

Types of Schools in Indiana

There are many options for schooling in Indiana. This chart summarizes some of the differences among the various types. When choosing a school, it is best to visit the school and meet with teachers and administrators as well as speak to parents and students attending the school. All types of schooling, except homeschool, can be either in person or online or both.

| | Traditional Public School | Charter School | Private "Choice" School | Private "Non Choice" School | Homeschool |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Admissions | Must accept all in the district at any time; may accept transfers | Open to all, but may have limited spots | Does not have to accept all students | Does not have to accept all students | N/A |
| Oversight & Accountability | Elected school board that meet in public; accountable to community | Charter authorizer that may not be local; privately managed | Privately managed | Privately managed | Overseen and accountable to the student's parents |
| Tuition | No tuition. But may have fees for activities, technology, special courses, etc. | No tuition. But may have fees for activities, technology, special courses, etc. | Charges tuition and fees but accepts government subsidies such as "Choice Scholarships" and/or provides scholarships and discounts | Charges tuition and fees but may provide scholarships and discounts, such as a private tax credit voucher | No tuition. Fees based on curriculum and activities as decided by parent |
| Funding | Publicly funded by sales, income, use, and property tax | Publicly funded by sales, income, use, and sometimes property tax | Privately funded and publicly funded by sales, income, use, but NOT property tax | Privately funded | Privately funded by the student's parents |
| Meals | Participates in National School Lunch Program; provides free meals to those who qualify | Ask school if it provides breakfast and lunch and participates in National School Lunch Program | Ask school if it provides breakfast and lunch and participates in National School Lunch Program | Ask school if it provides breakfast and lunch and participates in National School Lunch Program | Provided by the student's parents |
| Special Ed and English Language Learners | Must provide SPED and ELL services | Must provide SPED and ELL services | Does not have to provide SPED and ELL services, ask what is provided | Does not have to provide SPED and ELL services, ask what is provided | Can obtain SPED equitable services from local public school |
| Transportation | Provides free busing to those that qualify | Does not have to provide busing | Does not have to provide busing | Does not have to provide busing | N/A |
| ILEARN Testing | Required to administer | Required to administer | Required to administer | Not required to administer | Parents are not allowed to administer |

Rights and protections for students are fewer the farther one travels from public school



100% parent control. Federal rights and protections do not apply.

Be an Educated School Choice Consumer

Can My School Close?

Yes. A traditional public school can close. Sometimes a school closes due to a new building being built or redistricting due to population change. When a public school closes, it happens at the end of a school year. Not in the middle of the school year unless there is a safety issue. Charter and private schools can close too. These schools can close at any time. Closing a school or losing its charter (contract) with its authorizer are forms of accountability for charter schools. Private schools are not accountable to any community or group. As a consumer, it is important to ask charter schools and private schools about their fiscal state and academic performance records.

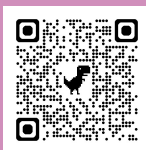
Private Schools Can Legally Discriminate

Private schools don't have to accept all students/families and can ask students to leave for numerous reasons, such as religion, disability, sexual orientation, and language.

It is important to read the parent and student handbooks and ask many questions at the private school you wish for your child to attend to be sure it is the right fit for your family. If you can't find the handbook online, request it from the school.

There are now 4 types of vouchers in Indiana. The largest one is the Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher, which can be used to pay for tuition at qualifying private schools. Families of 4 that earn up to \$230k/year can qualify for a Choice voucher in the 24-25 school year.

<https://bit.ly/3ZnyPB4>



Special Education Rights

Traditional public schools and charter schools in Indiana all follow IDEA guidance to identify and provide services to eligible students with disabilities attending these schools. Private schools in Indiana are not required to provide special education services but can choose to offer them to their students or partner with the local public school to provide equitable services at no cost. Equitable services are not the same services that a student would receive in a public school. Parents of school-age children in Indiana have the right to select a private school for their student with disabilities, but if the parent places the child in the private school, many rights are waived. Homeschooled students in Indiana are considered privately schooled students for the purposes of determining access to special education services; therefore, they may be eligible for equitable services from their local public school. It is important to ask what services the school can provide and who would provide those services.

Disability rights (physical, learning, mental) for "parentally placed" private school children can be found on the U.S. Department of Education.

<https://bit.ly/3KgpSVG>



School Grades Are Not Accurate

State school grades and rankings can be found on real estate apps and elsewhere. However, the data on those sites may be a few years old as the state paused grading on A-F scale. Grades may also only reflect the socioeconomic level of the community but not the quality of the school.

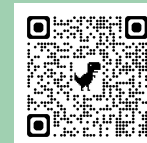
There Is So Much School Choice

There have always been education options in Indiana and now more options than ever are funded using public dollars.

In 2008, public funds, for the most part, went to 2 public school districts in Monroe County. In 2024, due to "choice" expansion, state tax dollars (income, sales, and use tax) followed Monroe County school-age children to almost 50 different outside-of-district schools including 10 charters and 11 private "choice" schools.

Indiana has created a dashboard to measure schools on more than just test scores. It is called Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed. It is new and still has kinks to work out. You can explore the many local schools on there as well.

<https://indianagps.doe.in.gov/>



Want to Learn More? Join Us!

Indiana Coalition for Public Education-Monroe County (ICPE-Monroe County) advocates for all children to have high quality, equitable, well-funded schools that are subject to democratic oversight by their communities. We are a nonpartisan and nonprofit group of parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers, and other community members of Monroe County and surrounding areas.

We meet once a month. Our meeting schedule can be found on our website.

