Traditional public schools:

Many children are assigned by their school districts to attend traditional public schools based on their community, neighborhood, or school zone. These schools are managed by school districts, governed by local school boards, and charge no tuition for children to attend.

HOW MANY

90,000

There are more than 90,000 traditional public schools across the U.S.

COST

Traditional public schools generally must accept any child who applies to attend. In some specific circumstances, schools may be able to require students to take entrance exams for acceptance to a selective school for the gifted and talented.

ENROLLMENT

Traditional public schools do not charge tuition or entrance fees. Costs for traditional public schools are paid by taxpayers in the form of local, state, and federal taxes.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

For the most part, all or most teachers in traditional public schools must be certified or licensed by the state to teach. Each state has its own teacher certification or licensure policies.

TESTING

After they are enrolled, students in traditional public schools are usually required to take annual or occasional state tests or assessments. These tests vary by state. Some school districts and individual schools have their own assessments, as well.

TRANSPORTATION

Most states require traditional public schools to offer transportation to and from the school. Although rare, some school districts do not provide transportation for all students, or they provide transportation for a fee. In states that allow parents to choose schools outside of their zones or districts, transportation policies vary.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Traditional public schools are required to enroll and provide specific services for children with special needs.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

Many children are assigned by their school districts to attend traditional public schools based on their community, neighborhood, or school zone. This process is called public school assignment. Many states, however, now offer parents more flexibility to choose traditional public schools outside of their zones. In some areas, parents can choose any traditional public school in their district. Other states allow students to attend traditional public schools in any district. These policies are known as open enrollment.

You may also hear these programs referred to as public school choice, inter-district school choice, or intra-district school choice. About half of U.S. states require school districts to participate in some type of open enrollment program. The most common limitation that states place on these programs involves space and availability. Students can usually only transfer to another traditional public school if the chosen school has not reached capacity.

Traditional public schools:
management

Traditional public schools are run by local school districts. School districts are usually overseen by elected school boards. All traditional public schools must follow the education laws in their states.

For more information, visit