

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program was established during the 2019 Legislative Session to enhance Florida's menu of education options. It will provide children whose families have limited financial resources with the opportunity to attend the school that best meets their needs and enables them to reach their academic goals.

The FES provides eligible students a scholarship to attend a private school selected by the parent. A student is eligible for the FES if the student meets the following criteria:

- The student's household income does not exceed 300% of the federal poverty level (\$77,250 for a family of four) or the students on the direct certification list (list of children who qualify for the food assistance program, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program, or the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations program); or
- The student is currently placed, or during the previous state fiscal year was placed, in foster care or in out-of-home care as defined in section 39.01, Florida Statutes;

and

- The student is eligible to enroll in kindergarten or has spent the prior school year (2018-19) in attendance at a Florida public school. Prior attendance means the student was enrolled in and in attendance at a Florida public school during both the October and February student counts; and
- Prior to scholarship funds being awarded, the student must be accepted and enrolled in a participating private school. For a list of eligible schools, please view the Department's Private School Directory. A private school that is currently eligible to participate in any of the scholarship programs is eligible to participate in the FES; however, parents should contact the school to inquire as to whether the private school will participate in the program.

Parents who meet the eligibility requirements above and are interested in applying for the FES should first contact one of Florida's two approved scholarship funding organizations (contact information below) to complete the income verification process. Students who have already applied for the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship program may be determined to meet the income eligibility without resubmitting household income documentation to the Scholarship Funding Organization.

For more information, please visit the Department of Education website at www.fldoe.org/FES.

Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFOs)

AAA Scholarship Foundation
<http://www.aaascholarships.org/>
888-707-2465
info@aaascholarships.org

Step Up for Students
<https://www.stepupforstudents.org/>
877-735-7837
info@stepupforstudents.org

**MCKAY SCHOLARSHIP FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
TRANSITIONS TO
THE FAMILY EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Florida's many school choice programs have been creating opportunities for parents to choose the best educational setting for their child for over twenty years. During the 2021-2022 school year, the **McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities** is providing approximately 27,000 Florida students with special needs the opportunity to attend a participating private school. This notice is to inform your family of upcoming changes to the program and the additional opportunities these changes will bring.

As of June 30, 2022, the McKay Scholarship Program will no longer exist. For the 2022-2023 school year, students who have been receiving the McKay Scholarship to attend a private school will be transferred to the **Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities**, or FES-UA. This transition will provide families with access to a personal Education Savings Account, or ESA, empowering you to further tailor the use of scholarship funds for your child's unique educational needs.

With an ESA, parents can receive a deposit of public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple, uses. An ESA can be used to fund items such as private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, community college costs, higher education expenses, and other approved customized learning services and materials. The FES-UA program is based on the belief that parents know what's best for their children, and that they should have the final say in their child's education. With access to an ESA, more Florida families will have the power to transform their child's education into a customized experience that expands access to learning opportunities specifically tailored to their unique needs.

Current McKay Scholarship students will not need to requalify to participate in FES-UA, but your family will need to select a Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO), which will work with you to administer your child's ESA. Be on the lookout for correspondence from SFOs, listed below, that will assist you in making a selection and in following the steps required to indicate your intent to continue using the FES-UA scholarship. Transitioning from the McKay Scholarship's private school choice program to the ESA model provided by FES-UA will bring some changes to funding processes that will affect both families and participating private schools. Our office is working closely with SFOs and other stakeholders to streamline the process and minimize any potential disruption that would impact families.

The Florida Department of Education believes that giving parents the freedom to choose how their child is educated is critical to their wellbeing and future. The FES-UA will financially empower parents to guide their child on a path to success. To learn more about the FES-UA, as well as Florida's other school choice options, visit our website linked in the box below.

Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFOs)

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| Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFOs) | | |
| AAA Scholarship Foundation http://www.aaascholarships.org/ 888-707-2465 info@aaascholarships.org | Step Up for Students https://www.stepupforstudents.org/ 877-735-7837 info@stepupforstudents.org | |
| WEB: FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG | Main Line: (850) 245-0502 TOLL FREE HOTLINE: (800) 447-1636 | EMAIL: SCHOOLCHOICE@FLDOE.ORG |

Family Empowerment Scholarship with Unique Abilities for Public School



Parents choosing the **public school option** of the FES-UA Scholarships Program are responsible for acknowledging and following the details below regarding public school FES-UA Scholarships. See the chart below indicating deadlines for requests and enrollment for each semester:

| Grading Period | Request Deadline | Enrollment Deadline |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| First Semester | 6/26/2022 | 8/19/2022 |
| Second Semester | 11/27/2022 | 1/13/2023 |

Parents **must** complete the Public FES-UA Request form to request a public school option.

FES-UA Eligibility Criteria for Public School Option requires a current IEP

Transfer requests for the first semester of the 2022-2023 school year will open May 16, 2022 and WILL CLOSE June 26, 2022

Transfer requests for the second semester of the 2022-2023 school year will open September 6, 2022 and WILL CLOSE November 27, 2022

Please go to the [Family Empowerment Scholarship with Unique Abilities](#) page and click on the Public FES-UA tab. Read the information, then click on the orange button for the Public School Request Form to submit your request.