



## **EdChoice Expansion Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. What does “Universal” EdChoice actually mean?**

Every family in Our Catholic Schools and throughout the State of Ohio now is eligible for an EdChoice scholarship equivalent or greater to 10% of the maximum scholarship amount, dependent on their household size and gross income. Maximum scholarships for the 2023-24 academic year are \$6,165 for K-8 and \$8,407 for grades 9-12.
- 2. What are the maximum/minimum scholarship amounts a student can receive with the new model?**

A full EdChoice scholarship (Traditional or Expansion) is \$6,165 for K-8 students and \$8,407 for 9-12 students. The minimum scholarship amount a family can receive is 10% of the full scholarship amount. Currently, the lowest tier for families at or above 750% of the Federal Poverty Guideline is \$650 (K-8) and \$950 (9-12).
- 3. What are the Federal Poverty Guidelines?**

The poverty guidelines are a simplified version of the statistical thresholds used by U.S. Census Bureau for calculating the number of people in poverty. Poverty guidelines are issued each year in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to determine financial eligibility for certain programs and vary by family size. In 2023, a family of four (4) at 450% of the Federal Poverty Guideline has a gross income of \$135,000/year.
- 4. Can schools charge the difference in tuition and scholarship amount? What if the family is on Traditional EdChoice and chooses not to submit income verification?**

Schools can - and should - charge the difference in tuition for families equal to or above 201% of the Federal Poverty Guideline, regardless of whether the family is on a Traditional or Expansion scholarship. For Traditional EdChoice, the family must submit income verification to receive low-income status and, therefore, would not be charged the difference between tuition and the scholarship.
- 5. What is the deadline to apply for the EdChoice Scholarship for the 2023-24 academic year?**

June 30, 2024. Scholarships submitted on or before October 14 will get the full amount of the scholarship they are eligible to receive. Scholarships submitted after October 14 will be prorated.
- 6. How soon can new families apply for scholarships?**

The portal reopened for applications on July 17, 2023. Families should contact a school to begin the enrollment process.

7. **For families with multiple children, how many applications do they need to submit?**  
One application needs to be completed for *each* child enrolled in grades K-12 in Our Catholic Schools. However, income verification only needs to be completed once for the family.
8. **Will Jon Peterson/Autism Scholarship recipients be eligible to receive EdChoice Scholarships?**  
No. Students are eligible to receive only one state scholarship. If a student no longer qualifies for an the JPSN scholarship, they would be eligible to receive an EdChoice scholarship. All state scholarship have a rolling deadline throughout the year.
9. **Do parents submit the current application to school first with the birth certificate and proof of address documentation?**  
Yes, parents need to submit copies of their student's birth certificate and proof of address to the school so it can be submitted with the application on their behalf.
10. **If schools have already set tuition for this year, will they be able to raise it to maximize EdChoice scholarships?**  
For this year only, schools can change their tuition until September 30. OCS highly encourages schools to do so to maximize EdChoice Scholarship dollars. For the 2024-25 academic year, tuition will need to be finalized and submitted by June 30, 2024.
11. **Has there been any guidance from the State of Ohio with regard to direct deposit of EdChoice scholarships versus paper checks?**  
There has been no discussion on direct deposit as of this time. Paper checks will be issued for each scholarship student on a monthly basis, provided attendance is submitted by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. Check deposit forms can be utilized by schools so schools can sign checks on a parent's behalf.
12. **How do these changes affect our admissions policies?**  
Schools should continue honoring their current admissions policies as written.
13. **Should we still provide parish grants to families?**  
Grants can still be provided to families to help fund tuition above the scholarship amount. Schools should utilize SGO and other tuition assistance funds before considering the use of parish grants. Please reach out to our office to discuss specific parish/school situation so we can provide more tailored guidance.
14. **Should we require that families apply for EdChoice if they want the parish grant?**  
Applying for EdChoice is a family decision. Laying out both scenarios to see what would benefit the family the most might be the best option. Please utilize the grant application process form that will be sent to you to aid with this decision. Please reach out to our office to discuss further your specific parish/school situation so we can provide more tailored guidance.

