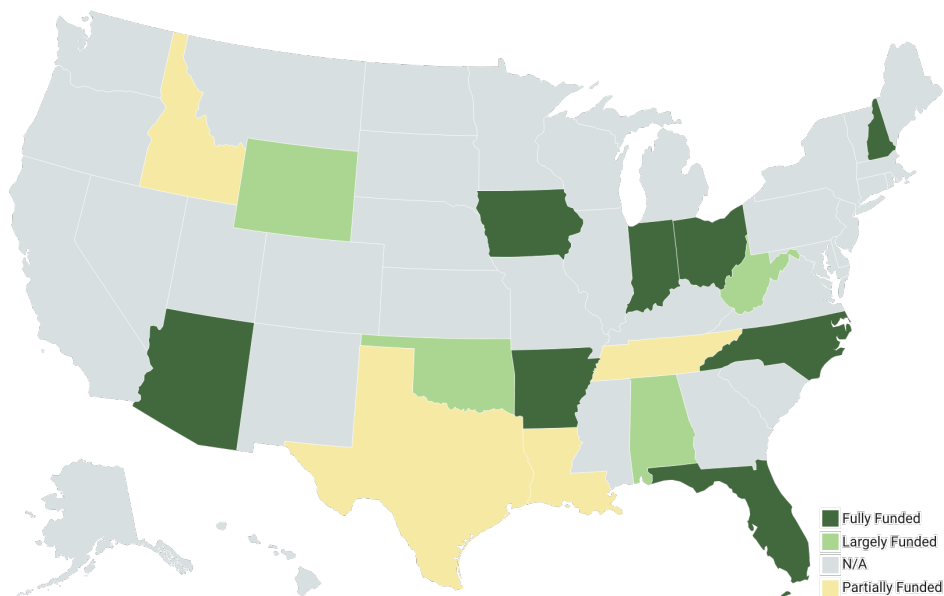




UNIVERSAL EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

A NEW LOOK AT
FUNDING EDUCATION

BY LINDSEY SANDERS



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Americans for Prosperity (AFP) believes all students deserve the opportunity to discover, develop, and deploy their unique passions and talents. Instead of limiting families to a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to education, we should expand their available choices so they can customize their students' educational options in ways that best suit their unique needs.

In order to accomplish an educational system where all students can thrive, **it is imperative that states fund every student regardless of their parent's income, geographic location, or the school they choose to attend.** Many states have adopted school choice programs that allow students to choose alternative means of education outside the traditional school setting, but not all states have provided funding for every student to participate.

There are three categories of funded programs: Fully Funded, Largely Funded, and Partially Funded.



FULLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Indiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Ohio all have universal educational choice programs that are fully funded (or will be fully funded within a few years), ensuring that funding is available for every student who wishes to participate in the program.

ARIZONA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** Between \$7,000 and \$8,000

Funding: Arizona's ESA program is funded through the state's education funding formula, allowing participation to expand without requiring separate legislative appropriations.

Participation: As of FY 2025 Q3, [87,602 students](#), or approximately 7.7% of the state's public school population, participate in the program.

ARKANSAS

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** ~\$7,000

Funding: Arkansas' ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. However, the state has so far ensured that funding is available for all students who wish to participate. For instance, while the state had originally appropriated only \$177 million in funding for the program for the 25-26 school year, it approved an additional \$90 million in supplemental funding when it became clear the initial appropriation would not cover all approved applications.

Participation: As of June 20, 2025, [39,000 students](#), or approximately 7.9% of the state's public school population, have been approved for the program.

FLORIDA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** Average of \$8,100

Funding: Florida's ESA program is funded through the state's education funding formula, allowing participation to expand without requiring separate legislative appropriations.

Participation: During the 2024-25 school year, [417,012 students](#), or approximately 14.5% of the state's public school population, participated in the program.

INDIANA

Program Type: Voucher | **Award Amount:** Average of \$6,536

Funding: Indiana's voucher program is funded through the state's education funding formula, allowing participation to expand without requiring separate legislative appropriations.

Participation: During the 2024-25 school year, [76,067 students](#), or approximately 7.3% of the state's public school population, participated in the program.

IOWA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** \$7,988

Funding: Iowa's ESA program is funded through an ongoing standing appropriation, which automatically allocates funds each year based on the number of eligible participants, allowing participation to expand without requiring separate legislative appropriations.

Participation: So far for the 25-26 school year, [43,784 students](#), or approximately 8.6% of the state's public school population, have had their ESA applications approved.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** Average ESA award \$5,100

Funding: New Hampshire's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, up to a 10,000-student cap, or approximately 5.9% of the state's public school population. The program has an escalator that annually increases this cap by 25% when at least 90% of the spots were filled in the previous year. While this cap isn't ideal, its high starting point (5.9% of the state's public school population) and its escalator make it likely that within a few years, every student who wishes to participate in the program will be able to.

Participation: Although no official data is available yet, within three weeks of the bill's passage, [9,000 families](#) had either completed or started an application for the program. It is likely that participation will approach the 10,000 student cap.

NORTH CAROLINA

Program Type: Voucher | **Award Amount:** Average voucher value of \$5,701

Funding: North Carolina's voucher program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. However, the state has so far ensured that funding is available for all students who wish to participate. For instance, in 2024, when North Carolina had a waitlist for the program, lawmakers injected \$463 million in supplemental funds to clear the large waitlist. North Carolina has scheduled \$625 million in voucher funding for 25-26, growing to \$825 million by 2032.

