



Questions and Answers on the BOOST Scholarship Program

May 17, 2016

The Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program provides scholarships for students who are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program to attend eligible nonpublic schools. The BOOST program was established in March 2016 by the Maryland General Assembly.

1. If a student receives a BOOST scholarship in the 2016-2017 school year, will the student be eligible for BOOST scholarships in future years?

The BOOST program is authorized in Senate Bill 190 (page 128) of the 2016 session. SB 190 is the Fiscal 2017 Budget Bill and serves as law for one fiscal year (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017). Continuance of the BOOST program is contingent upon action taken by the Maryland General Assembly in the next session, which will be January to mid-April 2017.

If the program is renewed, and to the extent that funding is appropriated, MSDE will administer the program so that students who receive a scholarship will continue to receive the scholarship for the years they remain income eligible and enrolled in an eligible school.

2. At which schools can the scholarships be used?

Pages 129-130 of Senate Bill 190 of the 2016 legislative session indicate the requirements for nonpublic schools to participate in the 2016-2017 BOOST Scholarship program.

Click [here](#) for a list of potential participating schools. The list includes schools that are participating in the Fiscal 2016 Nonpublic Textbook and Technology program and that offer programs beyond kindergarten. The schools also will have to certify that they administer certain assessments and that they will comply with certain non-discrimination laws.

3. Can students currently attending an eligible school apply for the scholarships?

Yes, students currently attending an eligible school can apply for the scholarships.

4. Are kindergarten students eligible for the scholarships if they are attending an eligible school?

Yes, kindergarten students are eligible if they attend a school that is participating in the Fiscal 2016 Nonpublic Textbook and Technology program and the school offers educational programs for grades above kindergarten.

5. Are pre-kindergarten students eligible? Are half-day pre-K students eligible?

No, neither half-day nor full-day pre-kindergarten students are eligible.

6. How do I apply?

MSDE has an online application for the 2016-2017 BOOST program. You will need to provide the following as electronic attachments in PDF format to your application:

- Documentation showing your household size and income (see the application for details); and
- Documentation showing that the student has pursued enrollment in an eligible nonpublic school for the 2016-2017 school year. This documentation could include a letter of acceptance/continuation, a letter that the student is on the waiting list, or acknowledgement that an admissions application has been submitted.

If you need assistance with the online application, you may wish to contact the nonpublic school at which you intend to use the scholarship.

Click [here](#) to apply.

7. If I want to apply for scholarships for more than one of my children, can I submit a single application?

No, a separate application must be submitted for each student.

8. How does the program work?

Applications will be reviewed by MSDE to ensure that they are complete. MSDE will compile a list of applicants that ranks eligible students by family income expressed as a percent of the most recent federal poverty levels. MSDE will forward the list to a BOOST Advisory Board that will determine how the scholarship funds are allocated among eligible applicants. Per Senate Bill 190 of the 2016 session (pages 130 – 131), the Advisory Board will have members appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Delegates.

BOOST scholarship checks will be made payable to the parent/guardian, but MSDE intends to send the payment directly to the eligible school that the student will attend. The parent/guardian will need to go to the school and endorse the payment over to the school.

9. If a student changes schools during the course of the school year to another eligible nonpublic school, can the scholarship follow the student to the other eligible school?

Cases where a student changes enrollment from one eligible nonpublic school to another eligible nonpublic school during the course of the school year will need to be handled on a case-by-case basis and will involve the sending school, the receiving school, and MSDE.

10. How is income determined for foster children and children in informal kinship care?

For children in foster care, the BOOST application should be completed with information on the foster parent as the guardian, and the family income should be reported as zero.

For students in informal kinship care, the BOOST application should be completed with information on the relative providing kinship care as the guardian, and the family income of the kinship care family should be reported. The application must include an electronic attachment of an affidavit verifying informal kinship care. Click [here](#) for the MSDE kinship care affidavit form. Kinship care affidavits also can be obtained from the local school district, local department of social services, or local office on aging in the county in which the kinship care family resides.

11. If the student's parents are divorced or separated, which parent information should be submitted in the application?

Information for the parent that claims the child as a dependent on the tax form should be submitted in the application. If income documentation other than a tax form is provided, then information for the parent with primary custody should be submitted in the application.

12. Can a student attending an eligible nonpublic school be considered for a BOOST scholarship if the family resides outside of Maryland?

No, the family must reside in Maryland.