

Four Signs Parents Won't Be Sending Their Kids Back to Public School This Fall

As disruptive as the 2020/2021 academic year was, it led to many positive educational changes that will be transformative and long-lasting. Most notably, parents have been re-empowered to take back the reins of their children's education from government bureaucrats and [teachers unions](#). Frustrated by school closures and district "Zoom schooling," families fled public schools in droves over the past year, and there are several signs that these families won't be returning this fall.

According to an [analysis](#) by Chalkbeat and the Associated Press, public school enrollment fell by an average of 2.6 percent across 41 states last fall, with states such as Michigan, Maine, Vermont, and Mississippi dropping by more than 4 percent. These enrollment declines far exceeded any anticipated demographic changes that might typically alter public school enrollment.

How many of these students will be back in a public school classroom next year? Not as many as public school officials hoped.

Here are 4 signs that many parents won't be sending their kids to public school this fall:

1. Fall 2021 Kindergarten Enrollment Is Down

Much of the enrollment decline over the past year was driven by younger students, especially kindergarteners. Many parents decided to forgo early school entry due to the coronavirus and

related restrictions, or chose private programs instead. In [Minnesota](#), for example, public kindergarten enrollment was down 9 percent this academic year, while private kindergarten enrollment was up 12 percent. Homeschooling in Minnesota also more than [doubled](#) this year to nearly 10 percent of K-12 students.

This fall, kindergarteners may again not be showing up at public schools. Kindergarten enrollment applications in [New York City](#) are down 12 percent compared to the previous year. In [San Francisco](#), overall public school enrollment dropped 3 percent this academic year, and kindergarten registrations are currently down 10 percent.

Some of this public school enrollment decline could be attributed to families who left heavily locked-down states like New York and California for more open places like [Florida](#). In San Francisco alone, 53,000 people [left](#) the city. But other districts are seeing similar downward patterns in fall public school enrollment.

In Marietta, [Georgia](#), kindergarten registrations for this fall are down 40 percent from last year. And in Denver, [Colorado](#), fall kindergarten registrations have declined 15 percent compared to last year.

In Springfield, [Missouri](#), public school officials are only expecting about half of the families who left the district this year to return in the fall. As a result, they are eliminating 49 teaching jobs.

2. Millions of New Homeschoolers Will Keep Homeschooling

The growth in homeschooling over the past year has been astonishing. Millions of parents have unenrolled their children from a district school for independent homeschooling.

According to the [US Census Bureau](#), the homeschooling rate doubled from 5 percent of US K-12 students, in spring 2020 to over 11 percent in fall 2020.

Leading the homeschooling surge this year were families of color. The Census reported a five-fold increase in the number of black homeschoolers this academic year, to more than 16 percent of the homeschooling population. This is an over-representation of black students in the homeschooling community compared to the 15 percent of black students [enrolled](#) in K-12 public schools.

And while some of the 2020/2021 homeschoolers will return to conventional schooling in the fall, there are indications that many new black homeschooling families will not.

Rasheeda Denning, the founder of Black Homeschoolers of Central Florida, says that her members who are new to homeschooling this year have found it to be rewarding and re-empowering. They don't plan to send their children back to school.

"One common trend that we've noticed during this pandemic is that parents have become empowered," Denning recently told [redefinED](#).

She continued: "Some new families will return to traditional schools, but we've found that most of our families are enjoying this new way of schooling and will stay with homeschooling, seeking out support to help them on their journey."

An [article](#) on the rise in black homeschooling in this week's *The New Yorker* also suggests the increase could be sustained post-pandemic, particularly as homeschoolers have turned to learning pods and homeschooling collectives for support and resources.

3. More K-12 Learning Options Are Sprouting

Despite recent actions by some school districts to limit education choices for the fall, the market is increasingly meeting parental demand for more learning options. Even as cities such as New York City and states like Massachusetts [eliminate](#) a remote learning option for the upcoming school year, private online learning providers are expanding their reach, hybrid homeschooling programs continue to grow, and entrepreneurs are creating new education models.

In [Indiana](#), two private, virtual learning providers were recently granted permission by the state's board of education to operate in the state. These two providers will be Indiana's first private, online schools and will be able to participate in the state's school voucher program which allows taxpayer-funding of education to follow students instead of being funneled into government school systems.

Other states have also enacted new school choice legislation, driven in large part by rising [support](#) for school choice policies over the past year.

"In total, 13 states have created five new programs and expanded 13 existing programs," EdChoice's Mike McShane [wrote](#) recently at Forbes. "Hundreds of thousands of families across the country will become eligible to participate in the next year or two, offering new opportunities that previously were financially out of their reach."

Whether it's virtual learning providers expanding their reach in more states, visionary [educators](#) opening small homeschool resource centers, or edtech startups gaining momentum, entrepreneurs are increasingly inventing new learning options for families.

[SchoolHouse](#), for example, is an edtech upstart that connects

learning pod families with a teacher to lead a learning pod in a family's home or, sometimes, an external commercial space. Families sign up through the SchoolHouse website to be matched with an educator. Now operating in 10 states with about 250 families, SchoolHouse just [raised](#) \$8 million in venture capital funding this spring to expand its offerings and reach.

4. Divisive School Practices Continue to Lure Parents Away

As schools across the country introduce critical race theory into their curriculum, [parents and educators](#) are speaking out against what they see as divisive, race-based practices that separate students into either an “oppressor” or “oppressed” group based solely on one's skin color. Some parents are pulling their kids out of schools that they think are [indoctrinating](#) children to view others as members of an identity group rather than as individuals.

In Palm Beach County, Florida, thousands of families removed their children from public schools for homeschooling this year and in one town, Jupiter Farms, the public elementary school lost 10 percent of its students to homeschooling. A primary driver for the exodus was that parents didn't want their children to have to wear masks all day long. Masks will not be required for the upcoming school year and school officials are eagerly trying to woo back families, but a recent district “equity statement” turned off some parents.

“When the school board approved an equity statement last month that vowed to battle ‘white advantage,’ Jupiter Farms was a hot spot for community anger,” *The Palm Beach Post* [reported](#) this week. “Compounding the problem, Jupiter Farms Elementary was one of the schools that decided to send copies of the new equity statement home with students last month. The school board [removed the reference](#) from its equity statement after weeks of sustained complaints, but some Jupiter Farms parents

have said they do not plan to return.”

No longer content to stick with an assigned district school by default, many parents have uncovered a variety of education options over the past year that work better for their kids. Entrepreneurs are building new learning models, school choice policies are expanding, and homeschooling resources are increasing, allowing more families access to more education possibilities. With virus-related back-to-school policies still murky, and districts continuing to alienate families with racially divisive practices, it’s no surprise that many parents won’t be sending their kids to public schools this fall.

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This article was originally published on FEE.org. Read the [original article](#).

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