



## 20 Public Schools Pros And Cons

By Dalia Yashinsky (MA, Phil) and Peer Reviewed by Chris Drew (PhD) /  
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**In most developed countries, school is mandatory for kids between the ages of 6-18, though the exact age range depends on the nation, state, or province.**

Public schools are government-run and funded learning institutions that are free for all students to attend. By and large, the [vast majority](#) of students attend public schools, and there are many reasons why this is the case. Public schools



are free for students to attend, transportation to and from the schools are often provided, and the public education curriculum is regulated and vetted by the government.

Despite all the advantages that come with public education, many parents and their children still opt out of the public education system so they can teach their kids either at home, through homeschooling, or at private schools.

Some parents prefer to homeschool their children so they can more closely monitor their child's education and progress; whereas other parents might prefer to send their kids to private schools that are more capable of meeting certain learning needs that their child may have, or provides a more tailored education curriculum.

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## Pros of Public Schools

## Cons of Public Schools



provided

curriculum options

**PRO:** Teachers are certified

**CON:** Public schools are less specialized

**PRO:** Special support is usually provided for children in need

**CON:** Public schools have fewer [co-curricular](#) activities

**PRO:** Public schools are diverse

**CON:** Public schools have less parental involvement

**PRO:** Public schools are heavily regulated

**CON:** Public schools have frequent testing

**PRO:** Public schools won't close down if they go bankrupt

**CON:** Bullying is supposedly more prevalent in public schools

**PRO:** Public schools often perform very well

**CON:** Public schools can be overcrowded

**PRO:** Public schools provide a consistent and uniform educational experience.

**CON:** There are often issues with public school infrastructure

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## Advantages Of Public Schools

### 1. Public Schools Are Free



Public schools are funded by federal, state, and local governments, which means that parents and kids can enjoy the benefits of an education without having to face heavy financial burdens.

For many people, paying for their child's education is not a viable option, so keeping public education free is necessary to make sure all kids have the opportunity to go to school and receive an education.

## **2. Public Schools Are Accessible**

Regional governments and school boards are usually in control of their region's public education. That means that regional and municipal governments are responsible for delivering the specified standard of education required, and determining when there is a need for new schools in a particular area or neighbourhood.

For all kids to be able to go to school, public schools have to be accessible for each child to physically (or virtually) attend. Geography, and the physical location of public schools relative to where kids and their families' lives plays a big role in determining the overall accessibility of public schools.

## **3. Transportation Is Often Provided**

Though schoolbuses depends on the region and local funding, most public schools offer transportation for kids to and from the school by the yellow school bus. Ontario alone transports [over 833,000 students](#) each day to and from school.



Schoolbuses are better for the environment, all things considered, since they help reduce the number of vehicles on the road by providing transportation for kids so parents don't have to. They also make attending school easier for many kids that would otherwise face difficulty getting to school. Understandably the availability of bus routes can be a huge advantage and reason to vote in favour of public schools that provide transportation.

#### **4. Teachers Are Certified**

Governments require that teachers be certified, licensed professionals in order to teach at public schools. People that go on to become teachers are expected to go to teacher's school, or a program that provides them with the relevant credentials and skills to teach public education in a public-school setting.

The process that teachers have to go through to earn their teaching credentials ensures that certain standards are being met, and that these teachers are qualified in their teaching competencies and subject matter (at the relevant grade level.)

#### **5. Public Schools Offer A Range Of Supports**

Each kid is different, and some require additional educational support, or personalized education plans to reach their learning goals. Since public schools educate students from all sorts backgrounds, and kids with different learning styles or disabilities, it's necessary for public schools to have resources and a range of supports to meet the learning needs of all students. This is why public schools offer Special Education classes, or English as a second language (ESL) classes, and other types of student supports.

## 6. Public Schools Are Diverse



On average, public schools tend to have a much higher [degree of diversity](#) in their student population than private schools. By attending public schools, kids become aware of cultural backgrounds that are different from their own. The diversity that exists in public schools allows kids the opportunity to become friends with other kids from diverse backgrounds and can create a more inclusive environment that goes beyond just the classroom.

## 7. Public Schools Are Heavily Regulated

Since public schools are funded by the government through tax-payer's money, they face a significant amount of regulation and oversight by the government to ensure that the curriculum is being taught to the relevant standard.

For example, in Ontario, public school students from K-12 are required to take the [EQAO](#) (Education Quality and Accountability Office) test. The EQAO is a government-run test that assesses student's literacy skills and numeracy skills at key intervals in their elementary education. These types of academic assessments exist to make sure that schools and teachers are meeting the standards outlined by the education curriculum, and that students are actually learning according to their grade level.

## 8. Public Schools Won't Permanently Close Down

Unlike public schools, [charter schools](#) and private schools are privately run-and-funded, which results in a much higher rate of private and [charter schools closures](#) compared to public schools. When private and charter schools go

belly-up, this seriously disrupts a child's education and places the burden on the family to find schooling in the middle of their child's school year.



Public schools face significantly less closures than private or charter schools because they are not privately-run, capitalist institutions, and face regulations on an ongoing basis.

## **9. Public Schools Often Perform Very Well**

There's no question that schools vary in academic performance between one another, and in some cases private or charter schools do perform better than their public-school counterparts. That said, numerous studies have been done that show how on average, public schools either match or outperform private and/or charter schools. [\*The Public School Advantage\*](#) is a book written by Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Lubienski that look to debunk the myth of private schools out-performing public schools due to the fact that private schools are commercially run. Lubienski argues that the better-performing students at private schools should not be attributed to the private school providing a better education, but because these students come from more affluent backgrounds that are better able to support the child's education.

