# Forida Choice Scholarships UNIQUE ABBILITIES SCHOLARSHIP For Students For Students (FES-UA)



This handbook is designed to help you navigate the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities program. Inside, you will find in-depth guidance, from applying for the scholarship to using it in accordance with the law.

If you need assistance along the way, our team is ready to help. The Step Up For Students Customer Engagement Center is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST to support families with any questions or concerns:

# Inquiry Form

Fill out this form to send us a question or message online



## (877) 735-7837

Call us to speak directly with a team member



## Live Chat

Click the red "Online Chat" tab on the right-hand side of our website



Click on any line within the Table of Contents to go directly to the section.

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# **Scholarship Overview**

The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) offers families the opportunity to customize their student's learning via an education savings account.

An education savings account allows public funds to be deposited into a government-authorized savings account for authorized uses. A parent or guardian may use the funds to pay for private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses and other approved services and materials.

# About Step Up For Students

# Our Work

Step Up For Students is a nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization approved by the state of Florida to administer the FES-UA program and other education choice programs. To explore the various programs administered by Step Up For Students and determine which one is the best fit for your family, we invite you to watch these helpful <u>videos</u>.

## **Our Mission**

Beyond administering scholarship programs, our mission is to empower families to access the best possible learning options for their children. Since 2002 we have worked to be deeply integrated in the community, highlighting innovation in education and sharing inspiring family stories. To learn more about how we put our mission into action, please visit our <u>website</u>.

# **Eligibility**

To be eligible for the FES-UA program, a student must:

- ✓ Be age three (3) or older (must turn 3 on or before December 31 of the year the application is submitted) OR be eligible to enroll in a Florida public school (if applicable for their age).
- ✓ Be younger than twenty-two (22) years old.
- ✓ Be a Florida resident OR a dependent child of active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces who has received Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to move to Florida OR a renewing FES-UA student whose parent or guardian is stationed outside of Florida but whose home of record or state of legal residence remains Florida.
- ✓ Have an Individualized Education Plan or a validated diagnosis that identifies one of the following conditions (for the definition, click the condition or view <u>Appendix A</u>):
  - o <u>Anaphylaxis</u>
  - o <u>Autism Spectrum Disorder</u>
  - o <u>Cerebral Palsy</u>
  - o <u>Down Syndrome</u>



- o Emotional or Behavioral Disability
- o <u>Hearing Impairment, including deafness</u>
- o High-Risk Child
- o <u>Hospital or Homebound</u>
- o Identification as Dual Sensory Impaired
- o Intellectual Disability (severe cognitive impairment)
- o Language Impairment
- o <u>Muscular Dystrophy</u>
- o Orthopedic Impairment
- o Other Health Impairment
- o Phelan-McDermid Syndrome
- o Prader-Willi Syndrome
- o Rare Diseases (defined by NORD)
- o Specific Learning Disability
- o Speech Impairment
- o <u>Spina Bifida</u>
- o Traumatic Brain Injury
- o <u>Visual Impairment, including blindness</u>
- o Williams Syndrome

# How To Apply

# Timeline

The table below outlines when new and renewal applicants must submit their applications:

Type of Applicant	Application Period
Renewal Applicants	February 1 to April 30, 2025
New Applicants	February 1 to November 15, 2025

▲ **Important:** Renewal applications submitted after the April 30, 2025 deadline, will be considered a new application.

# **Creating Your EMA Account**

To apply for the scholarship, the parent or guardian must first create an account on EMA (Education Market Assistant).

EMA is Step Up For Students' secure online platform that allows parents and guardians to manage every aspect of their student's scholarship. Through EMA, families can apply for the scholarship program, upload required documents, track scholarship funds, make purchases, and submit reimbursement requests.

To create an EMA account, please follow this video tutorial and this guide.

▲ Important: The parent or guardian must use their own phone number, physical address and email address for their EMA account as use of someone else's contact information is prohibited.

# **Entering Your Information**

New and renewal applicants are required to submit a scholarship application each year through EMA. New applicants must first <u>create an EMA account</u>, while renewal applicants must log in to their existing EMA account to submit a renewal application.

Once logged in to your EMA account, follow this step-by-step <u>guide</u> to fill-out the application, upload required documentation (including proof of age, Florida residency, and diagnosis), sign the Sworn Compliance Statement and Terms & Conditions, and submit.

## ▲ Important:

- A parent or guardian may not apply for the FES-UA and another scholarship program for the same student during the same application period. This includes the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, Personalized Education Program Scholarship, and Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options.
- A scholarship student can only be linked to one parent or guardian account. If the muln the event of a change in guardianship or the passing of a parent or guardian, please contact our <u>Customer Engagement Center</u> to make necessary changes.
- A parent or guardian who plans to switch their student from another scholarship program to the FES-UA program should first check with the school to confirm it accepts the FES-UA.
- Schools and providers may not submit applications or take any action on behalf of a parent or guardian. They are also prohibited from requesting or using login credentials to access the account.

# **Uploading Required Documentation**

As part of the application, parents and guardians must upload documentation to verify eligibility. <u>This checklist</u> details which documents are needed for both new and renewal applications to help ensure a smooth submission process.

Additional guidance is provided below to support families with specific documentation requirements.

## **Qualifying Unique Ability**

To document your student's unique ability, you must submit a copy of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a validated diagnosis that identifies one of the conditions listed in <u>Appendix A</u>.

An IEP must be an official, district provided IEP written within the past three years and in accordance with the rules of the State Board of Education or with the applicable rules of another state.

A validated diagnosis must be documented by one of the following licensed professionals:

- Florida-licensed Physician or physician licensed by another U.S. state or territory
- Florida-licensed Autonomous Advanced Practice Registered Nurse
- Florida-licensed psychologist

## **Requirements for Renewal Applicants**

In most cases, documentation only needs to be submitted once. However, renewal applicants may be required to submit updated documentation if any of the following apply:

- If the student was previously diagnosed as hospital-bound or homebound, an updated IEP must be submitted.
- If the student was previously diagnosed with a dual sensory impairment, an updated IEP must be submitted.
- If the student previously qualified under the high-risk category but will turn six (6) years old on or before September 1 of the upcoming school year, then the student will no longer qualify under that category and documentation of another eligible condition must be submitted.
  - Birth certificates are generally only required for new students between the ages of 3 and 6. However, when a student ages out of the high-risk category at age 6 and submits a new diagnosis, they are treated as a new applicant for eligibility purposes. As a result, a birth certificate will also be required.

# **Active-Duty Military Status**

Dependent children of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces are excluded from the <u>annual scholarship cap</u> and may still apply even if applications have closed due to the program reaching maximum capacity.

To prove the active-duty military status of the parent or guardian, you must upload the Service Member's Leave and Earnings Statement for the month the application was submitted under the *Additional Documents* section of the application.

# Law Enforcement Officer Status

Dependent children of law enforcement officers are excluded from the <u>annual scholarship cap</u> and may still apply even if applications have closed due to the program reaching maximum capacity.

To prove the law enforcement officer status of the parent or guardian, you must upload a photocopy of the law enforcement officer's badge under the *Additional Documents* section of the application.

# **Adoption Status**

An adopted child is excluded from the <u>annual scholarship cap</u> and may still apply even if applications have closed due to the program reaching maximum capacity.



To prove adoption status, you must upload a copy of an Adoption Decree or other similar legal documentation under the *Additional Documents* section of the application.

## **Foster Status**

A foster child is excluded from the <u>annual scholarship cap</u> and may still apply even if applications have closed due to the program reaching maximum capacity.

To prove foster status, you must upload a copy of Foster Placement Documentation or other similar legal documentation under the *Additional Documents* section of the application.

# Residency For Active-Duty Military Who Received Permanent Change of Station Orders To Move To Florida

Dependent children of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces who received Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to move to Florida but have not yet established Florida residency are eligible for the FES-UA program.

To provide proof of residency, you must:

- Upload PCS orders in the *Proof of Residency* section of the application.
- Ensure the physical Florida address in the parent or guardian profile matches the Florida unit address listed on the PCS orders.
- Contact Step Up For Students at (877) 735-7837 once Florida residency is established to upload an updated proof of residency document as scholarship funds will not be disbursed until updated proof of residency is received and the address is also reflected on the parent or guardian profile.

You may also visit our dedicated military family webpage for more information.

## Residency For Active-Duty Military Who Are Stationed Outside of Florida

Renewal applicants for the FES-UA program whose parent or guardian is stationed outside of Florida are eligible if their home of record or state of legal residence is still Florida.

To provide proof of residency, you must:

- List the address of the Florida base from which you were relieved in your parent or guardian profile.
- Upload your PCS orders in the *Proof of Residency* section of the application.
- Confirm that your home of record or legal residence remains in Florida by uploading either your Leave and Earnings Statement or IRS Form 2058 (Domicile Declaration).

You may also visit our dedicated military family webpage for more information.

**Important:** A parent or guardian with a legal domicile in Florida but who is currently on orders to another state are not eligible to apply for the scholarship for the first time.



