

September 2018

## SURVEY OF KENTUCKY'S NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This brief overview of Kentucky's non-public schools is based upon a survey conducted during the month of September 2018 by EdChoice Ky. One of the objectives of the survey was to better understand and quantify significant characteristics of schools as they function today.

The Bluegrass State has a long history and tradition of education diversity with non-public schools working alongside public schools to serve students. A couple of schools have been operating for 200 years or more; ten years before the first public school was authorized by the General Assembly on February 13, 1828.

### KEY OBSERVATIONS

- \* Non-public schools in Kentucky have at least 7,700 open seats with a projected estimate closer to 21,000 open seats for K-12 students.
- \* More than one-third of students receive financial aid for tuition however resources fall far short of demonstrated need. Only 55% of the demonstrated need is funded.
- \* 82% of non-public schools serve students with special needs.
- \* Practically 100% of the schools offer some type of financial assistance.
- \* While non-public schools currently do a great deal to serve high need students, the need far exceeds available funding. All of the responding schools expressed an interest in participating in a Scholarship Tax Credit program so that they can serve more students.



The survey was administered to the Commonwealth's 203 Certified Non-Public Schools<sup>2</sup>. Eighty-nine (89) schools, completed the survey and the results are tabulated throughout this brief. The respondents are well diversified geographically, and by mission. Respondents include schools focused on special needs, faith based and non-faith based schools; K-12 schools, highs schools only and elementary schools. The 44% response provides meaningful insight into Kentucky's non-public schools.

## Enrollment and Cost

According to Private School Review<sup>1</sup> nearly 72,000 students are enrolled in non-public schools in Kentucky. The non-public school enrollment amounts to about 10% of the total K-12 students in Kentucky. Although the Commonwealth’s population has increased nearly 16.5% over the last 20 years the non-public school enrollment has declined nearly 23%. Why? It is usually attributed to tuition cost.

Kentucky Non-Public School Survey				
	#	Enrollment	Percent of Capacity	Avg. Tuition
<b>Survey Respondents</b>				
Kindergarten	70	2,053	75.1%	\$4,946
Elementary Schools	70	9,953	75.7%	\$5,104
Middle Schools	68	6,576	74.2%	\$4,887
High Schools	27	7,958	83.9%	\$7,757
<b>Total Responding Schools</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>26,540</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>\$6,280</b>
	44%			
<b>Total Non-Public Certified Schools</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>72,000</b>		
<b>Estimated Seats Available</b>			<b>20,832</b>	
<i>Source of data</i>				
Kentucky Non-Public School Commission				
Kentucky School Review				
Responding Schools				
September 2018				

In analyzing tuition costs, facilities and capacity should be included as these factors may be as much as 18% of the underlying tuition fee. The adjacent table sets forth in detail the current tuition costs throughout the state and the capacity of schools to serve additional students with existing facilities.

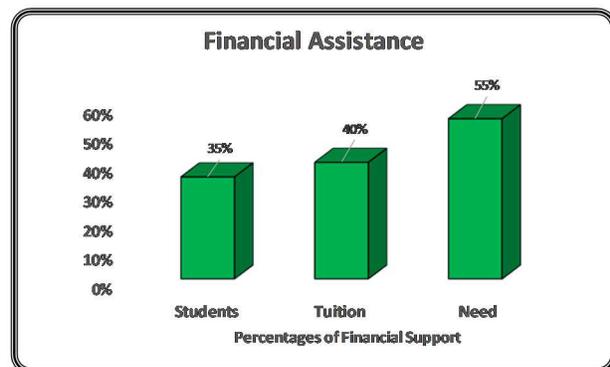
Of particular note is:

- There appears to be meaningful capacity to accept new students without expanding the facilities and,
- The average tuition is on the lower end of experiences nationally.

## Financial Need and Assistance

Virtually all the respondents reported they provide some type of need-based financial assistance to families. As illustrated on the chart, the schools cannot generate sufficient resources to fund the demonstrated need for assistance.

- **“Students”** is the percentage of students who receive tuition assistance;
- **“Tuition”** reflects the average (may range from 5% to 99%) percentage of the tuition the financial aid typically covers;
- **“Need”** reflects how much of the families demonstrated need is met on average after considering the families ability to pay, which is typically assessed by a third party such as FACTS.



As illustrated on the above chart, the schools cannot generate sufficient resources to fund the demonstrated need for assistance to meaningfully expand education choice in Kentucky without a change in current law.

