



Families and Friends of WCS,

For fifty years, Wayside Christian School has experienced the goodness and blessing of God's provision as we strive to be a benefit to our community as a resource for Christian education. By God's grace, He has led us to a time of great opportunity as we desire to faithfully follow His leading and do what He has called us to do.

On August 15, the WCS school board and the Wayside Chapel deacon board voted unanimously to move Wayside Christian School from being a non-chartered, non-public school to a chartered, non-public school. We know that there are many questions that folks may have with regard to what this decision means for the school and so the goal of this letter is to seek to answer as many of those questions as possible. We firmly believe that the Lord has directed us down this path and we are excited to see how He is going to use this to advance the mission of Wayside Christian School and most importantly, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

FAQ's About Chartering

1. Why has Wayside decided to become a chartered, non-public school?

There are several reasons for pursuing charter status, with the primary motivation being the opportunity to alleviate financial and transportation barriers for families in our community. In recent years, we have increasingly encountered families who are enthusiastic about providing their children with a Christian education. However, financial constraints and transportation issues have prevented them from realizing this desire. With the rising costs of basic necessities such as food, these challenges have become even more daunting for our current and prospective families. By obtaining charter status, WCS can enable families to access the EdChoice scholarship program, making Christian education either tuition-free or available at a substantially reduced cost for a significant portion of our community. This represents a win-win situation for families, WCS, and the spread of the gospel.

A second and equally important reason for becoming a chartered non-public school revolves around our commitment to our full-time and part-time staff members. Over the years, the WCS board and administration have worked diligently to find innovative ways to enhance the compensation packages for our faculty and staff while maintaining tuition rates that families can afford. Despite maximizing our budgetary resources without imposing significant tuition hikes, our staff members still receive salaries that fall far short of comparable positions in the public and private education systems.

In the state of Ohio, the average salary for public school teachers stands at \$60,000, while their counterparts in Christian schools average \$30,000. These figures do not factor in the benefit packages that most full-time staff members receive, which average approximately \$6,500 for Christian school teachers in Ohio. Unfortunately, the average compensation for a teacher at WCS is only \$20,000, with very limited benefits available. We hold immense gratitude for our staff's unwavering dedication to their calling in Christian education, and they never voice complaints about their modest compensation.

Nonetheless, as administrators at WCS, we consider it our biblical responsibility to provide our staff with a wage that allows for a decent standard of living, reflective of their invaluable contributions. With the EdChoice scholarships accessible to families, WCS can implement the necessary adjustments in tuition rates to bring our teacher salaries and benefits to a significantly more equitable and justifiable level. This undertaking not only enhances the well-being of our current staff but also is pivotal as we seek to attract additional staff members in the future, enhancing our ability to serve our students and their families.

2. What does it mean to be chartered? What is a charter?

A charter is akin to accreditation, a status that the vast majority of our colleges and universities attain. By achieving chartered status as a non-public school, WCS asserts its commitment to outside accountability, ensuring that we adhere to our stated mission and objectives as established by the WCS board, and that WCS is operating in accordance with the generally accepted best practices for educational institutions.

3. Will Wayside have to use the public school or secular curriculum and textbooks as a chartered, non-public school?

No! As a chartered, non-public school, Wayside will remain dedicated to teaching its curriculum from a Biblical Worldview and will continue to use the same textbook publishers it currently employs, namely Abeka and BJU Press.

4. Will Wayside lose the ability to set their enrollment and hiring practices as a result of being chartered?

No! As a chartered, non-public school Wayside must agree to not discriminate based on race, however, our current non-discrimination statement already makes clear that we will not do so. Wayside retains the right as a religious organization to select or deny students based on academic performance, religious commitment, lifestyle choices, and personal qualifications including a willingness to cooperate with WCS administration and to abide by its policies (Romans 2:11). The same is true with regard to our hiring practices.

