

**News – For Immediate Release**

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## **NEW SURVEY: A Record 46 Million U.S. Parents Considered New K–12 Schools for Their Children Last Year**

*School searching jumps to five-year high;  
62% of parents say they will exercise education options in 2026.*

**MIAMI, FLA. (JAN. 12, 2026)** — More than 46 million U.S. parents considered finding a new school for at least one of their children last year, marking a five-year high in school searching, according to a new national survey.

The survey found that 75% of parents of school-aged children said they considered new schools in 2025, up from 60% the year before. Twenty-one percent of parents—about 13.3 million nationwide—ultimately enrolled at least one child in a new learning environment.

The findings come from a survey of 3,960 parents released by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation ahead of National School Choice Week, which runs Jan. 25–31.

Most parents who enrolled their children in new schools said they were motivated by practical factors rather than dissatisfaction. Common reasons included children entering school for the first time (20%), moving between school levels (26%), or families relocating to a new community (16%). Just 32% cited dissatisfaction with their child’s previous school as the primary reason for enrolling somewhere new.

When selecting new schools, parents who enrolled their children said their top priorities were a safe, supportive school environment (61%), a positive social environment (47%), and a particular educational theme or approach—such as STEM, arts, or faith-based education (39%).

Looking ahead, interest in school choice is expected to remain strong. Nearly two-thirds of parents (62%) said they are likely to consider new schools for at least one of their children in 2026.

“Over the past five years, more than 30 states have expanded public and private learning options for families, and new and nontraditional learning environments have opened their doors. As a result, exercising education options is no longer a niche exception, but an expectation for most parents,” said Andrew Campanella, CEO of the National School Choice Awareness Foundation.

“At the same time, more work needs to be done to help the 54% of U.S. parents who engaged in the search process but never found a new learning environment,” Campanella said. “We are committed to helping families navigate their options, and we encourage parents who want to search to start the process early—because timing matters.”

To help families search for schools, National School Choice Week runs from Jan. 25 to 31 and will include more than 28,000 events nationwide, such as school fairs, open houses, and information sessions organized across roughly 80% of U.S. counties. To learn more about K–12 education options in your state, visit [myschoolchoice.com](http://myschoolchoice.com) (English) or [opcionesescolares.com](http://opcionesescolares.com) (Spanish). For details on National School Choice Week events and activities, visit [schoolchoiceweek.com](http://schoolchoiceweek.com).

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### About NSCAF

The National School Choice Awareness Foundation (NSCAF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We show parents how K–12 school choice can change their children’s lives, and then guide them through the process of finding schools that best meet their children’s needs. Our three charitable programs—National School Choice Week, Navigate School Choice, and Conoce tus Opciones Escolares—raise equal awareness of the public, charter, magnet, private, online, home, and nontraditional education options available for families. We are nonpolitical and do not advocate for or against legislation at any level of government.

### Survey Details

National results are based on a representative survey of 3,960 U.S. parents of children ages 4–18, conducted December 2–10, 2025, using SurveyMonkey’s national audience panel. Results were weighted to reflect the U.S. parent population by key demographics. The margin of error is  $\pm 1.6$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

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**FACT SHEET:**

**U.S. Parents Searching for K–12 Schools for Kids  
in Record Numbers**

School choice has shifted from a niche exception to a mainstream expectation for America's families, according to a survey of 3,960 U.S. parents released in January 2026 by the nonprofit National School Choice Awareness Foundation. In 2025, 75% of U.S. parents—about 47 million nationwide—considered, searched for, or enrolled at least one child in a new or different school.

**School searching reached a five-year high.**

More than 46 million parents, or 75% of U.S. parents of school-aged children, considered finding a new school for at least one of their children in 2025, up from 60% in 2024. Twenty-one percent of parents—about 13.3 million nationwide—ultimately enrolled a child in a different school.

**Practical considerations drove most school changes.**

Parents who enrolled their children in new schools most often cited everyday transitions such as moving between school levels (26%), children entering school for the first time (20%), or relocating to a new community (16%). About one-third of parents (32%) said dissatisfaction with their child's previous school was their primary motivator.

**Most enrollment decisions occurred in the early grades.**

While families enrolled children across all grade levels, enrollment was most common in Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade, with fewer changes occurring during the middle and high school years.

**School environment was the top priority for parents who enrolled.**

Among parents who enrolled a child in a new school, 61% cited a safe, supportive environment as a top priority, followed by a positive social environment (47%), a particular educational theme or approach (39%), and strong academics and teaching quality (36%).

### **Parents who enrolled engaged deeply in the search process.**

Parents who ultimately enrolled their children were nearly twice as likely to visit schools in person as parents who searched but did not enroll. They were also more likely to speak directly with school staff and attend open houses or school tours.

### **Parents are increasingly choosing from a wider range of school types.**

Families who enrolled children in new schools were more likely to choose alternatives to their assigned public schools, including private schools and homeschooling, though a majority still reported having children enrolled in public-sector schools.

### **Many parents considered or searched for new schools but did not enroll.**

More than half of U.S. parents (54%) considered or searched for schools for their children last year but did not enroll their child anywhere new. This includes 23% of parents who considered new schools but never began an active search, and 31% who actively searched for a new school but ultimately stopped.

### **Concerns about disruption, uncertainty, and logistics were key barriers.**

Among parents who actively searched but did not enroll, the most common reason was concern about disrupting their child's academic or social life (33%). Others said they were worried about making the wrong choice (26%), struggled to find good options near them (26%), or said transportation challenges made changing schools too difficult (25%).

### **School searching is expected to remain high in 2026.**

Nearly two-thirds of parents (62%) said they are likely to consider new schools for at least one of their children in the coming year, up from 40% last year.

### **Methodology**

National results are based on a representative survey of 3,960 U.S. parents of children ages 4–18, conducted December 2–10, 2025, using SurveyMonkey's national audience panel. Results were weighted to reflect the U.S. parent population by key demographics. The margin of error is  $\pm 1.6$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.