# Submitting Your Application

Before submitting the application, parents and guardians should carefully review all the information they have entered for accuracy. Providing false or misleading information may result in a revocation of the scholarship and may be punishable as a crime.

To complete the application submission, the parent or guardian must agree to the Terms and Conditions and sign the Sworn Compliance Statement, acknowledging you will follow all applicable Florida statutes, rules established by the Florida Department of Education, and Step Up For Students guidelines.

# **Eligibility Notification**

After the application has been submitted, Step Up For Students will notify the parent or guardian by email and on a rolling basis whether the student is eligible for the scholarship.

If the student may be eligible but documentation is required to confirm eligibility, Step Up For Students will place the application on hold and notify the parent or guardian by email. If the student is determined ineligible, the reason will be available on your EMA account. For questions or further support regarding the eligibility notification, please contact our <u>Customer Engagement Center</u>.

# Prioritization

Scholarships are reviewed in the following order of priority:

- 1. Renewal applicants, students who received FES-UA scholarship funds during the immediately preceding school year.
- 2. New applicants, students who did not receive an FES-UA scholarship or declined the scholarship during the immediately preceding school year.

# How To Accept The Scholarship

Upon receiving notification from Step Up For Students that the student is eligible, Florida law requires the parent or guardian to accept or decline the scholarship by a certain date.

# Timeline

The table below outlines when new and renewal applicants must accept or deny the scholarship by:

Type of Applicant Decision Required By	
Renewal Applicants	May 31, 2025
New Applicants	December 31, 2025



## Process

Upon receiving notification from Step Up For Students that the student is eligible, the parent or guardian must log into their EMA account to accept or deny the scholarship.

# **Award Notification**

After the scholarship has been accepted, Step Up For Students will notify the parent or guardian by email and on a rolling basis whether their student has been awarded a scholarship or if the scholarship program has reached capacity.

The sections below detail the FES-UA program's capacity limitation and categories of students that are exempt from the capacity limit.

# **Capacity Limitation**

Florida law caps the number of scholarships available each school year so if the number of applications exceeds program capacity, not all eligible students may be awarded a scholarship.

Step Up For Students strongly encourages parents and guardians to submit their application and all required documentation as early as possible since applications may close before the published application deadlines if capacity is reached.

# **Capacity Exceptions**

Florida law allows certain categories of students to be excluded from the annual scholarship cap, meaning they may still apply even if applications have closed due to the program reaching maximum capacity.

If a parent or guardian indicates their student falls into one of these categories during the application process, a prompt will appear to upload the required documentation for verification. Some exceptions require the parent or guardian to provide documentation, please refer to the <u>Uploading Required Documentation</u> section of the handbook for specific instructions.

Eligible capacity exceptions include:

- Dependents of a law enforcement officer as defined in s. <u>943.10(1)</u>, F.S.
- Dependents of an active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces.
- Adopted child.
- Foster child.
- Students who received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program described in s. <u>1002.66</u>, F.S. during the previous school year and have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed by the district school board in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education. This is verified by the Florida Department of Education, so uploading documentation is not required.



- Students who spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. This is verified by the Florida Department of Education, so uploading documentation is not required.
- Students who received a John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities in the 2021-22 school year. This status is recorded, so uploading documentation is not required.

**Important:** Applicants may experience a delay in application processing while their documentation is reviewed and verified.

# **Enrollment Requirements After Being Awarded**

Once awarded a scholarship, parents and guardians should print the notice for their records.

To receive and use scholarship funds, the student must be enrolled in one of the following programs that meets Florida's regular school attendance requirements:

- An eligible private school
- A home education instructional program registered with their local school district

# **Public School Enrollment Prohibition**

A student cannot be enrolled in a public school at the same time they are receiving and using scholarship funds, so parents and guardians should ensure proper public school withdrawal. To do this, you may request that the district or charter school complete the <u>Standard Withdrawal</u> Form for Students Entering K-12 Scholarships (Form IEPC-SWF) in accordance with Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.0952.

▲ Important: A student cannot receive both a state-funded FES-UA scholarship and be reported enrolled in a public school. This is prohibited, as it would constitute the student being funded by the state twice. However, FES-UA scholarship students may access individual classes and services provided by a public school or district as long as the cost is covered by the student. The cost can be covered using FES-UA scholarship funds or by paying out-of-pocket. Parents or guardians of scholarship students who participate in classes at a public school must ensure that the public school or district reports the student as privately paying. Otherwise, the student may be incorrectly reported as enrolled in public school, which could result in the loss of the scholarship.

Florida public schools include:

- A charter school
- A developmental research or laboratory school
- Any other Florida public school
- Florida Virtual School or any other online public school as a non-private-pay student
- The SEED School of Miami
- a College-Preparatory Boarding Academy



- The Florida Scholars Academy
- The Florida School For The Deaf and The Blind
- Early Steps Extended Option

# **Voluntary Prekindergarten Enrollment**

Students may use the FES-UA scholarship and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program at an eligible private school at the same time.

• Students may not use an FES-UA scholarship and VPK's Specialized Instructional Services (VPK-SIS) at the same time.

# How To Get Your Scholarship Funds

The process for receiving scholarship funds depends on whether the student is enrolled in a private school or participating in a home education program. Please refer to the section that applies to your student.

# **Students In Private School**

Parents and guardians of students that will be enrolled in a private school full-time or part-time can choose between either direct billing through EMA or paying out of pocket and requesting reimbursement. The sections below detail the process for each option.

## **Direct Billing in EMA**

Full-time private schools may choose to create an account in EMA and offer families the option to use direct billing. If your student plans to attend a private school that participates in EMA for direct billing, you must follow the steps below to receive scholarship funds.

First, you must contact the private school and provide them with your student's <u>Award ID</u> which will be provided to you on your EMA account upon being awarded the scholarship. The school will then enroll the student in EMA using the tuition and fee rate agreed upon by both the school and the parent. Once the school completes the enrollment, the parent or guardian will receive a notification to confirm it.

After the enrollment is confirmed, an invoice will be generated each quarter. Both the school and the parent or guardian must review and approve each invoice to verify its accuracy. Once approved by both parties, scholarship funds will be disbursed to the private school. If the parent

## **Option to Pay Out of Pocket**

If the parent or guardian chooses to pay the private school directly, no additional steps are required for funds to be deposited into the student's scholarship account. The parent or guardian will pay for eligible expenses out of pocket and then submit a reimbursement request through EMA to be reimbursed from the student's scholarship account.

# Home Education Students

For students registered in a home education program with their school district, no further action is needed for scholarship funds to be deposited into the student's scholarship account.

# **Funding Amount**

Scholarship funding amounts are determined annually by the Florida Legislature. Step Up For Students will publish the funding amounts as soon as they are available. In the meantime, families may refer to this <u>2024-25 funding chart</u> for a general idea of funding amounts from the immediately preceding school year.

A student's scholarship funding amount is based on three factors:

- The student's grade level
- The student's county of residence
- The student's matrix level of services

The funding amount based on the student's grade level and county of residence will be determined by Quarter 1 funding, and any grade level or county changes made after Quarter 1 funding will not impact funding for that school year.

The sections that follow provide additional information about how the matrix level of services affects the funding amount.

## Matrix Level of Services

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are assigned a matrix level between 1 and 5 (also referred to as 251 and 255), which determines the level of support they would receive in a public school.

Students with a matrix level of 1, 2, or 3 (251, 252, or 253), or who qualify for the scholarship using a diagnosis from a medical or mental health professional, receive funding based on the average per-student special education funding amount in their local school district.

Students with a matrix level of 4 or 5 (254 or 255) receive higher funding amounts based on their needs.

A student's matrix level of services must be developed and submitted by a Florida school district to the Florida Department of Education. The Florida Department of Education will then notify Step Up For Students once a matrix level is assigned or revised so the scholarship reflects the appropriate amount.

Step Up For Students is not involved in the development of matrix level of services. We only receive the information to appropriately fund the scholarship. Please see the information below that may be pertinent to your situation.

#### How to Request a New or Revise an Existing IEP and Matrix Level of Services

If the student does not have an IEP and matrix level of services, the parent or guardian can request an evaluation for their student from their local school district at any time. If the student has an existing IEP and matrix level of services, the parent or guardian can request a reevaluation to revise the IEP and matrix level of services once every three years. A school district may change a matrix of services only if the change is a result of an IEP reevaluation or to correct a technical, typographical, or calculation error.

Once the parent or guardian makes the request, Florida law requires the local school district to:

- Complete the IEP and matrix level of services within thirty (30) days after receiving notice of the parent or guardian's request.
- Notify the parent or guardian and the Florida Department of Education within ten (10) calendar days after its completion.

The Florida Department of Education will then notify the parent or guardian and Step Up For Students of the amount of the funds awarded within ten (10) days after receiving the school district's notification of the student's matrix level.

Step Up For Students will update the matrix level on the student's application and, if applicable, adjust the amount of scholarship funding.

#### Federal Special Education Law

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides important procedural safeguards for students with disabilities.

