995	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Cannot Determine from Abstract	"Minnesota has an open enrollment program which allows students the opportunity to attend a school in any school district of their choice. The authors examined the survey responses on open enrollment of 82 parents of rural students with disabilities and rural students who are gifted. The purpose of the data analysis was to focus on transferring students' demographic characteristics, sources of information about open enrollment, and reasons for transfer. The majority of students with disabilities using open enrollment have been categorized as having a learning disability. Most of these open enrollment students and their parents gather information about the availability of open enrollment from the media. The most important reason parents of rural children with special needs apply for open enrollment is because programs available in alternative districts are thought to be better able to meet the educational requirements of these children."
Organizational Change at the Local School Level under Minnesota's Open Enrollment Program	J.P. Tenbusch and M.S. Garet	American Educational Research Association	1993	Conference Paper	Positive	"Findings of a study that examined school organizational change associated with the implementation of open enrollment in Minnesota are presented in this paper. Data were derived from mailed surveys completed by 126 principals at the end of the 1989-90 school year. A three-way multivariate research design with seven dependent variables was used to estimate differences in open-enrollment effects between participating and nonparticipating schools, large and small schools, and rural and urban schools. Findings indicate that open enrollment has: (1) created a market system for educational services; (2) stimulated improvements in curricula and support services; (3) promoted greater parent and teacher involvement in school planning and decision making; (4) fostered a more equitable distribution of school resources and student access to educational services; and (5) increased the ethnic and cultural diversity of schools. Open enrollment had a greater impact on large and rural schools. Rural schools experienced a greater amount of organizational change than urban schools and have expanded their curriculum and service programs to the limit of their resources. The pattern of organizational change suggests that most open-enrollment effects tend to diminish with experience in the program, especially in the case of parent/teacher influence on school management, but they do not return to preprogram levels. Sustained effects in school improvement and specialization in educational programming are noted. School type and wealth do not appear to be associated with school organizational change in response to open enrollment."