## **10. Public Schools Are Consistent And Uniform**

Since private and charter schools are privately run and for-profit, there are extreme disparities in the quality of education provided at some private schools than others. Public schools, on the other hand, operate on an entirely different structure.



The curriculum is provided to them, and regulatory bodies oversee public school performance to ensure a standard of quality is being met across the board. As a result, parents can depend on the quality of public education to be more consistent, reliable and inclusive of each student and their diverse set of needs.

## **Disadvantages Of Public Schools**

### **1. Public Schools Have Less Access To Resources**

Public schools face funding shortages that can impact the school's ability to access important and relevant school resources that kids need.

Private schools, and in some cases charter schools do not face similar issues with regards to school funds because they are for-profit organizations and collect student tuition. Kids that attend private schools may come from more affluent economic backgrounds, and so the parents of these kids are oftentimes better able to support the school through financial contributions or volunteering.

### **2. Public Schools Have Bigger Class Sizes**

The vast majority of students attend public schools because they are free for students to attend. With the amount of students enrolled in public schools each year, classroom sizes on average tend to be much higher in public schools than private schools.

Classroom size is a significant consideration because the more students there are in a classroom the busier the teacher is, and this could result in less one-on-one time between the teacher and individual students in the class. According to



the [NCES](#) (National Center for Education Statistics) the average classroom size in public schools is 25, compared to 19 students per class in private schools.



### **3. Public Schools Have Fewer Curriculum Options**

Public schools are required to stick to the government-mandated curriculum that has been instated by the ministries of education. Parents that want a more focused or specialized curriculum for their child may find public schools lacking in that regard.

Private schools, on the other hand, offer various educational programs, curriculums and specializations that may focus on some academic areas more than others. For example, there are private schools that focus their curriculum more on the arts, STEM, sports and so on. For students that demonstrate an interest or talent in a certain area, private schools can be a good option so kids can focus more on the areas that interest them.

### **4. Public Schools Are Less Specialized**

Gifted students, or students that demonstrate a proclivity for some academic areas more than others should nurture their abilities by attending a more specialized school. Parents with gifted kids, or kids that excel in a particular area might opt out of sending their kids to a public school so that they can better meet their child's education goals.

It's important that kids feel challenged and motivated to keep stretching their skills and competencies. When students are bored in class, or do not feel they are being challenged, this can negatively affect their academic performance and interest in education overall. Private schools that have a more focused

education curriculum can therefore be a much better fit for some students given their individual talents and interests.



## **5. Public Schools Have Fewer Extracurricular Activities**

While this is not true for all private schools, some private schools have more extracurricular activities, clubs and sports teams for students to choose from than public schools do. Since private schools collect tuition, and sometimes receive additional support from parent in the form of donations, certain private schools have the funds to provide outstanding extracurriculars and sport programs to their students.

## **6. Public Schools Have Less Parental Involvement**

Compared to private schools, public schools see less parental involvement in their child's education and with the school in general. Parents that send their kids to private schools, on the other hand, tend to be much more involved in their child's education and school as a whole, since these parents are paying for their child's education. As a result, they have a bigger stake or feel a vested interest in their child's education that parents of public-school kids might not feel as intensely.

## **7. Public Schools Have Frequent Testing**

Students that attend public schools must take ongoing, standardized tests throughout their K-12 education so governments can better assess school performance and ensure the school is delivering the curriculum appropriately.

[Standardized tests are stressful](#) for students and put immense pressure on them to perform up to grade level. Lots of kids don't do well on tests, and experience



extreme anxiety in preparing for them. For many students, the thought of having to take these mandatory standardized can be a drawback of the public school system.

## **8. Bullying Is Supposedly More Prevalent In Public Schools**

The [NCES](#) (National Center for Education Statistics) reports that roughly 20%, or 1 in 5 kids experience some form of bullying throughout their K-12 education.

Though there is limited research on the prevalence of bullying in private schools, by comparison, the numbers show that public schools tend to have more incidents of bullying, with more students being ostracized as a result.

No parent wants their kid getting bullied at school. To shield kids from being bullied, some parents pull their kids out of public school in the hopes that they will not face these problems in private school.

## **9. Public Schools Can Be Overcrowded**

Overcrowded classrooms, limited workspaces and a lack of one-on-one student-teacher time can significantly impact student achievement and progress.

Classrooms that are overpopulated with students face greater distractions, behavioural issues and as a result, students can fall behind on their learning goals and grade level.

Teachers with classrooms that are overpopulated find themselves stretched thin, and may not be able to meet the needs of each student in the class. This makes it easy for some students to fall behind or slip between the cracks of the public

education system. Overcrowded classrooms raises a big issue that dissuade many people from sending their kids to public schools.



## 10. Issues With Public School Infrastructure

[Education Week](#) spoke about the dismal state of school infrastructure in an [article they published in 2021](#). Public schools have been seriously impacted and student education disrupted because of issues in the public school's infrastructure. In Connecticut, a public school had to shut down because the ceiling collapsed and caused flooding. There are numerous examples of public schools failing to provide safe and inhabitable environments for students, which leads to closures and an interruption in student education.

## Conclusion

Every school is different and face their own set of unique challenges that depend on a variety of factors. Overpopulation, lack of resources and funding can result in a myriad of issues for public schools that sometimes impedes on their ability to provide quality instruction. Public schools are the most popular and widely-attended form of education, and as we have seen in this post, there are many reasons why people choose to send their kids to public schools. While public schools are far from perfect, for the most part, they can be relied upon to deliver quality educational instruction to all students, no matter their individual learning style or grade level.

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