

School Choice Resources for Alabama Journalists

Welcome! This plain-text guide provides information about school choice in Alabama for reporters covering stories related to [National School Choice Week](#) (January 25–31, 2026) and beyond. For more information, please contact:

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To schedule a conversation with one of our team members, including [Andrew Campanella](#), [Shelby Doyle](#), or [Krissia Campos Spivey](#), about school choice policy and options in Alabama or nationally, call or email Lauren.

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NSCW Overview

School Choice Week in Alabama Begins January 25

National School Choice Week begins Jan. 25 in Alabama and across the country. In the Yellowhammer State, 390 schools and nonprofits are hosting events and activities, spanning 64 of the state's 67 counties and collectively serving an estimated 129,000 students.

The week's goal is to help families learn more about the K–12 learning options available for their children, including public, charter, magnet, private, online, home, and nontraditional learning environments. More than 28,000 events across the country are being planned.

To raise statewide awareness, Black Alabamians for Education will host the Birmingham Student Showcase on Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026. The event will take place from 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. at the Carver Theatre in Birmingham, with more than 500 attendees expected.

Other notable events include an open house and school tours hosted by Alabama Connections Academy in Athens, offering families a closer look at virtual public charter options. In Birmingham, Briarwood Christian School is hosting an open house for scholarship-eligible families. University Charter School in Livingston is marking the week with a schoolwide spirit week. In Montgomery, Wares Ferry Elementary School is holding classroom activities focused on school choice, while New Life Christian Academy in Troy is hosting a school choice assembly and participating in a local school fair.

For updated event details or more information, please visit <https://schoolchoiceweek.com/alabama>.

About School Choice and NSCW

School choice is the process of parents selecting the schools that best fit their children's individual interests and needs. Held each January, [National School Choice Week](#) helps families learn more about the learning options available for their children. Organized by the nonprofit [National School Choice Awareness Foundation](#), the week raises equal awareness of public, public charter, public magnet, private, online, home, and nontraditional learning environments. Since 2011, National School Choice Week has spotlighted 235,000 independent events hosted by schools, nonprofits, and parent leaders.

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School Choice Landscape

K-12 Education Options for Parents in Alabama

Parents in Alabama have much more flexibility in choosing public, private, home, and nontraditional learning environments for their children than families in other states, as the Yellowhammer State is a rising national leader in providing families with K–12 schooling options.

Public and private school choice options have significantly expanded for Alabama families over the past several years. The biggest expansion was the enactment of the CHOOSE Act, which created a new tax-credit education savings account providing about \$7,000 per student for eligible families beginning in the 2025–26 school year. After strong early demand, lawmakers expanded the program again in 2025 by nearly doubling total funding.

Traditional Public Schools

Alabama offers more than 1,350 traditional public schools for K–12 students. These schools are run by school districts and do not charge tuition, and students are usually assigned to attend a public school in their neighborhood or region. In addition, the state and local school districts sometimes allow parents to send their children to a different public school within their district and, in limited cases, to another district when a school is identified as low-performing, with districts deciding placement and transportation often left to families.

Public Charter Schools

Alabama is home to about 20 charter schools. Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that are allowed to determine many of their own policies and innovate within the public education system. These schools are available for families in select communities across the state, and transportation may be available in some cases, with additional support for certain students, including students with IEPs.

Public Magnet Schools

Magnet schools are tuition-free public schools or programs that focus on specific themes, such as math, science, technology, or the performing arts. Alabama offers more than 30 magnet schools in several districts. Transportation may be available in some cases.

Private Schools

There are more than 400 private schools in Alabama. These schools charge tuition and set their own admissions policies. The state has several private school choice programs that make private schooling more affordable for families; the primary program is the CHOOSE Act, which provides eligible families earning up to 300% of the federal poverty level with about \$7,000 per

student per year through an education savings account that can be used for private school tuition and other approved education expenses. Priority is given to students with special needs.

Online Learning

Alabama offers several full-time, tuition-free online schools, where students learn from qualified educators and collaborate with classmates via the internet. Options include Alabama Connections Academy, Alabama Virtual Academy, Genesis Innovative School, and Alabama Destinations Career Academy.

Homeschooling

In Alabama, parents have the freedom to homeschool their children. Families who want to educate their children at home must provide a one-time notice of intent, and the state does not require specific subjects or standardized testing; homeschooled students may be eligible to participate in sports at local public schools based on district rules.

Nontraditional Education

Microschools are small group learning environments that are often established by families or educators to respond to local needs. Microschooling is growing in Alabama and often appears as small private schools or homeschool families learning together in personalized settings. Examples include Hope United Academy in Madison, Legacy Builders Academy, and Build UP in Birmingham.

Editor's note: Information in this analysis may be used with attribution to the National School Choice Awareness Foundation.

Parent Survey Data

A record number of U.S. parents searched for new schools in 2025, survey finds

MIAMI (Jan. 12, 2026) — A record 46 million U.S. parents considered finding a new K–12 school for at least one of their children in 2025, marking a five-year high in school-search activity, according to a new national survey released Monday.

