

Ohio Educational Choice Scholarship Program

Summary of Fall 2007 Parent Survey Results

In October 2007, EdChoice e-mailed electronic surveys to two parent groups: 1) parents whose children first began receiving the EdChoice scholarship during the 2007-2008 school year (i.e., first-year parents) and 2) parents who renewed their children's EdChoice scholarships for a second year during the 2007-2008 school year (i.e., second-year parents). The purpose of the surveys was to find out about parent experiences in participating in the EdChoice Scholarship Program. Approximately 318 first-year parents and 129 second-year parents completed the survey.

In general, responses from both first- and second-year parents were very positive. Of first-year parents, 91% said that the process of applying to private school was either easy or very easy; 98% of them said that they were satisfied with the help they received from the private school in submitting an EdChoice application. Leading reasons for why most first-year parents applied for EdChoice scholarships were: 1) better overall quality of education at private school, 2) wanted child to have a religious education, and 3) student will receive individual attention at private school.

In regard to second-year parents, 88% rated their experience with the EdChoice Scholarship Program as "Excellent." Ninety percent of them were either satisfied or very satisfied with the private school their child attended during the 2006-2007 school year, with 93% saying that their child was attending the same private school for the 2007-2008 school year. Ninety-nine percent of second-year parents said that their child liked attending private school, with 60% saying that they have seen improvement in their child's grades. Ninety-five percent of these parents said that their child was welcomed by the private school and made to feel like part of the school community. Ninety-two percent of second-year parents answered "No" when asked if they had had any problems with their child's private school.

While feedback on both surveys was primarily positive, parent comments showed that there were four areas causing confusion or dissatisfaction for parents:

- **Time period in which parents receive award notification:** Some parents felt that finding out in July that their child has been awarded an EdChoice scholarship is too late, giving them little time to plan an alternative strategy if child is not awarded the scholarship or to prepare for additional costs (e.g., uniforms, supplies) needed for private school.

Although EdChoice understands parental concerns about the scholarship award timeline, the program cannot award scholarships any sooner than July. The award process requires that data such as student attendance and achievement test records be reviewed, and these data are not available until late June.

- **Scholarship renewal process:** Some parents did not seem to realize that the scholarship is renewable through 12th grade. Those that did know the scholarship was renewable still did not understand the process involved in renewing the scholarship.
- **Transfers:** Some parents did not understand that the scholarship is transferable at any point during the school year. They also did not understand what needs to be done to transfer the scholarship from one school to another.
- **Additional school fees/lack of awareness of programs offered by private schools:** Parent comments showed that there was a general lack of understanding about how the private school process worked. Parents assumed that all of the services they received through the public school district (e.g., free lunch, transportation, special education, etc.) would also be received at the private school. Many parents also said that they were not aware of the additional fees required by many of the private schools.