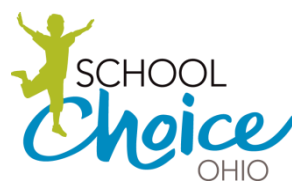


# NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION GUIDE



*PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS FOR EVERY OHIO CHILD*

# CONGRATULATIONS!

You have chosen this school because it is the best fit for your child's learning needs and will help prepare him or her for life's next steps. Your decision to be proactive about where your child attends school is to be commended.

As a parent or guardian, you are a major part of the team that leads your child to educational success as children are more successful in school when their parents play an active role.

Private schools can be different from other schools, so we put together some tools and information to help you get started and know what to expect. In some ways this will be a big transition, and we want to help you make sure this new adventure begins on a good path!

## The purpose of this orientation guide is to:

1. Provide tips from other parents for success in private school
2. Share questions you can ask your child's teacher(s) to make sure you are all on the same page
3. Explain the ins-and-outs of Ohio's scholarship programs

It can take time to adjust to a new school environment, new administrators, teachers, students and friends.

We hope this booklet helps prepare you and your child to make the most out of your new private school experience. Your school is eager to work with you to make this a ***GREAT*** year.

# Tips for Success

As a parent, you are entrusting the school with your most valuable possession: your child. So, invest some time in getting to know the school and the people.

## Find a buddy

- Find someone who already attends your private school and ask if they are willing to share their experience and help you navigate this new environment. Check with the school. They may already have a buddy system in place.
- Get to know other families by attending social events sponsored by the school.

## Communicate openly

- Introduce yourself to your child's teacher(s) and get their contact information.
- Keep open lines of communication with your child's teacher(s), principal, and school administration. Feel free to use email, phone calls, and visits.
- Be proactive. Make sure you communicate both positive and negative aspects of your school experience.
- Communicate any concerns with the appropriate party.
- Communicate with respect and take a problem-solving approach to talking about any problems that arise.

## Volunteer at the school

- Become involved with the school by volunteering in the classroom, becoming a tutor, volunteering at athletic events and/or field trips.
- Let your child's teacher know what times are best for you to volunteer.

## Talk with your child throughout the year

- Touch base with your child on how the transition is going. Is it mostly good? Are they having any struggles adjusting?
- Help them navigate their new social and academic environment.
- Find out your child's favorite things about the new school, and share these successes with the school.

# Questions to ask

Below are some questions that you can ask your child's teacher or principal to help make sure expectations are clear from the beginning. We've also included a page for you to write out any additional questions you have. You will find that reading your school's 'parent handbook' may provide you with many of the answers. Remember that you and the school are a team working together on the same mission: to give your child the best education.

## ACADEMICS

Classes may operate at a different pace than your child's previous school, which could create some challenges. It may take some time for your student and their grades to adjust to this change. Talk with the school and your child's teacher about academic expectations and how you will work through any potential challenges.

- What are the **course requirements** for each grade level? Will your child be challenged in class? How much "catching up" will your child have to do?
- If your child is **falling behind** or does not seem to grasp a certain subject, what are the steps taken in class? How long will it take before you are notified of your child's progress?
- Are there **different "levels"** in the class for certain subjects or what sort of differentiated learning styles are in place? Hands on? Group? Individual?
- Is **homework** assigned daily? How does the teacher keep students accountable for completing their homework?
- What is the **grading system**? Does the school use letter or number grades and for what ages/grades?
- How are you able to **track your child's progress**?

## FINANCES

Even with scholarships, financial aid, and/or other tuition assistance programs, there may be remaining tuition and fees due to the school. Here are some questions to keep you informed of your financial obligations.

- What **fees** will come up throughout the year, and how can they be paid?
- If you split your payments, is there a finance **charge** attached? If so, how much is assessed per payment? What are the penalties for late payments?
- When is the **deadline** to apply for tuition assistance for the following year?
- Are used **uniforms** available for sale at the beginning or end of the year?
- Does the school hold any **fundraisers**? Are parents required to participate?

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We all know that students perform better when parents take an active role in their academics and are involved in their children's activities at school. It is strongly encouraged that you become an active participant in your child's education.

- Is there a Parent Advisory association? **Parent council**? PTO? Boosters club? How are parents notified about meeting dates and times?
- What **volunteer** opportunities are available at the school? Are parents able to go on field trips, act as chaperones on school trips, help with tutoring?
- How are parents kept **informed** about their child's performance in school?
- When are parent-teacher **conferences**?
- What **special events** or programs does the school host during the year?
- Are parents required to **volunteer** a certain number of hours each year?

