

Ohio: The State of School Choice

JUNE 2010 ISSUE

EdChoice Achieves Greatest Success

For the first time in its history, the EdChoice Scholarship Program—which provides children in chronically underperforming public schools with the opportunity to receive vouchers to attend private schools—has reached its state-imposed cap of 14,000 students.

The application period for the 2010-2011 school year ended on April 16, and the Ohio Department of Education reported 14,689 Ohio students have applied for the scholarship.

The program served over 11,000 children in the 2009-2010 school year.

The EdChoice program is America's largest voucher program designed specifically to provide educational opportunities to children who attend low-performing public schools.

"EdChoice is making a positive difference in the lives of thousands of Ohio children," said Chad Aldis, SCO's executive director, "so I'm not surprised by the popularity of this program or the fact that Ed-

Choice reached its cap so quickly."

The next step is expansion of the program to allow more students to exercise educational choice. Efforts in the state legislature capitalizing on the momentum of this historic achievement have already commenced.

To see how you can help to make this expansion a reality, visit our website today and click on "Get Involved":

www.schoio.org

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Filmmakers Draw Attention to School Choice

Two filmmakers have turned their documentary lenses on their local schools, finding compelling stories that have deep connections to the larger school choice movement in the United States.

Director Bob Bowdon, a veteran TV journalist,



illuminates the disparity between education funding and student outcomes in the New Jersey public schools in his film *The Cartel*.

An impressive group of

interview subjects tries to make sense of the fact that New Jersey spends more per pupil than any other state and reaps a disastrous 39 percent rate of proficient or advanced readers among the state's eighth-graders.

The Lottery is director Madeleine Sackler's look at four families who have entered

a charter school lottery in an attempt to find a better choice for their children than their New York City public schools. Sackler's contributors include Newark Mayor Cory



Booker; Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education Joel Klein; and Susan Taylor, former editor-in-chief of *Essence Magazine*.

For more information on these films, check out their official websites:

thelotteryfilm.com

thecartelmovie.com

DID YOU KNOW?

- The *Cartel* had a feature event in Columbus on May 21st. The screening was followed by a Q&A session that included director Bob Bowdon.
- The *Lottery* was shown simultaneously at theaters nationwide on June 8 to celebrate National Education Day. In Ohio, screenings took place in Columbus, Cincinnati, Huber Heights, and Sandusky.

Faces and Voices of the Ohio Autism Scholarship

The Ohio Autism Scholarship, now in its sixth year, continues to provide needed educational alternatives for students on the Autism spectrum. Almost 1,400 students throughout Ohio have taken advantage of this scholarship.

School Choice Ohio has been working with the Foundation for Educational Choice in Indiana to collect stories and to produce a booklet which looks into the lives of these students and their families. The stories are told in the words of the children and their parents, and it is hoped that anyone who reads them will find out just how much a high-quality educational environment can enrich the lives of students with autism.

Something that we may sometimes take for granted—access to an education that is a good fit and meets

our needs—can change the direction of a child’s life for the better.

“While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the children featured in the booklet,” says Cheryl Bowshier, SCO’s Autism Outreach Coordina-

Important note for all parents considering the Ohio Autism Scholarship:

The Ohio Department of Education has made a rule change and starting this year will no longer accept new applications for scholarships during the month of April. Please plan your application accordingly.

tor, “one common thread that runs through the stories is that the children are happy in their schools. This in itself can make all the difference.”

Want to read more success stories?

Now available from
School Choice Ohio



Pictures and stories in the words of families all across Ohio who have found success using the Ohio Autism Scholarship Program

To get your copy:
www.schoio.org



EdChoice Scholarship Spotlight

School choice is about helping families find educational success. This is the story of one of those families. The excerpts below are from Joshua Hayes, a student using the EdChoice Scholarship.

My name is Joshua Hayes, and I am writing to the EdChoice Program to tell why it’s important to me and how it is making a difference in my family life and my school life. EdChoice is important to me for many reasons.

One reason is that the school curriculum challenges me more than before. I used to just be able to get easy A’s without really trying or thinking about it. Ever since I’ve enrolled in my school I’ve thought more about my school work and committed it to memory because **my** expectations are higher.



