

January 23, 2012

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## “Ohio: The State of School Choice”

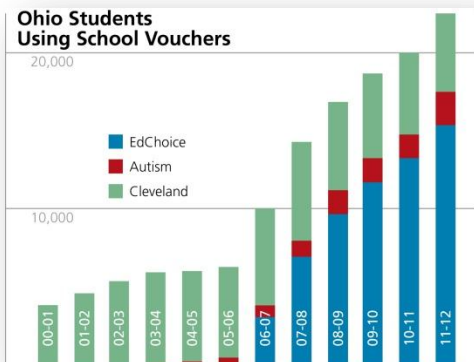
### Kicking-off School Choice Week, SCO Touts Successes and Announces Legislative Agenda in Annual Report

(Columbus, OH) – School Choice Ohio Executive Director Matt Cox joined with special needs scholarship hopeful Christopher Fuchs and his mother Fati Fuchs, to thank Ohio legislators for legislation creating the new Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program, a major legislative achievement for the nearly 250,000 Ohio students eligible to apply when the program launches next month.

“The new Special Needs Scholarship Program opens up new doors for our children, lets parents and families make their own school choices, and reduces the anxieties we feel as parents to find the best school to address the needs of our children. Our thanks goes out to all, especially to former Representative Jon Peterson, for preserving and making this important program work for our children,” said Fati Fuchs, mother of two children with special needs.



The Fuchs family’s story can be found, along with others, in School Choice Ohio’s 2011 Annual Report that was also released today. The comprehensive document provides an inside look at School Choice Ohio’s operations and accomplishments. The full report can be viewed [here](#).



“2011 was an exceptional year for school choice in Ohio,” said Cox. “We increased the number of available EdChoice Scholarships from 14,000 to 60,000 and increased the Cleveland voucher amounts to mirror EdChoice scholarship amounts. With the addition of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship, Ohio students now have access to four scholarship programs.”

Aiming to expand on last year's landmark achievements for school choice, Cox also announced a legislative agenda for 2012 and beyond. In addition to the important Parental Choice and Taxpayer Savings Scholarship (PACT), which determines eligibility by income instead of zip-codes, SCO hopes to make even greater strides toward school choice and educational freedom for Ohio in 2012.

Repairing per-pupil funding disparities that exist between voucher programs and public schools will create a fair learning environment for all students. For a more personalized and targeted education, Ohio families should have access to a mix of online and bricks-and-mortar, or "hybrid" learning experience. Finally, the state should increase information available to parents about the range of available school choice options.

School Choice Ohio's legislative agenda revolves around four key issues:

1. **Access:** Create statewide income-based scholarship program
2. **Funding:** Address critical voucher funding disparities affecting student access
3. **Flexibility:** Allow "hybrid" on-site/online school models to operate in Ohio
4. **Quality:** Ensure more state-published school choice information for parents and the public

"The utilization of school choice is a life changing event for so many children and families. We want as many families as possible to have this experience," said Matt Cox.

In celebration of National School Choice Week (Jan. 22-28), there are more than [400 events](#) taking place across the country. The governors of more than 25 US states (including Governor Kasich) have proclaimed it "School Choice Week" in their states. As part of School Choice Week, School Choice Ohio will join with families, students and teachers across Ohio to celebrate school choice. The following is a schedule of events School Choice Ohio will be hosting.

### **Sunday, January 22**

- Akron School Fair: More than 60 public and private schools joined together to display educational options available to the Akron community.

### **Monday, January 23**

- 11:30A Roundtable: SCO will lead a luncheon roundtable with Columbus principals about the importance of advocacy for income-based scholarships.
- 06:30P SCO Year in Review: Virginia Walden Ford, a founding member of The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) and former executive director of D.C. Parents for School Choice, Inc., will speak with parents, teachers, legislators and candidates at a Columbus community event. A single mother, Ford mobilized thousands of parents to pass the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program in Congress in 2004 after her son received a scholarship to leave a failing school.

## **Tuesday, January 24 “Day at the Capital”**

- 11:30A Statehouse Luncheon: The “Celebrating Ohio’s Educational Options” event is co-hosted with Forum for Educational Options, and Virginia Walden Ford will give introductory remarks to more than 100 elected officials, school leaders and families.
- 06:30P Akron Community event with Virginia Walden Ford.

## **Wednesday, January 25**

- Distribution of School Choice Ohio’s Annual Report to legislators and executive offices.

## **Thursday, January 26**

- SCO Canton Field Trip: News Conference with families and students at Heritage Christian School about the EdChoice Scholarship program. (Note: Heritage Christian has the most EdChoice students in Stark County.)
- SCO Youngstown Field Trip: News Conference with families and students at a local school (call for details) to make a special announcement about the Autism Scholarship.

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*School Choice Ohio (SCO) is a nonprofit organization that educates parents and families about Ohio’s school choice options and advocates for greater expansion of those options. The organization works tirelessly to educate both the public and our leaders on the importance of empowering parents to find the best educational setting for the needs of their children. SCO believes that all parents should have the opportunity to choose which school is best for their children, regardless of their income level.*