

# INTERDISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM

Technical Assistance Session for New Choice Administrators  
November 15, 2013

# Choice Program Office

2

- Evo Popoff, Assistant Commissioner
- Jessani Gordon, Director
- Anna Leonardo, Special Assistant to the Assistant Commissioner

# Agenda

3

- About the Choice Program
  - Program Background:
    - Purpose and History
  - How the Program Works:
    - Key features, processes and policies
    - Funding
    - Transportation
    - NJSMART
  - Tips from Veteran Choice Districts
- Q&A

# Program Purpose and History

4

- The Choice Program is necessary to increase options and flexibility for parents and students in selecting a school that best meets the needs of each student, thereby improving educational opportunities for New Jersey citizens.

## Interdistrict Public School Choice Program Act

Passed in 2000

Five-year pilot

Maximum of 21 choice districts;  
only 1 per county



Passed in 2010

Permanent program

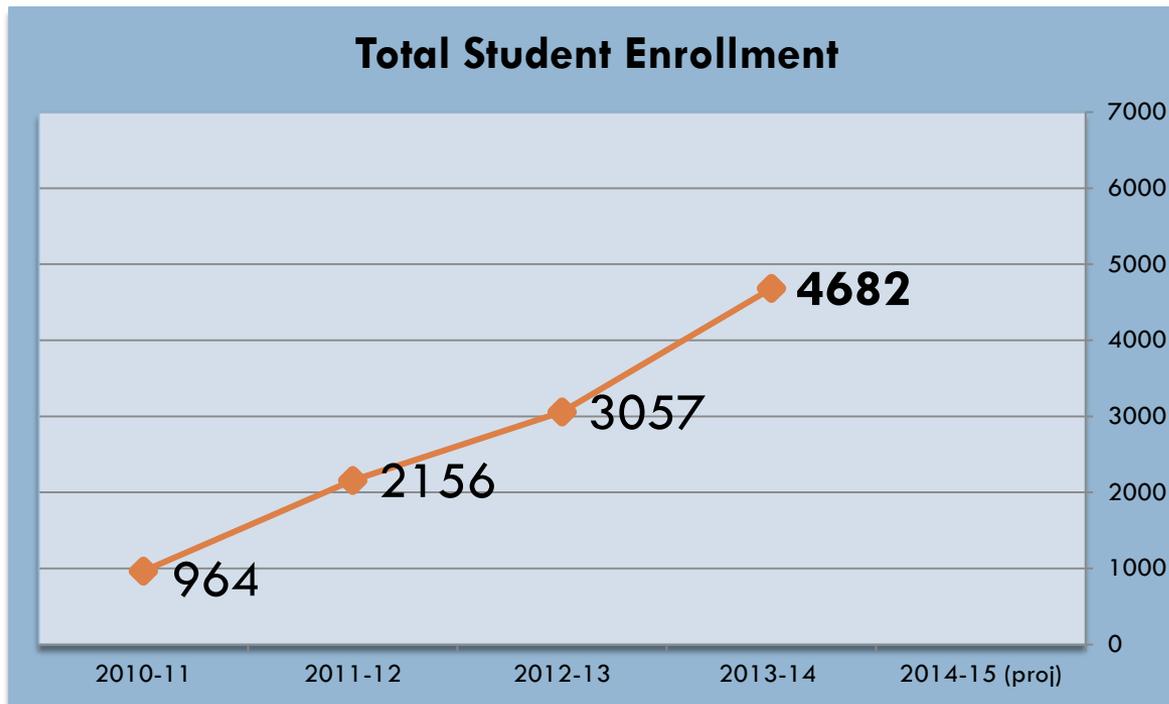
No limit on number of choice districts

# Program Size and Growth - Students

5

## □ Student enrollment:

- Enrollment in the choice program has grown from 1 000 students (in 15 districts) in SY2011 to 4,700 (in 110 districts) in SY2014.
- 136 districts will participate in the choice program in SY2015.