5. So what then are the requirements for a chartered, non-public school?

The following list of requirements must be met to maintain chartered, non-public school status:

- **Adherence to General Operating Standards:** These standards encompass professional requirements widely recognized as best practices for both private and public schools. WCS already seeks to diligently follow these operating standards as they represent commonly accepted best practices.
- **Ohio Teacher Licensure/Certification and Background Checks:** Several of our WCS teachers already possess state teaching licenses, and all other teaching staff members hold the necessary credentials to meet this requirement. Furthermore, WCS already mandates that all staff members and volunteers undergo background checks.
- **Exceeding Minimum Instructional Time:** WCS is already obligated to meet or exceed the state of Ohio's minimum instructional time standards in its current status as a non-chartered, non-public school.

- **Administration of Annual Standardized Tests:** WCS already administers the Iowa Standardized Assessment tests to all its students annually. We will continue to utilize the Iowa Tests to fulfill this requirement as a chartered, non-public school.
- **Meeting Ohio Graduation Requirements:** WCS already mandates that its students meet or exceed the Ohio graduation requirements.
- **Compliance with Cutoff Dates for Kindergarten and First Grade:** Currently, WCS sets its cutoff date for entry into Kindergarten as September 15. As a chartered, non-public school, this date will need to be adjusted to either August 1 or September 30. We are likely to adopt the September 30th date.
- **Completion of Annual Health and Fire Inspections:** WCS is already obligated to meet this standard in its current status as a non-chartered, non-public school.
- **Maintenance of Student and Staff Record Keeping:** WCS already diligently maintains appropriate student and staff records.

6. Besides funding, are there any other benefits to being a chartered, non-public school?

While funding and access to EdChoice Scholarships represent the most apparent advantages of being a chartered, non-public school, there are additional benefits that both the school and students/families can leverage.

One potential advantage associated with charter status is transportation. State law mandates that public school districts within a 30-minute radius of WCS must either provide transportation for students attending chartered, non-public schools to their respective school buildings or offer families an 'in-lieu-of' reimbursement for transportation expenses. It will be up to each individual school district to determine what they will offer families.

A second significant benefit of being a chartered, non-public school is that WCS diplomas will enjoy greater recognition not only from the Ohio Department of Education but also from prospective employers and institutions of higher education.

7. How do you know that everything that was mentioned above about being a chartered, non-public school is true, and you won't have to compromise on your Christian values or philosophy of Christian education?

WCS remains unwavering in its commitment to its Christian values and educational philosophy, and this commitment will remain unchanged. To ensure that this steadfast dedication holds true as a chartered, non-public school, we invested significant time in studying the Ohio Revised Code and thoroughly researched the information available on the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) website regarding chartering.

Furthermore, WCS administration engaged in conversations with various individuals, including our state representative, a Christian schools lobbyist in the Columbus state house, the board chairman of an existing chartered, non-public Christian school, and several administrators from like-minded Christian schools that have held charter status for several years. In every interaction, we received assurances that these schools have never been required to compromise their Christian values or their philosophy of Christian education in order to maintain their status as chartered, non-public schools.

In fact, in every conversation, we heard resounding endorsements of how the charter has been a tremendous blessing for their respective schools. These schools have shared how the state has consistently provided valuable support to help them fulfill their mission through Christian education.

With these assurances, as well as what we believe to be the very clear providence of God throughout this process, we are moving forward to become a chartered, non-public school with complete confidence that we will not, in any way, have to compromise our values or philosophy of education as we seek to fulfill our mission of “assisting families and churches in equipping students to achieve academic excellence, to make Biblically based decisions, and to exemplify and serve Jesus Christ.”

8. Could things change and what happens if they do?

While none of us can predict the future, we readily acknowledge that the stance toward private education in our state and country could change. Drawing from conversations with our state representative and others who possess a deep understanding of the current educational and political climate in Ohio, we do not anticipate any imminent shifts that would require us to act contrary to our scriptural beliefs and principles. It's worth noting that many Christian schools have successfully operated as chartered, non-public schools for over 30 years without compromising their beliefs or biblical principles. It is our prayer and hope that we can do the same for many years to come.

However, if, at any point, Wayside were compelled to compromise its Christian principles or its philosophy of Christian education, we would opt to relinquish the charter and revert to our previous status as a non-chartered, non-public school—a status we maintained for the past 30 years.

