

GETTING STARTED GUIDE

By DesertSchoolChoice.com

INTRODUCTION

For Families Exploring Alternative Education

Mission: Serving K-12 students and advancing career readiness in the Desert Cities and beyond.



Why Consider Alternatives?

Every child learns differently. Whether your reasons are academic, personal, religious, cultural, or values-based, alternative education paths give families more control over their child's learning journey. This guide helps you explore the most common options, steps to get started, and key questions to ask.



Step 1: Identify Your Family's Needs & Goals

Use these guiding questions to start:

- What are our top 3 reasons for seeking an alternative to public school?
- What are our child's strengths, challenges, and interests?
- Do we want more flexibility, safety, faith integration, or individualized learning?
- Are we looking for short-term or long-term alternatives?



Step 2: Understand the Main Education Options



Homeschooling

- Parent-directed education at home

- Flexible curriculum, pacing, and schedule
- Options: Independent, PSPs (Private School Satellite Programs), online

Charter Schools

- **Publicly funded but independently operated**
- Often offer flexible, theme-based programs (STEM, arts, classical)

Private & Microschools

- **Tuition-based**, small group settings
- Can reflect specific values, religious beliefs, or specialized learning models

Learning Pods & Co-ops

- **Group learning led by parents or tutors**
- Share teaching, costs, and social experiences

Step 3: Know the Legal Requirements (California Example)

Note: Always verify with your state's Department of Education.

If Homeschooling in California, You Can:

- File a **Private School Affidavit (PSA)**
- Enroll in a **Private School Satellite Program (PSP)**
- Join a **public charter homeschool program** (funded, with teacher oversight)

Requirements usually include:

- Attendance tracking
- Record keeping
- Basic subject instruction



Step 4: Choose Curriculum & Resources

Curriculum styles vary:

Type	Best For
Classical	Logic, literature, history-heavy
Charlotte Mason	Nature, literature, habit training
Unit Studies	Multi-age, theme-based projects
Online/Virtual	Independent learners, structure
Faith-Based	Integration of spiritual beliefs
Secular	Neutral worldview, flexible content

For a printable starter pack checklist, click [here](#).