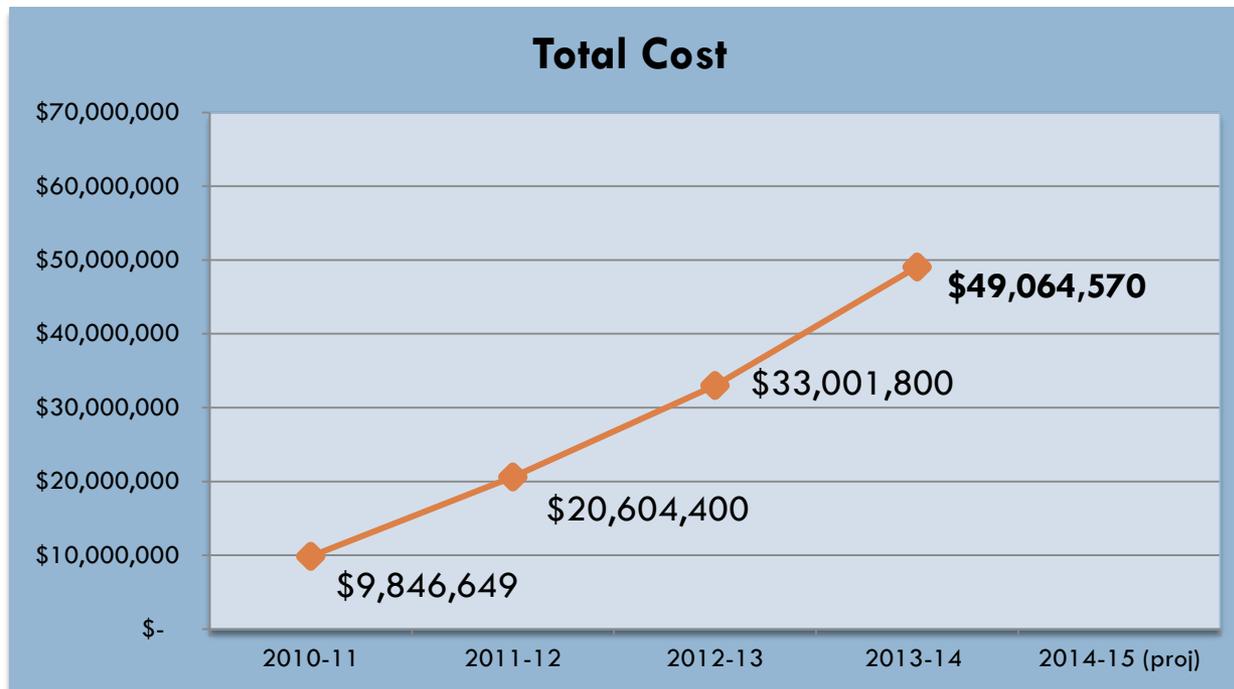


# Program Size and Growth -Dollars

6

## □ Program cost:

- The cost of the choice program has grown from \$10 million in SY2011 to \$49 million in SY2014, a 400% growth rate in three years.



# How the Program Works

7

1. At the District Level
2. For the Students
3. Everything in Between

# At the District Level

## Where should you be right now?

8

- Choice Target Enrollment
  - ▣ 5% funding growth expected in FY2015 State Budget
    - Enrollment targets intended to help districts plan and set expectations
    - Final numbers will be determined in the winter
  
  - ▣ Districts may enroll non-resident, non-tuition students, but these students are outside the choice program

# At the District Level

## Where should you be right now?

9

- Enrolling non-resident, non-tuition students: no state funding
  - ▣ No guarantee they will be converted to choice students in subsequent years
  - ▣ To become choice students, they would need to apply to the choice district in another year and if they have a choice sibling in the district, they would get enrollment preference
  - ▣ In the ASSA, these students should be counted as “Onroll” and “Received->Misc.-> Other-Tuition Free”. These students should not be counted as “Onroll-Choice” students. In NJSMART these students should be coded as “resident” in their home district and “received/attending” in the choice district utilizing TUITIONCODE = 05 “Tuition Free.”

# At the District Level

## Where should you be right now?

10

### **Profiles and Website**

- One of the first places parents look when they are researching the Choice Program is the DOE website.
- Profiles are critical to connecting them to your program by giving them key information in a brief snapshot: seat availability, contact information, district type, etc.
- Please check to make sure that all of the information on the DOE website is up-to-date!

For Parents & Students

Find a Choice District

Student Application Process

Timeline

Intent to Participate Form

FAQs

Transportation

School Choice Home

## FIND A CHOICE DISTRICT

Click on a choice district to receive information and links.

Use the search options below to view districts by specific categories. Refresh your browser after each search to return to the default settings.

Find a

County:

Find a

Choice District:



District Name: Alexandria Township School District

Address: 557 County Road 513, Pittstown, NJ 08867

Contact: Jennifer Bills (908-998-6811 x254)

More Information:

- [Choice Program Profile](#)
- [District Performance Report](#)
- [District Website](#)
- [Find the distance to your home address](#) (Contact the district to find the addresses of specific choice schools in the district)

Map Satellite



Neher  
n Hill  
Helsertown

Holland

Alexandria  
Rocks

Franklin

Readington  
Township

Somerville

Martinsville

Mid

# At the District Level

## Where should you be right now?

12

### **Parent Information Center**

- Choice districts must create and maintain a parent information center to:
  - Collect and disseminate information about policies and participating programs and schools
  - Assist parents and guardians in submitting applications
  - Maintain the choice district's website with up-to-date information and application forms, including:
    - Links to all forms either provided by the district or by the DOE
    - Transportation information, especially if your district is in a unique transportation situation
    - District policies regarding siblings, Tier 2 students, etc.

