January 2021

Overview
The State Policy Map provides a snapshot of school choice policies found in laws passed by legislative bodies, for all 50 states (state legislatures) and Washington, D.C (Council of the District of Columbia). The State Policy Map focuses on four types of school choice: charter schools, virtual schools, private school choice (vouchers and tuition tax credits/deductions), and interdistrict school choice; it was developed as a tool to allow users to compare how school choice policies differ by state.

Data Collection
For each of the 17 policy questions, we collected data from relevant statutes for all 50 states and Washington, D.C. In select cases, we also consulted state department of education websites. Additionally, we referenced the Education Commission of the States 50-State Comparison and EdChoice School Choice in America Dashboard. Data collection for the State Policy Map occurred in fall 2019.\(^1\) We continued running validity checks on the data through December 2020. It is important to note that we did not systematically look beyond state statutes for policy information, such as rules created by state boards of education. Therefore, the State Policy Map does not capture all state policy regarding these types of choice; it was designed to be a snapshot of what currently exists in state statutes. Also, the State Policy Map does not account for the ways in which these statutes are interpreted and implemented.

Data
Each question’s response in the State Policy Map includes a summary code (see explanation below); a text response that includes a brief description of relevant law(s) found and/or relevant information from additional sources (e.g., expert feedback, state department of education websites); and a citation for relevant statutes and/or any additional sources.

Summary Codes:
- **Yes**: indicates that we found a statute that explicitly permits the policy in question
- **No**: indicates that we found a statute that explicitly prohibits the policy in question
- **Unclear**: indicates that we found a statute that may address the policy in question but further interpretation of the legal language is needed
- **Did Not Find**: indicates that we did not find a statute associated with the policy in question
- **Not Applicable**: indicates that the broader type of school choice (charter schools, virtual schools, private school choice, or interdistrict school choice) is not available in that state and therefore the more detailed questions about those forms of choice do not apply

For the questions about whether a state has charter schools, private school choice, or interdistrict school choice, the determinations of summary codes varied slightly. In addition to reviewing state

\(^1\) We re-coded the responses for the question “Are for-profit charter schools or management companies allowed?” in fall 2020, as the question did not initially include for-profit management companies.
statutes, we consulted two other sources to determine whether such programs or policies existed for each state. For questions about whether a state has private school choice, we consulted the [EdChoice School Choice in America Dashboard](https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice-in-america-dashboard). For questions about whether a state has charter schools or interdistrict school choice, we consulted the Education Commission of the States (ECS) 50-State Comparison: Charter School Policies and Open Enrollment Policies. If these resources confirmed that programs or policies did not exist, we coded the state as “No,” as opposed to “Did Not Find.”

**External review**

We requested feedback on the State Policy Map content from school choice policy experts in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. We contacted experts from a variety of research organizations, state departments of education, charter school associations, and advocacy groups. As of January 2021, we have received feedback from experts in 26 states. We processed this feedback by updating responses when an expert provided additional information about state statutes. If the expert noted that practice differs from law or specified that statute is silent on a particular policy in question, we updated the text response but did not update the summary code. For example, if a policy expert stated that the law does not state whether charter schools in a given state can hire uncertified teachers but indicates that in practice they can, the summary code would be “Did Not Find” because we did not find mention of the particular policy in question in state statutes. However, we would specify in the text response for that question that a policy expert indicated that charters may hire uncertified teachers.

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2 Specifically, we requested feedback on the summary codes (Yes, No, Unclear, Did Not Find, Not Applicable).