

School Choice Resources for North Carolina Journalists

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

Lauren Forte
Manager of Communications
National School Choice Awareness Foundation
lauren@schoolchoiceweek.com
760-898-8987

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 North Carolina or nationally, call or email Lauren.

In this document:

[Overview](#) – NSCW in North Carolina

[Landscape](#) – K–12 Education Options for North Carolina Parents

[Survey Data](#) – Why Parents Search for New Schools (Jan. 2026 Survey)

[Guest Column](#) – How North Carolina Parents Can Start the Search Process

Resources for journalists:

[Logos](#)

[Photos](#)

[B-Roll](#)

[Audio](#)

[Survey Graphics](#)

[Full January 2026 Survey of U.S. Parents](#)

NSCW Overview

School Choice Week in North Carolina Begins January 25

National School Choice Week begins Jan. 25 in North Carolina and across the country. In the Tar Heel State, 811 schools and nonprofits are hosting events and activities, spanning 87 of the state's 100 counties and collectively serving an estimated 361,000 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, the North Carolina Association for Public Charter Schools will host the Raleigh Student Showcase on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026. The event will take place from 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at the Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts in Raleigh, with more than 400 attendees expected.

Other notable events include open houses and information sessions hosted by Parkside Elementary School in Charlotte and The Math and Science Academy in Concord. In the Greensboro region, The Hawbridge School in Graham is welcoming families with an open house and tours, while The College Prep and Leadership Academy in Jamestown is holding a themed pep rally and weeklong activities. In the Raleigh area, Endeavor Charter School in Wake Forest, Gorman Christian Academy in Durham, and Roxboro Christian Academy are opening their campuses to prospective families through public open houses and showcases.

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

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.

Editor's note: This overview may be used, reproduced, or adapted by members of the media, in full or in part, without attribution.

School Choice Landscape

K-12 Education Options for Parents in North Carolina

Parents in North Carolina have somewhat more flexibility than families in other states to choose public, private, home, and nontraditional learning environments for their children.

Private school choice options have significantly expanded for North Carolina families over the past several years. The biggest change was the expansion of the Opportunity Scholarship program to all K–12 students statewide in 2023, with scholarship amounts tied to household income.

Traditional Public Schools

North Carolina offers more than 2,600 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, parents generally send their children to their assigned public schools, with only limited exceptions in hardship situations as determined by local districts.

Public Charter Schools

North Carolina is home to about 200 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 widely available across the state, with transportation determined locally.

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. North Carolina offers many magnet schools across the state. Transportation policies vary by district.

Private Schools

There are more than 800 private schools in North Carolina. These schools charge tuition and set their own admissions policies. To make private schooling more affordable for some families, the state offers the Opportunity Scholarship program, which helps families afford tuition by providing up to about \$7,400 per student per year and is open to all students, with priority for lower-income families.

Online Learning

North Carolina offers several full-time, tuition-free online schools, where students learn from qualified educators and collaborate with classmates via the internet, including North Carolina Virtual Academy and North Carolina Cyber Academy.

Homeschooling

In North Carolina, parents have the freedom to homeschool their children. Families who want to educate their children at home must file a one-time notice of intent, have a teaching parent with a high school diploma, and complete required assessment, and the state does not require specific subjects; homeschooled students may face limits on participating in public school sports or activities, though other leagues and activities are available.

Nontraditional Education

Microschools are small group learning environments that are often established by families or educators to respond to local needs. Microschooling in North Carolina includes private membership models and community learning hubs. Examples include Roots School in Durham.

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 North Carolina Should Know About Their School Options

By Andrew Campanella

All children in North Carolina 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 North Carolina, parents have more education options than they may realize. In addition to assigned traditional public schools, the Tar Heel 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 (which are widely available), theme-based magnet schools (available in many districts), and full-time online schools.

Parents can also consider private schools, and North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship Program helps eligible families make private education more affordable by providing funding that can be used for private school tuition. Finally, North Carolina moms and dads have the freedom to educate their children at home, and some families pair homeschooling with microschools or hybrid learning hubs.

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 811 school events across North Carolina, including school fairs, open houses, parent nights, and information sessions.

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.

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 North Carolina, visit <https://myschoolchoice.com/north-carolina>

[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.

Editor's note: This column may be republished in full or in part. Please attribute to Andrew Campanella, CEO, National School Choice Awareness Foundation. [Headshot available for download here.](#)