FES-UA scholarship students are considered parentally placed private school or home education students under IDEA, which means their rights and access to services differ from those of students enrolled in public schools. Specifically, school districts are not required to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to these students.

FES-UA scholarship students may be entitled to special education services provided by their local school district under Part B of IDEA. To access these services, the student must have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that identifies a qualifying need, or undergo an evaluation conducted by the school district.

Parents or guardians may contact their <u>local school district's special education department</u> or Parentally Privately Placed office for to request an evaluation or inquire about available services. Although school districts are not required to evaluate non-public school students, FES-UA scholarship students are entitled to an IEP or matrix level of services developed by their local district. As such, school districts may use evaluations completed by private, licensed providers to develop an IEP or matrix level of services for the student. For more information, refer to the Florida Department of Education's guide on <u>Student's Matrix of Services</u>.



## Former Gardiner & McKay Scholarship Recipients

Students who received a Gardiner or McKay Scholarship during the 2020–21 school year will receive the amount the student received for the 2020-2021 school year or the newly <u>calculated</u> <u>amount for the current school year</u>, whichever is greater.

In your EMA account, you will see two different amounts: the Award Amount and the Funding Amount. The Award Amount is an estimate of total funding based on the details submitted in your application, while the Funding Amount shows the actual amount being deposited into your student's scholarship account each quarter. These amounts may not always match for students who are grandfathered from the 2020–2021 school year. While we have made efforts to correct discrepancies, if the Award Amount appears incorrect, please refer to the Funding Amount to verify what your student will receive.

## **Funding Schedule**

Scholarship funds are deposited into students' scholarship accounts on a quarterly basis. Step Up For Students receives funds from the State of Florida according to the schedule below and will then deposit the funds into students' scholarship accounts within two weeks.

Quarter	Type of Scholarship Student	Step Up For Students Receives Funds
Quarter 1	Renewal students	August 1
Quarter 1	New students	September 1
Quarter 2	All students	November 1
Quarter 3	All students	February 1
Quarter 4	All students	April 1

**Important:** In the event of a delay in a scheduled deposit, the disbursement may still be processed at a later date.

# **Funding Proration**

Scholarship funding will be prorated based on the date the student is awarded a scholarship. Below is a breakdown of the proration:

- Students awarded a scholarship by October 15, 2025, will receive 100% of the total funding amount for that school year.
- Students awarded a scholarship by January 15, 2026, will receive 50% of the total funding amount for that school year.
- If a student is not awarded a scholarship by January 15, 2026, they will not be funded for the 2025-2026 school year.



# **Funding Rollover & Balance Limits**

Unspent scholarship funds may be rolled over from one school year to the next. However, Florida law prohibits depositing additional funds into a student's scholarship account if the scholarship account balance exceeds \$50,000.

# **Accrued Interest**

Florida law requires Step Up For Students to track any interest earned on a student's scholarship account and apply it to the account balance. The earned interest will be deposited into the student's scholarship account based on the quarter in which it was earned.

Interest Accrual Period	Earned Interest Deposit Date
July - September	October 31
October - December	January 31
January - March	April 30
April - June	July 31

The table below shows the interest deposit schedule:

# **Funding Errors and Adjustments**

If excess funds are mistakenly deposited into a student's scholarship account, Step Up For Students will recover the excess funds by adjusting future funding. Parents and guardians should monitor their student's account carefully and should avoid spending funds that may have been deposited in error.

If a student switches scholarship programs mid-year, Step Up For Students may also recover excess funds associated with their previous scholarship.

# Funding Transfers Among SFOs

Students may only receive scholarship funding from one Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) at a time.

A parent or guardian may choose to transfer from one SFO to another. The steps required to transfer depend on your situation, so please refer to the section below that applies to your student.

If a student completes a transfer, please note the transfer of funds may take several weeks.

## Student Applied with Another SFO and Has Not Been Funded

If the parent or guardian applied with a scholarship funding organization (SFO) other than Step Up For Students, and the student has not yet been awarded a scholarship or received any funds,



they must first decline the pending scholarship with the current SFO before applying through Step Up For Students.

## Student Applied with Another SFO, Has Been Funded and Wants to Transfer

If the student has already been awarded a scholarship and received funds through another SFO, the parent or guardian must first submit a new application through Step Up For Students and receive eligibility confirmation. Once eligibility has been confirmed, the parent or guardian should then contact the current SFO to request a scholarship transfer to Step Up For Students.

## **Funding Discontinuation**

No additional funds will be deposited into a student's scholarship account if the student becomes ineligible. A student becomes ineligible if any of the following apply:

- Are found to be enrolled in a public school
- Graduate from high school
- Turn 22 years old on or before July 1 of the upcoming school year

## **Funding Revocation**

A student's scholarship account will be closed and remaining funds, including any contributions to the Florida Prepaid College Plan or the Florida 529 Savings Program, will be returned to the state if any of the following occurs:

- The Florida Department of Education Commissioner deems the student ineligible due to fraud or abuse
- Three consecutive years pass after high school graduation without enrollment in an eligible postsecondary program
- Two consecutive fiscal years (July 1 June 30) pass with no spending activity from the student's account

## How to Spend Your Scholarship Funds

There are several methods a parent or guardian can use to spend scholarship funds:

- Direct billing for full-time private school through EMA
- Direct billing for services through *Find Providers* on EMA Marketplace
- Purchasing products directly through *MyScholarShop* on EMA Marketplace
- Paying out of pocket for eligible expenses and requesting reimbursement

The EMA Marketplace connects you to products and services that have been pre-approved as eligible expenses for scholarship funds. There are two options in the EMA Marketplace:

- *MyScholarShop* allows you to purchase eligible instructional materials and curriculum.
- *Find Providers* allows you to purchase services, such as tutoring and therapy, from pre-approved vendors.

Prior to spending funds, parents and guardians should ensure:



- The item or service being purchased is an eligible expense. (If a purchase was previously approved due to error, under another program, or under a previous year's rules, that does not mean it will be approved in the future.
- The student has available funds in their account to cover the purchase amount. may view their account balance on EMA. A family cannot receive reimbursements for amounts that exceed the available balance in the student's account.

▲ Important: Step Up For Students approves purchases and reimbursement requests in accordance with Florida statutes related to the scholarship program, rules set by the Florida Department of Education, and internal policies and procedures.

# Eligible Expenses

 Scholarship funds must be used for eligible expenses that meet the individual educational needs of the student. For a comprehensive list and detailed guidance on eligible expenses, please consult the <u>Purchasing Guide</u>. For a summary chart of eligible expenses and payment types, please refer to <u>Appendix B</u> of this handbook.

The following categories of items and services are eligible expenses:

- Instructional materials
- Curriculum and curriculum materials
- Specialized services
- Tuition and fees:
  - At an eligible private school
  - For home education instructional programs\*
  - At an <u>eligible post-secondary institution</u>, including those participating in the <u>National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)</u>
  - At a Florida Department of Education approved pre-apprenticeship program
  - For a dual enrollment program that is creditable toward high school completion and a career certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree under <u>Florida Statute 1007.271</u>. <u>More information is available from the Florida</u> <u>Department of Education</u>.
  - For a private tutoring program
  - For part-time tutoring services or Choice Navigator services
  - o At an approved online or virtual provider
  - As a private pay student for Florida Virtual School (FLVS)
- Standardized testing and academic fees, including test administration and proctoring
- Contributions to approved college savings programs
  - o Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program
  - Florida 529 Savings Program
- Contracted services provided by a public school or school district
- Fees for specialized summer education programs
- Fees for specialized after-school education programs
- Transition services provided by job coaches



- Annual home education evaluation fees
- Tuition and fees for an approved VPK Program provider, an approved School Readiness provider, or an eligible private school
- Fees for horse therapy
- Fees for music and art therapy

\*Note: For purposes of the scholarship program, a home education instructional program as an authorized use of funds is different than a home education program as defined in s. 1002.01(1), F.S.

## How to Use Direct Billing

#### **Private School**

Parents and guardians of students that will be enrolled in an eligible private school full-time or part-time can choose to pay the private school by either direct billing through EMA or paying out of pocket and requesting reimbursement. A list of eligible private schools can be found in the <u>Florida Private Schools Directory</u>.

#### **Full-Time Private School**

Full-time private schools may choose to create an account in EMA and offer families the option to use direct billing. If your student plans to attend a full-time, in-person private school that participates in EMA for direct billing, you'll need to follow a few steps to ensure successful payment to the private school.

First, you must contact the private school and provide them with your student's <u>Award ID</u> which will be provided to you on your EMA account upon being awarded the scholarship. The school will then enroll the student in EMA using the tuition and fee rate agreed upon by both the school and the parent. Once the school completes the enrollment, the parent or guardian will receive a notification to confirm it.

After the enrollment is confirmed, an invoice will be generated each quarter. Both the school and the parent or guardian must review and approve each invoice to verify its accuracy. Once approved by both parties, scholarship funds will be disbursed to the private school within seven (7) business days.

