

**Choice Scholarship Program
Frequently Asked Questions
2020-2021 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
1	What is the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program?	The Choice Scholarship Program provides State funding to qualifying students that is used to help offset tuition costs at participating Choice schools. Students based on student eligibility criteria. (Please see Eligibility Questions below.)
2	Who administers the Choice Scholarship Program?	The Indiana Department of Education, Office of School Finance, administers the Choice Scholarship Program.
3	When and where can I apply for the program?	First period student applications may be submitted between March 1 and September 1, 2020 for the current school year. Second period student applications may be submitted between November 1, 2020 and January 15, 2021. Only an approved Choice school may submit a Choice Scholarship student application. Student applications are submitted electronically by the Choice school to the Indiana Department of Education.
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 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. 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 at www.doe.in.gov/choice .
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 The scholarship is terminated when the student is withdrawn from the school.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 application period the student may apply for a second period award.

Number	Question	Answer
Eligibility Questions		
1	What are the student eligibility criteria?	<p>To be eligible, a student must first satisfy each of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Have legal settlement in Indiana (b) Be between the ages of 5 and 22 no later than August 1 of the school year <p>After satisfying the requirements listed above, there are eight different tracks that enable a student to be eligible to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program. The eight tracks are outlined below. A student must satisfy the requirements of only one of the eight tracks to be eligible. A complete explanation of each of the eight eligibility tracks can be found in the documents explaining each track posted at www.doe.in.gov/choice, in the Student Eligibility section.</p> <p>Continuing Choice Scholarship Student Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student received a Choice Scholarship in the school year that immediately precedes the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship; ii. The student is required to have remained enrolled at the Choice school for the entirety of the immediately preceding school year; and iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 200% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program. <p>Previous Choice Scholarship Student Track</p> <p>EITHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student received a Choice Scholarship in a previous school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for Choice Scholarship; <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The student received a Choice Scholarship in the immediately preceding school year, but the student exited the Choice school prior to the end of the school year; <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program. <p>Previous Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Award Track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The student received an 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.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Athletes of Indiana • Sagamore Institute Scholarships for Education Choice • School Scholarship Granting Organization of Northeast Indiana • Summit Scholarship Granting Organization, Inc. • The Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization of Indiana • Tuition Assistance Fund of Southwestern Indiana (Closed February 2013) <p>AND</p> <p>ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.</p> <p>Special Education Track</p> <p>i. The student has a disability that requires special education services</p> <p>ii. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) pursuant to IC 20-35 or a Service Plan (SP) pursuant to 511 IAC 7-34 has been developed for the student; and</p> <p>iii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 200% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.</p> <p>"F" Public School Track</p> <p>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; and</p> <p>ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.</p> <p>Two Semesters in a Public School Track</p> <p>i. The student was enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school, including a charter school, in Indiana for at least two semesters immediately preceding the first semester for which the individual receives a Choice Scholarship; and</p> <p>ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.</p> <p>Sibling Track</p> <p>i. The sibling of the newly applying student received either a Choice Scholarship or an 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; and</p> <p>ii. The student is a member of a household with an annual income equal to or below 150% of the amount to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program.</p>
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2	Can a kindergarten student be eligible for a Choice Scholarship?	Yes, a parent/guardian of a kindergarten student may apply for a Choice Scholarship provided that the child meets the requirements of one of the eight tracks listed above.
3	If a child attends a public school for kindergarten, can this count toward the two semesters in a public school requirement?	Yes, providing the student was enrolled at a public school in kindergarten for the two semesters immediately preceding the first semester for which the student receives a Choice Scholarship.
4	If a student is withdrawn from a public school before the end of a school year, is he/she still eligible for the Two Semesters in a Public School Track for the upcoming school year?	For the first period application the student must be enrolled and expected in attendance in an Indiana public school for the 2019-2020 fall count date and the 2019-2020 spring count date. For the second period application the student must be enrolled and expected in attendance in an Indiana public school for the 2019-2020 spring count date and the 2020-2021 fall count date.
5	Which "A" through "F" grades will be used to determine the "F" schools for eligibility purposes for the 2020-2021 school year?	The "A" through "F" grades issued for school performance in the 2018-2019 school year will be used to determine the "F" school eligibility purposes for the 2020-2021 Choice Scholarship program.
6	What does "sibling" mean for purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program?	For purposes of the Choice Scholarship Program, the term "sibling" means one of two or more individuals having one or both parents, legal guardians, or legal custodians in common. The term does not require a consanguineous (blood) relationship between the individuals.

