



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Choice Scholarship Program Frequently Asked Questions 2023-2024 School Year

Information contained in this document reflects current law and may be subject to change after the current session of the Indiana General Assembly.

Number	Question	Answer
General Questions		
1	What is the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program?	The Choice Scholarship Program provides state funding to qualifying students that is used to offset tuition costs at participating Choice schools. Students qualify based on student eligibility criteria and household income. Eligibility criteria is outlined in questions below.
2	Who administers the Choice Scholarship Program?	The Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE's) Office of School Finance administers the Choice Scholarship Program.
3	When and where can I apply for the program?	Student applications are submitted electronically by the Choice school to IDOE. <u>2023-2024 Choice Scholarship Application Windows</u> Period one: Wednesday, March 1, to Friday, September 1 Period two: Wednesday, November 1, to Monday, January 15
4	What is the difference between first and second period student applications?	First period student applications are for the entire upcoming school year. Second period applications are for the students enrolling in a Choice school after the period one deadline for an award to be used for the second half of the school year and as such, the second period award amount is half the amount the student would qualify for in the first period.
5	Which schools participate in the Choice Scholarship Program?	A list of participating schools can be found on the program website . The list is updated as schools apply to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program each year.
6	Can a Choice Scholarship be transferred to another school during the school year?	No. The Choice Scholarship is specific to a student as well as to a school. The scholarship is terminated when the student is withdrawn from the school. However, if a student transfers to another Choice school during the second period application window, the student may apply for a second period award.



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Eligibility Questions		
1	<p>What is the student eligibility criteria for the Choice Scholarship Program?</p>	<p>To be eligible, a student must first satisfy <u>each</u> of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Have legal settlement in Indiana (b) Is at least five years of age and less than 22 years of age on August 1 of the school year (c) Meets at least one of the eight eligibility tracks listed below; and (d) Is a member of a household with an annual income of not more than 300% of the amount required for the individual to qualify for the Free/Reduced Lunch program. <p>Previous Choice Scholarship Student Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student received a Choice Scholarship in a preceding school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship. <p>Previous Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Award Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The students received a SGO Scholarship in a previous school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship. The approved Scholarship granting Organizations (SGOs) are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community Foundation of Elkhart County ● Institute for Quality Education, Inc. (Formerly Educational Choice Charitable Trust) ● LaGrange County Community Foundation, Inc. (No longer granting scholarships as of the 2021 school year.) ● Professional Athletes of Indiana ● Sagamore Institute Scholarships for Education Choice ● School Scholarship Granting Organization of Northeast Indiana ● The Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization of Indiana ● Tuition Assistance Fund of Southwestern Indiana (Closed February 2013) <p>Special Education Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student has a disability that requires special education; and ii. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) has been developed for the student under IC 20-35 or a Service Plan (SP) has been developed under 511 IAC 7-34.



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		<p>“F” Public School Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student would be required to attend a specific public school based on his/her residence that has been assigned an “F” grade. The list of “F” schools for Choice Scholarship eligibility is posted prior to the beginning of the school year. <p>Two Semesters in a Public School Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The students was enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school, including a charter school, in Indiana for at least two full semesters immediately preceding the first semester for which the individual receives a Choice Scholarship. <p>Sibling Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The sibling of the newly applying student received either a Choice Scholarship or an SGO Scholarship in a previous school year. <p>Pre-K Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student received and used an Early Education Grant under IC 12-17.2-7.2- to attend Pre-K at an eligible Choice school; and ii. The student is applying for a Choice Scholarship at the same Choice School in which they attended Pre-K with an Early Education Grant. <p>Foster Child Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A student must be placed in foster care, as defined in IC 31-9-2-46.7. The child’s placement must be supported by documentation from a Department of Child Services (DCS) caseworker that is signed and dated during the 2023 calendar year. ii. Foster children are automatically income eligible for the Choice Scholarship Program and do not require household size and income.
2	<p>Can a kindergarten student be eligible for a Choice Scholarship?</p>	<p>Yes, a parent/guardian of a kindergarten student may apply for a Choice Scholarship if the child meets the requirements of one of the eight tracks listed above and is five years of age on or before August 1 for both period one and period two applications for the 2023-2024 school year.</p>
3	<p>If a child attends a public school for kindergarten, can this count toward the two semesters in a Public School Track for the upcoming school year?</p>	<p>Yes, providing that the kindergarten was a public school and the student was enrolled at a public school for the two full semesters immediately preceding the first semester for which the student received a Choice Scholarship.</p>



