

Below is the email I sent to over 25 state Representatives, Senators, and State Board members about Ed Choice.

Good Morning,

The purpose of this email is to express my concern for the extreme effects the EdChoice voucher deductions are having on public school districts and the flat foundation funding. As you are well aware, Ohio's EdChoice voucher program started out as a way to provide an alternative education choice for students whose local public school was considered by the state to be a "failing school". While I understand Ohio is an aggressive school choice state, it baffles me that students who have NEVER enrolled in a public school are qualifying for public school district-paid vouchers, yet the school district pays. Then, once a student obtains a voucher, they continue to receive vouchers throughout their entire education even if a district improves on the local report card. The financial impact will be devastating to public school districts. Currently, **90%** of Ed Choice vouchers in Middletown City Schools are for private school students who have NEVER attended or registered to attend our public school district (FY20 costs about \$890,000). **Consider reversing the change in HB 166 and require high school students to attend a public school 1 full academic year in the year prior to applying for an Ed Choice voucher.**

Another concern is the criteria set to become designated as an EdChoice school. The criteria are based on the Local Report Card. The idea behind the Local Report Card is acceptable. However, the components and the calculations are misleading and flawed. Currently, Middletown City School District is celebrating that 5 of our Elementary Schools have a **B** for the Progress component, 1 Elementary School has an Overall report card grade of **B**, and our HS has a **91%** Graduation Rate. Unfortunately, every one of our schools is now designated as Ed Choice eligible. We have worked very hard the past 3 years for the results in the Progress component, only to be rewarded with the designation of a "failing school". It only takes a grade of D or F in ONE LRC component for a building to become EdChoice eligible. As long as we continue working under a flawed report card, **consider changing the criteria to a building must have two or more components with a D or F before qualifying for EdChoice. Consider removing the eligibility of any building with an Overall letter grade of A, B, or C.**

A second criteria concern involves the K-3 Literacy measure, which only reflects the progress of the students who are not on track for meeting the third grade reading guarantee. Because the measure is fall to fall, we are being held accountable for three months of no instruction! At no time does it consider those students who meet the promotion criteria. A total of 5 Elementary Schools in Middletown CSD have a 3rd Grade Guarantee Promotion Rate of 91% or higher, but unfortunately all 5 Elementary Schools are rewarded with the designation of a "failing school". **This measure should be removed as criteria for EdChoice.**

Lastly, Ohio law currently requires that if a student qualifies for an Ed Choice voucher both through the income-based criteria and the report card performance of their building, the default is the Ed Choice voucher based on building eligibility. This means that even though the student would qualify for a state-paid voucher, the payment for the voucher must come from the school district. Since the original premise of offering vouchers to students was the notion that some students' families may not have the wherewithal to access a different education "choice" because of the cost of tuition, income -based Ed Choice voucher program ought to be the default for students who qualify for both programs. **Consider replacing the current default mechanism in Ohio law to make income-based voucher the default when a student qualifies for both programs.**

As a proponent of accountability, the measures need to be fair and equitable. If the public schools are held to specific standards measured by the Local Report Card then, non-public schools accepting vouchers should have the same accountability. We are in need of change to the Ed Choice Expansion program as the impact to public school districts, Middletown CSD included, is absolutely financially devastating. Will you help us pass a levy? Our students and staff have shown amazing improvements, but unfortunately that will be compromised with the expansion of the Ed Choice voucher program.

I appreciate your time and am more than willing to speak with you about my concerns not only about scholarships, but also the Local Report Card.

Respectfully,
Marlon J. Styles, Jr.