



Ohio School Boards Association



OSBA FAQ on ECOT's closure

What exactly is occurring?

Yesterday, the ESC of Lake Erie West (ESC), which is the sponsor of the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), voted to suspend the operation of the community (charter) school. The sponsor cited ECOT's lack of sufficient financial support, ongoing funding disputes with the Ohio Department of Education and inability to obtain a bond for its fiscal officer as of February, as the basis for its decision. The ESC has also decided to terminate its sponsorship contract with ECOT's governing board.

Immediate results

What does suspension of ECOT's operation mean for ECOT?

Now that the ESC has suspended ECOT's operation, ECOT's governing board is prohibited from operating the school. It immediately must notify employees of the school and parents of enrolled students of the suspension. It must cease all school operations on the next business day (today).

Does suspending operation of the school mean that the school is closed forever?

In this case, probably yes. In most cases, when the sponsor of a school suspends operation of the school, the contract between the sponsor and the school becomes void only if the governing authority fails to submit a proposal to remedy the conditions cited by the sponsor as the reasons for suspension. In those situations, the school's governing authority and the sponsor could reach an agreement that would result in the school's resumption of operation.

However, in this situation, the sponsor has also announced that it will terminate the sponsorship agreement with ECOT. Once the sponsorship agreement is terminated, operation of the school cannot be resumed.

After ESC terminates its contract with ECOT, can ECOT get a new sponsor and continue to operate?

Probably not. According to state law, a community school is prohibited from entering into a contract with a new sponsor if, on its most recent report card issued by the Ohio Department of Education, the school received a grade of "D" or "F" for the performance index score and an overall grade of "D" or "F" for the value-added progress measure of student academic progress. ECOT received a grade of "F" in each of these categories on its 2016-2017 report card.

Results for students

How many students will be affected by ECOT's suspension of operation?

As of October 2017, ODE records state that there were more than 13,400 students enrolled in ECOT. Of those students, almost 1800 are in the elementary grades, about 2400 are in middle school grades, and about 9700 are in high school grades. Twenty percent of the students enrolled at ECOT are students with disabilities and more than 67 percent are economically disadvantaged.

Do ECOT's students still have to attend school?

A student's requirement to attend school does not end when ECOT suspends operation. If a student attends a charter school whose sponsorship contract is terminated, the law requires that the student shall be admitted to the schools of the district the child is entitled to attend. Usually, that is the district in which the child's parent or guardian resides. Deadlines for open enrollment in alternative schools in the district are waived for these students. Students may also be able to enroll in a different charter school.

Can parents of ECOT's students apply for EdChoice Scholarships for the remainder of this school year?

The deadline for EdChoice Scholarships for this school year has passed. However, parents whose children are accepted to a private school for the 2018-19 school year can apply for EdChoice Scholarships if:

- The school building to which their child will be assigned in 2018-19 in the district they are entitled to attend is classified as "low performing"; or
- The student will be attending kindergarten through fifth grade in fall 2018 and the family's household income is at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

The two application periods for 2018-19 EdChoice Scholarships are Feb. 1-Apr. 30 and July 1-31, 2018.

Results for school districts

What does suspension of ECOT's operation mean for the students' districts of residence?

Now that ECOT has suspended operation, the students that were enrolled in ECOT can attend school in the districts they are otherwise entitled to attend.

How many students should districts expect?

The 13,000 students that were enrolled at ECOT come from almost all districts across the state. The districts with the most students enrolled at ECOT are **Columbus City, Cleveland Municipal, Dayton City, Cincinnati City** and **South-Western City**.

Will districts be reimbursed for any portion of the funds distributed to ECOT?

Possibly. When a community school is permanently closed and ceases operation as a community school, the assets of the school shall be distributed to the retirement funds of employees of the school, employees of the school and private creditors who are owed compensation.

If there are any funds remaining after these distributions, the remaining funds shall be paid to ODE for redistribution to the school districts that students enrolled in the school at the time it ceased operation were entitled to attend. The funds must be distributed by ODE to each district in an amount that is proportional to the district's share of the total enrollment in the community school.

OSBA has additional resources available at www.ohioschoolboards.org/ecot-closure.