

What Is a Microschool?



Microschools exist as a midpoint between homeschooling and traditional schools. These small, intimate learning environments typically have around ten to twenty-five students and one or two teachers. EdChoice estimates¹ that between 1.1 and 2.1 million students attend microschools (see [American Microschools: A Sector Analysis: April 2024](#) for a comprehensive microschool overview).²

Overview

Microschools fall into three categories.

- **Independent Microschools.** Small, multi-family learning environments that meet regularly, either full-time or on hybrid schedules.
- **Partnership Microschools.** Collaborations between host partners (employers, houses of worship, etc.) and technical partners responsible for teaching and learning.
- **[Provider Networks](#).** Align local leaders with established organizations to support launch and operations.

Microschool key features include:

- Microschools maintain a close learning environment with a limited number of students. This allows for personalized attention and close relationships between teachers and learners.
- 63 percent of microschools report serving populations of children with neurodiversity, 53 percent with other special needs, 53 percent whose educational

¹ *McShane, Michael Q. and Paul DiPerna, Just How Many Kids Attend Microschools, EdChoice, September 12, 2022, available online at: <https://www.edchoice.org/engage/just-how-many-kids-attend-microschools>

² Soifer, D., Soifer, A., “[American Microschools: A Sector Analysis](#)”, National Microschool Center © 2024, 376 E. Warm Springs Road, #256, Las Vegas Nevada 89119, 27 pp.



attainment upon arrival is two or more grades below their chronological 'grade level,' and 45 percent have experienced emotional trauma.³

- 55 percent of microschools offer full-time weekly schedules, defined as at least four days per week and four hours per day, while 28 percent offer part-time/hybrid schedules, and 17 percent offer families to choose between these.⁴
- Microschools tend to be community-based. The teaching staff often includes parents, former educators, or local community members with specialized expertise.
- Microschools adapt teaching methods and content to meet individual learning styles and interests.
- Students engage in hands-on projects, encouraging critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- Microschools often utilize non-traditional spaces, such as community centers or shared facilities.

Microschool benefits include:

- **Individualized Attention.** With smaller class sizes, students receive more personalized support and guidance.
- **Community Connection.** Microschools foster a sense of community. Some partner with homeschooling parents, providing classroom space, tutoring, and curriculum support. Parents often have a say in shaping the microschool's curriculum. They can contribute ideas, suggest resources, and help design learning experiences. Collaborative decision-making ensures that the curriculum aligns with the values and goals of both parents and educators.
- **Flexibility.** Microschools can tailor their schedules, curricula, and activities to suit the needs of their students.
- **Holistic Development.** By emphasizing active learning and personalized approaches, microschools aim to nurture well-rounded individuals.

Microschool Governance

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid



Microschools may have parent-led committees responsible for fundraising, organizing events, or addressing specific needs. Some microschools involve parents in governance decisions, such as budgeting, hiring staff, or setting policies.

Microschools often collaborate closely with homeschooling families. Parents who homeschool part-time can use the microschool as a resource. The partnership allows parents to balance personalized home education with the benefits of a structured school environment.

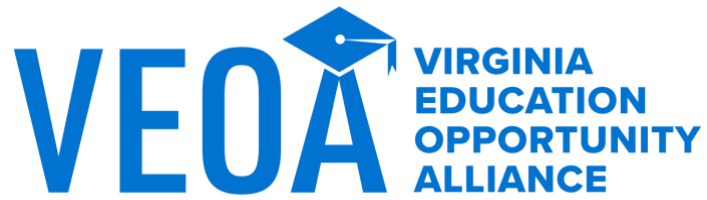


Microschool Challenges

While microschools offer unique benefits, parents may encounter some challenges as well. Here are a few common ones:

- **Limited Resources.** Microschools often operate with limited budgets and resources compared to larger schools. This can impact the availability of extracurricular activities, specialized teachers, and facilities.
- **Parental Commitment.** Microschools thrive on active parental involvement. Parents may need to contribute time, effort, or funds to support the microschool's growth and sustainability. Some parents may find it challenging to balance their own work, family responsibilities, and active participation in the school community.
- **Socialization and Peer Interaction.** Microschools have smaller student populations, which can limit the diversity of peer interactions. Students may have fewer opportunities to form friendships or engage in group activities. Parents may need to organize playdates, field trips, or joint events to ensure socialization beyond the classroom.
- **Curriculum Customization.** While personalized learning is a strength of microschools, it can also be a challenge. Parents may need to actively collaborate with teachers to tailor the curriculum to their child's needs. Balancing individualized learning with essential foundational knowledge is key.
- **Teacher Qualifications.** Microschool teachers often wear multiple hats—they may be educators, administrators, and mentors. While this flexibility is an advantage, it can also mean that not all teachers may have formal credentials in each of these areas.
- **Legal and Regulatory Challenges.** Depending on the locality, microschools may face legal hurdles related to accreditation, licensing, and compliance with educational standards. Parents may need to navigate these regulations or advocate for changes.
- **Assessment and Accountability.** Microschools often use alternative assessment methods, such as portfolios or project-based evaluations. While these are valuable, they may not align with traditional grading systems.

Remember that each microschool is unique, and challenges can vary based on the specific context and community. Open communication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to education can help address these challenges effectively.



In summary, microschools offer an innovative alternative to traditional education, emphasizing personalized learning, community connections, and flexibility. While research in this area is still evolving, these studies highlight the growing interest in microschools and their potential impact on education.⁵

⁵ Smarick, A., "[Microschooling and Policy](#)," Manhattan Institute, February 2022.