## APPENDIX 2

### Impacts of Open Enrollment, 1990–2015 (continued)

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Abstract
Parent Choice Behavior under Minnesota's Open Enrollment Program	J.P. Tenbusch	American Educational Research Association	1993	Conference Paper	Neutral	"Findings of a study that examined parental reactions to the implementation of Minnesota's statewide open-enrollment program are presented in this paper. Data were derived from telephone interviews conducted with 162 parents at the end of the 1989-90 school year. A three-way multivariate research design with eight dependent variables was used to estimate differences in enrollment decision-making behavior, home-school relations, and awareness/opinions about school choice among participating and nonparticipating parents, white and nonwhite parents, and parents with varying levels of education. Findings indicate that: (1) parents are aware that open enrollment exists but are unaware of other enrollment options available in the state; (2) parents are "active" enrollment decision makers, regardless of whether they choose resident or nonresident schools; (3) parents participating in open enrollment have a greater degree of influence in relations with administrators; (4) parents choose nonresident schools because of dissatisfaction with their resident school's educational services and/or administration; and (5) parents who keep their children in resident schools do so because of overall satisfaction with the school, community affiliation, social reasons, and/or school location. Other factors related to parental choice include race, parental level of education, and open-enrollment participatory status."
School Choice and Students with Disabilities: The Practice and the Policy	C.M. Lange	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1995	Research Organization Report	Mixed	"This paper synthesizes 5 years of research examining three Minnesota school choice options for students with disabilities: (1) open enrollment; (2) High School Graduation Incentives (a second chance option for at-risk students); and (3) Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (which allows 11th and 12th graders to enroll in college courses for high school and college credit at no cost). Analysis of the three options addresses program characteristics, participation rates of students with disabilities, impact of transfer as a function of disability classification, student characteristics and reasons for transfer, impact on school districts of transfer of students with disabilities, and program impact. Students with disabilities are participating in each of these options. Questions are raised on the impact of such options on schools, such as how such programs should be evaluated and locus of responsibility for support services."
The Price of Public School Choice	K. Howe, M. Eisenhart, and D. Betebenner	Educational Leadership	2002	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"Study of school choice in the Boulder Valley School District in Boulder, Colorado, finds increased stratification of schools according to race, ethnicity, and income created by open-enrollment procedures. Per-pupil costs and money raised through fund raising were higher in choice schools, as was student achievement. Recommends actions to limit the negative effects of school choice."
Open Enrollment and Students with Disabilities: Where Are We and Where Are We Going	J.E. Ysseldyke et al.	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1992	Research Organization Report	Positive	"This report examines the development of school choice policies as an element of educational reform, describes open enrollment as one form of school choice, outlines other types of school choice programs, describes Minnesota's various forms of educational choice, explores arguments for and against choice, and discusses issues and concerns for students with disabilities. The report then presents a study which evaluated opinions of families (n=75) of students with disabilities participating in one of Minnesota's school choice options, open enrollment. In addition to general demographic information, the survey included items related to open enrollment information sources, family decision-making, and the effects of the decision on participating students. Results indicated that: (1) most parents did not experience any problems obtaining information; (2) over half the parents thought the services would be better as a result of a transfer; (3) over half the respondents felt that positive behavior changes in their children as a result of open enrollment included increased confidence in abilities, improved motivation to learn, improved academic performance, satisfaction with teachers and learning, better relations with friends, increased sense of responsibility, and higher education aspirations. Results suggest generally favorable responses for families of students with disabilities participating in the open enrollment option."
Minnesota's Public School Choice Options	K.W. Colopy and H.C. Tarr	Policy Studies Associates, Inc.	1994	Research Organization Report	Neutral	"This document presents findings of a study that identified patterns of use among a broad array of open-enrollment options available to elementary and secondary students in Minnesota. During the period 1985-91, the Minnesota legislature passed several pieces of new legislation designed to: (1) increase the educational choices available to students, and (2) place enrollment decisions directly in the hands of students and their parents. Data were obtained from Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) files. The study addressed six research questions on trends in district-level enrollments through Minnesota's school-choice options. Findings indicate that in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, within-district choice was the mechanism most frequently used by parents. Unlike the other nine choice options, use of open enrollment was more likely to occur in smaller districts, suburban and rural districts, and higher poverty districts. Use of the school-choice options by minority students was on the rise. Minority students in the Twin Cities primarily used open enrollment and private alternative programs. Nearly 95 percent of minority students who applied to use open enrollment in 1990-91 actually enrolled in a nonresident school district in 1991-92."
