



A Learning Option for Students with Unique Abilities

Florida is a national leader in educational choice with more than 1.6 million students attending schools of choice. Step Up For Students, a 501(c)3 scholarship granting organization, helps deliver several of those options. Today, Step Up offers six scholarships to meet the diverse needs of Florida's public, private and home education students.

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship

Created in 2001, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC) served 15,585 students in the inaugural 2002-03 school year. Step Up funded 125,657 students in private schools in 2023-24. Today, 66 percent of the students are non-white, half live in single-parent homes, and more than 73,000 qualify for free or reduced-price lunches

Scholarships are paid for by private corporate donations. Donors receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for their contribution, with tax credits capped at more than \$1 billion. Scholarship values vary from county to county and by grade, but average between \$7,550 and \$8,250. Students may also receive a \$750 transportation scholarship to attend a different public school other than the one they were assigned.

The Family Empowerment Scholarships

The Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) has two programs: the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO), which is a universal voucher, and the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA). FES is funded from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), an operational formula that funds K-12 student choices in district schools, charter schools and private schools.

FES-EO began in 2019 with 17,724 students and now funds 136,087 students, 55 percent of whom are non-white. Scholarship values vary by grade and county but average between \$7,550 and \$8,200.

The FES-UA program (formerly the Gardiner Scholarship, with the McKay Scholarship added to it in 2022) was created in 2014 as an education savings account (ESA) for students with special needs. The program allows families to personalize their children's education by directing money toward a combination of programs and approved providers, such as textbooks, school supplies, tutors, therapies, curriculum, and even tuition and fees. For 2023-24, Step Up funded 83,499 students with unique abilities with an average scholarship value of about \$9,800

The Hope Scholarship

Florida created the Hope Scholarship in 2018, making it a first-of-its-kind school choice program that provides scholarships to students suffering from bullying at their prior public school. K-12 students who have reported an incident of harassment, hazing, bullying, robbery, sexual assault and more, may be eligible for a scholarship to attend a private school or a public school in a different school district.

The scholarships are funded by individual donors who receive a tax credit, up to \$105 on their motor vehicle purchase taxes to the program. Scholarships average between \$7,250 and \$7,850 depending on grade and county of residence. Students may also receive a \$750 transportation scholarship to attend an out-of-district public school. 1,533 students were awarded so far in 2022-23.

The New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

In 2019 Florida became the first state to offer an education savings account (ESA) for students enrolled in public schools. The program offers families of public school students in K-5th grade who are struggling with reading, literacy and math access to ESAs worth \$500. The scholarship pays for tuition and fees related to part-time tutoring, summer and afterschool programs, instructional materials and curriculum. Step Up funded 9,916 students last year and is currently accepting applications for 2023-24.

The Personalized Education Program

Florida created the nation's first universal home education education savings account in 2023 with the Personalized Education Program (PEP). PEP allows parents of students not enrolled full time in public or private schools to customize their learning by paying for tutors, curriculum, school supplies, part-time tuition and more. Step Up funded 18,748 students in 2023-24.