#### <u> Important:</u>

- If a student attends the school for at least 10 days during a quarterly payment period, the school will receive the full distribution for that quarter.
- The agreed-upon tuition rate between the private school and the parent or guardian may not exceed the school's published rate for the student's grade level.
- Some private schools may offer financial assistance, so the agreed-upon rate may include discounts or other considerations.



- If the school's tuition exceeds the scholarship award amount, the parent or guardian is responsible for covering the difference, either by working directly with the school or by using available rollover funds in the scholarship account.
- The student's scholarship award is allocated for the private school's tuition and fees and applied to the quarterly payments before any remaining funds can be used for other eligible expenses.

## Part-Time Private School

Part-time private schools may choose to create a service offering on EMA and offer families the option to use direct billing. If your student plans to attend a part-time, in-person private school that participates in EMA for direct billing, you'll need to follow a few steps to ensure successful payment to the private school.

First, you must log in to your EMA account and click *Marketplace* on the left-hand side of the dashboard. Click *Find Providers* to search for your student's school. Next, you must select your student using the dropdown arrow in the *Select Student* box. Be sure to choose the correct student for whom you are reserving tuition and fees. Use the filters to select *Eligible Private School* as the service category and *Tuition* as the service type, then click search.

Select your student's school from the list and choose the correct location from the dropdown. Review the tuition rate listed by the school, select the quantity, and click *Add to Cart.* Please note, you must have sufficient funds to reserve services.

Click the shopping cart icon, review your selections, and click *Reserve Funds*. Check the *Yes* box and click *Confirm* to give the school access to your contact information and reserve funds. Once funds are reserved, the provider can submit payment for services without further guardian approval.

For more guidance on the part-time private school direct option, please watch this brief video.

▲ Important: Tuition and fees for <u>Personalized Education Program Hybrid Schools</u> are not eligible expenses under the FES-UA program.

## Full-Time or Part-Time Pre-Kindergarten

Beginning the 2025-2026 school year, scholarship funds can be used for full-time or part-time in-person pre-kindergarten programs offered by an eligible private school. The private schools may choose to create an account in EMA and offer families the option to use direct billing. If your student plans to attend a pre-kindergarten program that participates in EMA for direct billing, you'll need to follow the below steps to ensure successful payment to the private school.

First, you must contact the private school and provide them with your student's <u>Award ID</u> which will be provided to you on your EMA account upon being awarded the scholarship. The school will then enroll the student in EMA using the tuition and fee rate agreed upon by both

the school and the parent. Once the school completes the enrollment, the parent or guardian will receive a notification to confirm it.

After the enrollment is confirmed, an invoice will be generated each quarter. Both the school and the parent or guardian must review and approve each invoice to verify its accuracy. Once approved by both parties, scholarship funds will be disbursed to the private school within seven (7) business days.

## **Transferring Among Private Schools**

Students who do enroll in private schools may transfer their scholarships between participating private schools. If a parent or guardian is not satisfied with the private school they have chosen, they may find another one.

Before a parent or guardian withdraws their student from the private school, they should notify the school and understand the school's transfer policy.

A student may not be enrolled in a new eligible private school in EMA until the student has been withdrawn from the prior school in EMA.

The transfer process may include final payment to the private school the student is leaving. If a payment is owed to that school, it must be approved by the parent or guardian. If the school has been overpaid, Step Up For Students will invoice the school for the overpayment.

If a student transfers to a different participating school in the same quarter, the first school the student attended for ten (10) days or more during that <u>quarter</u> will receive the full quarter's payment.

Quarter	Dates
Quarter 1	July 1 — September 30
Quarter 2	October 1 — December 31
Quarter 3	January 1 — March 31
Quarter 4	April 1 — June 30

The parent or guardian and the two schools may negotiate any amount owed to the new school from the quarterly payment made to the first school. This is not required, but, in the spirit of partnership for the good of the student, is highly recommended.

Parents or guardians should allow five (5) business days for the current school to withdraw the student. If the student has not been withdrawn after five business days, please <u>contact our</u> <u>Customer Engagement Center</u>.



## Services

Step Up For Students allows parents and guardians to pay directly for some eligible educational services. Providers wishing to participate in direct billing payment for educational services from scholarship students must set up a provider account in EMA and submit a service catalog.

Requests for payment directly to a provider may only be approved after the service has been rendered.

## Individual Classes, Extracurricular Activities, or Services At Another Private School

Students enrolled full-time at a private school may use any scholarship funds remaining after paying for full-time tuition and fees to take individual classes or participate in extracurricular activities at another eligible private school. Eligible expenses include academic services, athletics, clubs, activities, individual classes, and testing.

Each class or activity must be paid for through the school's EMA Marketplace account or by reimbursement.

## **M** Important:

- Students must not enroll in multiple private schools as a full-time student.
- Payments made to a non-eligible private school will not be reimbursed.

## Florida 529 College Savings Plans

A request for direct payment must include a Florida 529 College Savings Plan account statement with the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Scholarship student's Florida 529 College Savings Plan account number
- Account type (this must be an Uniform Transfers to Minors Act (UTMA) or Uniform Gifts to Minors Act (UGMA) account)

In EMA the parent or guardian should use *Find A Provider*, select the student for whom they wish to make a contribution, and then select "Florida 529 College Savings Plan" from the dropdown menu.

Direct contribution requests must be submitted by the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month and will be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification monthly before each payment is made. The student's name listed on the scholarship account must match the name of the beneficiary of the Florida 529 College Savings account.

Any requests received after the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month will not be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification until the following month.

FES-UA scholarship funds deposited into a Florida 529 College Plan may only be used to pay for postsecondary expenditures and may not be used for K - 12 expenditures, including at any private school.



For a step-by-step guide on Florida 529 College Savings Plan, please visit this video.

## How to Use MyScholarShop

MyScholarShop allows you to purchase eligible instructional materials and curriculum.

Parents and guardians can log in to EMA to access MyScholarShop, which becomes accessible within a few weeks after funds are deposited into a student's account

If an item is not in MyScholarShop or the program <u>Purchasing Guide</u>, it may still be an eligible expense. If an item is in MyScholarShop, it may not be an eligible item for all scholarship programs..

If a parent pays out of pocket for an item identical to one available through MyScholarShop, but pays a lower price, the parent must be reimbursed for that item.

Parents or guardians should submit a pre-authorization form if they are unsure an item is eligible.

#### MyScholarShop Guidelines

- The parent or guardian should ensure they have enough available funds in the scholarship account to cover the entire purchase.
- If an item requires pre-authorization, the pre-authorization request must be approved before a parent or guardian places the order. The approved pre-authorization number must be included in the appropriate field to avoid a delay or denial of order.
- If an item has an associated purchasing rule, such as size or frequency limitation, those same rules apply in MyScholarShop.
- MyScholarShop orders will ship to the mailing address listed in the guardian profile in EMA. If the mailing address has been recently updated, please confirm the address before placing the order.
- Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny purchase requests.
- These policies do not apply to in-store purchases or purchases from vendor websites.

#### MyScholarShop Returns

Returns are completed through the vendor they were purchased from and not through Step Up For Students. Individual vendors list their return policies and instructions in MyScholarShop. Please note that items may not be returned to the store.

Once the vendor has received the item, it may take up to a few weeks for the funds to be credited to the student's scholarship account.

#### **How To Request Reimbursement**

Parents or guardians who choose to pay for eligible tuition and fees, items or services out of pocket may apply to have those expenditures reimbursed from their student's scholarship account.

Parents and guardians will submit all reimbursement requests through the EMA Marketplace. Step-by-step instructions for submitting a reimbursement request in EMA are <u>available here</u>.

## <u> Important:</u>

- Products or services paid for by another agency or source (for example, health insurance, Healthcare Savings Accounts (HSAs), or a School Readiness program) may not be submitted for reimbursement.
- Step Up For Students approves reimbursement within the guidance of Florida statutes related to the scholarship program, as well as Florida Department of Education rules and Step Up For Students policies and procedures and reserves the right to close or deny any reimbursement request submitted for payment.

## **Reimbursement Timeline**

Scholarship funding and reimbursements follow the fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30. Requests for reimbursements using scholarship funds from the 2025-2026 school year must be submitted by July 31, 2026.

The table below shows when eligible purchases can be made and when corresponding reimbursement requests must be submitted. Parents and guardians should allow up to sixty (60) days for reimbursement requests to be reviewed and processed after all required documentation has been submitted.

Reimbursement Type	Eligible Purchase Window	Reimbursement Request Window
Reimbursements	July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026	July 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026
Eligible Reimbursements Before Scholarship Year Begins	Any time before July 1, 2025	July 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026
Eligible Reimbursements for Advance Services	Within 4 months of the reimbursement request, or within 1 year if the provider attests the service is nonrefundable	July 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026

## Eligible Reimbursements Before Scholarship Year Begins

The categories listed below are eligible to be purchased in advance, but reimbursement requests must be submitted between July 1 and June 30 of the year the student is awarded a scholarship. This is intended to give families flexibility to plan ahead, while ensuring that the correct year's scholarship funds are used.

