

EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI

What is Public School Choice?

Sometimes referred to as “Portability” or “Open Enrollment,” public school choice allows a student to more easily transfer to a different public school within their district (intradistrict) or to a different public school outside of their district (interdistrict).

Despite there being many reasons that a parent might want to transfer their child to a new school, Mississippi students must meet a very specific set of criteria to do so, and there are a number of obstacles:

- Students may only transfer to a new public school if both the student’s assigned public school district (aka home district or transferor district) and the school district to which the student wants to transfer (aka receiving district or transferee district) give approval of the transfer
- The receiving school can reject the student for any reason, and may even charge tuition for the transfer
- The home district may also refuse to release the student, even if another district has agreed to accept them

We believe that by addressing some of those specific barriers, lawmakers can provide increased access to quality public education for all students.



Public school choice would:

- ☒ Increase education access for all students, regardless of district location or accountability score
- ☒ Eliminate home district approval requirements for students
- ☒ Increase transparency by requiring districts to publish transfer policies, capacity, tuition, and fees

Legislative Opportunities for Improvement



For the last several years, there have been legislative attempts to remove the ability of a home school district to hold a student hostage if another district has agreed to accept them. We support those efforts and encourage lawmakers to pursue additional opportunities to remove barriers for students who would like to transfer to another public school district.

A receiving district may currently deny a transfer request for any reason and charge tuition to transfer students. We encourage lawmakers to make these processes more transparent for parents by requiring districts to post their capacity to serve transfer students, their admissions criteria, and any tuition they may charge.

There are currently no laws governing student transfers between schools in the same district (intradistrict transfers). We encourage lawmakers to consider legislation to establish such criteria and ensure students are given a path to pursue intradistrict transfers.