FAQ About Finances and EdChoice

1. Is there any biblical precedent for Christians to take or benefit from government funding?

As we look into the pages of Scripture, one thing becomes evident: God provides for the needs of His people through various means, often employing different methods at different times. Throughout the Bible, we find instances where God utilizes the government, represented by kings or rulers, as one of the means to provide for His people.

In Genesis 47, we witness God's provision for Jacob, Joseph, and their families through the Pharaoh of Egypt, who generously granted them the best of the land for their dwelling. The book of Exodus also illustrates God using the Pharaoh of Egypt and the Egyptian people to provide for His people, as they bestowed gifts upon the children of Israel, marking the beginning of their journey from bondage to the promised land. Similarly, in the book of Nehemiah, we observe God's provision through a king, enabling His people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Similar scenarios occur in several other places throughout Scripture.

Romans 13 reminds us that government and rulers are under the Lord's authority, and God has established them as ministers of good. It appears that in the state of Ohio, the Lord is once again using government officials to meet the needs of His people and advance the cause of the Gospel.

2. How will the school tuition rates be effected by being a chartered, non-public school?

WCS tuition rates have consistently remained well below the average rates for private Christian education in the state of Ohio. Over the course of many years, the Wayside administration has recognized the need for substantial adjustments to our tuition rates to better cater to the needs of our students, faculty, and staff.

The administration has also been acutely aware that a significant tuition increase would likely impose a financial burden on many of the families currently enrolled at WCS, with many unable to afford the higher rates. Consequently, the board and administration have diligently acted as responsible stewards of the resources at our disposal, always prioritizing fiscal responsibility. We believe we have succeeded in this endeavor, albeit not without sacrifices, including limitations on advancing our mission, maintaining our facilities, and adequately compensating our staff.

With the forthcoming availability of EdChoice scholarships for families, we can now alleviate the burden of a tuition increase for both our current and prospective families. With this in mind, we will be raising our tuition rates significantly. We have not yet determined an exact number, but we anticipate increasing our rates to be able to take advantage of the full amount available through the EdChoice scholarships. It is crucial to understand that this tuition increase is not driven by a desire for financial gain or greed. Instead, it stems from our commitment to advancing the school's mission and enhancing our capacity to serve our students and staff more effectively. Just as we have diligently strived to be good stewards of our current resources, we will remain equally committed to responsible stewardship of the resources God blesses us with in the future.

3. Will higher income families who do not qualify for as much EdChoice assistance be required to pay more next year as a result of tuition increases?

Every family will qualify for some amount of assistance through the EdChoice scholarship. However, it is possible that higher-income families could find themselves with a gap between their EdChoice scholarship amount and our new tuition rates, which may give the impression that they will actually face higher tuition costs next year.

Nevertheless, recognizing that our desire throughout this entire process has been to help our families, we are fully committed to ensuring that no family pays more out of pocket next year than they are currently paying during this school year. To achieve this commitment, we will leverage the NOSF scholarships, the Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO), and what we currently refer to as our FAST scholarships. In fact, we are going a step further by guaranteeing that every family will pay less per student out of pocket next year than they paid this year under our current tuition rates no matter what their family income may be.

4. What scholarship amounts are available to families through EdChoice and who qualifies?

With the passing of the 2023 biennial state budget, every family in the state of Ohio is now eligible to receive some amount of assistance through the EdChoice scholarship program as long as their students are attending a chartered, non-public school. Scholarships for EdChoice are awarded based on the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of a family's household. If a family's household income is at or below 450 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, they will be awarded the maximum scholarship amount. If a

family's household income is at or above 451 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, the student's scholarship award will be prorated based on the chart below.

