
School Types and Options

A good education is important for all students. Finding the right school or educational setting can be a challenge for parents. There are many things to keep in mind when making this choice, such as the child's needs, abilities, and unique personality. Possible choices in Utah include:


Public schools

Since public schools are state and federally funded, they have mandates that require every child to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that is appropriate for them. Children with disabilities are often entitled to receive additional services and accommodations while they are in public school. There are two options for these additional supports: a Section 504 Plan, and an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

A Section 504 Plan provides accommodations and supports to students with disabilities, by leveling the playing field and providing equal access to the general education curriculum. Examples of accommodations and supports can include: extra time on tests and assignments, preferential seating, and amplification devices for students who are hard of hearing; however, they can be anything the team deems reasonable to support the needs of the student. Please go to <http://utahparentcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Accommodations-for-Students-Under-Section-504.pdf> for more information on Section 504 plans.

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction in the classroom, home, hospital, or institution, and instruction in physical education. This would provide support and services beyond what a Section 504 plan can accommodate. If your student is eligible for an IEP, they are entitled to special education services and supports that modify the general education curriculum to a level that is appropriate





for their individual needs. Examples of the types of services provided in IEPs can include: specially designed instruction in areas of need, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, behavioral supports, and counseling services. Please go to

<https://utahparentcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Parents-as-Partners-Parent-Handbook-Final-07.2019.pdf> for a handbook that explains how to navigate the IEP process.

Examples of public schools are:

- Traditional schools through your local school district
- The Statewide Online Education Program (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/edonline>)
- Charter schools, including online charter schools

Split Enrollment

Split enrollment is when a student is simultaneously enrolled at two public schools, including district schools and charter schools. Students who are split enrolled are entitled to an IEP or 504 in both schools.

Concurrent Enrollment

The purpose of concurrent enrollment (CE) is to provide high school students with a challenging and rigorous college-level experience. Students in the program receive both college and high school credit. Students with special needs can participate in CE; however, it is important to note that while a student with a disability can receive reasonable accommodations in a CE class, they will not receive specialized or modified instruction.


You can learn more about CE at

<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/7ee9550c-30ab-4a22-8209-9babb0844bd7>.

Homeschooling and Dual Enrollment

Utah is a very homeschool-friendly state and allows parents to use their discretion when choosing a homeschooling curriculum. You can read about homeschooling laws and requirements at <https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/homeschool>.

Homeschooling: Homeschooling allows the flexibility of a curriculum based on a student's interests, strengths, and personality. In addition, there are disability-specific homeschooling curricula that may be appropriate for your child.



There are many benefits to homeschooling, such as one-on-one support, working at the student's own pace, academic flexibility, and prioritizing your child's needs. Be aware that a homeschooled child may miss out on social skill-building, problem-solving opportunities, and the rewards of developing friendships with peers. It is also important to note that a homeschooled student is not entitled to an IEP or a Section 504 plan during the time that they are homeschooled.

Dual Enrollment: Dual enrollment is when a student is simultaneously enrolled in a public school and a private school or homeschool. The student is entitled to an IEP or Section 504 plan (if eligible) for the time or number of courses the student is enrolled in public school, based on the decision of the child's academic team. It should be noted that dual enrollment students can participate in school academic activities along with their same-aged peers.

Private Schools

While public schools are funded through federal and state money, private schools are mostly funded through student tuition, endowments, scholarship/school voucher funds, and donations and grants from religious organizations or private individuals. It is important to note that private schools are not required to follow federal mandates for special education; however, most private schools are required to provide reasonable accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act. Private schools tend to have smaller classes and are likely to have more one-on-one learning.

Taking on the cost of private school tuition may be difficult for families. However, if your child is eligible for an IEP, they may be able to receive tuition assistance through the Carson Smith Scholarship for children with special needs. Under this program, students with special needs may be eligible to receive private school vouchers to contribute to their tuition. It is important to note that services through the scholarship are provided at the school's discretion. Go to <https://www.schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/resources/scholarships> for more information.

Reference:

- Medical Home Portal
<https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/living-with-child/education-and-schools/school-types-and-options>