## SPECIAL FEATURES

A holistic education engages your child's mind, heart, body, and soul. You want to know what resources the school has for your child and your family.

- What other **support staff** are located in the school? School psychologist? Social worker? Guidance Counselor? Tutors? What are their roles?
- Does the school provide **extended care**? Before and after school? Is there a cost associated with these services? Is transportation available?
- Does the school offer services for **gifted and talented** students?
- Does the school offer programs or services for students with an IEP or who have **special needs**?
- Are there services for **children who are behind** in a subject and need extra assistance? If so, who tutors the students? How often?
- What types of **extra activities** are available? Are there sports teams available? Is there a fee for participating?
- What other **clubs and organizations** are available? Is there a fee to participate?

# My Notes and Other Questions

# State Scholarship Students

## Scholarship checks

- Checks are sent directly from the state to the school and are paid in 2-3 installments. Checks are made payable to the parent, and **parents are required to come to the school and sign each check over to the school**. The parent listed on the check must be the one to come sign the check.
- Please make sure you go to the school to sign your check as soon as possible after it comes in.

## Transferring/Renewing your scholarship

- If you move or are not satisfied with your school:
  - EdChoice: You can transfer to another participating private school so long as you:
    - are NOT moving out of the school district that made you eligible
    - or-
    - are moving into a new district where you would also be assigned to a low-rated public school on the EdChoice list
  - Income-Based: You can transfer to another participating private school at any point, regardless of where you are moving in Ohio.
  - Cleveland: You can transfer to another participating private school so long as you do NOT move out of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.
  - Autism & Jon Peterson Special Needs: You can transfer/add providers, regardless of where you move in Ohio.
- All Scholarships are renewable on a yearly basis so long as you continue to meet the eligibility requirements for that program.

To view all program eligibility requirements visit [www.scoho.org](http://www.scoho.org).

# Private School Timeline

## August - September

- Attend any orientation sessions, open houses, or school socials to get to know some of the other families at the school and meet the school leaders.
- Learn as much as you can about your new school by meeting with the teachers and asking questions about how to start your child on the right track in the new school.

## October - November

- Attend parent teacher conferences to learn about your child's progress and get to know your child's teacher better.
- If your child is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and your school ends in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, begin applying for admission to the high school(s) of your choice.
- **Scholarship recipients:** Go to the school to sign your scholarship check! Payments are made in the fall, winter and spring. The checks are sent directly to the school in your name and require you to sign the check over to the school in order to pay for your child's tuition. The school will notify you of their signing period. Your school depends on these funds to pay for the school expenses and does not receive funds for your child until your check is signed.

## January - February

- Time to re-enroll for next year or explore your other school options.
- The scholarship application window opens. Spread the word about the scholarship programs. Visit [www.scoho.org](http://www.scoho.org) for more information on the different scholarship programs available to Ohio families.
- **Scholarship recipients:** Submit your scholarship renewal paperwork to the school. You **do not** automatically receive your scholarship for the following school year. The Ohio Department of Education will send you a renewal form in the mail. This form needs to be completed and returned to your private school by the renewal date.
- **Scholarship recipients:** When the school notifies you the second scholarship payment checks are in, make sure you go to the school to sign your check.

## March - April

- **Scholarship recipients:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> scholarship checks are sent to the school in the spring and will require your signature in order to make the last payment for your child's tuition.
- Scholarship deadline – all information should be submitted for both new and renewal scholarship applications.

## May - June

- Be sure to thank the teachers and staff at your child's school for a great year!





School Choice Ohio is the only statewide organization that educates parents on the education options available for their children and advocates for the expansion of quality options for every Ohio child.

### **Sharing School Choice Information with Parents**

Educational options for children are only useful if parents know about them. We provide family-friendly information about all schooling options: public schools, private schools, state scholarships, charter schools, home school, online schools and more.

### **Advocating for Quality School Options**

School Choice Ohio educates the state's elected leaders on the benefits of school choice across Ohio. We work with policy leaders and elected officials to improve the scholarship programs and assist those who want to bring innovative school choice programs to Ohio.

### **Empowering Community Ambassadors**

School Choice Ohio empowers parents with information about their education options, and we help families raise their voices in the education policy arena as ambassadors. Parents, students, community leaders, and school leaders are standing up and speaking out to make a difference.

These volunteers work together to:

- Share information about school choice in their communities
- Invite and host legislators for tours of their school
- Testify at public policy hearings in front of legislative committees
- Write letters to support the state scholarship programs and to request new expansions

**Learn more:**

[www.schoio.org](http://www.schoio.org)

[www.facebook.com/schoolchoiceohio](https://www.facebook.com/schoolchoiceohio)

**800-673-5876**