2026–27 EDITION · GILBERT, ARIZONA

The Gilbert School Options Guide

Every way to school your kids in Gilbert — district, charter, private, micro school, ESA and homeschool — explained in plain language, sorted by type and never ranked.

Skool Gilbert
Sammy Majidi, Founder · Gilbert, Arizona
(435) 375-9407 · samantha.majidi@gmail.com

Mom of three Gilbert students
skoolgilbert.com/map

Start with how your child learns.

In most states your address decides your school, so families never really choose. Arizona flipped that. Open enrollment, tuition-free charters, universal ESA funding and a fast-growing micro school scene mean a Gilbert family can genuinely pick the learning environment that fits their child. The catch is that nobody hands you the list. This guide is the list.

Three facts that change the search

- **Gilbert is served by three districts**, not one: Gilbert Public Schools (43 schools), Higley Unified (15) and Chandler Unified (45). The lines between them run straight through neighborhoods.
- **Open enrollment is statewide.** You can apply to any public district or charter school with space, whatever your address. Transportation is usually on you.
- **ESA is universal.** Every Arizona K–12 resident is eligible for an Empowerment Scholarship Account with no income test — roughly $7,000 a year for general-education students, and more for students with an IEP or 504 plan.

How to use this guide

- Read the six options on pages 3 and 4 and circle the one or two that sound like your child.
- Open the map at **skoolgilbert.com/map** and filter to those types. Star three worth visiting.
- Take the tour questions on page 6 with you. The answers tell you more than any brochure, including this one.
- Or meet twenty programs in one evening — see the events on page 6 — and cut months off the whole thing.

The map is free, and so is being on it.

skoolgilbert.com/map — every learning option in Gilbert, sorted by type, never ranked. Schools are never charged to appear and families are never charged to look.

Open the map

This guide is general information for families, not a recommendation of any school or program. Enrollment rules, funding amounts and availability change every year — verify details with the school, the district or the Arizona Department of Education (azed.gov/esa). Which option fits your family is entirely your decision, and Skool Gilbert never describes neighborhoods or who lives in them.

The six options, part one

Public district schools

TUITION-FREE · ADDRESS-BASED, WITH OPEN ENROLLMENT

Gilbert Public Schools, Higley Unified and Chandler Unified each serve parts of town. Your home address sets your assigned school, but Arizona's open enrollment lets you apply to other schools in your district or a neighboring one when they have room. Popular schools fill early, and application windows typically open in winter for the following fall.

> **Ask on the tour:** What happens for a student who is ahead, and for one who is behind? A large school's answer to that question is the real difference between two campuses that look identical on paper.

Charter schools

TUITION-FREE · PUBLIC · NOT TIED TO YOUR ADDRESS

Charters are public schools run independently, free to attend and open to any Arizona resident. Gilbert has an unusually deep bench: classical, STEM, arts, back-to-basics and college-prep models. Most run lotteries or waitlists, and siblings usually get priority. Note that a student receiving ESA funds cannot also attend a public or charter school.

> **Ask on the tour:** What is your waitlist like for our grade, and when exactly does the window open? Timing beats preference here — the best-fitting charter is no use if you find it in April.

Private & faith-based schools

TUITION · ESA CAN BE APPLIED

Independent schools with their own admissions, calendars and cultures, from Catholic and Christian schools to secular college-prep. Tuition varies widely. Arizona's ESA can be applied toward tuition, and some schools also work with School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarships — though a student cannot use ESA and an STO scholarship at the same time.

> **Ask on the tour:** What is the true annual cost beyond tuition? Books, uniforms, technology, trips and required volunteer hours are where a budget quietly breaks.

The six options, part two

Micro schools & learning pods

SMALL · FLEXIBLE · OFTEN ESA-FUNDED

Small, mixed-age learning communities — often 8 to 20 students — meeting in homes, churches, farms or small commercial spaces. Models run from classical to project-based to nature-based, and many operate three or four days a week. Most are ESA-eligible. They grow by word of mouth, so the best ones rarely advertise, which is precisely why they are on the map. My own three kids attend one.

> **Ask on the tour:** What do you not do well? A founder who answers that honestly is telling you they know their own program. One who cannot think of anything is telling you something too.

Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA)

STATE FUNDING · ANY PATH EXCEPT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Arizona's ESA gives every K–12 resident state education funds to direct themselves: private or micro school tuition, curriculum, online courses, tutoring, therapies, testing and educational technology. General-education students receive roughly $7,000 a year; students with an IEP or 504 plan receive substantially more depending on category. Funds arrive quarterly through ClassWallet and unused balances roll over. Apply through the Arizona Department of Education portal and allow four to six weeks.