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4	If a student is withdrawn from a public school before the end of a semester, is he/she eligible for the Two Semesters in a Public School track for the upcoming year?	No, a student should be enrolled for the full semester to count toward the Two Semesters in a Public School Track.
5	What does “sibling” mean for purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program?	For purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program, the term “sibling” means students who share at least one parent, legal guardian, or legal custodian. The term does not require a consanguineous (blood) relationship between the individuals.
6	When did the sibling of a student have to receive a Choice Scholarship or SGO award for the sibling to be eligible for the Sibling Track?	To be eligible under the Sibling Track, the student’s sibling must have received a Choice Scholarship or SGO award in any previous school year. This means for the 2023-2024 school year, the sibling must have received the Choice Scholarship or SGO award in any year up to and including the 2022-2023 school year.
7	What are the household income limits?	The income guidelines for the 2023-2024 school year are included on the Track Eligibility Requirements document. This is posted on the Choice Scholarship Program website under student eligibility.
8	Is the household income of the foster parent included when determining whether the foster child is eligible to receive a Choice Scholarship?	No. Foster children are automatically income eligible for the Choice Scholarship Program. Official documentation of the student’s current foster status must be kept in his/her file. If the household includes biological or adopted children in addition to foster children, payments received for serving as a foster parent will not be included in the household income calculation for purposes of determining eligibility for the biological or adopted children.
Application Process		
1	What counts as income and who should be included in the household size?	For questions about determining income and household size, please contact the Choice school. The school will assist with questions and provide guidance specific to your circumstances.
2	Can children be included in the household size if they are not listed on the tax forms for their household?	Yes. The household which serves as the child’s primary residence should be used for purposes of applying for a Choice Scholarship. If a child is claimed by the other parent on taxes, documentation of this agreement should be kept in the student’s file. More guidance for determining household size is available in the Income Verification Rules .



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3	Who is responsible for determining a student's Choice Scholarship eligibility?	IDOE determines eligibility. The parent/guardian of the student must provide documentation establishing eligibility, which must be kept on file at the school.
4	How is the amount of the Choice Scholarship award determined?	The first period award is the lesser of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tuition and fees reported on the Choice student's application at the Choice school; or 2. 90% of the per-student state funding allocation, based on the student's school corporation of residence. The second period award would be half of this amount.
5	Where can I review the Choice Scholarship award amounts?	The award amounts for each school corporation are available on the Choice Scholarship Program website .
6	How will families be notified of the Choice Scholarship awarded to their child?	The school will print the award letter or denial letter at the time the application is submitted. The initial award letter is an estimated award amount; actual award amounts are calculated using information that is not available until later in the school year. A letter with the final award amounts will be available to the Choice school when the public tuition support payment amounts are final. Families should retain copies of all forms and letters.
7	Can a parent/guardian of a student submit an application for a Choice Scholarship to multiple schools?	A student can only have one application for a given application period. If a parent/guardian wishes to apply at a different school, the parent/guardian must withdraw the student's application at the original Choice school and submit an application at the preferred Choice school.
Tuition and Fees		
1	Can participating schools charge tuition and fees in addition to what is covered by the Choice Scholarship award?	Yes, The parent/guardian is responsible for any tuition and fees that the participating school charges beyond the Choice Scholarship award amount. A parent/guardian should carefully read any agreement signed at a participating school. A Choice school is not allowed to charge Choice Scholarship students additional fees and costs that are not routinely charged to non-Choice eligible students.
2	Will the Choice school receive additional funding if a student receives special education services?	The parent or guardian of an eligible special education student will designate either the Choice school or the public school corporation as the special education service provider. If the Choice school is selected as the service provider during the first period, the Choice school will be eligible to receive the state special education funding allocated for that student. This funding is to be used to provide special education services for the eligible student. If the Choice school is selected as the service provider during the second application period, the Choice school will not be eligible to receive the state special education



