

Native Education Factsheet

October 2017

Choice Innovation in Native Education



Despite limited resources, tribal governments and Native communities are innovating to create Native education programs that fulfill the unique needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.

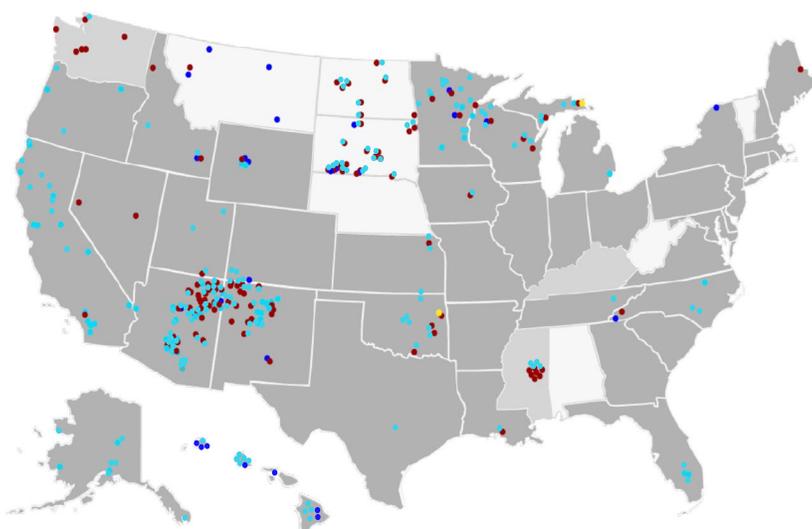
Current Landscape

There are six primary types of schools serving Native children across the United States.

- **741** Public Schools in Native Communities
- **183** BIE Funded Schools
- **130** Tribally Controlled Schools
- **53** BIE Operated Schools
- **31** Native Charter Schools
- **22** Native Language Immersion Schools

See the map below for additional information regarding where these schools are located.

Types of School Choice in Native Communities
2010-2017



Opportunities for School Choice

Charter School: A publicly funded independent school established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with a local or national authority. Tribes throughout the United States have partnered with official authorizers to create charter schools that address the unique needs of Native students. Parents of children attending charter schools do not receive ESAs, vouchers, or tax-credit scholarships because the schools receive public funding.

Immersion Charter Schools: Schools that utilize Native languages as the primary language of instruction within the classroom. These schools are crucial to revitalizing Native languages and helping Native students reach their full potential.

Online & Virtual Schools: Long distance learning options that allow students to work with their teachers to take classes over the Inter-net. Online courses can supplement or replace courses within the traditional classroom environment. ESAs, vouchers, and other school choice options can be used to pay for costs associated with virtual school.

- No Charter School Legislation
- Legislation Passed, but no Schools
- Charter School Legislation Passes
- Native Charter Schools
- Native Immersion Schools
- Native Immersion Charter Schools
- Tribally Controlled BIE Schools

Funding Opportunities For School Choice

School Voucher: State funded scholarship used to pay for low income students to attend private school rather than public school. Voucher programs give funds usually used by the local school district to the student’s family to pay for private school. Vouchers have a poor record of supporting student success in rural and reservation areas.

Education Savings Account: Deposits of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted use. Parents of children with ESAs often receive funds via a debit card, which is used to pay for tuition, online learning programs, tutoring, and other approved services and materials. Lack of meaningful and accessible learning options makes ESAs less effective in rural and reservation areas.

Tax Credit Scholarship: An amount of money that a taxpayer is able to subtract from taxes owed to the government when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships. Tax credits reduce the amount of taxes owed rather than the taxable income.

Individual Tax Credits & Deductions: An amount of money that parents are able to subtract from taxes owed to the government. The tax credit is meant to provide funding for approved educational expenses, including tuition, supplies, and transportation.

Challenges to Choice in Rural Education

Infrastructure: Due to inadequate federal funding and laws that prevent bonding and taxing against Indian lands, Native schools have not been built or maintained well enough to prepare Native students for the 21st century. Reports from federal agencies have documented dilapidated school facilities, lack of technological infrastructure, and health hazards within both BIE schools and public schools on and near reservations. Federal and state agencies do not provide funding to update the existing facilities or to build new ones.

Housing: Teachers of Native students in rural and reservation areas face limited housing options due to location and lack of funding. Charter schools, immersion schools, and other alternative learning institutions receive less per-pupil funding, which limits their ability to recruit and provide adequate housing for their teachers.

Transportation: Rural and reservation students often travel long distances for school. In addition, poor road conditions that link rural schools increase vehicle maintenance costs. Since charter schools and voucher programs do not provide funding for student transportation, the student’s family must assume the cost of transportation and drive long distances to and from school.

Teacher Shortage: Throughout the country, rural and reservation schools report severe shortages of effective and culturally competent teachers. Lower per-pupil funding reduces the ability of rural and reservation schools to attract qualified educators. Training, hiring, and retaining effective teachers remains critical for expanding school choice in rural and reservation communities.

Types of Funding Programs in States with High Native Populations

	ESA	SVR	TCS	ICS
Arizona	●		●	
Florida	●	●	●	
Minnesota				●
Montana			●	
Nevada	●		●	

	ESA	SVR	TCS	ICS
North Carolina		●		
Oklahoma		●	●	
South Dakota			●	
Utah		●		
Wisconsin		●		●

ESA: Education Savings Account SVR: School Voucher TCS: Tax Credit Scholarship ICS: Individual Tax Credit

* Note: The following states do not have funding opportunities for school choice programs: AK, CA, HI, ID, NE, NM, NY, ND, OR, WA, and WY.