

(OpenEd

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED

And education is catching up.

A Parent's Guide to Open Education



Technology has transformed our way of life. We have access to everything, customized to our needs, delivered to our tastes. We've adapted how, when, and where we work, live, and play. But our education system remains stuck in the past, preparing kids for a world that no longer exists.



Standardized schooling is **failing** our children:

- 65% of today's students will work in jobs that don't yet exist
- Only 42% of parents are satisfied with their child's education (25-year low)
- 70% of students report feeling disengaged in class

Traditional schools are geography-bound and standardized. They force children to learn what others dictate, treating them as products rather than individuals. The stakes are no less than your child's creativity, passion for learning, and ability to thrive in an uncertain future.

It's time to **open up education.**

Open education recognizes that each student is unique and the world is full of possibility. Instead of being forced to choose between public/private, remote/on-site, or homeschool/unschool, open education allows learners to take what works from any approach and adapt it to their goals.

From our vantage point, having guided thousands of families through alternative education models, we recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

However, we've identified 4 hallmarks of a future-focused, open education that you can pursue through a variety of different approaches:

1. **Personalization:** Tailoring learning to individual needs and interests
2. **Flexibility:** Adapting schedules and locations to suit families
3. **Technology integration:** Leveraging digital tools for enhanced learning
4. **Competency-based learning:** Focusing on mastery over seat time

This guide is your roadmap to opening your child's education.

It will help you:

1. Explore the full spectrum of education alternatives and find the best fit for your family
2. Create a personalized education plan for your child
3. Access resources to support your journey

You don't have to accept a closed, standardized education for your child. It's time to open up to a world of possibilities.

21st Century Public School Frameworks

Contrary to popular belief, public education can offer a surprising degree of flexibility and personalization.

Here's how you can tailor your child's learning experience within the public system:

OpenEd: Public School on Your Own Terms

OpenEd represents a groundbreaking approach to public education.



This district-partnered program allows students to create a personalized learning plan while still accessing public school resources.

Here's what you need to know:

- Students can enroll part-time in traditional schools (up to 3 classes)
- Families have access to public school resources, facilities, and activities
- Curriculum and schedules are customizable
- Support is available for IEPs and 504 plans

To get started with OpenEd, you'll collaborate with an assigned teacher to create a learning plan that blends online resources, community experiences, and traditional classes. Regular check-ins ensure your child stays on track.

If OpenEd isn't available in your area, you can still personalize your child's education within the broader public school system.

Schedule a meeting with your child's principal or counselor to discuss:

- Independent study options
- Credit for outside learning experiences
- Gifted and talented programs

Look into charter schools.

These publicly funded, independently operated schools often focus on specific approaches or subjects. Look for:

- Project-based learning charters
- STEM/STEAM focused schools
- Language immersion programs
- Virtual charter schools

Many use a lottery system, so apply to multiple schools that interest you.



ESAs, Private Schools, and Microschools

While public schools offer surprising flexibility, there are a number of private alternatives to customize your child's education.

ESAs are state-funded accounts that allow parents to use public funds for various educational expenses. The scholarships are available in over 14 states, including Utah, Arizona, Florida, and Tennessee, and typically require opting out of public school enrollment.

[Click here to visit EdChoice.org to see if your state has an ESA or scholarship.](https://edchoice.org)

The majority of families spend their funds on traditional private schools, which may offer smaller class sizes, specialized curricula, a specific set of values, or a strong sense of community.

While typically requiring full-time enrollment, some private schools are beginning to offer more flexible options:

- Part-time enrollment options
- Hybrid programs combining on-campus and online learning

Microschools are a subset of private schools offering small, personalized learning environments typically serving 15-150 students. They commonly advertise multi-age classroom, project-based learning, flexible schedules and personalized learning plans. Many microschools follow a particular philosophy or educational approach.



