



McKay Scholarship News

Newsletter for Families of John M. McKay Scholarship Students

Letter from the Editor

Dear McKay Families,

We here at the School Choice Office hope that your children are loving their learning and making progress on their educational journey.

It is our goal to make the McKay process as simple and user-friendly as possible. That is why we will soon be sending parents who have recently entered the McKay Program an email requesting their help in improving our process. The email will provide a link to our Parent Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to learn what worked well and what needs improving in the McKay intent and enrollment process. The survey is anonymous – no names are used, and the results will help us to improve our service to Florida’s parents and children. If contacted, we hope that you will help us by completing our survey.

We look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Julia Somers-Arthur
 Customer Service Supervisor



Office of Independent
 Education and
 Parental Choice

Volume 1, Issue 3

February 2008



Spotlight on Success!



Thank you for the McKay Scholarship program. My son, B., who turns 15 today, suffered in the public

school system since Kindergarten. He did not fit in, and by 2nd grade was picked on by “normal” kids. He was different from the other kids, and finally in the 5th grade, he was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

We finally got the McKay Scholarship, and in the 7th grade we put him in a private school. That school has been such a God-send...such a blessing to B. He is not tormented anymore and so he can actually learn. He is smart but needs more teacher attention than he got in public school.

The school is wonderful and the Principal is a wonderful, talented, caring person who invests herself, and makes a way for all of the teachers to invest themselves, into these students’ lives.

Since going there, B. needs no medicine and no longer has emotional problems. The stress that was so thick in public school is gone. He enjoys going to school now and is learning. As a result, our family is much more peaceful and happy. The McKay Scholarship has been such a wonderful blessing for us and has made a positive, life-changing impact on B. and our entire family.

**Thank you,
 T.S.**

Inside this issue:

Your Questions Answered 2

Reevaluation 3

Contact Information 4

Scholarship Deadlines 4

Your Questions Answered

From the E-mail bag



Q. *My son is currently in a McKay private school. Will I need to file a new Intent to keep him in the program for next year?*

A. No, there is no need to file a new Intent to Participate each year. Once your child is a McKay student, his scholarship status will continue as long as he remains enrolled in a participating school and either graduates with a Standard Diploma, or turns 22 years old, whichever comes first. At the end of each school year, you just need to be sure he is reenrolled in his current school or, if you wish, you can transfer and enroll him in another participating McKay school.

Q. *I have been informed that my daughter's school will be closing its doors before the end of the year. What do I need to do to keep her in the McKay Scholarship Program?*

A. If your school is closing, your daughter will need to transfer to another McKay school. To do this, the original school must withdraw her from their rolls. Then the new school can enroll her.

You should know that the timing of your transfer can affect your scholarship payments. If a student transfers, the first school the student attends for a total of ten days during a payment period is entitled to receive the check for that quarter, and the parent is required to sign it. Sometimes private schools may come to an agreement to share the scholarship funds when a student transfers, but there is no requirement to do this and any arrangements must be worked out between the two schools. (See the chart on page 4 for the dates of each payment period.)

For a list of private schools that participate in the McKay Program, visit our website, click on **McKay Scholarships**, then under **Directory** on the menu at the left, select **Private Schools**.

Q. *I have read that services from the school district could make my son lose his scholarship.*

If I take him to a public school to have him participate in the FCAT testing, will that invalidate his scholarship?

A. No. Every McKay student in Florida is entitled to participate in the FCAT testing. You will need to make arrangements well ahead of time with the district so they will have him on their testing list and will have test materials for him at the testing site. Participating in the FCAT is **not** regarded as a "return to public school."

Q. *My son is under the McKay Scholarship and in 12th grade. I would like to know, when he gets ready to go to college, will the McKay Scholarship be available for him?*

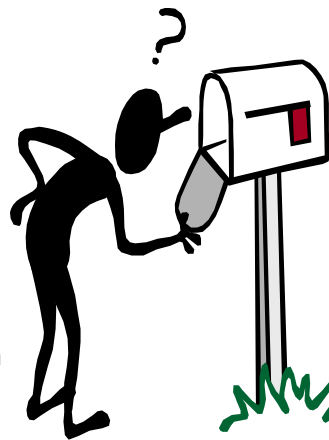
A. The McKay Scholarship provides funds for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Funding ends with a student's graduation from high school. For assistance with post-secondary education, you can contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance (1-888-827-2004), or the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (1-800-451-4327), which offers a variety of

support and assistance to teens and adults with disabilities.

