

# Family Empowerment Scholarship



OCTOBER 2019

OFFICE OF POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## THE FAMILY EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) is Florida's first voucher program for low- and middle-income students. Like the McKay Scholarship for students with special needs, 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. The scholarships will average between \$6,775 and \$7,250 depending on the grade level and county of the student. The program is projected to cost about \$130 million in its first year, which is less than the cost to educate the students at a traditional public school.

### 2019-20 FAST FACTS

18,000 enrolled (capped at 18,000 students).

There is no financial cap, but the program is estimated to cost about \$130 million.

Scholarships are worth 95 percent of the FEFP per-pupil funding by grade and county (however, the FES calculation excludes the \$1.1 billion "ESE Guaranteed Allocation" which makes the scholarship about 90 percent of the FEFP).

FES will become the second voucher program currently funded from the FEFP and will join McKay, Gardiner Scholarships, Bright Futures and Voluntary PreK as Florida's fifth direct state-funded private school scholarship program.

Scholarships will vary by grade and county and will average between \$6,775 and \$7,250.

### ELIGIBILITY

- Students must be in grades K-12 and age 5 by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Students must have attended a Florida public school for the prior school year unless entering kindergarten, a foster child, or a child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who transfers to Florida with permanent change of station orders.
- Students must be living in a household earning at, or below, 300 percent of the Federal poverty level, or in foster care or out-of-home care. That equals \$77,250 for a student living in a household of four.
- Priority is given to students who household income is no more than 185 percent of the poverty level – the level that qualifies public school students for free or reduced-price lunch, or are in foster or out-of-home care. That equals \$47,637 for a household of four.

### How to Apply

- Parents or guardians may start an application by visiting the Step Up For Students website here: <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/logins/income-based-scholarship-login/>.
- Parents or guardians can learn more about the scholarship by visiting the fact page here: <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/for-parents/income-based/how-the-scholarship-works/>.
- Parents or guardians can call 1-877-735-7837 or email [info@stepupforstudents.org](mailto:info@stepupforstudents.org) for questions.
- Schools may call 1-877-735-7837 or email [enrollment@sufs.org](mailto:enrollment@sufs.org).

Contact: Ron Matus, (C) 727-580-1577 or [rmatus@sufs.org](mailto:rmatus@sufs.org)  
Patrick Gibbons, (C) 813-528-3435 or [pgibbons@sufs.org](mailto:pgibbons@sufs.org)  
[WWW.STEPUPFORSTUDENTS.ORG](http://WWW.STEPUPFORSTUDENTS.ORG)