• Eligible Private School Tuition and Fees



- Home Education Instructional Program Tuition and Fees
- Public School Contracted Services
- Dual Enrollment Classes
- Full-Time Private Tutoring
- Postsecondary Institution Tuition and Fees
- State-Approved Virtual Instruction Provider
- State-Approved Online Course
- Curriculum

## **Eligible Reimbursements for Advance Services**

Parents and guardians can submit a reimbursement request for services up to four months in advance. For example, if a tutor asks for payment in advance, a parent can apply on August 15 for reimbursement of tutoring fees paid through December 15. An invoice showing specific dates or a general term like "semester 1" may both be accepted, as long as the service period falls within the four-month limit.

Requests submitted for services more than four months in advance may be approved through the remainder of the school year, up to one year, if the provider attests that the services paid in advance are non-refundable. In this case, the parent or guardian must submit a signed and dated letter from the provider stating the payment is non-refundable or submit published policies from the provider showing these requirements.

#### **Reimbursement Process**

After you submit a reimbursement, it will progress through these statuses:

- Submitted: Step Up For Students has received the reimbursement request.
- In Review: Step Up For Students is reviewing the reimbursement request.
- **Approved:** The reimbursement request will be fulfilled and paid to the parent or guardian from the student's scholarship account via direct deposit (ACH). Payment can also be received by check or PayPal.
  - If direct deposit (ACH) is selected, the parent or guardian will be asked to submit personal banking information. If an ACH payment is rejected by the banking institution, the funds will revert to the student's scholarship account after thirty (30) days.
  - Reimbursements for multiple scholarship students on multiple scholarship programs will be paid separately.
- Denied: The reimbursement request will not be fulfilled for the identified purchase. Step Up For Students will provide the denial reason via email to the email address in EMA. Common denial reasons include incorrect or insufficient documentation for the purchase, or the purchase was submitted using the wrong category. Please refer to the <u>How To Appeal A Denied Reimbursement</u> section for information on the appeals process.



• On Hold: The reimbursement request needs further action, information, or documentation from the parent or guardian. Step Up For Students will provide information via email to the email address in EMA. If additional documents are requested for an On Hold reimbursement and none are submitted within thirty (30) days, it will automatically be denied, and the parent or guardian will need to submit a new reimbursement request.

## How To Appeal A Denied Reimbursement

If a reimbursement request is denied, the parent or guardian may appeal the decision once by submitting a new reimbursement request, noting in the description box it is an appeal or reconsideration request, and providing additional documentation.

After the appeal decision is made, additional appeals for the same item will not be reviewed.

Step Up For Students is unable to review appeals or resubmission requests that are sent via email or through any other customer service channel.

Reimbursement requests placed on hold for longer than thirty (30) days after a request for additional documentation will be denied and need to be submitted again.

#### Submitting Reimbursement Supporting Documentation

For a reimbursement request to be approved, the parent or guardian will need to upload two documents:

- 1. Proof of payment.
- 2. Eligible use of scholarship funds.

Step Up For Students may request additional documentation or clarification when the reimbursement request is reviewed. The parent or guardian will be notified by email to the email address in EMA.

#### Supporting Documentation for Proof of Payment

The following documents can serve as proof that the parent or guardian paid for the purchase:

- Credit card receipt showing the full transaction date (mm/dd/yy), provider name, and amount.
- Credit card/bank statement showing the full transaction date (mm/dd/yy), provider name, and amount.
- PayPal receipt showing the full purchase date (mm/dd/yy), provider name, amount, and funding source.
- Copy of the front and back of the cleared check showing the full payment date (mm/dd/yy), provider name, and amount. When submitting a copy of a cleared check, black out the routing and account numbers.

An invoice that does not show it has been paid in full and does not show the means of payment (such as the number of the credit or debit card used), will not count as proof of payment.

If the provider's name on the proof of payment does not match the provider listed on the invoice or receipt, supporting documentation from the provider will be required to explain the difference (this can be in the form of a letter).

## Proof of Payment For Private School Tuition Using Tuition Management Systems

A private school's tuition management system (e.g. FACTS, Blackbaud, TADS) may include the information needed to provide proof of payment.

The billing statement should include:

- School's name and address
- Scholarship student's first and last name as listed in EMA
- Description of each payment to be reimbursed (including but not limited to tuition, registration fee, book fees, etc.)
- Amount of each transaction
- Date of full payment (mm/yy)
- Amount of each transaction.

A tuition management system account may show activity related to multiple students and transactions. Each reimbursement request should include the specific scholarship student, and the specific transactions, for which the parent or guardian is seeking reimbursement.

If a private school's tuition management system groups students by family and does not show spending for individual students, a parent or guardian can submit an invoice from the school with appropriate documentation as stated in <u>Tuition and Fees at an Eligible Private School</u>.

#### Proof of Payment for Cash, Checks, & Private Sellers

Cash payments to a provider require a signed, dated letter from the provider on their letterhead that includes:

- Provider's name
- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Description of service (tuition, registration, etc.)
- Date of full payment (mm/dd/yy)
- Amount of purchase
- Method of payment (cash/check).

Requests for reimbursement of cash purchases from private sellers that are not affiliated with a company or institution (garage sale, Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, private tutors, private therapists) will be denied.

When making purchases from private sellers, payment in the form of a personal or cashier's check, money order, PayPal, Venmo or other electronic payment method is required. This form of payment provides verification of the purchase, which is required for reimbursement.

When submitting a cashier's check, a copy of the cashier's check or a bank receipt confirming the purchase is required.

#### Proof of Payment for Credit Card Points, Gift Cards, & Cash Equivalents

Purchases made using reward or loyalty points, credits, or gift cards may only be eligible for reimbursement if the proof of payment clearly shows the cash value of the payment method.

For example: A parent or guardian makes an eligible purchase for \$40.48. They pay \$30 with their credit card and \$10.48 using reward points.

They can be reimbursed for the full purchase price of \$40.48 if the receipt from their purchase clearly shows a full price of \$40.48, and the full purchase was for eligible expenses.

If the receipt does not show the full purchase price, they can only be reimbursed for \$30 – the portion paid with a credit card.

#### **Proof of Payment For Installment Payments**

If an approved purchase is made using layaway, an installment plan, or a buy now pay later service, such as Klarna or Affirm, Step Up For Students cannot reimburse the full purchase amount until all payments have been made.

However, each installment payment on the approved purchase is eligible for reimbursement once the payment has been made.

Note: Parents or guardians utilizing a payment plan for Florida Theme Park admission must wait until the ticket or pass has been paid in full (or up to \$299) before submitting their reimbursement request.

#### Supporting Documentation for Eligible Use of Scholarship Funds

#### Instructional Materials, Curriculum, or Curriculum Materials

The invoice or receipt must include:

- Item(s) purchased
- Full date of purchase, including year
- Place of purchase
- Amount of the purchase, including item price, subtotal, taxes, fees, discounts, and total
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

If there are several items listed on the receipt, underline or highlight the item(s) the reimbursement request is for. If possible, purchase the item(s) in a different transaction.

#### Internet Resources (Including Mobile Hot Spots and Streaming Services)

The invoice or receipt must include:

- All pages of the internet bill
- Proof of payment that matches both the payment method and the service dates listed on the internet bill
- Billing address that matches the mailing address listed in the guardian profile in EMA

Your proof of payment date will need to correspond with the due date on the invoice.

## **Physical Education (P.E.)**

The invoice or receipt must include:

- Provider's company/league name
- Type of service rendered
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Service rate
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section).

## **Electives & Enrichment**

Reimbursement requests for elective classes, enrichment or lessons must include documentation demonstrating the provider meets the requirements for part-time tutoring or Choice Navigator services (see the Purchasing Guide for these requirements), or has one of the following:

- A valid or expired Florida educator's certificate
- Minimum of three years of experience in the relevant subject area as demonstrated by a full LinkedIn profile or resume.
- Currently enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution as a student of the relevant subject area
- Degree from a postsecondary educational institution in the relevant subject area
- Certification or national accreditation in the relevant subject area

The invoice or receipt must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Instructor's first and last name
- Provider's company name, if applicable
- Type of service rendered
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Service rate

A **Important:** Supplies that are considered general household expenses or improvement are not eligible for reimbursement (e.g. irrigation systems, large appliances, chicken coops).

#### **Specialized Services**

The invoice or receipt on business letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Type of service rendered
- Amount due for the service
- First and last name of the service provider who rendered the service
- Service provider's license number
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)



**Important:** If the invoice includes medical billing codes rather than the type of service rendered, it may result in delays in processing.

## FLDOE Approved Pre-Apprenticeship Program

The invoice or receipt on craftsperson or company letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name of the FLDOE-approved pre-apprenticeship course
- Craftsperson name, company name (if applicable) and license number or listed on FLDOE website
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Program rate
- Total amount due for the service
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

More information about FLDOE approved pre-apprenticeship programs can be found here.

