

Ohio Educational Choice Scholarship (EdChoice) Pilot Program

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Guardians

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What is Ohio's Educational Choice Scholarship Pilot Program?

The Educational Choice Scholarship Pilot Program (Ohio EdChoice) provides a limited number of scholarships to students who attend persistently under-performing public school buildings. The scholarships may be used to attend chartered nonpublic schools that meet the requirements for program participation.

Should my child apply for a scholarship first, or apply for admission to a nonpublic school first?

Your child should apply for admission to a participating nonpublic school first. All students who apply for a scholarship must have been accepted for enrollment at a participating nonpublic school.

When will applications be accepted for the scholarships?

The next EdChoice application period will begin on February 1, 2008 and continue through April 18, 2008. New EdChoice students must be admitted for fall 2008 enrollment at a participating chartered nonpublic school. Once a student has been admitted for fall enrollment, the nonpublic school will submit a scholarship application

on behalf of the student. Participating nonpublic schools have until April 18, 2008 to submit student applications.

Who will be eligible to apply for a scholarship?

Eligibility is determined by attendance and/or assignment to a public school building which has been rated in "academic emergency" or "academic watch" for two of the past three years. A list of the EdChoice-designated public school buildings can be found by clicking [here](#) and searching keyword: *EdChoice*

The following students are eligible to apply for an EdChoice scholarship:

- Students currently enrolled in and attending EdChoice-designated public school buildings – schools rated in Academic Emergency or Academic Watch for two of the past three years (see link above);
- Students enrolled in a community school who would otherwise be assigned to one of the EdChoice-designated public school buildings, or;
- Students currently enrolled in a regular public school or community school in their resident district who would be assigned to attend one of the EdChoice-designated public school buildings for the upcoming school year. This provision is for students moving from one level of school to the next. For example, public school students moving from elementary to middle school would be eligible to apply if the middle school that they would be assigned to in the fall is designated for EdChoice;
- Students eligible to enter kindergarten in the next school year who would be assigned to one of the EdChoice public school buildings.

If a student receives an EdChoice Scholarship, how long can he or she continue to attend a nonpublic school?

Under current law, students that receive a scholarship can renew it each school year through 12th grade as long as the student: 1) 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; 2) takes all required state achievement tests; and 3) has good school attendance. Students who are absent for *more* than 20 days in a school year must have written documentation that the absences were excused for reasons such as illness or injury, bereavement, etc.

What is a Community School?

Community Schools – often called "charter schools" in other states – are public nonprofit, nonsectarian schools that operate independently of any school district, but under a contract with an authorized sponsoring entity that is established in statute or approved by the State Board of Education. Community schools are public schools of choice and are state and federally funded.

Why are there no Cleveland schools on the list of two-year academic emergency or two-year academic watch school buildings?

Students who reside within the Cleveland Municipal School District are not eligible to participate in the EdChoice program. There is a separate Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program for students in that district. Information on Cleveland's program can be found by clicking [here](#) and searching keywords: *Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program*.

My child's school is scheduled to close at the end of the school year. Is she still eligible for a scholarship?

As long as your child's school is on the list of EdChoice-designated public school buildings and if the school building is still open during the application period, your child is eligible to apply for a scholarship.

My child is scheduled to start high school in the upcoming year and will be assigned to a high school that has been in academic emergency or academic watch for two years. Is he eligible?

Yes, if your child is currently attending a public school in your resident district, your child will be eligible to apply for an EdChoice scholarship if the school he or she will be assigned to attend next school year is on the list.

My child is entering Kindergarten next year. Is he eligible for a scholarship?

If your child would be assigned to attend kindergarten at a school on the list, he is eligible to apply for an EdChoice Scholarship.

My child is currently attending a private school, but would otherwise attend one of the buildings on the list. Is she eligible to apply?

