Ohio Department of Education’s EdChoice Scholarship Program
Know the Facts and Impact on Anthony Wayne Local Schools

“Unconstitutional”, “Unintended consequences”, “Changes to come”, all words that you may think are coming from the national news about politicians in Washington. Unfortunately, these are words people are using to describe State of Ohio legislation called EdChoice. I would like to share with you how this current legislation may affect Anthony Wayne Local Schools (AWLS) and provide some insight on those who suggest that AWLS has “underperforming” schools in our District.

What is EdChoice?
The EdChoice Scholarship Program provides up to 60,000 scholarships to students who attend “Underperforming” schools of a public school district, as defined by the Ohio Department of Education. Public Schools can be designated as “Underperforming” based on data from a school building’s Local Report Card that is created by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) each year. Students who live in the attendance zone of the ODE designated “Underperforming” school are eligible to receive a scholarship to attend a private/parochial school that has signed up to be an EdChoice provider school. As a result of a legislative change this past summer, over 400 of the 610 school districts in Ohio had at least one building designated as an EdChoice school. Unfortunately, with a change in legislation this past summer, the number of school districts with buildings on the EdChoice list ballooned from 40 (FY 2019) to 420 (FY 2021). in For the 2020-21 school year, Whitehouse Primary and Waterville Primary have been placed on the EdChoice list.

Know the facts about AWLS:
AWLS has been recognized for years as one of the highest academic performing school districts in this State and has been recognized at the National level for the educational opportunities provided to students in this community. I want to give you a brief snapshot below of the academic performance on the 2019 State of Ohio assessments for Waterville and Whitehouse Primary.

Waterville Primary
Performance Index Score of 108.7 (0-120 range) for the 2019 Local Report Card
2019 Performance Index Score ranked 79th out of 3316 school buildings in the State
2019 Performance Index Score ranks this building in the top 4% of all buildings in the State
In the 2019 reporting year 75% of the 3rd and 4th grade students scored accelerated or advanced
2018-2019 Ohio Department of Education Designated STEAM School
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators Hall of Fame School
Ohio Department of Education Designated Purple Star School
2013 National Blue Ribbon of Distinction School

Whitehouse Primary
Performance Index Score of 110.3 (0-120 range) for the 2019 Local Report Card
2019 Performance Index Score ranked 38th out of 3316 school buildings in the State
2019 Performance Index Score ranks this building in the top 2% of all buildings in the State
In the 2019 reporting year 78% of the 3rd and 4th grade students scored accelerated or advanced
Ohio Department of Education Designated Purple Star School
As you can see Waterville Primary and Whitehouse Primary are high performing buildings where students are receiving outstanding educational experiences. Many of the students are achieving well above the average students; most students score Accelerated or Advanced, the two highest rankings, on the State assessments.

**How does EdChoice affect AWLS?**
For the 2020-21 school year, Waterville Primary and Whitehouse Primary have been designated to the EdChoice list based on this unfortunate and misguided law. The data that was used to place these two buildings on the EdChoice list is currently being reviewed for major changes by a State committee. Unfortunately, legislation for these Local Report Card changes is expected in late Spring of 2020.

**What is the Financial Impact to AWLS?**
K-4 students who live in these attendance zones would be eligible for a yearly $4,650/year scholarship to attend a private or parochial school and then a $6,000/year scholarship for the remainder of their grades 5-12. Thus, one student could receive up to $71,250 of tax payer’s dollars to attend private or parochial schools during their K-12 experience while never attending AWLS.

The EdChoice scholarship money that is paid to the private and parochial schools is taken from the allocation of State money that was designated to come to the AWLS under the current State funding model. Thus, depending on the number of individuals that take this scholarship, AWLS may receive significantly less State funding. This negative financial impact on school districts across the State has many districts seeking additional operational levies so they can absorb this significant financial loss.

It is important to know that the tax dollars that you pay to the State of Ohio have been used in the past and continue to be used to fund these scholarships; therefore, paying for the tuition of students that choose to take the EdChoice scholarships and attend these private/parochial schools. This use of AW residents State tax dollars happens even if we don't have school buildings on the EdChoice list. In addition, please know that these schools are not held to the same accountability system and do not have to follow all of the same laws that public schools do. So, for those that choose to send their children to an EdChoice provider, do they really have a true comparison of the quality of education being offered at each school?

**Will private and/or parochial schools be required to accept all students who are eligible for EdChoice Scholarship payment?**
No, private and parochial schools are not legally required to educate all students, can be selective in their entrance process, and can dismiss a student at any time without reason. Unfortunately, for students and their families, they may never get into these schools or, once in, could be dismissed at any time. The question becomes, “Is this the climate and culture that parents want their children to be in?”
What is next?
Public school officials and State legislators have been quoted in the news that changes to how public schools are selected to be on the EdChoice list need to happen prior to February 1st. If you have concerns in regards to your tax dollars being used to fund private and parochial schools scholarships, the potential reduction in State funding to AWLS because of EdChoice, and/or to encourage your public officials to make legislative changes to the EdChoice law that removes AWLS buildings you can contact your local State legislator. Please see the list below.

State of Ohio Representative Derek Merrin
77 South High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Rep47@ohiohouse.gov

Senator Theresea Gavarone
Senate Building
1 Capital Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Gavarone@ohiosenate.gov

The District is participating in on-going discussions with legislators in regards to the EdChoice law. The Board of Education has passed a resolution against this law and has asked legislators to make changes to it prior to February 1st when it will go into effect for Whitehouse and Waterville Primary. Based on what has been reported to us by legislators and through media, there will be changes to this law. The fliers you may receive in the mail from those promoting the use of your tax dollars to pay for private school scholarships most likely will not mention this potential change in the law.

AWLS thanks you for taking the time to read this information and becoming actively involved in changing this unfortunate legislation. AWLS hopes for a quick resolution to this issue. Thank you and have a great day!! **Go Generals!!**