# The Students: Eligibility

13

- **Tier 1 students** must be enrolled in resident school district for the full year preceding enrollment in a choice district; includes:
  - Charter school students
  - Kindergarten applicants who are attending their resident district's public preschool or, if none offered, must have a sibling currently attending the choice district
- **Tier 2 students** have not attended their resident public school for the full year prior to enrollment and do not meet the requirements for Tier 1
- **Students who may be given enrollment preference:**
  - have siblings currently attending the choice district
  - attend a choice district with a send-receive agreement (or limited purpose regional districts) that terminates before 12th grade
  - move out of the district during the course of the school year (guaranteed enrollment if move is before application due date)

# The Students: Eligibility

14

- A choice district cannot discriminate in admissions policies; if there are more applicants than there are seats available, the choice district must hold a lottery to select choice students.
- **INTERDISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM ACT OF 2010 18A:36B**
  - The district shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of athletic ability, intellectual aptitude, English language proficiency, status as a handicapped person, or any basis prohibited by State or federal law.
  - A choice district may evaluate a prospective student on the student's interest in the program offered by a designated school.
  - A choice district shall not prohibit the enrollment of a student based upon a determination that the additional cost of educating the student would exceed the amount of additional State aid received as a result of the student's enrollment. A choice district may reject the application for enrollment of a student who has been classified as eligible for special education services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes if that student's individualized education program could not be implemented in the district, or if the enrollment of that student would require the district to fundamentally alter the nature of its educational program, or would create an undue financial or administrative burden on the district.

# STUDENT APPLICATION TIMELINE FOR CHOICE DISTRICTS

## For the 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

15

Document Name/Process	From	Received by	Deadline
Student Application	Parent or Guardian	Choice District	12/2/2013
Notice of Intent to Participate (If registered in resident district's public school or applicant is Tier 1)	Parent or Guardian	Resident District	
Confirmation of Enrollment for verification as Tier 1	Choice District	Resident District	12/6/2013
Resident District Verified Confirmation of Enrollment for verification as Tier 1	Resident District	Choice District	12/13/2013
Lottery held (if applicable)	Choice District	n/a	12/13/2013 thru 12/20/2013
Notice of Conditional Acceptance, Rejection, or Wait Listing	Choice District	Parent or Guardian	12/20/2013
Student's Notice of Intent to Enroll in the Choice District	Parent or Guardian	Choice District	1/6/2014
Student's Notice of Intent to Enroll in the Choice District District note: send copy of each student's Intent form to his/her resident district	Choice District	Resident District	1/17/2014
Registration with Resident District (if not already registered and are Tier 2)	Parent or Guardian	Resident District	1/17/2014
Enrollment Data: NJDOE data collection	Choice District	DOE	1/24/2014
Transportation Requests	Choice District	Resident District	3/15/2014

# Everything in Between – Late Applications and the Waiver Process

16

## **Late applications:**

- ▣ Choice districts may accept late applications after December 2. Late applicants may be added to the district's waitlist (if one exists) and may be accepted if seats become available, provided the district does not exceed its enrollment target. AFTER the NJDOE data collection (1/24/14), the choice funding number is locked.

## **Waiver of the student application deadline:**

- ▣ Once a choice district has filled all of its approved seats, a late applicant must apply for a waiver of the student application deadline from the Commissioner. A waiver may also be applied for if a student needs an immediate transfer. A student who can show good cause for an immediate transfer will be given priority through the waiver process over any existing waitlisted students.

# Everything in Between –

## Resident students who move out of a choice district

17

- If a resident student moves out of a choice district during the school year, the parents/guardians of the student make the decision to remain in the choice district until the end of the current school year or move the student to the new resident district. The new resident district then becomes responsible for providing transportation for the student.
  - If the move occurs prior to the data submission deadline, *the district must convert the student to a choice student* in the subsequent year and will receive choice funding for that student.
  - If the move occurs after the data submission deadline, *the choice school district* makes the decision to allow the student to remain as an **unfunded** choice student in the subsequent school year and convert the student's enrollment to a funded choice student the following year.