No, students who are currently enrolled in private, nonpublic schools are not eligible for Ohio EdChoice scholarships. When the law for the program was passed, the Ohio legislature limited eligibility to those students currently attending an EdChoice-designated public school, to public school students who will be assigned to an EdChoice-designated school next year, to those students currently enrolled in a publicly-funded community (“charter”) school who would otherwise be assigned to an EdChoice-designated public school, and to new kindergartners who would be assigned to an EdChoice-designated public school.

Will every child that applies to participate be accepted?

Ohio law limits the number of scholarships awarded to 14,000 statewide. If the total number of eligible new and renewing applications exceeds 14,000, priority will be given first to renewing students, and then to new EdChoice applicants with family incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Students will be selected by lot to receive any remaining scholarships.

Can my child attend any nonpublic school?

Your child must be accepted by a participating chartered nonpublic school. A chartered nonpublic school must meet certain requirements to participate in the EdChoice program. A list of participating chartered nonpublic schools is available by clicking [here](#) and searching keyword: EdChoice and scroll down to the list of participating schools. This list is updated as new schools register to participate.

What is the value of the scholarship?

The scholarship amount is currently \$4,375 for grades K-8 and \$5,150 for grades 9-12 or the actual tuition charged, whichever amount is lower.

Will parents/guardians have to pay any amount of money?

Parents and guardians may still have to pay registration fees, material fees, and other similar types of fees. The scholarship amount only covers school tuition.

If the nonpublic school’s tuition is higher than the EdChoice scholarship amount and if the student’s family income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, the family will not have to pay the difference. If the student’s family income is above 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, the family may either pay the tuition difference or participate in volunteer opportunities in lieu of cash payment at the nonpublic school.

Are the scholarships first-come, first-served?

No, all applications received by the end of the application period on April 18, 2008, will be given equal consideration.

If I request low-income priority, how will my income be verified?

ODE has contracted with two income verification companies to document and verify the family size and income of any family that requests low-income priority. Each nonpublic school will work with a single company. The company that your school has selected will contact your family directly and request the documentation to determine your family size and income.

The contracted companies are Private School Aid Service (PSAS) and FACTS Financial Management.

If my child receives an EdChoice Scholarship to attend a nonpublic school, will he receive transportation services from the public school district?

Students enrolled in nonpublic schools may be entitled to pupil transportation services from their public school district of residence. The “30 minute rule” applies – the nonpublic school must be within a 30 minute bus ride from the public school during the school day. The 30 minutes is timed starting from the public school where the student would be assigned. Parents must request transportation from the public school district in writing and specify the student’s name, address and phone number and the name and address of the nonpublic school. In certain cases, a public school district may declare a student “impractical to transport” and instead provide limited reimbursement payment to the parent. Additional information about transportation services for nonpublic school students is available on the Pupil Transportation page of the ODE Web site.

My child is currently attending a “charter” school that is rated in academic emergency or academic watch. Is he eligible to apply for an EdChoice Scholarship?

In Ohio, “charter” schools – public schools of choice that operate independently of school districts and receive state and federal funds – are called “community schools.” By law, eligibility for an EdChoice Scholarship is based on the status of the resident public school building to which the student would be assigned if he were not attending a community school. Eligibility is not determined by the rating of the community school.

My child is currently receiving an EdChoice Scholarship. How do I renew it for the upcoming school year?

Parents who are renewing their child’s EdChoice scholarship for the upcoming school year should complete the EdChoice Scholarship Request/Renewal Form and take it, along with proof of current address, to their child’s private school.

Parents who plan to have their child attend a different participating private school during the next school year must first get their child enrolled at that new school. After the student has been accepted by the new school, parents must give the new school a completed Scholarship Request/Renewal Form and proof of current address. The new private school will then be able to renew your child’s scholarship application through the secure Web-based EdChoice Scholarship application system.

If your child is currently in the last grade level at his/her private school (for example, an 8th-grader at a school that only serves grade K-8), you should begin to look for another school for your child to attend for the upcoming school year. Although your child is an EdChoice student, this does not mean that your child will

automatically be enrolled at another participating private school. It is your responsibility to get your child enrolled into another participating private school.

The scholarship renewal period is from Feb. 1, 2008 through April 18, 2008.