Participation: During the 24-25 school year, [80,472 students](#), or approximately 5.2% of the state's public school population, participated. An [additional 40,000 students](#) have applied for the 25-26 school year.

OHIO

Program Type: Voucher | **Award Amount:** \$8,400 for high schoolers, decreasing by income.

Funding: Ohio's voucher program is funded through the state's education funding formula, allowing participation to expand without requiring separate legislative appropriations.

Participation: For the 25-26 school year, [99,866 students](#), or approximately 5.9% of the state's public school population, have been accepted to participate in this program.



LARGELY FUNDED PROGRAMS

Largely Funded Programs fall into two categories. The first group, including **Alabama** and **West Virginia**, have kept their program fully funded so far, but are likely to spark appropriations battles in the near future as participation grows. The second group, consisting of **Oklahoma** and **Wyoming**, are not fully funded, but existing funding will likely cover the majority of interested students.

ALABAMA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** \$7,000

Funding: Alabama's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. An initial funding of \$100 million was allocated for the first year, and lawmakers subsequently allocated an additional \$80 million to ensure the program's full funding. So far, the state has ensured that funding is available for all students who wish to participate. However, the size of the program is likely to increase significantly in future years, potentially doubling, opening the door for an appropriations fight in the near future.

Participation: For the 25-26 school year, [23,000 students](#), or approximately 3.1% of the state's public school population, have received approval to participate.

WEST VIRGINIA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** ~\$5,200 for the 25-26 school year

Funding: West Virginia's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. For the 25-26 school year, lawmakers appropriated a combined \$120 million for the program, which should cover all applications this year. However, with the program becoming fully universal in eligibility next year, applications are likely to spike, requiring additional appropriations.

Participation: [Close to 15,000 students](#), or approximately 6% of the state's public school population, will participate in the program for the entirety of the year, with more expected to join mid-year.

OKLAHOMA

Program Type: ETC | **Award Amount:** \$5,000 - \$7,500 based on income

Funding: Oklahoma's ETC program authorizes up to \$250 million in tax credits each year to be claimed for use toward private school tuition. Oklahoma is likely to hit this cap, with more than [30,000 applications](#) on the first day of the application period alone. As a result, a significant number of students wishing to participate in the program will be unable to without legislation increasing the cap on tax credits.

Participation: For the 25-26 school year, [at least 36,583 students](#), or approximately 5.2% of the state's public school population, will participate in the program.

WYOMING

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** \$7,000

Funding: Wyoming's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. The state appropriated \$30 million for the next school year, sufficient to fund approximately 4,100 students, or approximately 4.4% of the state's public school population. With the Wyoming DoE receiving [3,484 applications](#) within the first two weeks of the application window, it is unlikely that all interested students will be able to participate in the program.

Participation: Participation numbers have not yet been released due to legal challenges.





PARTIALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

Idaho, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas have universal educational choice programs that are not fully funded, and existing funding will only cover a minority of interested students.

IDAHO

Program Type: ETC | **Award Amount:** \$5,000

Funding: Idaho's ETC program authorizes up to \$50 million in tax credits each year to be claimed for use toward private school tuition. This funding is sufficient for [up to 10,000 students](#), or approximately 3.1% of the state's public school population. Given that demand for participation in universal programs has always exceeded 5% of the state's public school population, the current cap will very likely bar a large portion of interested families from participating.

Participation: Applications for the program start for the 26-27 school year, so information on participation is not yet available.

LOUISIANA

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** Between \$5,200 and \$7,600, depending on income

Funding: Louisiana's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, requiring lawmakers to allocate money for the program each year. While Gov. Jeff Landry requested \$100 million for the program, the legislature appropriated only [\\$43.5 million](#), which is only enough to serve 6,000 students, or approximately 0.8% of the state's public school population. With [nearly 35,000 students](#) applying and being deemed eligible for the program, the vast majority of applicants will be denied.

Participation: 6,000 students, or approximately 0.8% of the state's public student population. Of these 6,000, [only 800 spots](#) will be awarded to applicants who are not currently participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program.



TENNESSEE

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** \$7,300

Funding: Tennessee's ESA program is funded through annual legislative appropriations, up to a 20,000-student cap, or approximately 2% of the state's public school population. The program has an escalator that annually increases this cap by 5,000 when at least 75% of the spots were filled in the previous year. Within the first week of the program's launch, the state received [more than 38,000 applications](#), implying that funding will be sufficient for less than half of applicants. Even with the elevator, it will take many years for Tennessee's program to be fully funded.

Participation: Tennessee has not released final data on how many scholarships have been approved for 25-26 school year, but it will likely be approximately 20,000.

TEXAS

Program Type: ESA | **Award Amount:** \$10,500

Funding: The Texas legislature appropriated \$1 billion over the 26-27 biennium, enough for [90,000 students](#), or approximately 1.6% of the state's public school population. Given that demand for participation in universal programs has always exceeded 5% of the state's public school population, the current cap will likely bar over two-thirds of interested families from participating.

Participation: Participation figures are unavailable as applications for the program don't open until 2026.

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