

Education Choice and Competition Index

2016 Scoring Guide (Technical)

The Education Choice and Competition Index (ECI) provides information on the extent to which parents residing within the geographical boundaries of the nation’s largest school districts can choose schools for their children, and the degree to which the procedures for school choice promote competition. School districts are scored on thirteen categories of policy and practice that are thought by experts to be important to the availability and quality of choice and to the extent to which choice creates competition among providers of education services. For categories in which no federal data are available, information is derived from school district websites and interviews with district staff.

CATEGORY 1	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Availability of Alternatives to Traditional Public Schools	<p>A. Alternatives to traditional public schools include charter schools and at least two of the following: magnets, vouchers, affordable private schools (≥75% of all private schools in the district), and tax credit scholarships</p> <p>B. Alternative options include two or three from part A</p> <p>C. Alternative options include one or none from part A</p> <p>Number of students enrolled in alternative schools (from part A) / number of students enrolled in traditional public + alternative schools</p> <p>D. ≥45%</p> <p>E. 44% to 25%</p> <p>F. <25%</p>	A & D	A or D or B & E	B & F or C & E	C & F

Traditional, charter and magnet school counts are based on 2014-2015 Common Core data. The determination for “affordable” is calculated by comparing the tuition of private schools to the federal expected family contribution of the typical family in that district for college tuition. Schools with tuition that falls at or below the expected family contribution are deemed “affordable.” Private school enrollment data are from the 2011-2012 Private School Survey (we multiply this number by the percentage of “affordable private schools” to get an estimate of the number of students enrolled in affordable private schools). Private school tuition data are from the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey. Expected family contribution is from the 2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, with our calculations for each district based on median income within each district from the 2015 U.S. Census American Community Survey. Virtual school enrollments are not included in this this measure due to practical constraints: there is no public database of virtual school enrollment by districts, and districts themselves are unable to reliably differentiate virtual classes they themselves offer from those offered by outside entities with which they compete (with respect to this category we are interested only in the latter).

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 2	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Accessibility of Virtual Courses	A) Publicly available policies allow students to enroll in a variety of virtual courses that count towards graduation or matriculation B) At least 2% of the total student population is enrolled in at least one virtual course C) Courses are free or of minimal cost to students/families	All	A & B or A & C	A or B	None
<i>The numerator for B is the number of individual students who take at least one virtual course for credit. The denominator is the total district enrollment. Student enrollment numbers are provided to us by each school district and capture only the students who access virtual courses through the auspices of the district.</i>					
CATEGORY 3	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Popularity of Schools Reflected in Funding (A district can only receive credit if its own funds are involved – no credit is given for mandated allocations of state and federal funds)	A) Clear definition of weighted student funding/fair funding in district documents where funds follow students to schools and differ based on student needs (i.e., special education, ELL, etc.) B) At least 75% of a district’s operating budget is allocated through the weighted student funding formula C) At least 50% of a district’s operating budget is allocated through the weighted student funding formula	A & B	A & C	A	None
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites and interviews with district staff.</i>					
CATEGORY 4	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Closures of Schools with Declining Enrollment Due to Parental Choice	A) Published policy citing low or declining enrollment as a reason for closing or restructuring unpopular schools B) District has closed schools that represent 3% or more of the total number of the district’s schools in the last five years or has closed at least 10 schools due to unpopularity as evidenced by low enrollment	All	B	A	None
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites and interviews with district staff.</i>					

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 5	DEFINITION	PTS 4	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
<p><i>Degree of Choice and Fairness in School Assignment</i></p>	<p>A) Students are assigned to schools through an application process in which parents express their preferences (rather than through geographical attendance zones)</p> <p>B) Students receive a default school assignment based on a geographical attendance zone but parents can easily express their preferences for other schools*</p> <p>C) Assignment to oversubscribed schools that engage in preferential admissions, e.g., magnets, maximizes the match between school preferences for students and parent preferences for schools (the presence of schools that carry out preferential admissions is necessary for C to be relevant)</p> <p>D) Assignment to oversubscribed schools that do not engage in preferential admissions maximizes parental preference through computer algorithms that rely on parents' rank ordering of their desired school assignments</p> <p>E) Assignment to oversubscribed schools that do not engage in preferential admission is by a lottery that is carried out separately for each school without regard to parental preferences for other schools **</p> <p>F) Assignment to oversubscribed schools that engage in preferential admission is through a competitive process that does not take parental preferences into account</p> <p>G) Assignment to schools out of the students' geographical attendance zone is impossible or difficult</p>	<p>A & C & D or A & D (with N/A on C)</p>	<p>B & C & D</p>	<p>A & C & E or B & C & E or A & E & F or B & E (with N/A on C and F)</p>	<p>B & E & F</p>	<p>G</p>

Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites and interviews with district staff.