Parents of Students with Disabilities and Open Enrollment: Characteristics and Reasons for Transfer	J.E. Ysseldyke et al.	Exceptional Children	1994	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Neutral	"This study examines the characteristics of students with disabilities who participate in Open Enrollment (one of seven enrollment options available in Minnesota), the reasons they participate, and the sources of information and decision-making process involved with choosing another district. Surveys of 347 parents revealed three primary reasons for transferring their children: The child's special education needs being better met at the new district, more personal attention from the teacher, and dissatisfaction with the resident school. Other factors, such as disability category, parents' income, and location, were also analyzed."
Open Enrollment's Impact on School Districts When Students with Disabilities Transfer Schools	C.M. Lange et al.	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	1995	Research Organization Report	Mixed	"This qualitative study examined the impact of open enrollment policies in Minnesota on eight school districts with larger than average transfers of students with disabilities. A series of case studies investigated implementation issues, effects on special education programs, effects on decision making in funding and planning, perceptions and opinions of school personnel about open enrollment, and characteristics of districts that gain or lose students with disabilities through open enrollment. Results were complex, as enrollment size and program quality alone did not explain the gain or loss of students with disabilities through open enrollment. Administrators and teachers did not give wide endorsement to the idea that the quality of special education programs improved because of open enrollment. Improved communication between school personnel and families did seem to be a key issue in open enrollment. For those districts gaining students with disabilities, there were few negative outcomes; districts losing students with disabilities were losing a great deal. Several recommendations are offered for consideration when evaluating open enrollment and the participation of students with disabilities."
The Effects of Open Enrollment on School Choice and Student Outcomes	U. Ozek	Urban Institute	2009	Research Organization Report	Negative	"This paper analyzes households' response to the introduction of intra-district school choice and examines the impact of this choice on student test scores in Pinellas County Schools. Households react strongly to the incentives created by such programs, leading to significant changes in the frequency of exercising alternative public schooling options, and changes in the composition of the "opt out" students. However, using proximity to public alternatives as an instrument for opting out of the assigned public school, the author finds no significant benefit of opting out on student achievement and that those who opt out of their default public schools often perform significantly worse on standardized tests than similar students who stay behind. Results further suggest that the short-run detrimental effects of opting out are stronger for students who opt out closer to the terminal grade of the school level. Yet the detrimental effects are weaker for disadvantaged students, who typically constitute the proposed target of school choice reforms."
Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools: Implications for Policy Development	C.Y. Barron Ausbrooks	ERS Spectrum	2002	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Cannot Determine from Abstract	"Describes charter-school law in Texas, including sections authorizing open-enrollment charter schools. Reports on results of third-year evaluation of 89 open-enrollment charter schools. Evaluation includes student demographics and performance, parents, teachers, directors, revenue and expenditures, and the effects of charter schools on traditional school districts. Draws implications for policy development."
Open Enrollment in Massachusetts: Why Families Choose?	R. Fossey	Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis	1994	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Cannot Determine from Abstract	"In 1991, the Massachusetts legislature passed an open enrollment law permitting students to enroll in schools outside their home communities. This article describes a study of enrollment patterns under the open enrollment program as of fall 1992. The study compared certain characteristics of Massachusetts sending and receiving districts in those settings in which 20 or more school-choice students transferred from one district to another. This comparison revealed that families generally enrolled their children in the schools of communities having higher indicators of student performance and higher socioeconomic status than the districts they left."
How School Choice Affects Students with Special Needs <sup>iii</sup>	C.M. Lange and J.E. Ysseldyke	Educational Leadership	1994	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Positive	"Minnesota has several types of school choice options available to its 750,000 students: open enrollment, second-chance programs, postsecondary enrollment options, and charter schools. Survey data show that the families of special-needs students are increasingly using the open-enrollment option and are satisfied with their choices. Students with disabilities are also taking advantage of the other three options. More research is needed to examine equity issues."
School Choice: Parent Perspective and Perceptions <sup>iv</sup>	J.E. Ysseldyke et al.	Intervention in School and Clinic	1993	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article Peer-Reviewed Journal	Cannot Determine from Abstract	"Parents of children with disabilities (n=80) or giftedness (n=19) commented on their children's participation in an open enrollment program. Twelve broad topics were identified by the Minnesota parents, including teacher/administration attitude, transportation/location, programs for special needs students, student's attitude and behavior change, social and educational continuity, changes in student's academic performance, and teacher effectiveness."