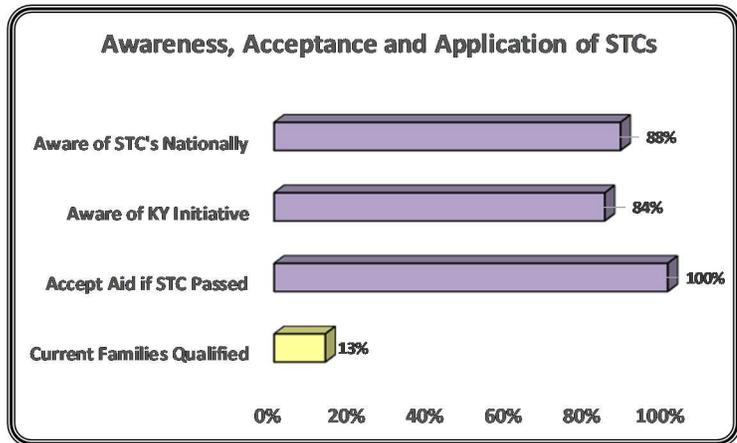
The responding schools have 26,540 students with average tuition of \$6,280 and 35% of the students receiving aid equal to 40% of the tuition. In total the respondents are granting aid of nearly \$23,000,000 either in the form of volunteer time, discounted tuition or funding from donors. Even after that tremendous effort the schools were unable to fulfill 45% of the need indicating another \$19,000,000 gap for demonstrated need. As discussed later, the schools view Scholarship Tax Credits as a means to expand their mission to even lower income families who may need substantially 100% assistance.

Of note, the financial needs would be far greater were it not for the efficient and economical operation of Kentucky's non-public schools; the average tuition is below the national comparisons because of parental engagement, many volunteers and the sacrifice of many teachers and administrators in the schools.

### Scholarship Tax Credits

The survey also focused on learning about the awareness, acceptance and application of Scholarship Tax Credits for non-public schools. In view of recent efforts to pass a Scholarship Tax Credit program in Kentucky, respondents were questioned about their awareness of such programs and their inclination to accept students if such a program became a reality.

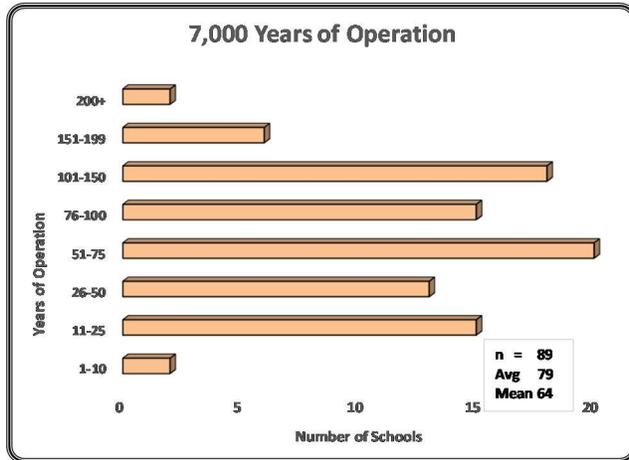
Eighty-eight (88%) percent of the schools were aware of the 18 other states that have Scholarship Tax Credits while eighty-four (84%) percent were aware Kentucky was attempting to pass such legislation. All (100%) of the schools responded that they would accept students who utilize Scholarship Tax Credit if it were available even though the vast majority (87%) of existing students would not qualify for STC funds because of family income thresholds.



Through STCs the schools would have access to greater resources to serve many additional low income families who have greater per family/student need. Under the proposed legislation it is a requirement that the majority of scholarship awards must go to high need students, including students from families whose income is below the federal free & reduced lunch income threshold, special needs students and foster care students.

## Trusted and Experienced Schools

Kentucky's non-public schools have a rich and trusted tradition of working along-side public schools in serving the education needs of its K-12 citizens. The chart below illustrates the commitment over time to the students of Kentucky.



Kentucky is fortunate to have long standing and experienced non-public schools as an option for families.

Of the 89 schools that responded, there is cumulative years of operation of nearly 7,000 years and the schools have outstanding academic records.

## EdChoice KY Commentary

All Kentucky families should have options when it comes to their children's education. The data collected above reflects that our non-public schools are striving to make this a reality with limited resources. A Scholarship Tax Credit program would provide Kentucky families with more options and more resources to access the school that best meets their children's needs.

Charles H. Leis  
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<sup>1</sup> Private School Review, New York, NY [www.privateschoolreview.com](http://www.privateschoolreview.com)

<sup>2</sup> Kentucky Non-Public School Commission [www.kynpsc.org](http://www.kynpsc.org)