

Volume 2, Issue 8

April 2008

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

Preparation for 2008-09 School Year

Special points of interest:

- The district FTE file of students that received a McKay Scholarship payment for April 2008 will be made available on May 14, 2008.
- If your school district has not yet submitted a Notification Verification Form, please do so immediately. The Department must receive a form from each school district to certify compliance with McKay Scholarship parental notification requirements.

With the end of the school year approaching, we would like to extend a reminder to school districts about the effect of automatic enrollment and withdrawal systems on McKay Scholarship students.

Some school districts have a system in place that automatically enrolls a student into his or her assigned public school when the student transitions from elementary to middle or middle to high school. As you can understand, this creates a difficult situation when a McKay Scholarship student that has been participating in the program (sometimes for several school years) is reported as enrolled in public school in the fall and his or her payment is cancelled. This results in a time consuming process of completing a District Verification Form for each affected student; therefore, we ask that you please take a moment in preparation for the 2008-09 school year to ensure that matriculating students participating in the McKay Scholarship Program will not be automatically re-enrolled in public school. And remember, the district can update a student's matrix at any time if the student does choose to return to public school.

In addition, some school districts have a system in place that automatically withdraws all public school students at the end the school year until they return to school in the fall. This creates an unfavorable situation for students applying for the McKay Scholarship Program during the summer months. We find that the district representative completing the matrix assignment for the student may assume the student is not eligible because he or she was not a public school

student at the time intent was filed. Please note that for purposes of McKay Scholarship Program eligibility, a student that completes the school year is a public school student over the summer unless the parent physically withdraws the student from public school. Therefore, please be mindful of public school withdrawal dates when determining the eligibility of students that file intent during the summer if your school district has an automated system in place.



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Website Password Requirements

In the February District Newsletter we introduced the new password requirements for logging on to the School Choice website. These changes took effect on April 14, 2008.

The first time you log in after this date, you will be required to update your school district's password. The new password must be alphanumeric (contain at least one number) and be 8-10 characters in length. Please note that passwords are case sensitive.

If you forget your current password, you may request it by clicking on the "Forgot Password" link of the District Login page. Select the school district from the drop down menu and click "Submit." Then the password will be sent to McKay Contact e-mail address in our records. The list of McKay District Contacts is posted on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/District/District_List.asp?pub=N.



February 2008 Survey Data

The February 2008 FTE survey data has been loaded into the School Choice website database. Intents filed for the 2008-09 school year will now be automatically verified against the October 2007 and February 2008 survey data, and school districts will no longer be required to manually verify a student's attendance during the February 2008 FTE survey period. We thank you for your additional assistance prior to the availability of this data.

McKay Information for Parents

Last year, the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice developed a process of providing parents with additional information related to the McKay Scholarship Program. After a parent files intent to participate in the program, a letter is sent to the parent that includes the student's intent confirmation number and intent date. A brochure entitled "Next Steps for Parents filing for the John M. McKay Scholarship" is also enclosed with the letter. The brochure includes instructions for choosing a participating private school or requesting public school McKay options from the district.

We hope this aids parents in understanding their options as well as responsibilities related to the program and would like school districts to be familiar with this brochure in case a parent references it when contacting you. The brochure is available on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/mckay/files/intent_now_what.pdf.

If you have any questions, please contact Julia Somers-Arthur at 850-245-0905.

Proposed Legislation

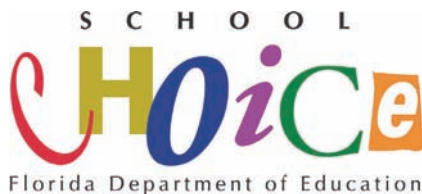
The 2008 Florida Legislature is in session from March 4—May 2, 2008. Presently, there are bills proposed in both the House and the Senate that, if passed by both chambers and approved by the Governor, could affect Florida private schools in general and those participating in the state scholarship programs. A Private School Bill Summary that includes the number of each bill, the bill's sponsor, bill subject, and a brief synopsis has been provided on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org/PDF/Scholarship_Private_School_Bill_Summary.pdf. Legislative contact information is also included in the summary page if you have any questions.

