

NORWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
James R. Savage Educational Center
275 Prospect Street
Norwood, MA 02062

PRESS RELEASE

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SCHOOL CHOICE - NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On Wednesday, May 28, 2014, at 7:05 P.M. the Norwood School Committee will be conducting a public hearing to discuss School Choice as outlined in the Education Reform Act of 1993 at the James R. Savage Educational Center, 275 Prospect Street, Norwood, MA in the School Committee Room. All school systems as of July 1, 1994 must participate in School Choice unless the School Committee votes to withdraw.

Background

Massachusetts first established School Choice in the 1991-1992 school year as part of an effort intended to widen public education opportunities for all students in the Commonwealth. The program defines districts as "sending", "receiving" or both. "Receiving Districts" are municipal and regional school districts that choose to participate in the School Choice Program by accepting non-resident students. "Sending Districts" are those which choice students would otherwise have attended. "Receiving Districts" have discretion in determining the number and grade level of the school choice students they accept. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available seats, students must be chosen by lottery or random selection. "Receiving Districts" receive school choice tuition payments from the "Sending District's" local aid distribution. "Sending Districts" are eligible to receive state reimbursement for a portion of school choice tuition payments.

Requirements

The School Choice Program requires each "Receiving School District" to certify to the Department of Education on October 1st and April 1st the number of children attending its public schools in the program and the community in which the child resides. The October enrollment figures are used to determine final school choice assessments; the April figures are used to adjust the final June reimbursements.

Tuition and Assessment

The Education Reform Act of 1993 mandated that tuition for school choice pupils must be deducted from the local aid of the city, town or regional school district where the pupil resides. Both tuition payments and tuition assessments are part of the last three quarterly local aid distributions. Each "Receiving District" receives one third of the tuition due; and each "Sending District" pays one third of the tuition assessed in December, March and June. If a municipality's Chapter 70 funds are insufficient to cover its school choice tuition payment, the law allows the state to deduct the payment from any of the quarterly local aid distributions including lottery, stabilization aid, highway aid and additional assistance.

Another significant change in the School Choice Program affects regional school districts. Prior to FY94, only municipalities were assessed for tuition reimbursement; now regional school districts will also be assessed.

School choice tuition is limited by statute to 75% of the per pupil spending amount in the "Receiving District" with a cap of \$5,000 per student.

Reimbursement

In FY94, under the revised School Choice Plan, districts or municipalities above the Chapter 70 foundation budget established by the Education Reform Act are still eligible to receive reimbursement at 25%. The difference in reimbursement from prior years is that if they have a net loss of greater than 2% of the total school budget they are reimbursed 25%; otherwise they are reimbursed at 0%. The net loss is defined as the net difference between tuition assessed and tuition received in a district or municipality.