

Plan could poise a new school choice vehicle, which typically takes money that would otherwise go to public schools.

MADISON - According to the Wisconsin State Journal Thursday, Wisconsin parents could pay for K-12 school expenses — including tuition at private schools — with a taxpayer-funded savings account under a program Assembly Republicans are considering.

What's known as **Education Savings Accounts** would be set up for parents to pay for tuition, textbooks and tutoring, according to a proposal in the Assembly Republican caucus agenda for 2017, released last month.

The accounts — dubbed the next generation of school vouchers by education policy experts — would add an option for Wisconsin parents, who already have a variety of alternatives to their designated public school, including open enrollment to other public schools, voucher-assisted private schools and independent charter schools.

Critics say the accounts represent the latest attempt to erode public schools.

The use of the education accounts in five states — Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada and Tennessee — offer clues about how they might work here if lawmakers pursue the idea.

In general, parents of eligible children receive several thousand dollars from the state to pay educational expenses. Parents can use the money to pay for tuition at private schools, books, tutoring or other costs, including in some cases extracurricular activities. In some states, any leftover funds can be saved for college.

Hunter Railey, a policy researcher for the Education Commission of the States, said in the states where ESA programs exist, parents can't use the money to send children to a different public school district.

Public school advocates characterized the accounts as similar to a school voucher, which typically takes money that would otherwise go to public schools as students leave the schools to attend private schools.