7	When did the sibling of a student attempting to qualify under the Sibling Track have to receive a Choice Scholarship or SGO award for the sibling to be eligible?	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 that, for the 2019-2020 school year, the sibling must have received the Choice Scholarship or SGO award in any year up to and including the 2018-2019 school year.
8	What are the household income limits?	The income guidelines for the 2019-2020 school year are included on the Choice Scholarship Eligibility Track documents. These are posted on the Choice Scholarship Program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice in the Student Eligibility section.
9	Is the household income of the foster parent included when determining whether the foster child is eligible to receive a Choice Scholarship?	<p>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. Foster children must satisfy the criteria for student eligibility and meet the requirements of one of the tracks to qualify for a Choice Scholarship.</p> <p>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.</p>
10	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.
11	Can children be included in the household size if parents are separated or claimed in alternating years?	Yes. The household which serves as the child's primary residence should be used for purposes of applying for a Choice Scholarship. 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.

Number	Question	Answer
Application Process		
1	Who is responsible for determining whether a student is eligible for a Choice	The participating Choice school is responsible for determining whether a student meets the eligibility guidelines. Parent/guardian of the student must provide documentation establishing eligibility, which must be kept on file at the school.

	Scholarship?	
2	How is the amount of the Choice Scholarship award determined?	<p>The first period award is the lesser of; and The second period award is half of the lesser of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tuition and fees reported on the Choice student's application at the Choice school; or 2. An amount based off the per-student State funding formula for the student's school corporation of residence, determined as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of the formula amount if household income is up to 69% of Reduced Lunch eligibility (127% of the Federal poverty level) if the student is eligible under the Pre-K Track. • 90% of the formula amount if household income is up to 100% of Reduced Lunch eligibility for students who are eligible under all Tracks except the Pre-K Track. • 70% of the formula amount if household income is up to 125% of Reduced Lunch eligibility for students who are eligible under all Tracks except the Pre-K Track. • 50% of the formula amount if household income is up to 150% of Reduced Lunch eligibility. • 50% of the formula amount if household income is up to 200% of Reduced Lunch eligibility if the student is eligible under the Continuing Choice Scholarship Student Track or Special Education Track.
3	Where can I review the Choice Scholarship award amounts?	<p>The award amounts for each school corporation are available on the Choice Scholarship Program website at www.doe.in.gov/choice in the section for Parents/Guardians. Refer to the school corporation in which the student lives in order to determine the estimated award amount.</p>
4	How will families be notified of the Choice Scholarship awarded to their child?	<p>The school will print the award letter or the denial letter at the time the application is submitted. The initial award letter is an estimated award amount. The actual award amounts are calculated using information that is not available until later in the school year. An updated award letter with 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.</p>
5	Can a parent/guardian of a student submit an application for a Choice Scholarship to multiple schools?	<p>A student can only have one application submitted to one school at a time. 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.</p>

6	Why are siblings living in the same household sometimes required to use different income guidelines for eligibility?	The Choice Scholarship is a student level award, and each student must meet the income guidelines that are applicable to the track under which the student qualifies.
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Number	Question	Answer
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?	<p>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 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 at www.doe.in.gov/choice.</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 2020-2021 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 Materials Assistance (TB) payment for a Choice student?	Yes, provided that the Choice student qualifies for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program, has 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.
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Number	Question	Answer
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, a complete application must be submitted for the student by the September 1, 2020 application deadline and the student must be fully enrolled and expected in attendance on the September count day. To be awarded a Choice Scholarship, a complete application must be submitted for the student by the January 15, 2021 second period application deadline and the student must be fully enrolled and expected in attendance on the February count date.
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 reapply for a second period application at their original school prior to the January 15, 2021 deadline. If the student does not return to the original school by the deadline, the student is no longer eligible to receive Choice Scholarship funds for the remainder of the school year.
3	How will the payment process work? Is there anything I 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 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 a payment for that student.