#### Full-Time Private Tutoring Program

Full-time private tutoring is an option for students to satisfy state attendance requirements outlined in s. <u>1002.43</u>, F.S. Parents must select a credentialed provider and participate in a minimum number of instructional hours by grade level.

The invoice or receipt on business letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Tutor's first and last name
- Tutor's Florida Department of Education certification number
- Tutor's company name, if applicable
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Include it is for full-time tutoring
- Tutor's hourly rate
- Total amount due for the service
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

#### ▲ Important:

- Full-time tutors who have not previously received payment via scholarship funds will be required to submit a Step Up For Students <u>Full-Time Tutor Participation</u> <u>Agreement</u> and W-9.
- To ensure correct processing, each reimbursement request should include documentation in English of the service provider's license number and/or credentials.

#### Part-Time Tutoring Services or Choice Navigator Services

The invoice or receipt on business letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Tutor's or navigator's first and last name



- Tutor's company name, if applicable
- Type of service rendered
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Tutor's hourly rate (not required for Choice Navigator services)
- Total amount due for the service
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

## <u> Important:</u>

- To ensure correct processing, each reimbursement request should include documentation, in English, of the service provider's license number and/or credentials.
- If the provider of these services has not already been approved in EMA, reimbursement requests for these services should include documentation of their credentials. Options for acceptable documentation are detailed in the program <u>Purchasing Guide</u>.

#### Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program

Reimbursement requests must be submitted by the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month and will be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification monthly before each reimbursement or payment is made. Any requests received after the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month will not be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification until the next month. The reimbursement request must include a Florida Prepaid College Program account statement with the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
  - The student's name listed on the scholarship account must match the name of the beneficiary of the Florida Prepaid account.
- Scholarship student's Florida Prepaid College Program Plan account number
- Account type (e.g. one year Florida University Plan)
- A copy of the Florida Prepaid account statement showing proof of payment including:
- Full payment date, including year
- Payment amount

#### Florida 529 College Savings Program

Florida 529 College Savings Program contributions must occur via direct payment. Florida 529 College Savings Program reimbursement requests submitted for payment to the parent or guardian will be denied. More information on direct contributions to 529 college savings programs is available in <u>Florida 529 College Savings Plans</u>.

#### Contracted Services Provided By A Public School or District

The reimbursement request must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name and address of the school
- Services provided



- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- A statement showing the amount paid (or billed)
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

#### Tuition & Fees At A Private School

Requests for reimbursement of tuition and fees at a participating private school submitted by the parent or guardian must include a complete invoice and proof of payment containing the following information:

- School's published tuition and fee rates
- Annual tuition rate for the scholarship student
- Name and address of the private school
- Scholarship student's first name and last name (The student's name on the invoice must match Step Up For Student's records. Nicknames, middle names as first names, etc. are not accepted.)
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- School year the payment is for
- Method of Payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)
- Itemized charges for each tuition or fee payment

## ▲ Important:

- School lunch and before- and after-school care are not covered. You may review the <u>Purchasing Guide</u> to view all prohibited fees.
- If the private school uses a tuition management system (e.g. FACTS, Blackbaud, TADS), only the annual fee for use of the billing service will be eligible for reimbursement.
- If a student withdraws or transfers, refunds (if any) will be based on the school's policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student's scholarship account. The parent or guardian may not accept refunds of scholarship dollars from the school.
- Tuition and/or fees paid to an ineligible private school that does not participate in the scholarship program are not eligible for reimbursement.

#### Tuition & Fees As A Private-Pay Student For Florida Virtual School (FLVS)

The reimbursement request must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name of course paid for (or billed)
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- A statement showing the amount paid (or billed)
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)



If the student withdraws from the course within fourteen (14) days, a refund will be issued to the entity/individual from which payment was received.

## Tuition & Fees At An Eligible Postsecondary Institution, A Home Education Instructional Program, or An Approved Online or Virtual Provider

Reimbursement requests must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name of the institution or course provider
- Course description
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Amount of tuition and fees
- Proof of payment, on institution letterhead, if applicable (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

For first-time Home Education Instructional Program providers who have not previously been vetted, reimbursement requests must also include:

- Tuition and fees schedule
- Address where the individual classes are held
- Descriptions of courses or activities
- <u>Completed Home Education Participation Agreement form</u>

## Tuition & Fees For An Approved VPK Program Provider or An Approved School Readiness Provider

Reimbursement requests must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name and address of the approved provider
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Description of the services provided
- Amount of tuition and fees
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

Tuition and fees must be for the educational needs of the student and may cover a full-day program, and must be accurately described in the invoice. Fees for nursery or daycare will not be covered.

School lunch and other fees that are not mandatory or are not educational are not covered by the scholarship.

If a student withdraws or transfers schools, refunds (if any) will be based on the provider's policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student's scholarship account. The parent/guardian may not accept refunds of scholarship dollars from providers.


# Fees For Specialized After-School Education Programs or Specialized Summer Education Programs

- Reimbursements must include:
- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Description of the services provided
- Amount of fees
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

#### <u> Important:</u>

- Specialized summer education programs, including overnight and day educational camps require <u>pre-authorization</u>.
- If the camp is not designed specifically for students with special or unique needs, the pre-authorization request must include a letter from a therapist or doctor describing how the camp will benefit your student's needs.
- Please note that camp lodging and food costs are not eligible for reimbursement.

# Fees For Annual Home Education Evaluation or Testing and Academic Services , Including Test Administration & Proctoring

Reimbursement requests must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Full date of the evaluation/test, including year
- Description of the services provided
- Amount of fees for the evaluation/test
- Documentation of the teacher's Florida Department of Education certification number
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section).

#### Transition Services Provided By Job Coaches

Transition services provided by job coaches at eligible private schools may be included in the school's fees (see <u>Tuition and Fees</u> for required documents)

Reimbursement requests for transition services provided by a job coach outside an eligible private school must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Description of the services provided
- Total amount due for the service
- Proof of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)
- Documentation the job coach meets one of the criteria listed in the <u>Authorized Uses</u> of <u>Scholarship Program Funds</u> section.



#### Fees For Horse Therapy

Includes equestrian therapy services provided at a center that is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH).

The invoice or receipt on business letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Type of service rendered
- Amount due for the service
- First and last name of the therapist who rendered the service
- Method of payment (see Proof of Payment section)

If the invoice includes medical billing codes rather than the type of service rendered, it may result in processing delays.

#### Fees For Music & Art Therapy

Includes services provided by a therapist who is certified by the Certification Board for Music Therapists or Credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc.

The invoice or receipt on business letterhead must include:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Time period of service rendered (e.g. date range of services, or Semester 1, or Winter Session, or Fall Semester)
- Type of service rendered
- Amount due for the service
- First and last name of the therapist who rendered the service
- Method of payment (see <u>Proof of Payment</u> section)

Please note: If the invoice includes medical billing codes rather than the type of service rendered, it may result in processing delays.

#### **Shipping Guidelines**

- MyScholarShop Purchases: All purchases made through MyScholarShop must be shipped to the Florida mailing address listed on the student's scholarship account.
- Reimbursed Purchases: For purchases submitted for reimbursement, items must be shipped to either a Florida address or a Florida P.O. Box.
- Parents/guardians who are active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces and received permanent change of station orders to this state or, at the time of renewal, whose home of record or state of legal residence is Florida are exempt from this and may have items shipped outside of Florida.

#### **Fees Guidelines**

• Shipping fees: All shipping types, including import/export duty, expedited, and overnight fees are eligible uses of scholarship funds and are reimbursable.



• Credit card fees: Credit card fees are reimbursable with the exception of credit card fees added to a private school tuition and fees invoice.

**Important:** Shipping and credit card fees denied prior to the implementation of this policy will not be reimbursed retroactively.

#### **Pre-Authorization Requests**

Pre-authorization requests can be submitted for expenses planned in the future. Once a request is approved, it can be used to submit a reimbursement or to make a MyScholarShop purchase.

Payment method information must be kept up to date in EMA to complete a pre-authorization.

Include detailed information about the item or service requested for pre-authorization, along with any supporting documents for the purchase.

If the pre-authorization request is approved, the item or service on the proof of purchase must match the approved pre-authorization; otherwise, the request may be denied.

If the pre-authorization request is put on hold, log into EMA to see the reason why it was put on hold, provide the required information or documentation, and re-submit the pre-authorization request.

If the pre-authorization request is denied, the reason for the denial will be listed in EMA. Denied pre-authorization requests may not be appealed, so no further action may be taken.

Parents and guardians should allow up to sixty (60) days for pre-authorization requests to be reviewed and processed after all required documentation has been submitted. The status of pre-authorization requests can be monitored in EMA. The deadline to submit pre-authorization requests for 2025-2026 is May 29, 2026.

## **Additional Purchasing Guidelines**

#### **Receiving Payments, Refunds, or Rebates**

Parents or guardians may not receive a payment, refund, or rebate of scholarship funds from a provider.

#### **Frequency of Purchase Limitations**

Program rules limit the frequency with which families can purchase certain items using scholarship funds.

