

## Ethics in Education Act

### Special Points of Interest:

- New students must have been enrolled by October 2nd to receive a second quarter payment on November 1st.
- Attendance verification for the second payment period must have been submitted between **October 6-10, 2008**, to receive a November 1st payment.
- The 2008-09 Private School Annual Survey is now available. Please complete and submit as soon as possible.

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The Ethics in Education Act establishes additional requirements related to employment screening and employee standards of conduct for private schools participating in the state scholarship programs.

Our records indicate that over 300 private schools have submitted the Compliance Verification Form related to the Act. We request that all private schools take the necessary steps to immediately comply with the new requirements and submit the verification form by **December 1, 2008**. The form serves as confirmation that your school has complied with the new statutory requirements for the 2008-09 school year.

Many schools have contacted the Department with questions related to who must be screened in accordance with the Act. To clarify, **instructional personnel and school administrators hired after the law became effective on July 1, 2008, must be screened using the Department's screening tools**. The private school must also conduct employment history checks for these new employees.

The screening tools include the Database of Disciplinary Action and the Teacher Certification Database. The Teacher Certification Database is accessed by submitting the Employment Screening Request Form available on the quick navigation bar of the School Choice Web site when logged in as private school. Upon submission of the form, a representative from the Department's Bureau of Educator Certification will search for the candidate's name in the Teacher Certification Database and respond via secure e-mail with any findings. The findings from both screening tools may be used to support informed hiring decisions and should be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

In addition to utilizing the screening tools developed by the Department, **the private school must continue to require all employees and contracted personnel to be fingerprinted through VECHS for a state and national criminal history check**. The Act requires participating private schools to review the level 2 criminal history screening results obtained through VECHS and disqualify from employment any instructional personnel or school administrator who is convicted of an act listed under s. 1012.315, F.S. This does not require any employees to submit the prints again; however, it does require the private school to review the background check results already on file. Please note that volunteers are not required to be fingerprinted or screened.

Detailed instructions for implementing the Ethics in Education Act are available on the School Choice Web site when logged in as a private school. Please continue to contact your Regional Manager if you have additional questions. We will be preparing a document of the most commonly asked questions for the Web site and will notify participating private schools as soon as it is available.

## 2008-09 Private School Annual Survey

We are pleased to announce that over 1200 private schools have submitted the 2008-09 Private School Annual Survey; however, there are many more schools that must still do so.

Private schools must submit the Annual Survey for the 2008-09 school year by **November 30, 2008**, in order to have the school's information included in the mid-year Private School Report that will be released by the Department in December 2008. Additionally, private schools that do not submit the Annual Survey for the 2008-09 school year by **May 1, 2009**, will be removed from the Directory of Private Schools until a current survey is received.

Private school administrators must log onto the School Choice Web site at [www.floridaschoolchoice.org](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org) and submit a survey online. The survey must then be printed, signed, notarized, and mailed to the Department. We also recommend keeping a copy of the survey for your records.



## Scholarship Programs Compliance Renewal

At the end of October, the Department will begin distributing instruction packets for private schools to renew participation in the scholarship programs for the 2009-10 school year. As part of the renewal process, participating private schools are required to have a review of compliance documentation once every third year. Private schools selected for this **full renewal** will be the first to receive the renewal instruction packets so

that they can immediately prepare the required documentation for submission.

The 2009-10 Scholarship Compliance Form will be posted on the School Choice Web site in November. The Scholarship Compliance Form must be submitted by **March 1, 2009**, in order to remain eligible to participate in the McKay or Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Programs for the next school year.

## CTC Scholarship Program—Norm-Referenced Testing

As a reminder, private schools participating in the Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarship Program must **annually** 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. A complete list of approved tests is available on the School Choice Web site at: [www.floridaschoolchoice.org/](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/)



[information/ctc/files/norm\\_CTC.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/ctc/files/norm_CTC.pdf).

Once the test is administered and the scores are received by the school, copies of the scores must be reported to the Project Director, David Figlio, at the University of Florida. Please ensure that the individual student score sheets **include the student's name, test date, and reading and math national percentile rankings**.

Additional score submission instructions will be provided by the University of Florida this winter.

## Scholarship Program Conference Call

Due to the Veteran's Day holiday on November 11, 2008, the regularly scheduled Scholarship Program Conference Call will be held on Wednesday, November 12, 2008. The call will be conducted at the usual time of 1:30 p.m., and the phone number remains (888) 808-6959. The conference code to join the call is 2459620.

More information is available on the School Choice Web site at [www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/events/ConferenceCalls.asp](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/events/ConferenceCalls.asp).



## Technical Assistance Meetings

The Department recently gave a technical assistance presentation related to the changes in legislation and scholarship program participation requirements at the annual McKay Coalition Conference in Miami. A PDF of the presentation will be posted on the Technical Assistance section of the quick navigation bar when logged in as a private school.

In addition, we will be presenting at the McKay Coalition's second conference on October 20, 2008, in Tampa. Any participating private school is welcome to attend. More information about the conference and registration is available on the McKay Coalition Web site at

[www.mckaycoalition.com/conference.htm](http://www.mckaycoalition.com/conference.htm).

Lastly, the Department will be presenting at the fall Florida P.R.I.D.E. meetings. If you plan to attend one of the meetings listed below, please contact Florida P.R.I.D.E. to R.S.V.P. at (866) 739-1195, ext. 222.

### MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

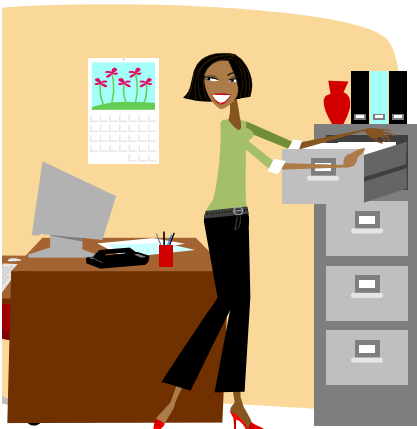
Wednesday, November 12 — Ocala

Thursday, November 13 — Tampa

Monday, November 17 — Miami

Tuesday, November 18 — Ft. Lauderdale

## Employee Spotlight—Sophia Patterson



The employee spotlight for the month of October is Sophia Patterson. Sophia recently began working as a Regional Manager for the counties located in the geographic central east areas of Florida (Region 2). Her prior work experience includes employment with the Department of Financial Services and The Florida State University.

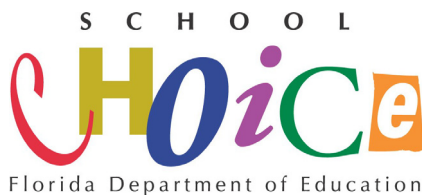
So far, Sophia enjoys working in the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice because it allows for professional interaction with individuals that contribute to the education of children. Sophia truly feels fortunate to have a hand in education, and we are fortunate to have her working in the area of School Choice.

## 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](http://WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG)**

Current and previous newsletters are available in PDF format on the School Choice Web site 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.