> **Ask the program:** Have you handled ESA before, and will you invoice ClassWallet directly? A program that has done it ten times will save you a month of paperwork.

Homeschool & co-ops

HOME-BASED · COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED

Arizona homeschooling requires a one-time affidavit of intent filed with the Maricopa County School Superintendent within 30 days of starting. No testing or curriculum approval is required. The East Valley has one of the largest homeschool communities in the state: weekly co-ops, hybrid two-day programs, sports leagues and enrichment days. Note that families who file a homeschool affidavit are not eligible for ESA — ESA families are technically "ESA students," not homeschoolers, which is mostly a paperwork distinction.

> **Ask the co-op:** What does a family actually commit to — teaching hours, fees, attendance? Co-ops run on parent labor, and the ones that work are clear about that from day one.

Gilbert-area directory

A starting list, not a ranking. The full, filterable version — including tutors, therapy providers and enrichment — lives at skoolgilbert.com/map. Confirm current programs, ages, tuition and openings directly with each school.

MICRO SCHOOLS & PODS	AREA	CONTACT
Paradigm Learning Microschool	Gilbert	paradigm-learning.com
ReThink Microschools	Gilbert	rethinkmicroschools.org
Bloom & Grow Micro School	Gilbert	bloomandgrowmicroschool.com
Gateway Learning	Gilbert	gatewaylearningaz.com
Moreana Boys Academy	Chandler	moreana-az.com
Adamo Education	Queen Creek	adamoeducation.org
Desert Sun Ranch Academy	Queen Creek	desertsunranchacademy.org
Creo School & Creo Farm	Gilbert	creoschool.org

BUILT FOR LEARNING DIFFERENCES	AREA	CONTACT
L.I.F.E. – Lauren's Institute	Gilbert	laurensinstitute.org
Polaris Academy	Mesa	polarisacademy.org
Victory Autism Academy	San Tan Valley	victoryautismacademy.com
Synergy Dyslexia Center	Chandler	synergydyslexiacenter.com

CHARTER SCHOOLS (TUITION-FREE)	AREA	MODEL
Legacy Traditional School	Gilbert	K–8, back-to-basics, uniforms
American Leadership Academy	Gilbert	K–6 campus; network runs through 12th
EDUPRIZE – Gilbert	Gilbert	K–12, project-based and arts-integrated
Leading Edge Academy	Gilbert	K–12, small campuses
Benjamin Franklin Charter School	Gilbert / Queen Creek	K–12, traditional
San Tan Charter School	Gilbert	K–12, classical / Montessori-influenced

DISTRICTS	SIZE	ENROLLMENT
Gilbert Public Schools	43 schools	gilbertschools.net/enroll · boundary maps online
Higley Unified School District	15 schools	South and east Gilbert
Chandler Unified School District	45 schools	West Gilbert

Run a micro school, co-op, tutoring practice, therapy practice or ESA-eligible program in the East Valley? Email samantha.majidi@gmail.com and you will be on the map within the week. Listing is free and always will be — nobody pays for placement here.

Take these with you

Six questions worth asking on any tour, at any kind of school. The answers tell you more than a brochure ever will — including this one.

- What does a normal Tuesday look like here?
  Not an open house, not a field trip. An ordinary day.
- How many kids are in a room, and who is in there with them?
  Ratios on a website and ratios at 2pm on a Thursday are different numbers.
- What happens when a kid is ahead? What about behind?
  Every school has an answer. The vague ones are telling you something.
- How do you handle a hard day, or a hard week?
  You are choosing who will be with your child on their worst day, not their best.
- What do you not do well?
  The single most useful question on this page.
- Can we visit on an ordinary day, rather than at an open house?
  A yes tells you almost everything.

Before you tour: what to settle first

- [ ] Which of the six options are we actually choosing between?
- [ ] Any school already in mind, and when is its enrollment window?
- [ ] Longest drive we would genuinely do, twice a day, in May
- [ ] Are we applying for ESA, and have we started the paperwork?
- [ ] Does our child need a specific support, and who confirms it?
- [ ] Three-day, four-day or five-day week — what does our week allow?
- [ ] What has not worked before, and why?
- [ ] What does our child say they want? Ask them before you tour.

Meet them in person instead

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11 · 4–6 PM

Meet the Educators Night

Educators, entrepreneurs and parents in one room at Desert Monks Brewing, 1094 S Gilbert Rd, asking one question together: how do we help our kids? No booths, no pitch decks, no fee. Order a drink to thank our host.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30

Kids CEO Fair

During National School Choice Week. A market run entirely by kids selling what they made, every kind of program with its own area, plus a build area and a stage. Bring the kids — it is their day.

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