

Volume 3, Issue 1

August 2008

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

Back to School: Legislative Changes

Special Points of Interest:

- The 2008-09 Private School Annual Survey will be available for submission on September 1, 2008. This document is required for all private schools in Florida.
- Private schools participating in the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program must administer an approved norm-referenced test to CTC students in grades 3-10 each school year.

Welcome back! We hope everyone enjoyed a relaxing summer because a busy school year is on its way. Senate Bill 1712, the Ethics in Education Act, became effective July 1, 2008, and affects the requirements for participation in the state scholarship programs. The Act establishes requirements related to employment screening and employee standards of conduct. Specifically, sections 1002.421 and 1006.061, Florida Statutes, have been modified to require a private school that accepts McKay or Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship students to:

- ◆ Disqualify from employment any instructional personnel or school administrator who is convicted of an act listed under s. 1012.315, F.S.
- ◆ Conduct an employment history check before employing instructional personnel or school administrators in any position that requires direct contact with students and documenting the findings.
- ◆ Screen new instructional personnel or school administrators through the Professional Practices Database of Disciplinary Actions and the Employment Screening Tool that will be created by the Department.
- ◆ Prohibit confidentiality agreements with instructional personnel or school administrators who are dismissed, terminated, or resign in lieu of termination due to misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.
- ◆ Create and adopt policies establishing ethical standards of conduct for instructional personnel and school administrators.
- ◆ Post a notice in the school indicating that all employees have a duty to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
- ◆ Post at the school site and on the school's website (if available) the policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

Detailed information about the new requirements entitled "Ethics in Education Act" is posted on the School Choice website when logged in as a private school. Implementation of these requirements must begin immediately; therefore, we ask that you please review the information carefully and contact your Regional Manager if you have any questions.

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September 1st McKay Payments

The first period McKay Scholarship payments will arrive prior to the actual September 1st payment deadline due to the holiday weekend (Labor Day). Once the payment packets have been scanned for shipping, DHL tracking numbers will be posted on the private school welcome page. If your school will be closed the last week of August, please make arrangements to sign for the package or contact DHL after the tracking numbers have been posted to request a hold.

Also, to ensure all eligible students receive a payment, please encourage parents of new scholarship students to notify the public school district that their student is withdrawing from public school to attend a private school.

Private School Contact Information

With the change in the school year, it is not uncommon for a school's contact information to change; therefore, we ask that private school administrators verify that school contact information is correct, **especially the contact phone number, fax number, and email address**. It is extremely important for the Department to have accurate email addresses for private schools participating in the scholarship programs because legislative updates, newsletters, and deadline reminders, are often distributed via email.

Contact information can be easily updated when logged in as a private school. Select the "Update Contact Info" link on the Quick Navigation bar, type in any necessary changes, and click "Update" to save the changes (see screen shot at right).

Contact Information	
Contact Name:	<input type="text" value="School Choice Private School"/>
Contact E-mail:	<input type="text" value="schoolchoice@fldoe.org"/>
Phone #:	<input type="text" value="(777) 777-7777"/> (xxx) xxx-xxxx Ext. <input type="text"/>
Fax #:	<input type="text" value="(777) 444-9999"/> (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Web Site:	<input type="text" value="www.floridaschoolchoice.org"/>
<input type="button" value="Update"/>	

McKay Scholarship—Upcoming Deadlines

First period scholarship payments for the 2008-09 school year will be distributed to participating private schools by September 1, 2008. The deadline for parents to file an intent for new scholarship students to participate and receive a first period payment was July 3, 2008.

Parents can still file an intent before **September 2, 2008**, in order to receive a second period payment on November 1, 2008. Any new scholarship students must be enrolled and have an individual fee schedule created by **October 2, 2008**, to receive the November 1st payment.

Please refer to the McKay Scholarship Program Deadline Chart on the last page of the newsletter for additional deadlines throughout the school year.

In addition to the scholarship program deadlines, there is also the requirement that all private schools submit a Private School Annual Survey.