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		<p>funding allocated for that student.</p> <p>For more information on the Choice Scholarship Program and special education, please review the Choice Scholarship and Special Education Services FAQ available on the Choice Scholarship Program website.</p>
3	What should be included in the tuition and fees policy for the Choice school application?	The tuition and fees policy should include descriptions and amounts for all tuition, fees, and discounts used by the applying Choice school. The policy must be finalized for the 2023-2024 school year prior to the submission of the school application. The policy and amounts must be applied uniformly among Choice and non-Choice students.
4	Can an optional fee be included in the tuition and fees on the Choice school application?	No, the optional fees cannot be included in the reported tuition and fees on the Choice school application. However, the Choice school can charge optional fees that are not included on the Choice school application.
5	Can a Choice school receive a Curricular Material Assistance (TB) payment for a Choice student?	Yes, provided that the Choice student qualifies for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program, and has been selected to receive curricular materials assistance and the cost of curricular materials is not included in the tuition and fees amount covered by the Choice Scholarship.
Attendance and Payment Process		
1	Can a student receive a Choice Scholarship after the school year has already begun?	To be awarded a Choice Scholarship in period one, a complete application must be submitted for the student on or before Friday, September 1. For a second period Choice Scholarship, a complete application must be submitted for the student on or before Monday, January 15.
2	Can a student who has been withdrawn from their Choice school return to the same Choice school at a later date in the school year and continue to receive his/her Choice Scholarship award?	At the time a student is withdrawn from the Choice school, the parent/guardian forfeits the remaining portion of the student's Choice Scholarship award. If the student enrolls at another school and chooses to return to the original school, the student may apply for a second period application at their original school prior to Monday, January 15, if the student has a qualifying track.
3	Is there anything I (the parent/guardian) need to do once school starts?	The parent/guardian plays a very important role in the payment process. The Choice Scholarship award is designated by the parent/guardian to be paid directly to the participating Choice school on the student's behalf. At the time of the application, the Choice school will download and print a Choice Scholarship Endorsement Form. The Endorsement Form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian. Without the completed Endorsement Form, the state will not make payment for the student.



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4	What happens to the payment if the student is withdrawn before the school year is over? Are there any costs to the family beyond what is covered by the Choice Scholarship?	At the time a student is withdrawn from the Choice school, the parent/guardian forfeits the remaining portion of the student's Choice Scholarship award. Please review the participating school's policies concerning student withdrawal and tuition payment as individual school policies vary and may require that tuition and fee costs be paid for the full month for which the student withdraws or even for the full semester. In accordance with the school's policy, the family may be responsible for any unpaid tuition resulting from the state's process of prorating payments.
5	How does the payment process work?	To receive a payment, a student must have: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An approved Choice Scholarship, 2. Current enrollment record, 3. Be included in the Choice school's Membership for Vouchers (MV) submission, and 4. Have an Endorsement Form (EF) signed by the parent/guardian and the school has uploaded this in the STN Application Center by the posted deadline. The Endorsement Form instructs the state to provide payment to the school on the student's behalf. Without the completed Endorsement Form, a payment will not be made.
6	What happens to the payment if the student is withdrawn before the school year is over?	When a student is withdrawn from the participating school, the Choice Scholarship amount is prorated down to the number of days that the student was enrolled at the Choice School providing that the student was claimed in the school's Membership for Vouchers (MV) count and a signed Endorsement Form (EF) was uploaded for the student. This process is repeated for the second count day, with the exception that the EF is only required to be submitted for period two students. Individual school policies vary and may require that tuition and fee costs be paid for the full month for which the student withdraws or even for the full semester. In accordance with the school's policy, the family may be responsible for any unpaid tuition resulting from the state's process of prorating payments.
7	How often will state payments be made?	At a minimum, Choice Scholarship payments will be made at least once per semester.
Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Program		
1	What is an SGO Scholarship?	The program provides a 50% state tax credit for contributions made to qualified SGOs that offer scholarships to children to attend non-public schools of their choice. More information about SGOs is posted on IDOE's school scholarship website . For more information on whether your child qualifies for an SGO award, please contact the Choice school.