Here are some of the most common themes you might encounter:

Type	Description
Montessori	Child-led learning & hands-on materials in mixed-age classrooms
Acton	Learner-driven communities, real-world skills & entrepreneurship
Waldorf	Holistic approach integrating arts, academics, and practical skills
Reggio Emilia	Project-based learning guided by children's interests
Sudbury	Self-directed learning with equal student-staff voting rights

To find a microschool, check out [Prenda's online directory](#). Can't find one? Consider starting your own with like-minded families.

NOTE: Using an ESA typically requires disenrollment from public schools, which can affect access to services like IEPs. OpenEd aims to offer more flexibility, allowing for a hybrid of enrollment in microschools, co-ops, public school classes, and community courses – potentially preserving access to some public school services.

THE MODERN HOMESCHOOLER'S TOOLKIT

Seven tools to equip every modern homeschooler.



Remember that old debate: "Homeschool or traditional school?"

Today's parents are responding with a resounding, "Why not both?" Call it "Homeschooling+," where families cherry-pick the best resources from various approaches.

Gone are the days when homeschooling meant parents had to be expert teachers in every subject. Today's homeschoolers are taking an "a la carte" approach, building a custom education plan from a buffet of options:

1. **Online Courses:** From Khan Academy to Coursera, the internet offers a wealth of free and low-cost courses in virtually every subject. Programs like OpenEd curate the best options, while also helping families source their own.
2. **Print Curricula:** Traditional textbooks and workbooks still have their place, especially for subjects where a structured approach is beneficial. Many homeschoolers mix and match curricula from different publishers to find the perfect fit for each subject.
3. **Project-Based Learning Kits:** Companies like KiwiCo and Creation Crate deliver hands-on STEAM projects right to your door, making it easy to incorporate engaging, practical learning experiences.
4. **Community Classes:** Your local community is a rich source of educational opportunities:
 - a. Martial arts dojos for PE
 - b. Music schools for fine arts requirements
 - c. Nature centers or outdoor schools for biology
 - d. Learning centers like Mathnasium for math support
5. **Co-ops and Learning Pods:** Connect with other homeschoolers to share teaching responsibilities, organize group activities, and provide socialization opportunities. Many co-ops offer specialized classes taught by parent experts or hired instructors.
6. **Tutors and Mentors:** For subjects where you need extra support, consider hiring tutors or finding mentors in your community. This can be especially valuable for advanced subjects or specialized interests.
7. **Real-World Learning:** Incorporate internships, apprenticeships, or volunteer work into your curriculum. These experiences provide valuable skills and can often count towards course credit.

Finding Your Best Fit: Assessing Your Family's Needs

Every family is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. As you explore the various educational options we've discussed, it's important to assess your family's specific needs, values, and circumstances.

Here's a quick self-assessment to help guide your decision:

1

**What are your top priorities for your child's education?
(Rank from 1-5, with 1 being most important)**

- _____ Academic rigor
- _____ Flexibility in schedule
- _____ Socialization opportunities
- _____ Personalized learning pace
- _____ Exploration of specific interests/talents

2

How much time can you dedicate to overseeing your child's education?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Minimal - need significant support

3

What is your comfort level with technology-based learning?

- Very comfortable - prefer mostly online
- Comfortable with a mix of online and offline
- Prefer mostly offline learning methods

4

How important is a structured curriculum to you?

- Very important - prefer a pre-set curriculum
- Somewhat important - like structure with some flexibility
- Not important - prefer to build our own path

5**What level of social interaction does your child need/want?**

- Lots - daily interaction with peers
- Some - regular but not daily interaction
- Minimal - happy with occasional social activities

6**Are there any specific subjects or skills you want to emphasize?**

7**What is your budget for educational expense?**

- Flexible - willing to invest significantly in education
- Moderate - can invest in some paid resources
- Minima - need mostly free resources

**Based on your answers,
you may lean more towards:**

- Full-time or private school
- Part-time school with homeschool supplements
- Full-time homeschooling with community resources
- Online school with in-person enrichment
- Microschool or co-op based education

Remember, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. The beauty of today's educational landscape is the ability to create a customized approach that fits your family's unique needs. OpenEd is here to help you navigate these options and create the ideal unstandardized learning environment for your child.

Ready to explore further? [Sign up for OpenEd today](#).