The 2008-09 Annual Survey will be posted on the School Choice website on September 1, 2008.

You may login as a private school administrator on the [School Choice website](#) and submit the survey as soon as it is available.

CTC Norm-Referenced Testing Requirement



With a new school year about to begin, we would like to remind private schools participating in the Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarship Program of the requirement to **administer or make provisions for CTC students in grades 3-10 to take one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education.**

This requirement is outlined in [Section 220.187\(8\)\(c\)2., Florida Statutes](#), and a list of approved assessments has been provided for your convenience:

- ◆ Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI™)—Comprehensive Version
- ◆ Comprehensive Testing Program 4 (CTP 4)
- ◆ Educational Development Series (EDSERIES), Forms G and H
- ◆ EXPLORE®
- ◆ Iowa Tests of Basic Skills® (ITBS®), Forms A and B—Core Battery
- ◆ Iowa Tests of Basic Skills® (ITBS®)—Complete Battery, Form C
- ◆ Iowa Tests of Educational Development® (ITED®), Forms A and B
- ◆ Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement—2nd Edition, Comprehensive Form (KTEA-II)
- ◆ Metropolitan Achievement Tests®, 8th Edition (METROPOLITAN8)—Short Form
- ◆ PLAN®
- ◆ PSAT/NMSQT®
- ◆ Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (Stanford 9)
- ◆ Stanford Achievement Test, 10th Edition (Stanford 10)—Basic Battery
- ◆ Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (Stanford 10)—Abbreviated Battery
- ◆ TerraNova (CTBS/5)—Basic Battery
- ◆ TerraNova, Second Edition (CAT/6)—Basic Battery
- ◆ Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement, Extended Battery

Please note that due to changes implemented by the 2008 Florida Legislature, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is **no longer listed** as a nationally norm-referenced test that may be administered to CTC students. Participating private schools must make arrangements to administer one of the above listed tests during the 2008-09 school year, or the private school may request the use of an alternate assessment. Requests must be submitted to the Department **in writing by September 15, 2008**, and specific instructions are available on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/CTC/norm_referenced_assessment.asp.

As an added measure to ensure compliance with this requirement, the Department recently mailed a cover letter and survey to all participating CTC schools. Please complete the survey indicating the norm-referenced assessment your private school will administer during the 2008-09 school year and fax it to our office by **September 15, 2008**. Failure to administer an approved assessment and submit copies of CTC student test scores to the independent research organization (University of Florida) may result in the ineligibility of private school to continue participating in the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

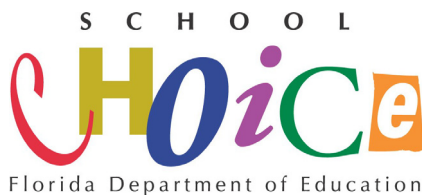
If you have any questions related to this requirement, please review the [Technical Assistance Paper](#) posted on the School Choice website, or contact your Regional Manager.

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

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"Increasing the Quantity and Improving the Quality of Education Options"

ON THE WEB AT:

WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG

Current and previous newsletters are available in PDF format on the School Choice website when logged in as a private school administrator. Click on the "Newsletters" link on the Quick Navigation bar on the left hand side of the screen.

MCKAY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2008-09 IMPORTANT DEADLINES*

2008-2009 Payment Period	Payment Date	Parental Intent Deadline	Private School Enrollment Deadline	Attendance Verification Available Online	Attendance Verification Deadline
July 1 – Sept 30	September 1	July 3	August 2	N/A	N/A
Oct 1 – Dec 31	November 1	September 2	October 2	October 6	October 10
Jan 1 – Feb 28	February 1	December 3	January 2	January 5	January 9
Mar 1 – June 30	April 1	January 31	March 2	March 2	March 13

*Private schools participating in the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program must meet the deadlines set by the Scholarship Funding Organizations to receive payment.

Please note that the deadlines for filing a parental intent and private school enrollment are statutory deadlines; therefore, the department cannot make exceptions if these deadlines are missed.

Failure to complete attendance verification will result in a postponement of scholarship payments until the next scheduled payment period.