These rules apply by calendar year. For example, a laptop may have a two-year purchasing frequency, meaning a student who purchased a laptop on November 10, 2025, will be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds on or after November 11, 2027.

Frequency of purchase rules apply to all scholarship programs, even if a student changes programs. For example, if a parent/guardian purchased a tablet with New Worlds Scholarship

Accounts funds on November 10, 2025, so the student would not be eligible to purchase a tablet using any other scholarship until November 11, 2027.

Information on the categories that the frequency of purchase rule applies to can be found on the <u>Purchasing Guide</u>.

#### Items That Are Lost, Stolen, or Broken Beyond Repair

If an item purchased with scholarship funds is broken beyond repair, it may be replaced with a similar item of equal or lesser value.

A parent or guardian must submit a pre-authorization request and documentation from a repair shop or service technician showing the item is beyond repair. Photos of the damaged item do not qualify as sufficient documentation.

If the item can be repaired, scholarship funds may be used to cover the cost of repair, but they cannot be used to cover the cost of a replacement.

If an item was stolen, a parent or guardian must submit a pre-authorization request and police report for review.

Replacement of lost items will not be approved.

If a replacement item is authorized, the two (2) calendar-year period will reset. For example, a student who purchased a laptop on July 10, 2025, but then is authorized to purchase a replacement device on October 10, 2026, they will not be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds until on or after October 11, 2028.

#### Maintenance Agreements/Warranties for Eligible Devices

Maintenance agreements for eligible devices purchased with FES-UA funds are eligible FES-UA expenses. Maintenance agreements/warranties are service agreements with a device manufacturer or vendor to support regular service on that device.

#### **Placement In Residential Programs**

If a scholarship student is placed in any residential program, the parent or guardian must confirm how participating students meet the mandatory school attendance requirement.

• If the program uses any Florida public school, including a full-time online school, the student may lose their scholarship eligibility if the online school reports them to the state for funding.

If the program includes a private school that is approved by the Florida Department of Education to participate in scholarship programs, the student's scholarship funds may be available to cover the cost of tuition and fees.



## Parent & Guardian Responsibilities

#### **Annual Assessment Requirement**

Students in grades 3-10 attending an eligible private school using scholarship funds are required to take a <u>standardized assessment approved by the Florida Department of Education</u>.

More information, including a list of approved assessments, is <u>available from the department</u> <u>here</u>.

Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement. These students must submit the <u>Test Exempt Form</u>.

## **Public School Enrollment Prohibition**

A student cannot be enrolled in a public school at the same time they are receiving and using scholarship funds, so parents and guardians should ensure proper public school withdrawal. To do this, you may request that the district or charter school complete the <u>Standard Withdrawal</u> Form for Students Entering K-12 Scholarships (Form IEPC-SWF) in accordance with <u>Fla. Admin.</u> Code R. 6A-6.0952.

## Maintaining Up-To-Date Contact Information

Parents and guardians must keep their contact information in EMA current, especially their primary email address, as this is how Step Up For Students will communicate important information.

To update proof of residency, parents or guardians should contact Step Up For Students.

To avoid important communications from going to spam or junk folders, parents and guardians should update their email filters to accept messages from Step Up For Students.

## **Use of Funds**

Parents and guardians are required to keep scholarship funds in an account managed by the Scholarship Funding Organization. Parents and guardians can direct how funds are used, but it is prohibited for parents and guardians to personally access the funds.

Additionally, parents and guardians cannot be paid with scholarship funds for services provided to their own scholarship student.

## Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of personal and financial information stored in EMA, only the parent or guardian listed on the account is permitted to access and manage it.

Parents and guardians must not share account login credentials with anyone, including school and service provider personnel, or other individuals. Sharing login information or allowing another

person to access the account may result in loss of scholarship eligibility and funding, and financial or criminal penalties.

Step Up For Students is not responsible for changes to the account or unauthorized transactions made by someone other than the parent or guardian listed on the account.

## Maintaining Eligibility

Once a student's scholarship has been funded, a parent or guardian may continue with the scholarship as long as they meet residency requirements and remain eligible to enroll in a Florida public school. The student will remain eligible until they return to public school, graduate high school, or turn twenty-two (22) years old. If a student graduates high school before the end of the school year, the parent or guardian must <u>contact Step Up For Students</u>. Failure to do so may be considered fraud and may result in financial or criminal penalties.

Renewal students do not have to requalify for the scholarship unless their qualifying disability status changes.

A student will need to apply for the scholarship as a new student if they:

- Do not renew their scholarship and "sit out" a year.
- Leave the program and later seek to resume participation.

If a student turns twenty-two (22) years old, graduates high school, or enrolls in a public school on a full-time basis but still has funds remaining in their scholarship account, the parent or guardian may continue to access and spend those funds on eligible expenses until no funds remain in the scholarship account. Contributions made to the Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Savings Program or to the Florida College Savings Program (529) qualify as account activity. Accounts will be closed after two years without any spending activity or any period of three (3) consecutive years after high school completion during which the student has not been enrolled in an eligible postsecondary educational institution or a program offered by the institution.

#### Leaving The Scholarship Program

Parents and guardians must notify Step Up For Students immediately by declining the scholarship in their EMA account, if a scholarship student:

- Enrolls, and is reported to the state for public funding, in any public school, including Florida Virtual School or another online school. (Students may use their scholarships to pay for courses or other services provided by these institutions.)
- Intends to apply for the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Education Options, a Personalized Education Program (PEP) scholarship, the Transportation Stipend, or New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program.
- Receives Specialized Instructional Services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program described in s. 1002.66, F.S.



 Moves out of state (except for renewing students of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces who receive permanent change of station orders out of state while maintaining legal residence in Florida).

To decline a scholarship:

- The parent or guardian must log in to their EMA account
- Go to the application where the scholarship was previously accepted
- Select the Decline Scholarship option
  - Once declined, the status will update in EMA under the *Application Details* and a timestamp will show when the decline was made.

**Important**: Parents and guardians cannot decline the scholarship if the student is enrolled with a school. If the student is currently enrolled with a school, they must be withdrawn or disenrolled before the decline can be submitted,

Failure to notify Step Up For Students could result in a loss of funding, loss of future eligibility, and financial or criminal penalties.

If state records show a student enrolled in a public school after receiving scholarship funds, the funds deposited into the student's account for that school year will be returned to the state of Florida.

If a student is found enrolled in public school or another scholarship program, their parent or guardian will be notified by email and should contact Step Up For Students immediately.

## Actions That May Lead To A Loss of The Scholarship

Actions that may lead to a loss of the scholarship include, but are not limited to:

- Parents and guardians must approve each quarterly payment to their students' school and may not designate any organization or individual to approve the payment on their behalf. Parents and guardians who fail to approve quarterly payments for the eligible private school where their student is enrolled may forfeit their scholarship.
- Misrepresenting or withholding information on the scholarship application or reimbursement documentation.
- Failure to enroll a K-12 student in a private school or as a Home Education Student with their Florida public school district.
- Failure to satisfy state compulsory attendance requirements as provided in s. <u>1003.01(16)(b), (c), or (d)</u>, F.S.
- Failure to satisfy attendance requirements outlined by their eligible private school, if applicable.
- Failure of the student to take a required nationally norm-referenced test or the statewide assessment, if applicable (students exempt from norm-referenced testing are not subject to this requirement).



- Moving or residing outside of the state of Florida. With the exception of renewal FES-UA scholarship students of active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces with Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to move out of Florida.
- Enrolling in a public school, including the Florida Virtual School, the Florida School For The Deaf and Blind, the College-Preparatory Boarding Academy, the Florida Scholars Academy, a developmental research school, a charter school, or any other Florida public school, on a full-time basis.
- Utilizing another state scholarship.
- Fraudulent activity, including taking possession of any scholarship funds by refund, resale, rebate, or credit from a provider or purchase.
- Allowing another party, including a provider or school representative, to access or manage a student's scholarship account.
- Step Up For Students determines the student is not eligible for program renewal.
- The Commissioner of Education suspends or revokes program participation or use of funds.
- The student graduates high school or reaches twenty-two (22) years of age, whichever occurs first.

The above actions, or any violation of scholarship statutes, rules, policies, or procedures may result in the loss of the scholarship, loss of future scholarship eligibility, and/or financial or criminal penalties.

## Data Security

Step Up For Students will never ask a parent or guardian for the following information via email, phone call, live chat, or text message:

- Password to their secure online account
- Full social security number (only the last four digits may be requested for verification)
- Credit card number or banking details
- Personal identification numbers (only the PIN provided on the scholarship application may be requested for verification)

Parents or guardians who receive any communication requesting this type of information or receive a suspicious email must not respond or click on any links. Instead, <u>report the activity</u> <u>immediately on the Contact Us page</u> on the Step Up For Students website.

## **Additional Resources**

Step Up For Students has created additional resources to help you navigate the scholarship program. To explore these tools, visit:

- Document Library
- <u>Resources Page</u>
- FES-UA Scholarship Information
- FES-UA Purchasing Guide



- Program Facts
- Find a School Tool

## Handbook Disclaimer

Please note that the information and terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change as laws or rules are amended. To ensure you have the most current information, we update this handbook regularly.

