



## St. Sebastian Parish School EdChoice Scholarship Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is an EdChoice Scholarship?***

The Educational (School) Choice Program is a state-funded scholarship granted to every K-12 student in the state of Ohio. There are two different scholarship types:

1. EdChoice **Traditional** – This scholarship is awarded to families who live in a qualifying school district. This is not new to the state of Ohio and has been available since 2005. Note: Students entering grades K-6 who would be assigned to EdChoice public school buildings regardless of where they attended school the previous year.
2. EdChoice **Expansion** – Any Family that does not live in a qualifying school district is now eligible for an EdChoice Expansion Scholarship. This was signed on July 3, 2023 by Governor Mike DeWine and makes the EdChoice Expansion Scholarship universally available to every Ohio student.

### ***What is the maximum scholarship award amount?***

The EdChoice Expansion Scholarship amount is based on a family's Adjusted Gross Income and the maximum scholarship for students in grades K-8 is currently **\$6,165** and \$8,407 for grades 9-12. The amount each student receives varies based on household income. Note – ALL families who apply are guaranteed to receive some level of award. The EdChoice Traditional Scholarship is currently **\$6,165** for grades K-8 and \$8,407 for grades 9-12.

### ***Who is eligible for the EdChoice Expanded Scholarship Program?***

Everyone. The EdChoice Expansion Scholarship program eligibility has expanded. If a family's household income is at or below 450% of the Federal Poverty Level (see chart on our website), they will be awarded the maximum scholarship amount and full tuition will be covered. If a family's household income is at or above 451% of the Federal Poverty Level, the scholarship award will be awarded on a sliding scale. Income levels have been expanded to include all households, removing the previous sibling eligibility criteria.

### ***When can a family apply?***

The EdChoice Scholarship application window is open now for the 2023-2024 school year through October 14, 2023. Anyone can apply for the EdChoice Expansion Scholarship by taking the following steps:

1. Submit the **Scholarship Request Form**, as well as a copy of the student's **birth certificate** and current **proof of residency** to the school office for submission via the online application system. The school must enter each student's application for EdChoice on behalf of the student. You may also email Diana McGee the form and supporting documents at [mcgeed@stsebastian.org](mailto:mcgeed@stsebastian.org).  
The next step toward finalizing the approval for your scholarship is listed below.



2. Submit an **Income Verification Form** to the State of Ohio (**not St. Sebastian**). Instructions can be found on the School Choice Scholarship page. Complete the income verification process only if you are applying for the School Choice Expansion Scholarship.
3. Complete the **Angel Scholarship Application** if you haven't previously completed this application.

All forms can be dropped off at the school office between 9am and 2pm. Office hours will be available on Thursday, August 17 from 5pm to 6:30pm if you need assistance or have questions. Feel free to call the office at 330-836-9107 with any questions.

### ***What if a family applies after October 14, 2023?***

Applications submitted after October 14 will be awarded at a prorated amount based on how much of the school year remains after the date of the student's enrollment in private school.

### ***How long will these scholarships exist because the budget was only approved for two years?***

It is correct that the Ohio budget is passed on a two-year term limit. However, the traditional EdChoice Scholarship and EdChoice Expansion Scholarship have been around for years and have only expanded. It is always possible that the next budget proposal is different, which is why it is important for Catholic, private, and homeschooled students to apply for these scholarships, sending a message that the funding is necessary and that Ohioans support the continued funding of school choice scholarships.

### ***How much does it cost for a family to apply?***

There is no fee to apply for an EdChoice Scholarship.

***Who determines what each family is awarded through the EdChoice Program?*** The State of Ohio will make the award determinations based on Adjusted Gross Income. Once St. Sebastian Parish School has confirmation from the state of Ohio, the school will update your FACTS account accordingly and the system will send you an email notification of any changes.

### ***Does the State of Ohio now have control over our school policies?***

No, we continue to operate independently of state-run education requirements as a Catholic School within the Cleveland Diocese. The monies we receive from the state are tax dollars following your child. We continue to operate with our mission and values as we always have.

### ***Have our admissions requirements and standards changed now that we accept the EdChoice Scholarship?***

Over the past year, we have put into place a comprehensive admissions and screening process which allows us to be selective in admitting new students to ensure our school culture remains robust and that new students meet our rigorous academic and behavioral standards and be a good fit in our community. The admissions process covers multiple phases to ensure each child



and family is a good fit for our school and that our school is a good fit for every child and family. In addition to the application documentation, families will meet with Mr. Rohr as well as complete grade-specific assessments during shadow visits all in an effort to get a sense of each child's learning style and personality.