15. **Are OCS teacher families able to apply for EdChoice? How does this affect those who are receiving tuition assistance over and above the teacher discount?**  
Yes, EdChoice is available to every family in the state! Please see questions 13 and 14 above and reach out to our office to discuss further your specific parish/school situation so we can provide more tailored guidance.
16. **Are capital expenses considered part of the true cost of education?**  
Technically, yes. The expenses would be capitalized on a balance sheet and then the expense would be realized on the income statement over the life of the asset. [Example: School buys a new piece of equipment that costs \$100,000 that has a useful life of 10 years. The depreciation expense each year would be \$10,000 (\$100,000/10 years), which could be included in the school budget.] However, currently only the high school budget accounts for these types of expenses. Elementary schools, because of their relationship with the parish, do not include these types of expenses in their school budget.
17. **How is family size calculated? Does this include adult children who may be living at home and/or grandparents who reside in the same residence?**  
Household size includes the scholarship student, the birth mother, or the legal guardian of the scholarship student, the spouse (also includes birth father of any child in the household), all children under the age of 18 which the legal guardian or spouse also has legal custody, children under the age of 22 who are fulltime students, disabled or blind adults or children related to the parent/legal guardian of the student, and relatives who are 65 or over and claimed as a dependent for federal income tax purposes. All sources of income for the family must be included on the income verification.
18. **Do poverty level guidelines affect Traditional EdChoice scholarships?**  
Not unless the family wants to claim low-income status. To qualify for low-income status, the family must be at or below 200% FPL. Families that want to claim low income status must have their income verified by completing the income verification process.
19. **For EdChoice renewals, do the families have to go back to submit income verification?**  
Renewals do not require the submission of income verification. Families may resubmit income verification if their financial status has changed and would like their scholarship amount to be reassessed.
20. **If siblings are eligible for Traditional EdChoice, do they need to apply for Expansion now?**  
Siblings are still eligible for Traditional EdChoice. Sibling requirements have been removed for Expansion.
21. **Is it okay to update our tuition rate in FACTS prior to notifying the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW, formerly ODE)?**  
Please update your tuition rate in the EdChoice portal first before updating it in FACTS.

22. **For parishes without a school, will the diocese update its inter-parochial school support policy regarding subsidies?**  
Yes, all the financial policies have been reviewed and analyzed over the course of this past year and are in the final stages of approval.
23. **Have there been changes to the state-required testing when schools get past a certain percentage of students receiving EdChoice Scholarships?**  
All students on EdChoice must take the required testing, regardless of how many other students in the school are also on EdChoice. Schools can take any approved alternative assessments in lieu of the state tests.
24. **Do we have to be an EdChoice provider in order for our families to receive the scholarship?**  
Yes.
25. **What should parents consider who may qualify for both Traditional EdChoice (low-performing school district) and EdChoice Expansion?**  
Families should consider which scholarship provides them a greater financial benefit. If they would only receive a partial scholarship due to household size and income under the new Expansion rules, a Traditional Scholarship will provide them the maximum amount and greater financial benefit. Traditional Scholarship also does not require any income verification, unless a family qualifies for low-income status (200% FPL).
26. **Will the FACTS Grant & Aid application for SGO funds change to align with the state requirements for EdChoice scholarships?**  
Possibly. OCS will discuss this topic with the SGO Advisory Committee.
27. **If parish grants are eliminated in the future, how will this affect the diocesan high schools from the feeder parishes?**  
We are currently reviewing this situation. As stated above, all the financial policies were reviewed and analyzed over the past year and are in the final stages of approval. Please reference them for detailed guidance moving forward.
28. **Most of our families have never qualified for EdChoice scholarships. How do we encourage them to apply for this and subsequent school years?**  
OCS has created flyers to help schools communicate the benefits of school choice for parents and the school community as a whole. Emphasize that school choice is a way to empower parents to put their own taxpayer dollars from the state back into educating their own students, not just public school students. It is meant to empower ALL families.
29. **If we make changes to tuition contracts for this school year, do they need to re-sign the contract in FACTS?**  
No, parents do not need to re-sign contracts in FACTS. However, you should notify them if any changes were made and explain those changes.

30. **Do you recommend we suspend all tuition payments until our families are approved for EdChoice?**

It is recommended that all families continue tuition payments/payment agreements as planned until EdChoice applications are processed **and** payments begin to be received from the state so there are no cash flow issues. Schools can then provide reimbursements to parents or prorate any final amount due later in the school year.

31. **If our students who receive Jon Peterson Scholarships aren't eligible for EdChoice scholarships, how can we help them with tuition assistance?**

With more students on EdChoice, there will be more funds available from the parish, Diocesan Tuition Assistance, and SGO. Schools should communicate that they can help support JPSN parents so their children can stay on the scholarship and receive the necessary services.

32. **What about all the families who have already been allocated SGO awards for the 2023-24 school year?**

SGO dollars could be reallocated, but only because funds may no longer be needed to support a family because they are receiving an EdChoice scholarship.