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2	Can a student who receives a Choice Scholarship also receive a SGO Scholarship?	Yes. A student who meets the requirements for a Choice Scholarship could qualify for an SGO Scholarship as well, provided that the combination of the two amounts does not exceed tuition and fees at the school. Please contact the Choice school for more information about this program.
3	What is the minimum SGO award amount?	There is no minimum amount that an SGO can award to an eligible student. However, an SGO award must be at least five hundred dollars (\$500) in order for that student, or the student's sibling, to qualify later for a Choice Scholarship under the previous SGO Track. This rule only applies to a student or a sibling of the student who receives an SGO award for the first time after June 30, 2013 and otherwise meets the income eligibility requirements of the program.
School Policies		
1	Does my participating school need to remove its religion classes and/or religious affiliation to qualify?	No. Participation in the Choice Scholarship Program does not require schools to remove religion classes or alter their religious affiliation.
2	How would the Choice Scholarship Program affect my school's admissions policy?	A participating Choice school may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. The school must have a written admissions policy. This policy is required to be submitted as part of the school's application to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program. Admission standards for Choice Scholarship students may not be different from the standards used for non-Choice eligible students.
3	Are all participating schools required to have a lottery policy?	Yes, in accordance with IC 20-51-4-3, even if a participating school does not anticipate ever using a lottery, the policy must be in place. A sample lottery policy is posted in the Non-Public School Community on Moodle.
4	Will my school be required to do teacher evaluations?	Yes. Pursuant to IC 20-28-11.5-4, eligible Choice schools are required to develop a plan for annual performance evaluations for each certified employee.
Accreditation/Accountability		
1	If my school is not accredited by the State Board of Education (SBOE), what national/regional accrediting entities are recognized by SBOE?	SBOE currently recognizes nine accrediting entities for purposes of participating in the Choice Scholarship Program. The recognized accrediting agencies are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accrediting Association of Seventh-Day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASDAS) • Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACSWASC)



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS) ● American Montessori Society (AMS) ● Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) ● Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS) ● Christian Schools International (CSI) ● Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) ● International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA) ● National Lutheran Schools Accreditation (NLSA) ● North Central Association (NCA)/AdvancED/Cognia
Assessment		
1	Will my school be responsible for the cost of state mandated tests?	No. Indiana provides state-mandated assessments to Choice schools with no fees.
2	What assessments are Choice schools required to administer?	Depending on the grades served, Indiana statewide assessments must be administered as part of a school's participation in the Choice Scholarship Program. All enrolled students who are in tested grades must complete the required assessments. Refer to IDOE's Office of Student Assessment website for information on specific assessments and 2023-2024 testing windows.
3	Is the test administrator (TA) required to be a licensed teacher?	Statewide assessment TAs must have an IDOE-issued license (instructional, administrative, or school services). See the Indiana Assessments Policy Manual (Section 4) for details; this document is posted and can be found on the website .
4	How will parents/guardians be notified of test results?	The school will provide student results to parents in a secure manner to protect student data. As per IC 20-32-5.1-13, school corporations, charter schools, and accredited non-public schools must promptly provide parents with information to access their child's test results.
5	Are schools responsible for managing the ILEARN rescore request process?	Yes. The school must communicate details of the rescore request process to all parents/guardians of students who participated in ILEARN testing ahead of the defined rescore window. As per IC 20-32-5.1-139(d), parents/guardians must have the opportunity to request resources for eligible, open-ended ILEARN test items. Schools must manage this process locally for any interested parents/guardians.
6	Our school does not have access to technology for all of our students. Are we required to participate in tests online?	Schools are required to participate in online testing to the extent possible. A school does not need to be 1:1 in order to participate in online testing. Testing can be administered using a stationary computer lab, mobile computer lab, or Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). A formal request to the Office of Student Assessment must be made for paper testing approval. In some cases, only partial approval may be granted. Approvals will be determined on a case-by-case basis.



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		Schools requesting paper must participate in a Systems Readiness Test to confirm technology capacity issues that would prevent the successful implementation of online tests.
7	Can students take a state assessment remotely if they are remote learners?	State assessments may not be administered remotely to students under any circumstances. Additional guidance and support may be viewed through the 2023-2024 Corporation Test Coordinator (CTC) and All Staff Test Security & Integrity Training, which is required annually by CTCs and school staff prior to administering assessments.
8	What is the process for ensuring alternate testers are noted, along with accommodations, in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) when Indiana IEP (IIEP) is not utilized?	Student information regarding alternate testing that is not submitted through a certified SIS/DEX vendor for students with a CSEP must be communicated to Alyson Traficante, Accessibility and Accommodations Specialist, at atraficante@doe.in.gov or 317-234-0658.

Further questions concerning enrollment and applications not addressed in this FAQ resource should be directed to the Choice school in which you are interested in having your student attend. Additional questions may be directed to Choice Scholarship Program staff at choiceschool@doe.in.gov or (317)233-2200.