Federal Poverty Level	Award Amount for Grades K-8	Award Amount for Grades 9-12
0 – 450%	\$6,165	\$8,407
451 - 500%	\$5,200	\$7,050
501 - 550%	\$3,650	\$5,000
551 - 600%	\$2,600	\$3,550
601 - 650%	\$1,850	\$2,500
651 - 700%	\$1,300	\$1,750
701 - 750%	\$900	\$1,250
751% or higher	\$650	\$950

For a more detailed description and to see where your family falls on the Federal Poverty Level, visit the following link:

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Scholarships/EdChoice-Scholarship-Program/2023-2024-Income-Eligibility-Requirements-for-EdChoice-Expansion.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

5. How will families apply for EdChoice Scholarships?

To apply for EdChoice Scholarships, parents will provide WCS with a copy of the student's birth certificate, a copy of current proof of address and the Scholarship Request Form. Additional information such as student report card, notarized letter, custody documentation or foster care information may be needed for determining student eligibility for a scholarship on a case by case basis. In addition to applying with the school, new applicants will need to complete the income verification process. More details for this process will be provided at a later time.

Once a family has completed the initial application, they will simply need to renew their application each school year. For renewal, parents must provide a copy of current proof of address and the Scholarship Renewal Form. Renewing families will not need to complete the income verification process each year, unless they would like to have their household income recalculated for their award amount.

6. Will the SGO and fundraising still be important for WCS?

Raising funds for our Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) will remain a pivotal aspect of WCS's financial future. While EdChoice scholarships will render a WCS education tuition-free for many families, it's important to note that these scholarships do not cover registration fees or any other fees imposed by the school. SGO funds, on the other hand, can be utilized to offset costs related to fees associated with a WCS education.

Furthermore, some families may not qualify for the full amount of the EdChoice scholarship due to higher household incomes. In such cases, the SGO becomes a valuable resource, helping these families move closer to affording a Christian education at WCS without incurring additional tuition costs.

Additionally, the tax benefits for donors contributing to the SGO will remain in effect. This means that donors can continue to direct up to \$750 per individual or \$1,500 for a married couple filing jointly, receiving a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. By doing so, they redirect their tax dollars toward the advancement of Christian education, benefiting families and furthering the mission of WCS.

Fundraising will continue to play a crucial role in WCS's financial future, albeit in a different capacity than it does currently. At present, our fundraising efforts are essential to meet our general operational budget. However, with the ability to raise tuition rates through the availability of EdChoice scholarships, our operational budget can now be sustained without a heavy reliance on fundraising.

This shift allows us to redirect our fundraising endeavors towards specific projects, such as the recently announced building expansion. It's important to reiterate that our primary objective throughout this process is to enhance our services for the betterment of our community. Our vision for WCS is to be a leader in education within Crawford County while instilling a biblical worldview and nurturing devoted disciples of Christ.

7. What does WCS intend to do with the additional funds that will become available through being a chartered, non-public school?

As previously mentioned, one of the most significant ways we plan to utilize the additional funds is to enhance the salaries of our staff members. Additionally, we have intentions to hire more staff members in the coming years to better address the individual needs of our students.

We have also communicated our desire to improve the safety and security of our buildings and to embark on a building expansion project. Both of these initiatives are essential for WCS, not solely driven by our charter status. With our elementary school's recent growth, we have reached a point where it's imperative to allocate each grade level into separate classes, but we currently lack the necessary classroom space to achieve this goal. The proposed building expansion will provide the required classroom space and accommodate future growth.

Our long-term goals encompass providing our students with additional opportunities that are not currently available at WCS. While we cannot provide all the details of these ideas at this time, they include offering tutoring services for students with specific learning needs, revitalizing our athletic programs, expanding and enhancing our robotics program, establishing and growing a more comprehensive art and music program, and potentially adding courses like shop class or trade-related programs.

For 50 years, the Lord has blessed WCS, enabling us to be a blessing to hundreds of families who have entrusted their children to our school. We have steadfastly kept our doors open, with many before us making significant sacrifices to do so. As we look ahead to what we hope will be another 50 years of ministry, we believe that the Lord is currently making available provisions that will enable WCS not only to survive year to year but to thrive, thereby increasing our impact on the current and future generations of students. Our mission remains paramount, as we endeavor to play a vital role in advancing the Kingdom of God in our community and beyond.