## APPENDIX 2

### Impacts of Open Enrollment, 1990–2015 (continued)

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Abstract
Dynamic Participation in Interdistrict Open Enrollment	L. Lavery and D. Carlson	Educational Policy	2015	Article	Neutral	"Interdistrict open enrollment is the nation's largest and most widespread school choice program, but our knowledge of these programs is limited. Drawing on 5 years of student-level data from the universe of public school attendees in Colorado, we perform a three-stage analysis to examine the dynamics of student participation in the state's interdistrict open enrollment program. First, we explore the characteristics of students who open enroll in a defined baseline year. Second, we analyze the characteristics of students who continue to participate in the program in subsequent years. Finally, we examine the characteristics of students who—conditional on not open enrolling in the defined-baseline year—choose to participate in the program in one or more subsequent years."
Parents' Perspectives on School Choice <sup>v</sup>	C.M. Lange, J.E. Ysseldyke, and C.A. Lehr	TEACHING Exceptional Children	1997	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Neutral	"Presents the results of surveys and follow-up interviews of parents of children with disabilities who chose to use the "open enrollment" transfer option in Minnesota. Reasons for school transfer included better met special education needs and personal attention for children at chosen schools, and more information on child's progress from special education teachers."
Lessons About School Choice from Minnesota: Promise and Challenges	J. Nathan and W.L. Boyd	Phi Delta Kappan	2003	Journal Article	Positive	"Nathan and Boyd examine the impact Minnesota's public school choice options have had on the state's education system overall, reporting on some unanticipated positive results, some negative predictions that did not come to pass and a few unfortunate instances that underscore the need for careful monitoring of the programs and the schools participating in them. Among the findings was that ongoing supervision and assessment of programs and of participating schools are vital."
Interdistrict Open Enrollment: The Benign Choice? <sup>vi</sup>	L. Jimerson	The Clearing House	2002	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"Presents three major areas of concern: social and ethnic stratification; the impact of competition; and open enrollment effects on academic achievement. Explores what is presently known (and not known) about the impact of interdistrict open enrollment in three areas. Focuses on the effect of open enrollment in Minnesota, which has been the site of the author's own research, but also includes national and international evidence."
Open Enrollment in North Dakota: Why Parents Choose This Option <sup>vii</sup>	J. Backes and K. Slotsve	Rural Educator	1996	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Neutral	"Survey of parents and guardians of 911 North Dakota students applying for open enrollment found that general education, family convenience, proximity, and school atmosphere/values/philosophy were the most important reasons for choosing a district outside their home district. Responders' educational level and income were higher than those of the general population of North Dakota."
Public School Choice and Desegregation: A Reality Check <sup>viii</sup>	J.R. McKinney	Journal of Law and Education	1996	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Negative	"In the Spring 1995 issue of this journal, Angela Smith contended that open enrollment is not mutually exclusive with desegregation. Joseph McKinney's response presents enrollment percentages and related historical information for Omaha and Iowa and asserts that the typical effect of school choice is to increase not only racial segregation but also financial inequalities."
Public School Choice and Open Enrollment: Implications for Education, Desegregation, and Equity	A.G. Smith	Nebraska Law Review	1995	Journal Article	Mixed	"This article explains and analyzes open enrollment plans, both intradistrict and interdistrict, and their potential harms and benefits. Part II sets the stage by outlining the trials and tribulations of the Omaha, Nebraska, School District in its attempt to balance the goals of integration and open enrollment. Part III overviews open enrollment, summarizing and synthesizing current open enrollment legislation and providing examples of both intradistrict and interdistrict plans which are presently in effect. Part IV analyzes the various theories which have been utilized to justify choice and to provide the legislative motives behind open enrollment statutes, particularly criticizing the market theory. Part IV also analyzes the interdependence of law and education and the problems inherent in that relationship. Part V discusses various aspects of the interplay and potential conflict between open enrollment and desegregation. Part VI provides recommendations for educational and legislative reform in the area of public school choice which will meet the needs of all students and provide not only quality education, but equity, access, and integration as well."
A Work in Progress	D. Arsen, D.N. Plank, and G. Sykes	Education Matters	2001	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"A Competitive Environment Michigan's system of school finance has created a highly favorable setting for studying the reactions of schools and school districts to competition. Since 1994, virtually all operating revenue for Michigan school districts and charter schools has been distributed by the state on a per-pupil basis. Detroit Public Schools has lost 10 percent of its resident students to charter schools and neighboring school districts, shaving \$100 million off the district's annual operating budget. [...]though, the systemic effects of school choice policies depend first on the local context in which the policies are implemented and second on the rules that govern the choices of parents and schools."
African Americans' Continuing Struggle for Quality Education in Milwaukee, Wisconsin	M. Bonds, R.L. Farmer-Hinton, and E.G. Epps	The Journal of Negro Education	2009	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Negative	"This article summarizes African Americans' ongoing struggle for quality education in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by utilizing school district data and secondary sources. The historic integration effort in the Milwaukee Public Schools system is outlined and the impact of sustained segregation, in the midst of significant changes to Milwaukee's social and economic context, is discussed. The historic integration movement and the social and economic context are used to contextualize and critique current racially segregated choice programs, which have been touted as remedies for inferior educational opportunities in Milwaukee."
Charter Schools and Students with Disabilities	C.M. Lange and C.A. Lehr	Remedial and Special Education	2000	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"Currently, charter school laws exist in 30 states, and more than 1,000 charter schools are now in operation (Center for Education Reform, 1998). The rapid increase in the number of charter schools suggests that this educational reform may have the potential to become a major factor in the education of U.S. children. Charter schools are serving a variety of students, and recent studies at the national level show that a sizable proportion of students being served in charter schools have disabilities. Yet few studies address the provision of special education services and whether the needs of students with disabilities are being met. The Enrollment Options Project at the University of Minnesota has been examining the impact of Minnesota's charter schools on students with disabilities. Parents of students with and without disabilities enrolled in Minnesota's charter schools were surveyed to answer questions about their experiences with charter schools. Results from more than 600 respondents who completed the survey are presented in this article. Parents answered questions about reasons for charter school enrollment, perceived changes in their child as a result of attending the charter school, level of satisfaction, level of parent involvement, and special education service availability. In addition, written comments provided by parents are qualitatively analyzed. The article concludes with a discussion of information gathered from parents and implications for further study, examining special education delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities attending charter schools."
Does School Choice Reduce Crime?	D.J. Deming	Education Next	2012	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"In this study, I investigate whether the opportunity to attend a school other than a student's assigned neighborhood school reduces criminal activity, especially among disadvantaged youth. Many of the schools chosen by the students were "better" on traditional indicators, such as student test scores and teacher characteristics. All of them, however, were preferred by the applicant over the default option. The analysis therefore sheds light on whether efforts to expand school choice can be an effective crime-prevention strategy, particularly when disadvantaged students can gain access to "better" schools."
Public School Open Enrollment and Housing Capitalization	A. Gupta and S. Aradhya	IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc	2014	Journal Article	Mixed	"Economic literature on real estate markets, especially that on house prices, shows that houses cost more in better school districts. This paper evaluates the effect of open-enrollment (OE) in public school districts on house prices." "The dataset used is from 6 school districts in and around Tucson Metropolitan area in Pima County, Arizona for 2001-2012, and draws on data from the Pima County Assessor's Office, Pima County GIS, Arizona Department of Education Research and Evaluation, along with proprietary OE numbers from the Catalina Foothills School District (CFSD) which is considered the best school district in the study region." "Preliminary results show that OE significantly increases house prices for school districts bordering the CFSD but this effect is not same for the two different neighboring districts. However, the house prices within the CFSD boundary are not significantly affected by OE, on an average. This is mostly attributed to the capacity constraint on OE numbers in school districts. All these analyses also show that houses along the boundaries are significantly different from those that are closer to the center of a district. This validates that OE does not have similar effects on all houses in a school district."
Is School Choice a Mechanism for Sustaining Change? Implications from a National Survey	C-L Hsieh and J. Shen	The Clearing House	2001	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Negative	"Hsieh and Shen summarize different forms of school choice as well as the pros and cons behind them. They describe the methodology used to discover what kinds of parents make which school choice decision and what reasons they have for their decisions, arguing that the school choice debate should be informed by actual practice in school choice."