**If a district requires students to meet restrictive requirements in order to transfer to another traditional public school parents cannot "easily express their preferences." A district with a default assignment must allow students to apply without restrictions to any traditional public schools with available space to qualify for part B. **Preferences for students whose siblings are already attending the school of choice, students who have previously attended the school, or students who live within the district boundaries are allowed.*

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 6	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Common Application for All District Schools	A) A common application for all regular public schools within a district's boundaries including magnet schools, but not charters	B & C	A & C	D	None
	B) A common application for all public schools within a district's boundaries, including magnet and charter schools (if charter schools are not present then A = B)				
	C) The district does not have default geographical assignment zones				
	D) Different applications for different schools				
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites. If a district has default geographical attendance zones that do not require an application they can only receive one point.</i>					

CATEGORY 7	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Availability and Comparability of Tax Credit Scholarship/Voucher Data	A) Private schools supported with public funding through student vouchers or tax credit scholarships are subject to an assessment system with public reporting requirements	A & B	A	C	None
	B) Public and publicly supported private schools can be directly compared in terms of their performance because they either participate in the same assessment regimen or different assessment regimens that are normed and standardized and thus directly comparable in terms of percentiles				
	C) Private schools supported with public funding engage in voluntary and idiosyncratic public reporting of student progress				
<i>Tax Credit and Voucher data are gathered from The Friedman Foundation's "The ABCs of School Choice" and state Department of Education websites. Publicly supported private schools must be present for A or B to be relevant and for "Availability and Comparability of Tax Credit Scholarship/Voucher Data" to count towards a district's total score.</i>					

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 8	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Reporting of Student Achievement Gains in Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Student achievement gains are presented based on longitudinal data on academic growth of individual students B) Student achievement gains are presented based on longitudinal changes in school level means C) School performance is described based only on cross-sectional achievement status for a given year 	A or A & B	B	C	None
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites.</i>					

CATEGORY 9	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
Accessible Online Choice Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) School choice-related performance information is clearly accessible and presented in an uncluttered and relevant manner. “Clearly” is defined as organized “at each level of the website so that it shows a clear and logical structure to typical users” on a parent, enrollment, or schools page B) Online resources provide a step by step choice process that includes contextual variables and definitions that allow parents to weigh important information C) Information to support school choice by parents is complete (parents with previous experience with the school choice process or parents with more access to informal networks of knowledgeable parents do not possess information unavailable to other parents that substantially advantages them in the choice process) and includes performance data from the previous year during the time period in which parents exercise school choice 	All	Two	One	None
<i>Measure derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites.</i>					

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 10	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
<p>Relevant Online Student Performance Data</p>	<p>Information elements required under federal law are augmented with additional performance information from categories including:</p> <p>A) School popularity (e.g., popularity as measured through open enrollment; parental satisfaction surveys; transfer-out rate for students)</p> <p>And;</p> <p>1) Student characteristics (absentee rates for students; rates of detention and disciplinary actions; gain scores on district-wide assessments; availability of accelerated and advanced courses and levels of student participation and performance in advanced courses; and for high schools, graduation rates and college enrollment and persistence rates)</p> <p>2) Teacher characteristics (e.g., percentage of inexperienced teachers; absentee rates for teachers)</p> <p>3) Principal characteristics (e.g., tenure of principal; past performance of schools in which that principal served)</p> <p>4) Course offerings and resources (curriculum focus in key subjects; availability of extracurricular and afterschool programs; and annual operating budget of the school expressed as per pupil expenditure)</p> <p>5) Additional performance information includes charter schools</p>	<p>A and four or more other categories; or five categories and not A</p>	<p>A and three categories; or four categories and not A</p>	<p>A and two categories; or three categories and not A</p>	<p>Less than 3 categories</p>
<p><i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites. Only one type of data within an element is required for credit (i.e. if the percentage of inexperienced teachers is available but the absentee rate for teachers is not, the district still receives credit for part 2).</i></p>					

