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QuickPoint! – Flexibility Is Key: The Next Generation of Parental Choice Solutions

By Kathryn Hickok

Families in five states now have access to a special program called Educational Savings Accounts.

Educational Savings Accounts, or ESAs, allow parents to take money the state otherwise would spend on their children in the public system and put it on a restricted use debit card. Parents can spend this money on a wide variety of approved educational options, including private school, individual tutoring, online classes, and other services. Any money not used is rolled over for parents to spend in the future.

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice [surveyed Arizona families](#) to see how they are choosing to spend the resources allocated for their kids. The survey found that more than a third of participating families used ESAs for multiple educational purposes, not just private school tuition. It also found that families saved a significant amount of their ESA money for future expenses.

This indicates that ESAs not only expand the learning options available to individual children, but they also encourage fiscal discipline within education spending.

Parents and lawmakers [in nearly a dozen states, including Oregon](#), are working to make this flexible learning option available to more children. The next generation of education reform in America needs to embrace flexibility to meet the needs of every child, and Educational Savings Accounts are proving to be a simple but powerful way to do just that.

Kathryn Hickok is Publications Director and Director of the Children's Scholarship Fund-Portland program at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.