## APPENDIX 2

### Impacts of Open Enrollment, 1990–2015 *(continued)*

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Abstract
School Choice and Educational Stratification	D. Carlson	Policy Studies Journal	2014	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Cannot Determine from Abstract	"Recent growth in the number of school choice programs across the country has ignited debate on the stratifying effects of these programs. In the context of interdistrict open enrollment, this paper analyzes--both theoretically and empirically--how choice programs affect stratification levels through the mechanisms of (i) the relative characteristics of program participants and nonparticipants and (ii) the schooling choices of different groups of program participants. The theoretical analysis uses Monte Carlo simulation techniques to analyze a hypothetical world where interdistrict choice is available to students in three school districts that are allowed to vary in student composition, the type of students who take advantage of the interdistrict choice program, and schooling choices of students who open enroll. The results of these simulations provide an understanding of the conditions under which an interdistrict open enrollment program leads to increases, decreases, or no changes in stratification levels. The empirical analysis uses data from the universe of students attending Colorado public schools in 2009-10 to examine how the state's interdistrict choice program affects stratification levels. It also analyzes the factors responsible for any increases or decreases in stratification and finds both participation patterns and differences in schooling decisions across groups to play important roles. The paper concludes with a discussion of its implications for research and policy."
School Choice Options: Why Do Students Make Choices?	M. Wronkovich, J. Robinson, and C.A. Hess	NASSP Bulletin	1998	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"As the main focus of this research study, high school students from three different school districts were surveyed to determine the reasons for their movement to a new school. The thrust of this study was to examine what led to movement."
School Choice Crucible: A Case Study of Boulder Valley	K. Howe, M. Eisenhart, and D. Betebenner	Phi Delta Kappan	2001	Journal Article	Mixed	"Howe et al's examination of the school choice program in the Boulder (CO) Valley School District, which adds to the growing body of research documenting serious flaws in the theory, procedures, and outcomes of school choice, is presented. They focus on the three general categories of controversy about school choice policy--competition, meeting student needs, and equity."
What Minnesota Has Learned about School Choice	Not Specified	Phi Delta Kappan	1994	Journal Article	Positive	"Comprehensive research and individual stories are presented to illustrate what has been learned from the choice programs in Minnesota. Support for that state's cross-district public school choice laws is strong."
School Choice Policies and Practices for Students with Disabilities	C.M. Lange and J.E. Ysseldyke	Exceptional Children	1998	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	"A major missing piece in the current debate about school choice is the impact of these policies on students with disabilities. In this article, findings from 6 years of research on implications of school choice for students with disabilities are synthesized. We used multiple methodologies to conduct a set of 12 quantitative and qualitative studies. Participation rates, reasons for transfer, impact on students with disabilities, and school districts were investigated for three of the most popular school choice options. Students with disabilities are participating in school choice options. Their reasons for transfer are often related to special education programs and services. Findings provide needed information for policymakers, educators, parents, and students as states propose, pass, and implement school choice legislation."
School Choice and the Pressure to Perform	K. Howe and K. Welner	Remedial and Special Education	2002	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Negative	"Major principles underlying school choice--such as market competition and parental autonomy--are in serious tension with the principles underlying inclusion from both philosophical and legal perspectives. In this article, the authors explicate this tension and then examine the empirical evidence indicating that exclusion of students with special needs, particularly by schools that market themselves on the basis of test scores, has been a result of the implementation of school choice. The authors suggest that school choice has turned back the clock by once again encouraging public schools to exclude students with special needs on the ground that educating such students is beyond the scope of their mission."
Open Enrollment is on the Menu- But Can You Order It?	M.T. Mikulecky	Education Commission of the States	2013	Research Organization Report	Mixed	States and school districts have provided various school choice options. One aspect of school choice is open enrollment. Proponents of open enrollment usually assert that open enrollment increases competition, accountability, and incentives for schools to improve, level the playing field, and improve student and parent satisfaction. Critics argue that open enrollment disproportionately affects low-income schools, affects neighborhood schools financially, and 'creams the best students.' This resource highlights what research says about open enrollment, the barriers that prevent students from taking advantage of open enrollment, and emerging issues in open enrollment.

