Ohio Educational Choice Scholarship Program

January 2013 Program Overview For Participating Private Schools

For more information, visit
http://EdChoice.ohio.gov
or call (877) OHIO EDU

What is Ohio EdChoice?

The Ohio Educational Choice Scholarship Program provides scholarships to students who attend the lowest-rated public schools.

The scholarships are used to attend participating private schools.

EdChoice-Designated Schools

Received a Local Report Card rating of Academic Emergency or Academic Watch for two of the last three school years;

or

Ranked in the lowest 10% of public school buildings by performance index score for two of the last three school years.

Scholarships Available

- More than 16,000 students receiving EdChoice scholarships for the 2012-2013 school year
- Up to 60,000 scholarships can be awarded for the 2013-2014 school year; 16,000 of those will be renewal students

Eligible Students

- Students currently enrolled in and attending EdChoice-designated school buildings in their resident district;
- Students currently enrolled in a public community school (charter school) who would otherwise be assigned by their public school district to an EdChoice-designated building;

Eligible Students (cont'd):

- Students currently enrolled in a regular public school in their resident district or community school who will be assigned to attend an EdChoice-designated building for the upcoming school year; and
- Incoming students who are eligible to attend kindergarten in the fall of 2013 and who would be assigned by their public school district to one of these designated buildings are eligible to apply.

Students Who Are Not Eligible

- Students currently attending private school
- Home-schooled students

Scholarship Renewal

Scholarship can be renewed each year through 12th grade, as long as the student:

- Does not move to another public school district (unless the student would be assigned to an EdChoice-designated public school in the student's new district);
- Takes all required state achievement tests; and
- Has good school attendance. Students cannot have more than 20 unexcused absences in a school year.

Private School Requirements

- Must have a valid state charter to participate.
- Must comply with the Operating Standards for Ohio Schools.
- Must agree to follow EdChoice program rules and requirements.

Private School Requirements

- Must fairly implement admission policies.
- Must report attendance information for EdChoice students to ODE.
- Must report tuition structure to ODE.

Private School Requirements

- Must administer Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) to EdChoice students in grades 3-8 and Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) to EdChoice students in the 10th grade.

Private School Requirements

If tuition exceeds maximum scholarship amount:

- Schools cannot charge parents the tuition difference if parents qualify for low income status;

- Schools must give parents who do not qualify for low income status the option of volunteering instead of cash payment to pay off tuition difference.

Application and Renewal Period for 2013-2014

Begins: February 1, 2013

Ends: April 19, 2013

Excused Absences

As adopted by the State Board of Education from Rule3301-69-02(B)(2) of the Administrative Code, an excused absence from school may be approved on the basis of one or more of the following conditions:

- Illness or injury of the child.
- Illness in the family necessitating the presence of the child.
- Quarantine of the home.
- Death of a relative.
- Medical or dental appointment.
- Observance of religious holidays.
- College visitation.
- Emergency or other set of circumstances.

Excused Absences

- All absences must have a valid note to be excused by EdChoice
- Absence notes must be kept on file at the private school, not sent to ODE
- Students who are ill for 1-3 days: Note from parent needed
- Students who are ill for more than 3 consecutive days: Note from doctor needed
- See OAC 3301-69-02(B)(2) to view complete absence policy

Updating OEDS-R

- Nonpublic schools must maintain school information in the Ohio Education Directory System (OEDS-R) to ensure that you receive communications and system access.

- Your OEDS-R Administrator can make updates to your school's information.

Ohio Achievement Assessments

- Nonpublic school must complete an online Intent to Participate in State Testing survey each year.
- The Intent to Participate in State Testing survey link is emailed to school principals each May.
- Complete the online survey if you plan to have any EdChoice students during the upcoming school year.
- Please estimate the number of tests you will need by grade level. The numbers can be updated according to actual enrollment prior to testing.

Ohio Achievement Assessments

- To facilitate the testing process, the person responsible for assessment testing at your school must log onto the TIDE website and upload the needed pre-ID file information (i.e., student name, grade, SSID number, etc.) to get Pre-ID test labels made.

Ohio Achievement Assessments

- All personnel who work with testing at your school should sign up for the *IDES of ODE* newsletter at the ODE website (http://www.ode.state.oh.us; enter "Ides of ODE" in the Search box)

Site Visits to Participating Schools

- ODE will perform random school visits.
- Site visits will ensure that participating schools comply with the state operating standards – focusing on teacher certification, staff background checks, and required inspections.

Site Visits to Participating Schools

- Staff will also review EdChoice student files to ensure that all required information is maintained.