# Handbook Feedback Form

Step Up For Students welcomes feedback from parents and guardians to help improve this handbook. We encourage you to share your suggestions using the <u>Parent Handbook Feedback</u> <u>Form</u>.

# Appendix A

## Anaphylaxis

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.0251</u>, the medical term for the life-threatening allergic reactions that may occur when allergic individuals are exposed to specific allergens. Anaphylaxis is a collection of symptoms affecting multiple systems in the body.

## **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(5)</u>, a pervasive, neurologically based developmental disability of extended duration which causes severe learning, communication, and behavior disorders with age of onset during infancy or childhood. Individuals with autism exhibit impairment in reciprocal social interaction, impairment in verbal and nonverbal communication and imaginative ability, and a markedly restricted repertoire of activities and interests

## **Cerebral Palsy**

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(6)</u>, a group of disabling symptoms of extended duration which results from damage to the developing brain that may occur before, during, or after birth and results in the loss or impairment of control over voluntary muscles. For the purposes of this definition, cerebral palsy does not include those symptoms or impairments resulting solely from a stroke.

## **Down Syndrome**

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(14)</u>, a disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21.

## **Dual Sensory Impaired**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.0322</u>, a student who has dual-sensory impairments affecting both vision and hearing, the combination of which causes a serious impairment in the abilities to acquire information, communicate, or function within the environment, or who has a degenerative condition which will lead to such an impairment. Current IEP required.

## **Emotional or Behavioral Disability**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03016</u>, a student with an emotional/behavioral disability who has persistent (is not sufficiently responsive to implemented evidence-based interventions) and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that adversely affect performance in the educational environment that cannot be attributed to age, culture, gender, or ethnicity.

## **Hearing Impairment**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03013</u>, a student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing and has hearing loss aided or unaided, that impacts the processing of linguistic information, and which adversely

affects performance in the educational environment. The degree of loss may range from mild to profound.

# High-Risk Child

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.963(22)</u>, a child from three (3) to five (5) years of age before September  $1^{st}$  of the school year with one or more of the following characteristics:

- A developmental delay in cognition, language, or physical development.
- A child surviving a catastrophic infectious or traumatic illness known to be associated with developmental delay, when funds are specifically appropriated.
- A child with a parent or guardian with developmental disabilities who requires assistance in meeting the child's developmental needs.
- A child who has a physical or genetic anomaly associated with developmental disability.

Under Florida Statute § 393.063(22), a child can qualify as high-risk based on developmental delay only between the ages of three (3) and five (5). Although developmental delays may be diagnosed for children age 6 and older, the high-risk definition is limited to ages 3-5. Children at age six (6) are no longer eligible as high risk based on developmental delay alone and will need to establish eligibility under another category to continue in the program.

## Hospital or Homebound

Per<u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03020</u>, a student who has a medically diagnosed physical or psychiatric condition which is acute or catastrophic in nature, or a chronic illness, or a repeated intermittent illness due to a persisting medical problem that confines the student to home or hospital and restricts activities for more than six months,. A current IEP is required to confirm this diagnosis.

## **Intellectual Disability**

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(23)</u>, significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior which manifests before the age of 18 and can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely.

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(23)(a)</u>, "adaptive behavior" means the effectiveness or degree with which an individual meets the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected of his or her age, cultural group, and community.

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(23)(b)</u>, "significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning" means performance that is two or more standard deviations from the mean score on a standardized intelligence test specified in the rules of the agency.

#### Language Impairment

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.030121</u>, language impairments are disorders of language that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the student's

typical learning environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education. A language impairment is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These include: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics.

The language impairment may manifest in significant difficulties affecting listening comprehension, oral expression, social interaction, reading, writing, or spelling. A language impairment is not primarily the result of factors related to chronological age, gender, culture, ethnicity, or limited English proficiency.

#### **Muscular Dystrophy**

As defined by the <u>Center of Disease Control</u>, muscular dystrophies are a group of muscle diseases caused by mutations in a person's genes. Over time, muscle weakness decreases mobility, making everyday tasks difficult. There are many kinds of muscular dystrophy, each affecting specific muscle groups, with signs and symptoms appearing at different ages, and varying in severity.

#### **Orthopedic Impairment**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.030151</u>, orthopedic impairment means a severe skeletal, muscular, or neuromuscular impairment. The term includes impairments resulting from congenital anomalies (e.g., including but not limited to skeletal deformity or spina bifida), and impairments resulting from other causes (e.g., including but not limited to cerebral palsy or amputations).

#### **Other Health Impairment**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.030152</u>, other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems. This includes, but is not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and acquired brain injury.

#### Phelan-McDermid Syndrome

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(28)</u>, a disorder caused by the loss of the terminal segment of the long arm of chromosome 22, which occurs near the end of the chromosome at a location designated q13.3, typically leading to developmental delay, intellectual disability, dolichocephaly, hypotonia, or absent or delayed speech.

#### Prader-Willi Syndrome

Per <u>Florida Statute § 393.063(29)</u>, an inherited condition typified by neonatal hypotonia with failure to thrive, hyperphagia or an excessive drive to eat which leads to obesity usually at 18 to

36 months of age, mild to moderate intellectual disability, hypogonadism, short stature, mild facial dysmorphism, characteristic neurobehavior.

## **Rare Diseases**

Per Florida Statue § 1002.394(e), rare diseases which affect patient populations of fewer than 200,000 individuals in the United States, as defined by the <u>National Organization for Rare</u> <u>Disorders</u>.

## **Specific Learning Disability**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03018</u>, a specific learning disability is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in significant difficulties affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematics. Associated conditions may include, but are not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, or developmental aphasia. A specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of a visual, hearing, motor, intellectual, or emotional/behavioral disability, limited English proficiency, or environmental, cultural, or economic factors.

## **Speech Impairment**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03012</u>, speech impairments are disorders of speech sounds, fluency, or voice that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the educational environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education.

## **Spina Bifida**

Per <u>Florida Statute §393.063(41)</u>, a person with a medical diagnosis of spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele.

## **Traumatic Brain Injury**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.030153</u>, a traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance. The term applies to mild, moderate, or severe, open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, or speech. The term includes anoxia due to trauma. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma.

## **Visually Impaired**

Per <u>Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.03014</u>, any impairment in vision regardless of significance or severity that, even with correction, adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness, including ocular, brain-based and neurological disorders.

## Williams Syndrome

As defined by the <u>National Organization for Rare Disorders</u>, a rare genetic disorder characterized by growth delays before and after birth (prenatal and postnatal growth retardation), short statute, a varying degree of mental deficiency, and distinctive facial features that typically become more pronounced with age.

# Appendix B

Authorized Use of Scholarship Funds	Scholarship Program				Payment
	FES-UA	FTC/FES-EO	PEP	NWSA	Method
Instructional materials	х	x	х	X (DP)	DP or R
Curriculum and curriculum materials	х	x	x	X (DP)	DP or R
Tuition and fees for:					
Full-time, in-person private school	х	x			DP or R
Part-time, in-person eligible private school	х		x		DP or R
Hybrid private school			x		DP or R
Home education instructional programs	х		х		DP or R
Eligible postsecondary institution	х	x	x		DP or R
Dual enrollment	х	x	х		DP or R
Approved pre-apprenticeship programs	х	x	х		Reimbursemen
Approved online or virtual provider	х	x	х		DP or R
Private-pay Florida Virtual School	х	x	х		DP or R
Approved VPK program provider	х				DP or R
Approved school readiness provider	х				DP or R
Standardized testing fees	х	x	х		DP or R
Contracted services provided by a public school or school district	x	x	х		DP or R
Private tutoring					
Full-time private tutoring	х		х		DP or R
Part-time private tutoring	х	x	х	X (DP)	DP or R
Services provided by a Choice Navigator	х	x	х		DP or R
Contributions to approved college savings programs					
Stanley G. Tate FL Prepaid College Program	х				Reimbursemen
FL 529 Savings Program	X				Direct Pay
Specialized services by approved providers or a Florida hospital					
Applied behavior analysis	х				DP or R
Speech-language pathologist services	Х				DP or R
Occupational therapy services	Х				DP or R
Physical therapy services	X				DP or R
Listening and spoken language specialist services	X				DP or R
Fees for specialized summer education programs	Х				DP or R
Fees for specialized after-school education programs	х				DP or R
Fees for summer education programs that improve reading, literacy, or math skills				X (DP)	Direct Pay
Fees for after-school education programs that improve reading, literacy, or math skills				X (DP)	Direct Pay
Transition services provided by job coaches	x				Reimbursemen
Annual home education evaluation fees	х				DP or R
Fees for horse therapy	x				DP or R
Fees for music and art therapy	х				DP or R

"DP" = Direct Pay through EMA or MSS; "R" = Reimbursement. All NWSA purchases must be made by Direct Pay