<sup>i</sup> Hanover could not access the full article.

<sup>ii</sup> Hanover could not access the full article.

<sup>iii</sup> Abstract from ERIC

<sup>iv</sup> Abstract from ERIC. Hanover could not access the full article.

<sup>v</sup> Abstract from ERIC

<sup>vi</sup> Abstract from ERIC

<sup>vii</sup> Abstract from ERIC

<sup>viii</sup> Abstract from ERIC

## APPENDIX 2

### Impacts of Open Enrollment, 2016–2021

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Summary
Open Enrollment Provides Substantial Benefits to Students and Families	A.G. Smith	Reason Foundation	2020	Research Organization Report	Positive	While there is little research on inter-district enrollment, several key studies have shown that families benefit from being given an education choice. However, state and district policy makers must do a better job of providing students with opportunities even if the state has strong policies.
FOX 11 Investigates: Impact of Open Enrollment on School Districts	R. Hornacek	Fox 11 News	2018	News Article	Negative	In Wisconsin, open enrollment has been an option for families for the last 20 years. The superintendent of Green Bay schools states that open enrollment "has afforded all of us to look deeply into what students need." However, open enrollment has had a negative impact on Green Bay schools. The district has lost money due to enrollment. District leaders say 62% of students who open enroll out of Green Bay have never attended a Green Bay school.
New Evidence on School Choice and Racially Segregated Schools	G.J. Whitehurst	The Brookings Institution	2017	Research Organization Report	Mixed	This resource addresses the principal question of whether the degree of public school choice at the district level is associated with district racial imbalance between school enrollment and the school-age population of individual schools' geographical catchment areas. The principal findings are mixed, but an increase of racial segregation is an issue that needs to be addressed.
Open Enrollment 50-State Report-All Data Points	Not Specified	Education Commission of the States	2017	Research Organization Report	Neutral	This resource details the type of open enrollment policies in each state and whether the policies are mandatory, voluntary, or both. The report also identifies states where desegregation provisions impact open enrollment, whether the state sets priorities for districts to follow when accepting students and the details on student transportation.
School Choice in the United States: 2019	K. Wang, A. Rathbun, and L. Musu	National Center for Education Statistics	2019	Government Report	Negative	A report analyzing issues related to school choice. It examines eight indicators related to enrollment, achievement, safety, and parent satisfaction for multiple categories of elementary and secondary school settings using survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics(NCES). Notably, there was little impact on academic achievement, and the study identified an increase in school crime.
Byron Public Schools Open Enrollment	Byron Public Schools	Byron Public Schools	Not Specified	Public School District Report	Positive	This resource outlines the open enrollment option in Byron Public Schools in Minnesota. The resource explains the funding, who comes and goes, legislative changes, space and the benefits of open enrollment. Through open enrollment revenue, the district has been able to reduce class sizes, competitively pay staff, increase academic programs and support services for students and have been able to avoid major budgets adjustments.
Wisconsin's Open Enrollment Program Provides Critical School Choice Option for 62,000 Students	Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty	Urban Milwaukee	2021	Research Organization Report	Mixed	Wisconsin's open enrollment serves more than 62,000 students and continues to grow .3 and .6% each year. The article states that districts with low-income students experience enrollment declines and students with disabilities are "frequently and unfairly denied" for due to "space" reasons. Open enrollment, however, increases diversity in schools and gives families the power to choose the best schools for their children. This resource also gives policy recommendations on how the district can improve.
Public School Choice and Student Achievement: Evidence From Michigan's Interdistrict Open Enrollment System	J.M. Cowen and B. Creed	AERA Open	2017	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Neutral	This study focuses on Michigan's statewide system of interdistrict open enrollment. The research revealed that students who take advantage of open enrollment are disproportionately lower performing on state exams, come from low-income families and are more likely to be minority students. The study finds little evidence that student achievement is affected and "find little consistent evidence that subgroups of students based on race, gender or income benefit or lose disproportionately from the program, nor do students whose resident districts vary on key demographic or achievement characteristics."
Thousands of Utah Kids Have Changed Schools During COVID-19, while 'School Choice' Left Others Out	J. Jag	The Salt Lake Tribune	2021	News Article	Negative	During the pandemic, Utah parents have moved their children around to different schools in greater numbers due to in-person, hybrid and remote options various schools offered. The pandemic exposed flaws in Utah's open enrollment program, such as inequities and barriers for families. The frequent use of the program seems to be causing more harm than good. Schools have a long waitlist, low income families are not able to take advantage of the program due to lack of transportation, and funding is not reliable.
Open Enrollment May Be Segregating Ohio's Public Schools	A. Marra	WOSU Public Media	2018	News Article	Negative	For some districts in Ohio, open enrollment is creating financial hardship and new instances of segregation. For example, for every student that leaves Liberty Local School District for a publicly public option, the district has to give up around \$6,100 for each student. Around 450 students leave each year. Every dollar that gets deducted from their budget due to open enrollment is over \$2.5 million. The article also points out that a racial imbalance is becoming a problem in some districts due to white students choosing to leave due to open enrollment. Some districts, however, are maintaining a racial balance.
"Re-segregating Our Schools": Des Moines' Public Schools Face an Open Enrollment Challenge	J. Clayworth	Axios	2021	News Article	Negative	A bill signed into law in Iowa is prohibiting public schools from denying students open enrollment. The reasoning behind the bill is that poor kids would be more heavily concentrated which would "set schools up for educational obstacles associated with poverty." Students of color are more likely to be negatively affected and hundreds of students are expected to leave the district costing nearly \$2.7 million in revenue for the upcoming school year.
What Leads to Successful School Choice Programs? A Review of the Theories and Evidence	C.A. DeAngelis and H.H. Erickson	CATO Institute	2018	Research Organization Report	Positive	Two primary mechanisms in school choice programs thought to generate positive outcomes are an increased access to higher-quality schools and an improved match between schools and students. This literature review examines the existing empirical evidence and arguments for these primary mechanisms.

