

State Board of Education – May 1, 2024
NJ Department of Education
Trenton, New Jersey

Valarie M. Smith
Interdistrict School Choice Association
609 206-0358
vmaffeismith@aol.com

May 1, 2024

The Interdistrict Public School Choice Program was created to give students the opportunity to go beyond the boundaries of restricted attendance zones, which have historically prevented students from one community from attending a school in another. The Association believes that the program is fundamental to improving equity in the K–12 system in New Jersey and can be a primary vehicle for achieving greater diversity if allowed to flourish.

The Goals of the Program (NJAC 6A:12-1.1) are:

1. Increase options & flexibility for parents & students in selecting a school that best fits the needs of each student
2. Increase the degree to which the education system is responsive to parents & student
3. Enhance academic achievement & improve efficiency through a voluntary redistribution of students from overcrowded to under-enrolled schools
4. Create a healthy competition between public schools

There are many good stories that can be told by districts and by individual students. The program has achieved great success.

Glassboro High School has a specialized program where students are able to take classes at Rowan University. One Glassboro High Student graduated with 21 college credits! Manchester Regional High School in Passaic was able to help increase diversity by making Interdistrict a part of their school community. And Interdistrict helped to save Sterling High School's Navy Knights ROTC program that was on the verge of closing due to a drop in the participation. There is a base line requirement of 100 students.

Deal Elementary School's, (Monmouth County), latest Choice Aid figures are at \$15,100 per Choice student as compared to the average state aid figures for Asbury Park's three elementary schools at \$56,917 as currently reported by the Department. Deal receives students from Asbury Park.

Asbury Park Elementaries	Federal Aid	State Aid	Total Per Pupil
Bradley Elementary School	\$15,877	\$38,947	\$54,824
Dr. Martin Luther King Upper Elementary School	\$16,880	\$30,052	\$46,932
Thurgood Marshall Elementary School	\$20,144	\$47,047	\$67,161

The Interdistrict Public School Choice Association has thoroughly reviewed the proposed regulations and although we agree with all the changes, we do want to present a question as to the timing of the enrollment process which our schools would like to have addressed.

Our schools are wondering why enrollment must be completed by December 31st of the prior year when funding is determined by the October 15th count of the following fall. With the exception of Interdistrict, students may enroll in a school at any point during the academic year and the aid calculation is configured to the date of enrollment from one school to another.

The December cut off is early and most parents are unaware of such an early enrollment requirement. Most parents aren't even thinking of the next school at that time. Students looking to enroll in a charter school have an all year option and we believe same should be afforded to students looking to enter the Choice Districts.

This is most important for our schools that have specialized high school programs like the Junior ROTC which is a full four-year program.

We are asking this Board to see if this can be addressed by the new regulations.

Thank you in advance, Valarie M. Smith