# Questions?

18

- Website: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/choice/>
- FAQs: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/choice/cdistricts/faq.htm>
- Email: [pschoice@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:pschoice@doe.state.nj.us)

# Agenda

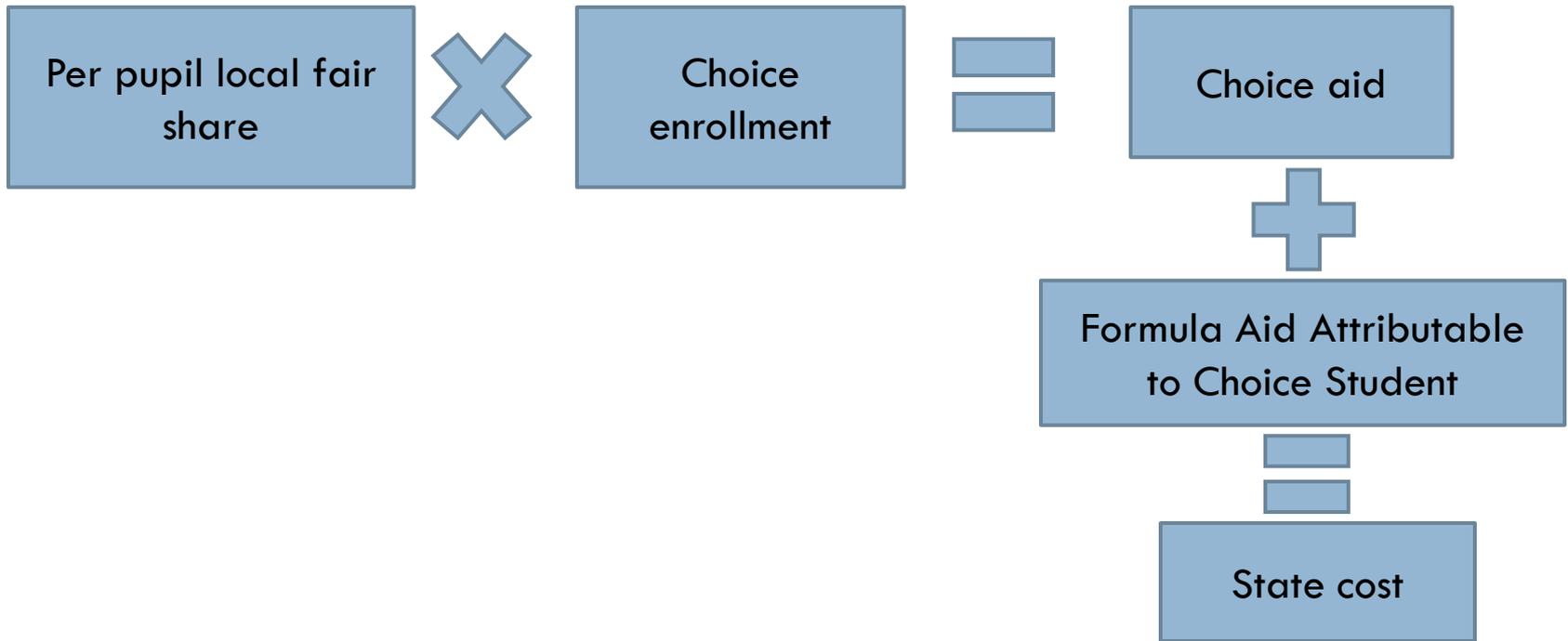
19

- About the Choice Program
  - Program Background:
    - Purpose and History
  - How the Program Works:
    - Key features, processes and policies
    - Funding (Kevin Dehmer)
    - Transportation (Greg Fera)
    - NJSMART (Jim McGlynn)
  - Tips from Veterans
    - Erik Ortolf, Ocean City
    - Dan Blachford, Hammonton
    - Suzanne Ivans, Stockton
- Q&A

# Program Funding-SFRA

20

- The State pays the receiving district its local fair share, on a per pupil basis, for each choice student **plus** formula aid for that student.
  - The State pays the district's local fair share per pupil rate to receiving districts in the form of "choice aid;" resident districts keep the levy collected for students who choice out
  - State formula aid follows the child to the receiving district (starting in year 2)
  - Transportation aid stays with resident district, which continues to provide transportation



# Program Features: Funding

21

- **For non-Adjustment Aid districts:** Choice aid will equal per pupil local fair share amount times choice enrollment
- **For Adjustment Aid districts:** Choice aid will be offset by the amount of Adjustment Aid the district receives
- **Year 1** – direct state aid only (Choice Aid)
- **Year 2 and beyond** – direct state aid plus students included in resident enrollment Students will be recorded as resident students in the October ASSA count