The [survey](#) found that 75% of parents of school-aged children considered, searched for, or enrolled a child in a new or different school last year, up from 60% the year before. Twenty-one percent of parents — about 13.3 million nationwide — ultimately enrolled at least one child in a new learning environment.

The findings come from a nationally representative survey of 3,960 U.S. parents conducted by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation ahead of National School Choice Week, which runs Jan. 25–31.

School-search activity spanned a wide range of outcomes. Twenty-three percent of parents considered new schools but did not actively search, while 31% searched but did not enroll a child. Parents living in cities, higher-income households, and younger parents were more likely to search, while parents in small towns and rural communities were more likely to follow through with enrollment once they began the process.

Most parents who enrolled their children in new schools said their decisions were driven by practical factors rather than dissatisfaction alone. Common reasons included children entering school for the first time, moving between grade levels, or families relocating. Thirty-two percent cited dissatisfaction with a previous school as the primary reason for enrolling elsewhere.

Parents who enrolled said they prioritized student well-being when choosing a new school. Safety and a supportive school environment ranked highest, followed by a positive social environment and a particular educational theme or instructional approach, such as STEM, arts-focused, or faith-based education.

Parents who ultimately enrolled were more likely to engage directly with schools during their search, including visiting campuses in person, reviewing school websites, and speaking with administrators. Conversations with family members, friends, and other parents also played a role, as did open houses and school tours.

Despite high interest, many parents did not complete the enrollment process. More than half of U.S. parents considered or searched for a new school but did not enroll a child. The most common barriers included concerns about disrupting a child's academic or social life, uncertainty about making the wrong decision, limited availability or waitlists, and transportation challenges.

Looking ahead, interest in school choice is expected to remain high. Nearly two-thirds of parents said they are likely to consider new schools for at least one of their children in 2026, according to the survey.

“Over the past five years, more than 30 states have expanded public and private learning options for families, and new and nontraditional learning environments have opened their doors,” said Andrew Campanella, CEO of the National School Choice Awareness Foundation. “As a result, exercising education options is no longer a niche exception, but an expectation for many parents.”

[Download the survey report here.](#)

[Visit the survey web page here.](#)

Guest Column for Republication

What Families in Alabama Should Know About Their School Options

By Andrew Campanella

All children in Alabama and across America deserve the opportunity to learn, thrive, succeed, and pursue their dreams.

That's why one in five parents last year enrolled at least one of their children in a new K–12 school. In fact, the process of moms and dads actively choosing how and where their children learn—often referred to as school choice—reached a five-year high in 2025.

Meanwhile, more than 60% of parents say they are likely to consider a new school for at least one of their children in 2026—suggesting another active year for families making enrollment decisions. What that means for your family depends, in large part, on where you live.

In Alabama, parents have more education options than they may realize. In addition to assigned traditional public schools, the Yellowhammer State has taken steps in recent years to give families more flexibility in choosing schools.

Within the public education system, tuition-free schooling options include charter schools (available in some areas), theme-based magnet schools (available in several districts), and full-time online schools. In limited situations, parents may also be able to send their children to traditional public schools outside of their assigned zones, if seats are available.

Parents can also consider private schools, and Alabama's CHOOSE Act helps eligible families make private education more affordable by providing funding through an education savings account that can be used for private school tuition and other approved education expenses. Finally, Alabama moms and dads have the freedom to educate their children at home, and some families pair homeschooling with microschools or other small-group learning environments.

If you want to explore these education options in advance of the 2026–27 school year, the time to begin that process is now. National School Choice Week begins January 25, with 390 school events across Alabama, including school fairs, open houses, parent nights, and information sessions.

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Before starting your search, it can help to pause and write down your goals for your child and what you want in an ideal learning environment. Doing so helps center the process on what—and who—really matters: your daughter or your son. When possible, visit schools and schedule tours or meetings with staff. Research shows that parents who visit schools in person

are twice as likely to enroll their children in a new school as parents who search without touring or visiting.

During those visits, ask questions. One of the most common mistakes parents make is accepting education jargon—of which there is plenty—at face value. If you do not understand a term, a reference to curriculum or instructional methods, or a school policy, ask for clarification until you do. You may also want to talk with other parents about their experiences, while keeping in mind that their perspectives are shaped by their own child's unique needs.

And remember: you know your child better than anyone else. When it comes to your child's well-being, you are the expert. Finding the right school is not about choosing what works for everyone—it's about choosing what fits your daughter or son best.

For a free guide to school choice options in Alabama, visit <https://myschoolchoice.com/alabama>

*[Andrew Campanella](#) is the CEO of the National School Choice Awareness Foundation, the nonprofit organization that coordinates National School Choice Week, Navigate School Choice, and Conoce tus Opciones Escolares. He is also the author of *The School Choice Roadmap: 7 Steps to Choosing the Right School for Your Child*.*

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