## APPENDIX 2

### Impacts of Open Enrollment, 2016–2021 *(continued)*

Title	Author(s)	Publication / Organization	Year	Resource Type	Impact of Open Enrollment	Summary
The Competitive Effects of School Choice on Student Achievement: A Systematic Review	H. Jabbar, C.J. Fong, E. Germain, D. Li, J. Sanchez, W-L Sun, and M. Devall	Educational Policy	2019	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Mixed	A systemic review and meta-analysis that tests the theory that school-choice policies are expected to generate healthy competition between schools, leading to improvements in school quality and better outcomes for students. The testing resulted in mixed findings and small positive effects of competition on student achievement was found.
The Real Story: School Choice Is Working	B.J. Lindquist	Thomas B. Fordham Institute	2019	Research Organization Report	Positive	This article explains how a report that was issued by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) misrepresents the impact of school choice, titled "School Choice in the United States: 2019." Through the growth of charter schools and other forms of choice described in the article, "the landscape has expanded to reach many more-low income, minority students in cities, who did not historically have access to high-quality educational options."
Here Are 10 Reasons School Choice Is Winning	J. Schwalbach and J. Selvey	The Heritage Foundation	2019	Research Organization Report	Positive	An article highlighting 10 benefits of school choice. Some of the benefits include student safety, an increase in parental satisfaction and involvement, tailored education, and options for low-income families. The author concludes the article in saying that the best public, private and public-charter school will not work for every student and that students need to have the opportunity to have options.
Disability, Race, and the Geography of School Choice: Toward an Intersectional Analytical Framework	F.R. Waitoller and C. Lubienski	AERA Open	2019	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Neutral	The article describes a theoretical framework to address two limitations of research on school choice: limited attention to students with disabilities and dichotomization of space and place. The authors provide an "analytical lens that utilizes critical notions of disability, race, and space to expand the understanding of how parents engage with school choice."
What Does the Research Show on School Choice?	G. Forster	Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs	2019	Research Organization Report	Positive	The research in this article builds upon the author's previous work reviewing the empirical literature on the effects of school choice. Research shows positive effects of school choice on academic outcomes of participants and public schools, fiscal effects, ethnic segregation and civic values.
Open Enrollment Survey Summarized Results	Not Specified	Jacksonville Public Education Fund	Not Specified	Research Organization Report	Mixed	This open enrollment survey received 116 responses with parents making up 50% of the responses. Parents were split over whether they would take advantage of the open enrollment policy. School environment and school safety were the two most important factors in deciding whether to move their child out of their neighborhood school. Some of the perceived advantages from the respondents included empowerment of parents, access to better schools and access to specific programs. Some of the perceived disadvantages included the possibility of overcrowding schools, lack of transportation and segregation across the district.
Missouri Open Enrollment Bill Sparks Debate Over Segregation, Consolidation	T. Weinberg	Missouri Independent	2021	News Article	Negative	Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, the Public School Open Enrollment Act will allow students to apply to transfer to participating districts outside of the one they reside. There are concerns that the bill would increase segregation and further discrimination against students with disabilities because districts would not be required to provide additional special education services for students with disabilities if they cannot meet their needs.
Open Enrollment's Greatest Impact Is in Small School Districts	K. Goodrich	The Free Press	2018	News Article	Positive	In Minnesota, rural districts were more likely to see a net gain in students due to open enrollment while regional center districts were more likely to see a net loss. Some families prefer a smaller school with smaller class sizes and parents feel their children are more likely to make sport teams and other activities. For small districts, open enrollment provides stability and allows them to offer more educational options.



