

Frequently Asked Questions
Proposed New Funding Model for St. Barnabas School

1. *With this new funding model, if I am a participating parishioner at St. Barnabas and my child is eligible for an Indiana Choice Scholarship, will I have to pay anything toward their tuition?*

No. It will be our goal to ensure parish children will have their tuition costs covered in full by the Indiana Choice Scholarship. There will always be a one-time \$250 registration fee you must pay the first time you enroll your student at St. Barnabas.

2. *What are the criteria to get the participating parishioner tuition rate for my child?*

Your family must be registered as parishioners at St. Barnabas, you must have a current stewardship intent card on file (Covenant Renewal), and you must have a record of tithing to St. Barnabas parish.

3. *What are the criteria to be eligible for the Indiana Choice Scholarship? Who can get this scholarship?*

See the criteria on this same parish website page or at <https://www.in.gov/doi/files/3-Choice-Track-Eligibility-Overview.pdf>. But for illustration purposes an Indiana family of four who makes less than \$222,000 in adjusted gross income is eligible for the scholarship. Families must reapply each year for the Choice Scholarship.

4. *What is the difference between a voucher and the Indiana Choice Scholarship?*

Nothing. They are the same. Voucher was a term used early in the program when it started in 2011, but the state now calls it the Indiana Choice Scholarship.

5. *How much can a St. Barnabas student receive in a Choice Scholarship?*

The amount of the scholarship depends on which school district the student lives in. For instance, if the student resides in the Perry Township school district, their Choice Scholarship pays up to \$6,454 in tuition for the 2023-24 school year. A student in the Center Grove school district can receive a Choice Scholarship for up to \$5,872, and a student in Greenwood school district can get a \$6,227 Choice scholarship.

6. *Why are we moving to this new funding model – I thought our parish finances were good?*

While our parish and school finances are solid, without the additional income from this new funding model for our school, we cannot support the proposed enhancements to our school such as recruiting and retaining our high quality teachers with higher salaries, hiring more instructional assistants for classrooms, purchasing other educational resources, and being better able to pay for capital projects like a new school roof that will likely need to be replaced in 4-5 years and cost about \$300,000.

7. *Are we not abandoning Fr. Sciarra's vision that St. Barnabas is a stewardship parish?*

No. Fr. Sciarra's vision was that any parish family that desired a Catholic education for their child would have that opportunity regardless of their financial situation. With the Choice Scholarship, that vision is still fulfilled. And for any parish family that is not eligible for a Choice Scholarship, we will set aside some parish funds to provide financial assistance if the family has a demonstrated need. Indiana Choice Scholarships did not exist at the founding of our parish in 1965 and so we are blessed with this new opportunity, an opportunity that Fr. Sciarra perhaps never could have imagined.

8. *If we move to this new funding model for our school, are we worried our Sunday collections (tithing) will go down?*

We have faith that will not be the case. This is because as Catholics, we know God calls all of us to tithe regardless of how we fund our school. We know that typically with tithing this means a family gives 5% of their income to their parish and 5% to charities of their choice, with perhaps with 1% of that going to the United Catholic Appeal. Our pastor Fr. Guy Roberts has said we are still a stewardship parish, and he is asking all families to continue to tithe as the parish will continue to support the school with 10-20% of the Sunday collections. Additionally, the parish still needs tithing dollars to keep our facilities open and operating and to fund our outreach and other ministries. So, yes, while we could see a slight drop in tithing, it is our hope that will not be the case with our parish.

9. *What about those families that are not eligible for an Indiana Choice Scholarship, can we do anything for them in this transition to a new model to fund our school?*

Yes. The parish will set aside some parish funds to provide financial aid to parish families not eligible for a Choice Scholarship to help with the transition to this new funding model and who demonstrate a need.

10. *What if the Indiana legislature changes their mind one day and cuts or eliminates the Indiana Choice Scholarship?*

That is always a possibility and if it occurs, Fr. Guy Roberts has said we will pivot and adjust. But Indiana Choice Scholarships have now been in place for 12 years and now there is discussion at the state level about expanding eligibility to everyone, regardless of their income level, which is known as universal choice.