- Site visits also provide school staff with the opportunity to ask additional questions and discuss issues with ODE.

How Students Apply

1. Students must ***first*** be accepted for enrollment at a participating private school.

2. Participating private schools will file applications on behalf of students through ODE's secure Web-based system.

How Students Apply

3. Public school districts will have an opportunity to verify student applications.
4. If necessary, a lottery to award scholarships will be held.
5. Schools and parents will be notified of awards.

Information Needed to Apply

- First-Year Applicants:
  - 3 Page Scholarship Request Form
  - Birth Certificate
  - Current Proof of Address (Utility Bill)
  - Name of current school or charter school

Information Needed to Apply (cont'd):

- Renewal Students:
  - Scholarship Renewal Form
  - Current Proof of Address

[Note: If renewing at same school, school should already have most of the required info. If renewing at a different school, parent will need to provide all info required of a first-year applicant.]

Income Verification

- Parents who select the “Yes” box on the request or renewal form must obtain an income verification form from either the private school or the EdChoice website (http://edchoice.ohio.gov).

- Parents need to complete income verification form and submit it, along with needed income documentation, to the EdChoice Office at the address listed on the form by the deadline.

Who Can Submit A Scholarship Application For the Student?

- Only the student's legal guardian can apply for the scholarship
- In Ohio, biological mother is the legal guardian if the biological parents are not married
- Biological father can apply **if** he is married to the biological mother; if he is not, then he must provide legal custody documentation
- Anyone else must provide a copy of legal custody documentation showing that they are the legal guardian of the student.

Who Can Submit A Scholarship Application For the Student?

Person Applying for Scholarship	Marital Status	Information This Person Needs to Apply for EdChoice		
		Custody/Guardianship Documentation	Birth Certificate	Address Proof
Biological Mother	n/a		✓	✓
Biological Father	Married to biological mother		✓	✓
Biological Father	Not Married to biological mother	✓	✓	✓
Adoptive Parent	n/a	✓	✓	✓
Stepparent	n/a	✓	✓	✓
Grandparent	n/a	✓	✓	✓
Foster Parent	n/a	✓	✓	✓
Other Adult Relative of the Student	n/a	✓	✓	✓

Transportation

- Parent requests for transportation should be sent in writing to the public school district before the end of the current school year.
- Your school should discuss transportation concerns with the public school district.

EdChoice Website vs. EdChoice Online System

- **Website- http://edchoice.ohio.gov**
  - Accessible to everyone
  - Find out about EdChoice program here
  - Program documents and forms available here

- **Online system (log on through SAFE account)**
  - Accessible only to designated people
  - Use it to enter new applications or renew applications
  - Maintain required student information here (attendance, assessments, payments, etc.)

Student Transfers

- A scholarship student may transfer an EdChoice scholarship to another participating private school at any time.
- If a student withdraws or is expelled from a private school, he or she must enroll in another participating private school within 30 days.

Payment Process

- School is paid full tuition amount or maximum scholarship amount, whichever is lowest

- Maximum scholarship amounts:
  - Grades K-8: $4,250
  - Grades 9-12: $5,000

Payment Process (cont'd):

- 3 payments per school year

- First payment = 40% of tuition
  Second payment = 40% of tuition
  Third payment = 20% of tuition

- First payment (Oct/Nov) cannot be any earlier because no payments can be processed until after October count week

Payment Process (cont'd):

- Parents who qualify for low income status (i.e., income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines)
  - Do not have to pay any tuition difference
  - Receive priority for scholarships if lottery is needed
- Parents who do not qualify for low income status
  - Have to either pay tuition difference or work off the amount by volunteering at school
  - Schools must offer the volunteering option to parents and maintain a policy on how volunteer hours can be met.

Payment Process (cont'd):

- Checks are made out to both the parent and the school
- Both school and parents must sign the check
- Each school is responsible for determining its own check-signing process
- A reconciliation process at the end of the year will account for any overpayments.

EdChoice Timeline

- **Dec. 3, 2012:** Private school registration for 2013-2014 begins.
- **Feb. 1, 2013** Application period begins.
- **April 19, 2013:** Application period ends.
- **April 19, 2013:** Deadline to submit income verification form.
- **June 14, 2013:** Last day public school districts have to verify application information.
- **July 2013:** Parents notified about scholar-ship awards.

EdChoice Contact Information

- Address: Ohio Department of Education
  EdChoice Scholarship Program
  25 S. Front St., Mail Stop 309
  Columbus, OH 43215

- Toll-free number: 877-644-6338

- Website: http://edchoice.ohio.gov

- E-Mail: EdChoice@education.ohio.gov