



## Was 2015 the best year yet for educational choice?

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The Wall Street Journal once famously declared 2011 "The Year of School Choice." As 2015 comes to a close, the Journal may want to update its assessment. The number and quality of school choice programs enacted in 2015 makes it the new Year of School Choice.

In 2011, 13 states enacted new school choice programs or expanded existing ones. In 2015, 15 states created or expanded school choice programs, as tallied by the libertarian Cato Institute's Jason Bedrick.

Distinguishing 2015 from the 2011 Wall Street Journal declaration, Bedrick argues that 2015 is "clearly" the new "Year of Educational Choice," as opposed to school choice. With three new education savings account laws, states are increasingly moving beyond school choice to more comprehensive education choice. "Families can use ESA funds to pay for a lot more than just private school tuition," Bedrick says, like tutors, textbook, online classes and more.

Eight new education choice programs were passed in seven states. Five of those states enacted vouchers or education savings accounts specifically for students with special needs.

Nine states expanded a total of 13 education choice programs. Those expansions vary from raising or eliminating a statewide cap on vouchers to expanding the types of businesses that can get tax credits for donating to nonprofits that give private school tuition scholarships.

Education choice advocates also won four out of five lawsuits decided in 2015. For example, the North Carolina state supreme court upheld the state's tuition voucher law, while the Alabama state supreme court upheld the state's tax credits for tuition scholarships.

Bedrick tallies seven lawsuits that are currently pending, two of which challenge Nevada's near-universal education savings account law.

The best measure of school choice is the number of students who gain access to choices in how they are educated. Without a known comprehensive tally of that, the number of states expanding a number of programs will have to serve as the best measure. With that in mind, 2015 seems to edge out 2011 as the best year yet for school and educational choice.