

2005 Archives

June 29, 2005

February 15, 2005

January 28, 2005

June 29, 2005 - FYI

ITEMS

- * Change of Address
- * NEW Deadline for Compliance Form
- * Be Careful Enrolling and Withdrawing Students From DOE's Web-site
- * Fall Conference

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that we have moved the office of The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools to a new address. Our mailing address is 5746 Centerville Rd, Tallahassee, FL 32309. We will be keeping the telephone number (850) 523-0688 but won't be hooked up for a week so if you need to reach us by telephone try (850) 893-2216. Our fax number will be changed to (850) 893-2440.

THE COMPLIANCE FORM IS DUE AGAIN!

Please be aware that DOE is requiring schools to fill out the compliance form by AUGUST 1st for the 2005-2006 school year. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL JULY 31ST, DO IT NOW!

DOCUMENT ALL ENROLLING AND UNENROLLING THAT YOU DO

DOE has still not fixed the computer problem concerning how to enroll students into another private school when they are leaving a private school. They are telling schools to re-enroll students and then to withdraw them. One school reported that the list on the web-site contained students that had not been enrolled in their school for the 2004-2005 school year.

We are urging you to be cautious when enrolling and withdrawing students from DOE's web-site. The following are The Coalition's suggestions (not DOE's), but we feel they will protect your school should any future questions be asked.

- 1) If a student was not enrolled in your school for the 2004-2005 year, but has shown up on the website as your list of students to re-enroll, send an e-mail to DOE listing these students and tell DOE that you WILL NOT re-enroll them because DOE needs to find out where they were enrolled last year. Keep a paper copy of this correspondence.
- 2) If a student has left your school after the 2004-2005 year and transferred to another McKay Scholarship School for the 2005-2006 school year, follow DOE's guidelines and re-enroll them on-line, then withdraw them. KEEP a paper copy of where you have re-enrolled and withdrawn the student.

We have repeatedly asked that this glitch be fixed for we feel that private schools are being placed into a situation of being asked to enroll students who we know are not attending and that this could have negative repercussions. DOE has not resolved this problem yet.

Pending topics

- * Legislative Liaisons with state legislators
- * Best Business Practices Looking at Schools Contracts and Student Policies

- * Discussion group concerning issues/problems of mainstreaming children with disabilities in more traditional programs
- * Transitions: What Happens to Our Kids After H.S.? Future Planning Has to Begin Before They Graduate
- * Study Strategies
- * And more????

If you have a speaker who you feel would be an asset to the conference, please have them get in touch with Robyn Rennick at drills@talstar.com
We'll be sending more information your way through the summer concerning the conference.

Hope you are having a great summer.
Robyn A. Rennick, MS
President

FEBRUARY 15, 2005

ITEMS:

- * **Missing Checks**
- * **FCAT Preparation**
- * **Government Forms You Don't Need to Buy**

Missing Checks

Many of our schools have reported that their parents have not received their scholarship checks. We have been told that the issue is verification of student enrollment, even though many of the students in question have been enrolled in the private school for several years.

We are concerned that, for the second time this year, scholarship checks have been very late. This puts a great burden on private schools accepting parents' payments through the scholarship program since private schools rely on tuition payments to meet their budget.

If you are still missing checks, and can't get any response from DOE, we suggest that you call and/or email your legislators.

Explain briefly the problem and the position it places the parent who owes tuition and the private school who is providing an educational program to these children with disabilities.

Ask your legislator how this constant problem can be investigated and fixed. If the parents and the private school are being held accountable and fulfilling their responsibilities, shouldn't the state of Florida be held accountable to fulfill its responsibilities?

Keep in touch with your legislator. Let them know how matters are progressing.

FCAT Preparation

Some McKay parents are taking the option of having their child take the FCAT. Please let them know that children who are in the McKay Scholarship Program may use the FCAT Explorer, an online tutorial that works on the benchmark requirements of the FCAT. Parents can be assigned a login name and a password by calling 1-888-750-3228.