Q. *We really think what my daughter needs is one-on-one teaching. We would like to home-school her through a home-schooling academy. I want to know if her scholarship will cover the cost of this program. Also, can the scholarship be transferred back to her current school if she wants to go back there next year?*

A. No. McKay funds cannot be applied to home education, virtual school, or non-participating private schools. If she does not remain enrolled in a participating McKay Scholarship school, she will lose her McKay Scholarship.

Do you have a question about your child's scholarship? Email us at: SchoolChoice@fldoe.org



Reevaluation

What is it — and who needs it?



If your child has been in the McKay Scholarship Program for a while, you may have received an offer for a reevaluation from your school district. If you are like many parents, the offer may be unexpected and even worrying. Here is what you need to know.



What is a re-evaluation? When your child first received an Individual Education Plan (IEP), it was a result of an evaluation of your child which determined that certain learning or other difficulties were present that required services and support beyond that of the typical school child. The reevaluation may consist of similar tests and reported observations from the child's parents and teachers, or it may be something as simple as an interview with the parents and review of private school reports. The parents have the right to request the type of evaluation.

Why is it being offered – and do I have to accept? The school district is required under federal law to offer reevaluation to all Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students at least every three years. This applies to ESE students in private schools as well, including McKay Scholarship students. The district has to document that they have made the offer - but the parent has the option of agreeing or refusing to have the child reevaluated.

Will my child's IEP be revised? No. Once a student is no longer a public school student, the IEP is not active. The matrix and scholarship funding will remain the same for the duration of the time that the student participates in the McKay Program, no matter what the results of the reevaluation are. However, a reevaluation may determine that the child no longer fits the definition as a student with a disability and if the child returns to the public school he or she may no longer be eligible for ESE services.

If I accept the reevaluation, can we lose the scholarship?

No. Reevaluation will **not** change the child's matrix or McKay Scholarship status. In addition, reevaluation does **not** require reenrollment in public school and will **not** result in services being provided to the McKay student by the district (known as a "return to public school").

What is gained from a reevaluation? The results of the reevaluation will provide you and the private school with an up-to-date picture of your child's progress and current learning needs. As with the IEP, the private school is not required to adhere to the recommendations of the reevaluation, but it can prove a helpful starting point in planning for the services and support that will help your child to achieve his very best.

Where can I get more information? If you have any questions about the reevaluation process or if you would like more information, we recommend you contact your local public school district's ESE office. Contact information is available on the School Choice website by clicking on **McKay Scholarships**, then under **Directory** on the menu at the left, select **District Contacts**.



What does the law say?

"A school district shall provide notification to parents of the availability of a reevaluation at least every 3 years of each student who receives a John M. McKay Scholarship."

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, Section 1002.39, Florida Statutes



Contact us at McKay Scholarship News

Editor: Julia Somers-Arthur

Email: SchoolChoice@fldoe.org

(Please put "Scholarship News" in the subject line.)

Write to us at:

*Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
 Florida Department of Education
 325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 522
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400*

For general information about the McKay Scholarship Program, call our **School Choice Information Hotline** at 1-800-447-1636, or visit us online at www.floridaschoolchoice.org.

Scholarship Program Deadlines

If you know a family who is thinking of entering their child in the McKay Scholarship Program for the first time, you may want to remind them that their Intent must be filed by February 1 for the last quarter of the 2007-08 school year, and their child must be enrolled by March 2, to receive the final scholarship payment on April 1.

The deadlines for intent filing, private school enrollment, and quarterly payments are set by Florida Statute.

For the 2007-08 school year...

If you filed intent by:	July 3	Sept. 2	Dec. 3	Feb. 1
Your child must be enrolled by:	Aug. 2	Oct. 2	Jan. 2	Mar. 2
For the school to receive payment on:	Sept. 1	Nov. 1	Feb. 1	April 1
Maximum scholarship amount for the rest of the school year:	100%	75%	50%	25%
Payment Period:	July 1 – Sept 30	Oct 1 – Dec 31	Jan 1 – Feb 29	March 1 – June 30

The scholarship amount is the state maximum amount or the private school tuition and fees, whichever is less. The scholarship amount is divided into four quarterly payments for the school year. If intent is filed or the student is enrolled after a deadline, the student will not be eligible to receive that quarter's scholarship payment, but the student will have met the deadline to receive payment for the next quarter.