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?	<p>At the time a student is withdrawn from the Choice school, the parent/guardian forfeits the remaining portion the student's Choice Scholarship award.</p> <p>Knowing the participating school's policies concerning student withdrawal and tuition payment is important. 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.</p>
5	How will the payment process work?	<p>In order to receive a payment for a student, the student must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current Enrollment and Mobility (EM) record; • Be included in the Choice school's Membership for Vouchers (MV) submission; and • Must have an Endorsement Form (EF) signed by the parent/guardian and uploaded 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 to the student.
6	What happens to the payment if the student is withdrawn before the school year is over?	<p>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 reported for the second count day, with the exception that the EF is only required to be submitted one time per year.</p> <p>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.</p>
7	How often will State payments be made?	<p>At a minimum, Choice Scholarship payments will be made at least once per semester.</p>

Number	Question	Answer
Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO) Program		
1	What is the SGO Scholarship?	The program provides a 50% state tax credit for contributions made to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) which offer scholarships to low and middle income children to attend private schools of their choice. More information about SGOs is posted on our website at www.doe.in.gov/choice/school-scholarships . For more information on whether your child qualifies for an SGO award, please contact the Choice school.
2	Can a student who receives a Choice Scholarship also receive an 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.

Number	Question	Answer
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 than 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 you don't anticipate ever using a lottery, the policy must be in place. A sample lottery policy is posted in the Choice Scholarship Community on Moodle.

4	Can a Choice student be expelled from the school for academic, disciplinary, or other reasons?	A participating Choice school should follow the policies of the school that have been approved by the school's governing body. The school must notify the Department within five days if a student is withdrawn from the school by submitting an updated Enrollment and Mobility (EM) report. If a student attends less than the period for which the award is allocated, the IDOE will prorate the amount of the Choice Scholarship and request a refund.
5	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 certificated employee.

Number	Question	Answer
Accreditation/Accountability		
1	If my school is not accredited by the State Board, what national/regional accrediting entities are recognized by the Board?	<p>The State Board of Education currently recognizes eight accrediting entities for purposes of participating in the Choice Scholarship Program. The recognized accrediting agencies are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASDAS) • American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS) • Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) • 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
2	Will my school's "A"- "F" grade be public?	All school grades for public, charter, State accredited non-public, and participating Choice schools are publicly reported. School and corporation results are posted on the Department's website, INview, at https://inview.doe.in.gov . Additional information is available on the Office of Accountability website, www.doe.in.gov/accountability .
3	Will my school's "A"- "F" grade affect my school's eligibility to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program?	<p>Per IC 20-51-4-9, "A"- "F" grades will affect participating Choice schools in the following manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school designated a "D" or "F" school for two consecutive years will receive a one-year suspension from accepting new Choice Scholarship students. • A school designated a "D" or "F" school for three consecutive years cannot accept new Choice Scholarship students until receiving a "C" or higher for two consecutive years. • A school designated an "F" school for three consecutive years cannot accept new Choice Scholarship students until receiving a "C" or higher for three consecutive years.

4	Are there any exceptions to these consequences?	An eligible school may submit a request to the State Board of Education to waive or delay consequences for a particular school year. The State Board may grant a request if the eligible school demonstrates that a majority of students in the eligible school demonstrated academic improvement during the preceding school year.
5	Is there a minimum number of students required to receive a grade?	Yes. Because schools participating in the Choice Scholarship Program are required to administer statewide assessments and receive a grade under the State "A"- "F" system, the IDOE must have a statistically valid number of students off which to base the school 'grade'. The number of students (n-size) in tested grades who met the 162 day rule and have valid test results (not necessarily Choice Scholarship students) differs based on the indicator/domain. The n-size for performance = 30; growth = 40; multiple measures = 10. Data may be aggregated over consecutive years, if necessary, to meet the minimum group size. For additional information about grade calculations, please contact School Accountability at schoolaccountability@doe.in.gov .

Number	Question	Answer
Assessment		
1	Will my school be responsible for the cost of State mandated tests?	No. The State will pay these costs.
2	What assessments are Choice schools required to administer?	Depending on the grades served, Indiana statewide assessment tests must be administered as part of a school's participation in the Choice Scholarship Program. All students in the school who are in assessment-tested grades must complete the required assessments.
3	Is the test administrator required to be a licensed teacher?	Statewide assessment examiners (i.e. the person(s) administering the test) must have an Indiana Department of Education issued license (instructional, administrative, or school services). This requirement is in place to ensure that test security procedures are followed.
4	How will parents be notified of testing results?	The school will notify parents of results. As per IC 20-32-5-9, school corporations, charter schools, and accredited nonpublic schools must promptly provide parents with information to access their child's test results.

5	Our school does not have access to technology for all of our students, are we required to participate in tests online?	Please contact the Office of Student Assessment at INassessments@doe.in.gov regarding any questions about paper/pencil or online testing.
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If you have further questions, the first point of contact should be the Choice school in which you are interested in having your student attend. The school can give guidance concerning enrollment and application questions. You may also contact Choice Scholarship Program staff at ChoiceSchool@doe.in.gov or (317)233-2200.

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