



WYOMING CITY SCHOOLS  
Administrative Center  
420 Springfield Pike  
Wyoming, Ohio 45215  
(513) 206-7000

---

December 13, 2019

Dear Wyoming City Schools Community,

Ohio has a very aggressive school voucher program called EdChoice that provides public tax dollars to pay tuition for students attending private schools. The voucher program started out as a way to provide an alternative educational choice for students whose local public school building was considered by the state to be a “failing” school. Because of a number of changes to Ohio law over the past decade, more and more vouchers are being granted each year. The number of school buildings being deemed eligible for vouchers increased 300% in the last two years (from fewer than 300 to more than 1200).

The program has expanded to include schools that, according to the state’s own metrics, are doing a very effective job overall educating their students. More than 47% of the buildings on the current list received overall grades of A, B, or C. The state’s arbitrary and conflicting definition of a “failing” school somehow now includes Wyoming Middle School and schools in other top performing districts, such as Indian Hill, Mason, and the state’s currently designated top performing district Solon.

For many years, Wyoming’s strong history of academic success has exempted us from the overreaching powers of the Ohio legislature to drain scarce resources from public schools and divert those funds to private schools. However, we can no longer sit back and ignore the State’s continued efforts to dismantle public education. The Wyoming community deeply values public education and we are laser focused - more than ever - on our students and their academic growth. The success of our students in and out of the classroom speaks for itself and is not reflected in a sliver of state test data from one day each year.

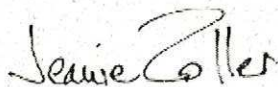
The designation of Wyoming Middle School as an EdChoice school is tied to a series of state test calculations that produce a “value-added” rating. These calculations project expected growth for a group of students. In our case, Wyoming Middle School students did not meet the calculated expected growth as projected by the state for two of the three years considered. In these same three years, Wyoming Middle School earned an “A” for meeting the performance measures considered on the report card. For reasons that no one - even the legislature - can explain, it’s the value-added subscore, and not the overall building grade that designates schools as EdChoice schools. Wyoming Middle School is ranked 278 out of 3070 public school buildings in Ohio (top 9% in the performance index subscore that the state uses for this ranking). Wyoming City Schools is ranked 18 out of 608 public school districts (top 3% in the performance index that the state uses for this ranking).

EdChoice Vouchers provide \$4650 for students in grades 5-8 and \$6000 for students in grades 9-12. Wyoming only receives \$2998 per student from the State, so the balance of the voucher would be paid from LOCAL tax dollars. The potential impact for Wyoming is estimated to be at least \$450,000 over the next 4 years.

The funding issue is distressing and we are deeply concerned with the state's continued efforts to attack and dismantle public education. Wyoming thrives on local control and we are opposed to the State's intrusion into our outstanding public schools to fund private education. We are currently working with education leaders across the state and our legislators on a solution to the EdChoice problem. Even Ohio Senate Education Committee Chair Peggy Lehner believes the system is flawed: "You have high-performing schools that are getting dinged on EdChoice for low (student growth) scores because they can't go any higher. Solon, the top-scoring school district in the state, has a school that's eligible for EdChoice. That's crazy."

As the Wyoming Board of Education, we are committed to providing the highest quality education for our students that has been a hallmark in this community for generations. We are equally proud of our teachers, support staff, and administration who deliver on our Wyoming promise to students and families each and every day. As solutions are proposed, we hope you will join us in advocating for EdChoice reform that will maintain the high quality education in Wyoming City Schools. We will be following up to share advisable next steps in the coming days.

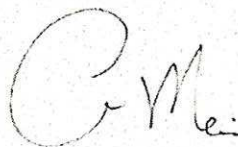
Sincerely,



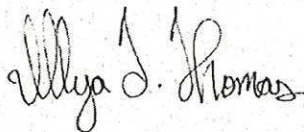
Jeanie Zoller  
President  
Board of Education



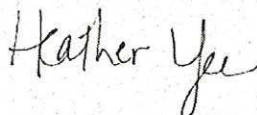
Kara L. Broderick  
Vice President  
Board of Education



Aaron Meis  
Member  
Board of Education



Illya Thomas  
Member  
Board of Education



Heather Yee  
Member  
Board of Education