***Will class sizes become larger because we accept more students?***

We are only accepting students if we have available seats in their grade level. Our goal is not to have a large school just to fill seats but to have a student body that is committed to the St. Sebastian mission and families that are devoted to maintaining our standards in behavior and involvement. We consider ourselves full at 18 students per class with a capacity of 22 students. The state has opened the door to Catholic education for families who previously couldn't afford private school, but we are committed to keeping our class sizes small to give our children the best learning environment possible.

***How does this affect my tuition rate for the 2023-2024 school year?***

Fr. Valencheck, Mr. Rohr, and Milissa Smith, in consultation with the Diocese, and Finance Council, have agreed on the following tuition changes for the 2023-2024 school year to reflect the true cost to educate.

- The new base tuition rate for students in grades K-8 will be \$7,000. This is an increase of \$500.
- With the recommendations of the Diocese, we are moving from a discount model to a scholarship model.
- Preschool tuition rates are not impacted by these changes.
- **Parent financial commitments will not increase.**

***How will these changes affect my family?***

We are committed that no family pays more for 2023-2024 tuition than was initially communicated in the policy in February. In order for tuition savings to occur, every family is encouraged to apply for the EdChoice Scholarship and/or the Angel Scholarship.

- Angel Scholarship funds will be used to cover siblings in Catholic schools, and unusual family circumstances and consider the best interest of the children of those who applied.
- Additional scholarships may be awarded on an as-needed basis.

***What will happen to my Diocesan Tuition Assistance or Angel Scholarship money if I have already received this? What about other scholarships such as Foundation awards?***

If your family qualifies for a full EdChoice state scholarship, the Diocese will take back the Diocese of Cleveland Grant that was previously loaded onto your tuition agreement. The same is true for any St. Sebastian Scholarship (Angel, Parishioner, Fund-A-Dream) money that was awarded. Each tuition agreement will be looked at individually and we will make adjustments as needed. Foundation-awarded scholarships will be maintained provided the funds are still needed.



***Is there still time to apply for the Angel Scholarship if I have not done so for the 2023-2024 school year?***

Absolutely and we strongly encourage all families to apply. As you are aware, through the generosity of our parishioners and school families, we raised nearly \$70,000 to award in Angel Scholarship funds this year. A significant percentage of our families who received those grants will no longer need the Angel Scholarship because tuition will be covered by one of the EdChoice scholarships. Therefore, we forecast there will be a large amount of money back in the Angel Scholarship distribution pool. The state requires that we prioritize families at or below 300% of the federal poverty line for the Angel Scholarship. Still, those families will now be fully assisted by EdChoice, allowing us to award the money to families in higher income brackets who don't qualify for the full EdChoice Scholarship to reduce tuition costs. The Angel Scholarship application can be found in your folder or online as a Google Form link here. There is a \$35 fee required to complete the FACTS application. The application deadline for Angel Scholarship closes **September 1, 2023**.

***What is the status of the Parishioner Tuition Scholarship?***

If your family was already awarded a Parish Life Scholarship (PLS) previously referred to as parish tuition assistance, it will still apply. Depending on the amount awarded by the state for the EdChoice Scholarship, your family may no longer need any PLS funds or may need partial funding. This will be dealt with on a family case-by-case basis.

***Can we defer future tuition payments if we think we will get a full EdChoice Scholarship?***

No. All parents need to keep making tuition payments as scheduled and as required by the tuition policy. We will make appropriate adjustments in FACTS once awards are approved.

***What if I am divorced? Who is required to file the application?***

The scholarship award belongs to the child so in the case of divorce, the primary/residential parent who claims the child/children on their federal tax return is the one who needs to apply. It doesn't matter if it is actually the other parent who is financially responsible for paying the tuition.

***Why should my family apply?***

No matter your family's adjusted gross income, this is a financial win-win for the parents, the children, our teachers, and for the school. Upon successful completion of the required paperwork, your family will owe less for tuition than you did when the original bills came out in July. The additional funding from the state will be utilized to enhance our educational priorities and improve staff compensation and development. We strongly encourage every one of our K-8 families, who are not already on another state scholarship, to apply for the EdChoice Scholarship.