Parents do not have to sign up for the FCAT in order to use the FCAT Explorer.

This may be a good opportunity for parents to see if their child is "ready" to take the FCAT.

Government Forms You DON'T Need To Buy

(The following information was provided by Phyllis Dechant of Providence Christian Academy, one of our member schools.)

Within the last three weeks our school has received two "notices" which are really scams that have all the appearances of the IRS or other government agency. One says in bold black letters, "**Compliance Update, 2005**" and also has "**Form 20110**" in one corner. It says "As a registered employer in the state of Florida you must immediately replace your out-of-date 2004 Labor Law Notices with new 2005 notices, etc. etc. On the back you can "purchase" the posters for a tidy sum of \$39.95 from "Personnel Concepts, 2865 Metropolitan Place, Pomona, CA 91767".

The other notice is from "E.C.S. Employer Compliance Service, 611 Pennsylvania Ave. S.E. #4000, Washington, D.C. 20003-4303. It also resembles notices printed by the IRS. From this address you are urged to order a "Complete Federal & State Poster Set" for \$54.95, additional sets for \$49.95 each, and \$39.95 for only the State posters.

Schools need to know that they can download every one of these posters for **FREE** on-line at **www.myFlorida.com**. I just did. You can download and print them in color or in black and white and on regular 8 ½" x 11" paper.

January 28, 2005

ITEMS:

- * **Institute of Justice Amicus Brief and Press Conference**
- * **Legislative Initiative**
- * **Membership Drive**

Institute of Justice Amicus Brief and Press Conference

Monday, January 24, the Institute of Justice held a press conference on the steps of the Florida Supreme Court concerning the Amicus briefs which have been filed. The briefs discuss the effect that a negative finding for the Opportunity Scholarship Program will have on other programs such as the McKay Scholarship Program.

Over 100 children and parents filled the steps of the Supreme Court while Bishop Harold Ray of Redemptive Life Academy and parents and students spoke urging the Florida Supreme Court to overturn the lower court ruling against the Opportunity Scholarship.

The McKay Coalition wants to thank staff, students and parents who participated in the press conference. Those who participated were: (Tallahassee) Woodland Hall Academy, Atlantis Academy, Innovation Schools of Excellence, Magnolia School, Betton Hills Preparatory Academy, Providence Christian Academy; (Panama City) Fellowship Christian Academy, Panama City Christian School; (Lake City) Lake City Christian School; (Jacksonville) Foundation Academy. If I missed anyone, forgive me. THANKS FOR COMING. IT MADE A DIFFERENCE.

The Amicus brief is at: <http://www.ij.org/schoolchoice/florida/index.html> (See amicus briefs on the right side, under "Legal Briefs and Decisions.")

Legislative Initiative

The Coalition was asked to speak before the House Education Innovation Committee on Tuesday, January 25. Robyn Rennick represented The Coalition and presented the Fact Sheet which gives an overview of the program. We felt the committee was very receptive and we continue to ask that they take care that any bills passed do not attempt to over-regulate the McKay Scholarship Program.

We have met with the House staff and are working on an Accountability Bill for the scholarship programs. As bills are filed and begin to go to committees, we will let you know which we feel will be beneficial and with which we are concerned.

Please have your parents organized on email and phone lists to be ready to contact their representatives when we make a call to action.

This is still the BEST time to let your legislators know about The McKay Scholarship Program and the GREAT things it is doing for Florida's children with disabilities. Attached is the fact sheet which is a great instrument to give to parents and have them present to their legislators. **If you haven't done so, set up appointments with your legislators BEFORE they go to Tallahassee for session.** We take for granted that they understand what the McKay Scholarship Program is, but many really do not.

Let The Coalition know who you have seen and what their response was. This will assist us as we talk with them in Tallahassee.

Membership Drive

We have been pleased with the response to our Membership Drive and Renewal. If you have not sent in your membership fees, please do so now. Attached is a membership form and Code of Ethics. Send both back with the fees.