## APPENDIX 2

### Open Enrollment Annotated Bibliography

#### Introduction and Methodology

Open enrollment, a form of school choice, gives families the opportunity to choose a different school for their child than the one to which they would automatically be assigned (e.g., their neighborhood school). Depending on a state's policy, families may select another school within their district of residence (i.e., intradistrict open enrollment) or another district (i.e., interdistrict open enrollment). To inform the design of an upcoming stakeholder survey, EdChoice has partnered with Hanover to identify literature examining the impact of open enrollment on students and schools. In addition to retaining the 20 sources from 2016-2021 contained in the original version, this updated annotated bibliography presents 49 relevant sources spanning 1990-2015. Such sources include: conference papers, government reports, journal articles, peer-reviewed journal articles, and research organization reports. The entry for each additional source contains: title; author(s); publication/publisher; year; resource type; impact (e.g., neutral, positive, negative, or mixed); and abstract. Please note that sources exclusively examining parents' reason(s) for participating and/or the characteristics of participating children (i.e., not analyzing impacts on student or school outcomes) are generally classified as 'neutral'.

#### Key Findings

A lack of consensus characterizes the literature on open enrollment. Studies draw different conclusions in terms of: the characteristics of participating students, the impact on student academic and behavioral outcomes, the impact on parental involvement, and the impact on school quality. Areas in which consensus exist include tendencies for (1) students to transfer from poorly-resourced, low-performing schools to well-resourced, high-performing schools and (2) students and parents to express high rates of satisfaction with their new school. Differing conclusions in other areas may reflect underlying differences in the nature of the open enrollment policies in the districts and schools examined (i.e., interdistrict and/or intradistrict transfers, mandatory or voluntary district participation, rights of refusal, etc.), as well as differences in how students get assigned to their default schools.

The characteristics of the students most likely to participate in open enrollment and the effects of open enrollment on their academic and behavioral outcomes vary across studies. Depending on the study, for example, Black and Hispanic students may prove less, more, or equally likely to participate in open enrollment than their White peers. However, while not unanimous, studies appear in greater agreement that open enrollment results in greater stratification by socioeconomic status or income across schools. The results of studies examining open enrollment's effects on student outcomes also differ; for example, some studies detect evidence of higher academic achievement, while other studies find academic achievement unchanged or even lower.

Whereas studies examining the impact of open enrollment on parents typically find increased satisfaction with their child's new school, the effects on involvement in their child's education appear inconclusive. When surveyed, parents of participating students report high rates of satisfaction, except with respect to transportation. Many parents note the difficulty of their child's transport to and from their new school. Regarding parent involvement in their child's education following their transfer, some studies detect an increase, some studies find no effect, and other studies find mixed effects (e.g., some forms of involvement increase whereas others decrease or remain unchanged).

Studies disagree on whether open enrollment increases competition across districts and thus contributes to improvements in school quality. Some surveys and interviews indicate that administrators perceive positive changes in curriculum and instruction, educational programming, etc. as schools aim to become more competitive in the 'educational marketplace' created by open enrollment. Others find that administrators see no such effects. Studies, however, generally consider rural schools more likely to experience increases in quality than schools in other settings.

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