Education Choice and Competition Index

CATEGORY 11	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
<i>Clear/Understandable Online Performance Data</i>	A) Provides text explanations providing parents enough information to interpret performance data B) Allows for side-by-side comparison of schools C) Provides performance information in graphical or tabular form with minimal or confusing text explanations	A and B	A or B	C	None
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites. "Enough" refers to information regarding terms, calculations, and other explanations of performance data needed for a parent to be fully informed.</i>					

CATEGORY 12	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
<i>Transportation to Alternative/Choice Public Schools</i>	A) Students are provided transportation to any public school of their choice within district borders on the same terms as for a district assigned school B) District subsidizes the cost of transportation to all public schools of choice but parents bear substantial costs C) District provides transportation or subsidizes transportation to traditional public schools of choice but excludes charter schools	A	B	C	None
<i>Measure is derived from our analysis of published materials on individual district websites and interviews with district staff. "Substantial costs" are more than 25% of the total transportation cost.</i>					

CATEGORY 13	DEFINITION	PTS 3	PTS 2	PTS 1	PTS 0
<i>District School Quality Rating</i>	District school quality is a measure of the performance of the average public school within a district on state assessments. A score for each school in the district is calculated by averaging that school's performance for all grade/subject combinations for which state assessment results are available. That score represents the school's percentile ranking in the state distribution of schools in terms of the percentage of students scoring proficient on the state assessments. District ratings are calculated by averaging the rating for each school in the district, weighted by the number of students enrolled at the school	7-10 rating	4-6 rating	0-3 rating	None
<i>District quality ratings are based on district profiles from GreatSchools.org.</i>					

Education Choice and Competition Index

Overall Scoring:

Districts receive points based on the number of criteria they meet in each category. The category score is the proportion of possible points received for that category. For three of the categories (Alternatives to Traditional Public Schools, Degree of Choice and Fairness in School Assignment, and Common Application for All District Schools), the proportion is doubled to reflect the importance of those categories to school choice relative to the other categories. Category scores are summed over all the categories and divided by the total points available.¹ The resulting proportion is translated into a letter grade as follows:

A	>.75
A-	.71-.75
B+	.66-.70
B	.60-.65
B-	.55-.59
C+	.50-.54
C	.45-.49
C-	.40-.44
D	.35-.39
F	<.35

¹ 16 total points are available to districts in which students attend private schools with publicly funded scholarships, whereas only 15 total points are available to districts without scholarship-aided private school attendance— the scoring category “Availability and Comparability of Tax Credit Scholarship/Voucher Data” is not applicable in the latter case

Education Choice and Competition Index

Scoring Example: New York

Category	Score
Alternatives to Traditional Public Schools	
Points	2
Category score (total points/3)	$.33\bar{3}$ $\times 2 =$.66
Accessibility of Virtual Courses	
Points	3
Category score (total points/3)	1.00
Popularity of Schools Reflected in Funding	
Points	1
Category score (total points/3)	.33 $\bar{3}$
Closures of Schools with Declining Enrollment	
Points	3
Category score (total points/3)	1.00

Degree of Choice and Fairness in School Assignment	
Points	4
Category score (total points/4)	$1.00 \times$ $2 = 2$
Common Application for All District Schools	
Points	2
Category score (total points/3)	$.6667$ $\times 2 =$ 1.3334
Availability and Comparability of Tax Credit Scholarships/Voucher Data	
Points	N/A
Category score (total points/3)	N/A
Reporting of Student Achievement Gains in Schools	
Points	1
Category score (total points/3)	.33 $\bar{3}$

Accessible Online Choice Information	
Points	3
Category score (total points/3)	1.00
Relevant Online Student Performance Data	
Points	3
Category score (total points/3)	1.00
Clear/Understandable Online Student Performance Data	
Points	1
Category score (total points/3)	.33 $\bar{3}$
Transportation to Alternative/Choice Schools	
Points	3
Category score (total points/3)	1.00
District School Quality Rating	
Points	2
Category score (total points/3)	.6667
Overall Score (category scores/15)	.73
Grade	A-