

# Fast Facts

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## *Open Enrollment in K-12 Education*

### *What —*

The CEEP Education Policy Brief, *Open Enrollment in K-12 Education*, by Adam Herrmann, Nathan Burroughs, and Jonathan Plucker examines the status and potential for open enrollment policies in public education. The advantages and disadvantages of open enrollment and its use in U.S. states in general, and Indiana in particular, are explored.

### *Why —*

The continuing debate over the role of market mechanisms in education reform efforts has made open enrollment an important part of the public debate. However, there has been little direct study of the public school choice option. In addition, recent changes in Indiana property tax and school funding laws have removed some of the barriers to a statewide open enrollment policy, making a careful analysis timely to help inform future policy discussions.

### *How —*

Open enrollment has the potential to introduce greater competition in public education, giving parents more options and hence spurring reform without being subject to many of the criticisms of private school voucher proposals. However, the effects of open enrollment on ethnic and socioeconomic segregation are disputed, and there remain potential implementation problems to overcome. Indiana has some experience with open enrollment on a limited basis as well as current legislative proposals to institute a statewide system that have many of the features necessary for a successful system.

### *Recommendations*

- There has been a dearth of rigorous empirical research on the design and effects of open enrollment policies. Future work should focus on the effects of open enrollment on school reform and student outcomes such as graduation rates.
- Open enrollment policies should mitigate the risks of economic and racial segregation, restrict non-academic recruitment of students, and include an aggressive campaign to inform parents of their options.
- If Indiana lawmakers choose to implement a statewide open enrollment law, they should create uniform guidelines for interdistrict transfer and require the participation of all districts. Transfers ought to be restricted to the period before enrollment is reported in order to minimize administrative burden. Support for transportation costs also needs to be considered.

To read this Education Policy Brief, go to:  
<http://ceep.indiana.edu/>