Joshua Hayes of Columbus

Also, the staff at my school is kinder. They believe in me and test my skills more. The staff treats me like I’m their own child. The students are also nicer.

Overall, there aren’t cliques or groups of kids like there are in other

schools. They don’t try to put you down, and if they were to they would quickly apologize.

Furthermore EdChoice benefits me in my family. I’m not like all the other teenagers of my generation that don’t listen, disrespect, hurt their parents, and are bullies to their siblings.

In conclusion, I would like to thank EdChoice for helping me financially get into my school, and have hope that like me, my other two brothers would be able to get into my school and reap the benefits of a kind staff, students, and friends.

Campaign Season—Again

It is hard to believe but another election season is upon us. Both incumbents and challengers will be on tour throughout Ohio during the summer months. Constituents and voters are going to have a great opportunity to find out where they stand on issues that matter to them.

If school choice is an important issue to you, are you ready to ask the important questions?

Here are some questions that you can ask:

- Do you support school vouchers that allow children in struggling public schools a chance to attend a different school?
- The EdChoice Scholarship program has reached its cap of 14,000 students, do you support an expansion of the program?
- The Autism Scholarship is very popular with Ohio parents. Would you support an expansion to include all children with disabilities?

Remember to be polite and respectful of those running for office, but make sure your views are heard and make sure your friends and neighbors know what the candidates are saying about the issues that matter to you.

Don't know how to get your voice heard as a supporter of school

choice? SCO can help. We are beginning an ambitious project to empower, train, and mobilize schools and parents in Ohio to address school choice issues at the state and local levels. The project is called Parents Speak Out, and it is coming soon to Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, Cincinnati, Toledo, and Columbus.

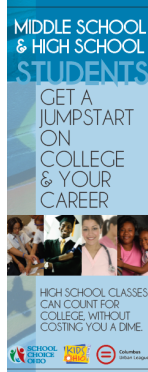
Your personal experiences with school choice through family, friends, and loved ones are often far more influential to politicians than ideology and party.

So if you want to Speak Out in your area, contact Sarah Pechan at (614) 223-1555 or by e-mail at spechan@scoho.org.

New Choices - a Jumpstart on College Education

School Choice Ohio is proud to announce the publication of its new resource for the parents of middle and high school students. Students in Ohio can get a jumpstart on college and career through four different programs, all with little or no cost to families:

- Early college high schools
- College Tech Prep programs



connecting high schools and local colleges

- Post-secondary enrollment for dual classes in both high school and college
- Advanced placement classes in high school

The new brochure was sponsored by SCO, KidsOhio!, and the Columbus Urban League and is currently being distributed statewide to human service organizations and community agencies.

If you would like this brochure yourself or to distribute in your community, please contact Sarah Pechan at (614) 223-1555 or by e-mail at spechan@scoho.org.

Autism Awareness Rally at Ohio Statehouse

A public rally was held at the Ohio Statehouse on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, to promote autism awareness and to give a venue for important voices to be heard by our state government. Thousands of parents, children, supporters, and professionals attended.

Speakers at the rally included the leaders of the House and Senate Autism Caucuses, students from Oakstone Academy, representatives from the Ohio Department of Education, and radio personality Stanley Jackson.

Rally attendees heard from many of the speakers about the importance of a quality education for children with autism. School Choice Ohio sponsored a reception after the rally



for families and friends of the Ohio Autism Scholarship Program.



It was a busy and productive day for the families, friends, and champions of educational options for children.



Stay Connected to SCO

Find out what we're doing or share your successes. These tools make it easy and fun.

Ohio Parental Choice Groups

SCO is fortunate to work with a number of groups around the state that strive to ensure parents have meaningful educational options.

Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)

Contact: Tracie Craft
Website: www.ohio.baео.org
Phone: 937.222.7990

Children's Scholarship Fund of Greater Cincinnati

Contact: Kelly Derickson
Website: www.csfcincinnati.org
Phone: 513.523.3816

Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund

Contact: Ann Riddle
Website: www.nosf.org
Phone: 419.244.6711

Parents Advancing Choice in Education (PACE)

Contact: Daria Dillard Stone
Website: www.pacedayton.org
Phone: 937.228.7223

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www.scoho.com/wordpress



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