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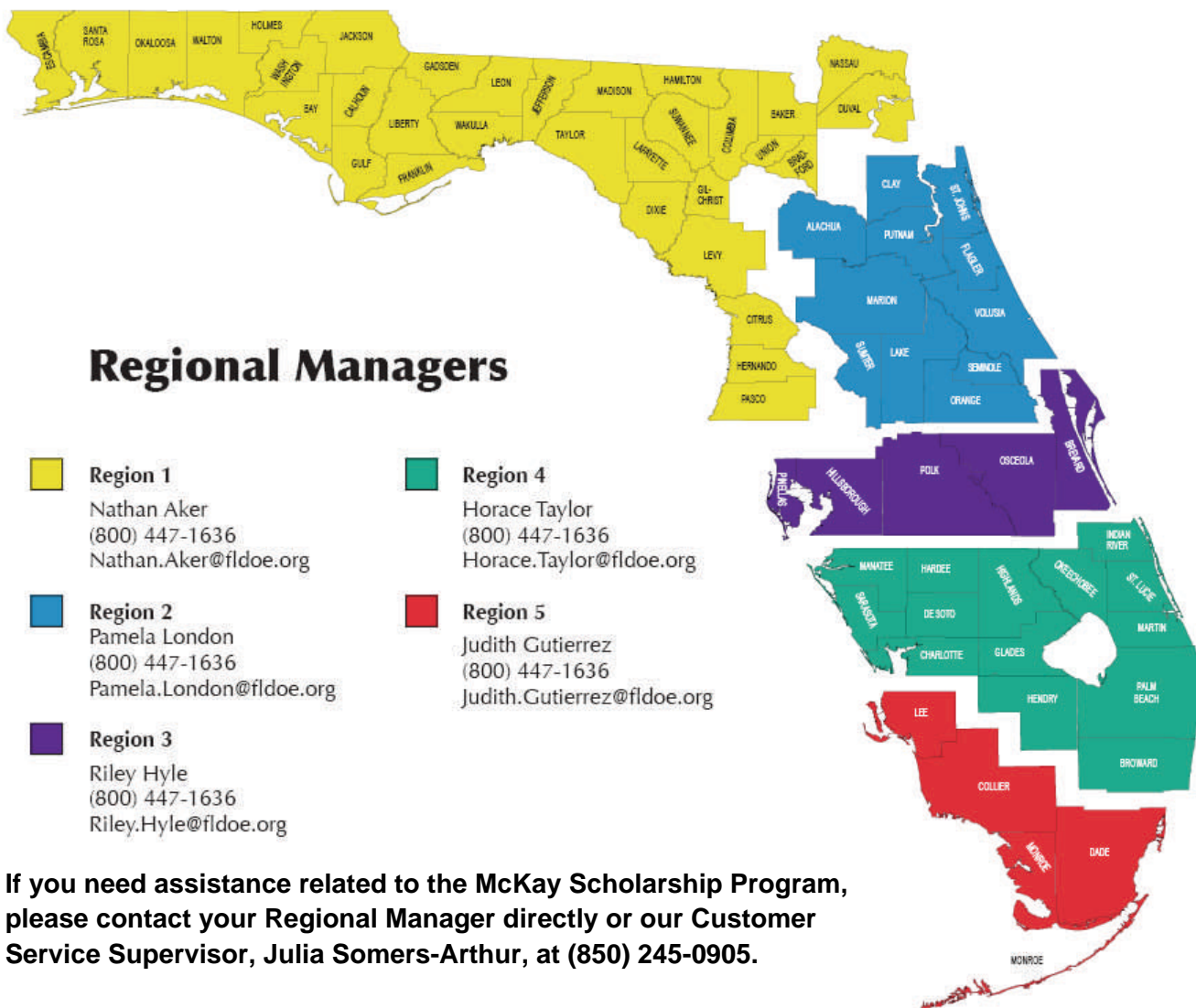
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ON THE WEB AT: WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG

Current and previous newsletters are available in PDF format on the School Choice website when logged in as a district administrator. Click on the "Newsletters" link in the General Information (yellow) section of the screen.



If you need assistance related to the McKay Scholarship Program, please contact your Regional Manager directly or our Customer Service Supervisor, Julia Somers-Arthur, at (850) 245-0905.