



## 5 Questions with Jason Bedrick, Cato's Center for Educational Freedom

Jason Bedrick is a policy analyst with the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom. Bedrick has extensive policy research experience, including detailed legislative development and analysis. He previously served as a legislator in the New Hampshire House of Representatives and was a research fellow at the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, where he focused on state education policy.

### 1) Can you summarize the meaning of school choice in one sentence?

School choice means empowering parents to choose the education providers that best meet their children's individual needs.

### 2) Why do you support school choice as public policy?

I support [school choice](#) because every child should have access to a quality education that meets his or her needs. I was blessed that my parents could afford to live in a town with high-performing elementary and middle schools and that they could afford to pay my tuition at a private high school.

Unfortunately, most children lack similar opportunities. They are assigned to a district school based solely on the location of the home that their parents could afford. It's time to break the unnecessary and harmful link between education and housing, and give all families the opportunity to choose the school that works best for their kids.

### 3) What more can be done to expand school choice across the nation?

Expanding school choice requires arming ourselves with the facts and holding elected officials accountable. Parents and other concerned citizens should learn who their state representatives are and how they vote on school choice initiatives. They should reach out to their legislators to encourage them to vote to empower parents with school choice.

That first requires familiarizing themselves with the research on school choice policies and developing the skills necessary to advocate effectively. Organizations like the [Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice](#), the [Alliance for School Choice](#), and numerous local

advocacy groups are great resources for citizens seeking to learn more about school choice policies and how to advocate for them.

#### **4) What is the biggest misconception about school choice?**

The biggest misconception about school choice is that it harms the students attending public schools. In fact, as the [evidence](#) demonstrates, empowering families with an exit option forces those schools to be more responsive to the needs of parents and students.

There have been 23 empirical studies of the impact of school choice policies on academic outcomes in public schools. Of those, 22 found that school choice policies improved academic performance of students at public schools. One study found no visible impact. No study found that school choice harmed public school students.

#### **5) Why is school choice better than a government monopoly?**

No one school is the best fit for every child who happens to live in a particular geographic area. A one-size-fits-all policy inevitably doesn't actually fit everyone. Moreover, monopoly education systems force parents with differing views about education into [social conflict](#) with each other.

When decisions about education are made via a zero-sum political process, the system produces winners and losers — and minority groups tend to be the losers. A system of school choice, by contrast, enables parents to choose schools that align with their values and meet their children's needs without forcing anyone else to abandon their own values or forgo their educational needs.