

Fact Sheet: Vouchers and ESAs

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The Indiana School Boards Association is releasing the following fact sheet, as the Indiana State Senate prepares to consider the expansion of the Choice Scholarship voucher program and the establishment of education scholarship accounts (ESAs). As debate on school choice programs continues to grow, ISBA believes it is critically important for the public to know all the facts.

- Resolutions opposing vouchers and ESAs [have been adopted](#) by 180 school boards that collectively serve nearly 673,000 students.
- Indiana [ranks fifth](#) in state budget support for private school choice and [39th](#) among states in public K-12 expenditures per pupil.
- An estimated [3,203 students out of 187,000 who would be eligible](#) are expected to sign up for an ESA in the first year of the program, but there is no cap on the number of students who can participate.
- Enrollment in the voucher program is estimated to grow by 34% from 36,100 students this year to 48,452 in FY 2023.
- Under the ESA proposal, parents of selected children who opt out of public schools would receive the equivalent of a taxpayer-funded debit card loaded with 90% of the state per-pupil funding that would otherwise go to the local public school district — about \$6,000 per child per year.
- Voucher eligibility would expand to households of four earning \$145,410 and households of five earning \$170,274 — amounts that qualify as [upper-class incomes](#) in many Hoosier communities. The proposed thresholds are more than twice as high as Indiana's [median household income](#) of \$57,603 and are three times higher than the amount to qualify for free and reduced price lunch.
- [House Bill 1005](#) requires an annual survey of parent satisfaction with the ESA program but lacks state reporting requirements on measurements of actual student learning outcomes. ILEARN testing requirements apply only to the subset of students who use an ESA to attend an accredited non-public school. Homeschool students in the ESA program *do not* have to take a statewide assessment or report academic performance measurements.
- The House-passed budget spends an additional [\\$144M over the next two years](#) to fund the expansion of the Choice Scholarship voucher program and the creation of ESAs. The money comes out of the tuition support appropriation at the expense of resources available for traditional public education.
- More than one-third of Indiana counties (33) have [zero Choice Scholarship schools](#), while another 20 counties have just one. Only [8.7% of last year's voucher recipients](#) resided in rural Indiana.
- Indiana has expended [more than \\$1 billion on Choice Scholarships](#) since the program's inception in 2011-2012. Unlike public schools, private schools are not audited by the State Board of Accounts, nor are they required to publish an annual financial report.
- A 2018 study by researchers at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Kentucky examining the first four years of the Choice Scholarship Program found students who used a voucher to transfer to a private school [experienced achievement loss in math](#) compared to their peers who remained in public schools.

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