11. *Is this new funding model just a money grab by St. Barnabas?*

No. These are our tax dollars, and in the past, we have not realized the full benefit of those dollars. With the recent expansion on eligibility for the scholarship, it seemed appropriate now to adjust our funding model to take full advantage of our tax dollars so that we can enhance our school with higher salaries for our teachers, hiring more instructional assistants who can work with our students, and purchase more educational resources. We could not do any of those things under our current model and budget.

12. Are we not changing what made St. Barnabas so unique among Catholic parishes with our stewardship model?

While it is true our traditional model for funding our school through use of stewardship dollars was unique among Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese, greater use of Choice Scholarship dollars can allow our parish to still be unique. This is because more of our Sunday collection dollars will stay with our parish and allow us to do more with our worship music, youth ministry, and outreach ministries, which can give us a new opportunity to be unique among Catholic parishes.

13. Doesn't the Indiana Choice Scholarship program take money away from our public schools?

No. According to the Indiana Non-Public Education Association, school choice programs across the country have been proven to save state governments millions – even billions – of dollars. When a student attends a non-public school using a school choice scholarship (voucher), state governments do not have to pay the public school the full cost for providing an education for that student. For the 2021-2022 school year, the state awarded \$241 million in Choice Scholarships, and the average scholarship amount was \$5,439 while state funding for public schools was \$7,968 per student. Public schools receive local taxes for operations, yet non-public schools do not receive those funds. Public schools also retain their local funding, even if those students transfer to a non-public school. This results in cost savings for the state and more money to go around for students remaining in public schools.

14. Will there be strings attached to taking Indiana Choice Scholarships? Will this impede our ability to teach the Catholic faith in our school?

No. St. Barnabas has accepted Indiana Choice Scholarships since their inception in 2011 and we have never been impeded from teaching our Catholic faith. Naturally with any government funding there are compliance and reporting requirements, and we will continue to adhere to those requirements.

15. *How much in our taxpayer dollars were we leaving on the table with our current model of only charging \$1600 per parish student?*

Over \$1 million dollars a year. For the 2023-24 academic year, we have 316 parishioner students and 132 non-parishioner students enrolled in kindergarten through 8th grade (We have 33 Pre-K students, but they are not eligible for a Choice Scholarship.) While our non-parishioner students have paid \$6,966 in tuition this year, our parishioner students have only had to pay \$1600 per year. So, to illustrate, if all 316 of our parish students had paid \$6000 instead of \$1600 in tuition this year, and used a Choice Scholarship if they were eligible, that would have been an additional \$4,400 per parish student or \$1,390,400 in additional income for the school this year (316 X \$4,400).

16. *I understand the proposed enhancements for the school, such as higher teacher salaries and more teachers' aides, but are these more wants than needs? Hasn't our school been doing just fine on our current budget?*

Our teachers and school staff are amazing, and they have done a remarkable job educating our school children and passing on the Catholic faith on our current budget. But the reality is it is difficult to retain our teachers, as we lose teachers almost every year to public schools that pay more. Also, having more instructional assistants in the classrooms will benefit all of our students who can receive even more instructional attention from their teacher. Finally, part of our school was built shortly after the founding of our parish in 1965, and that aging part of our school along with the other parts has on-going facility needs.

17. *How do salaries compare between a St. Barnabas teacher and a Perry Township grade schoolteacher, assuming they both have five years teaching experience and a bachelor's degree?*

The Archdiocese guideline for our teacher calls for a salary of \$39,155 while the public-school guideline for the Perry teacher calls for a salary of \$53,100.

18. *What is the average rate of tuition at area Catholic grade schools for parish students and non-parish students?*

We do not have data for the current 2023-24 school year, but the data for the 2022-23 school year showed that among 10 local Catholic grade schools not including St. Barnabas, parish students paid on average \$5,575 in tuition and non-parish students paid on average \$7,117 in tuition.