



Start a School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

Florida

Private Schools

Steps to Start a Private School

1. Review Zoning Regulations:

If you know the location of your planned school, you must review and comply with any local [building zoning](#), public safety, and inspection regulations. Contact your local [Department of Health](#) to find out more about specific building codes, [fire inspection regulations](#), and [food, water, and radon](#).

Note that Florida has passed [HB 1285](#) amended [Florida Statute 1002.42\(19\)](#) to enable private schools to use certain types of facilities under existing zoning and land use designations, no rezoning or special use permits required. Property that qualifies for tax relief includes:

- Churches, libraries, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theatre, or cinema properties, provided these have been actively used for their intended purposes within the last five years.
- Facilities that have recently housed a school or a licensed child care facility.
- Land or facilities owned by institutions within the Florida College System or universities.
- Similar public institutional facilities.

This tax relief applies regardless of whether the private school leases or purchases the property.

Note: [Florida Statute 404.056](#) requires that some Florida districts require radon testing. Find out if your district requires radon testing at this [link](#).

[Teach FL](#), a division of Teach Coalition, was founded in 2016 to advocate on behalf of Florida's nonpublic schools and parents. Teacher FL has developed a [report](#) that documents the various challenges in zoning for many municipalities (counties and cities). These municipalities are listed below:

- Aventura
- Boca Raton
- Boynton Beach
- Broward County
- Coconut Creek
- Cooper City
- Coral Springs
- Dania Beach
- Davie
- Deerfield Beach
- Fort Lauderdale
- Hallandale Beach
- Hialeah
- Hollywood
- Homestead
- Margate
- Miami
- Miami Beach
- Miami Gardens
- Miami-Dade County
- Miramar
- North Miami
- North Miami Beach
- Palm Beach County
- Palm Beach Gardens
- Parkland
- Pembroke Pines
- Plantation
- Pompano Beach
- Southwest Ranches
- Sunny Isles Beach
- Sunrise
- West Palm Beach
- Weston

2. Register with the Florida Division of Corporations:

2.1. Review the information on this [website](#) and then determine the type of organization you will use. This will be either For-Profit or Non-Profit. Once that is completed, you will need to register with the Florida Division of Corporations as either a [for-profit](#) or [nonprofit](#).

- Please be aware that you may receive solicitation letters from "third-party application assistance" companies offering various services for processing fees. These companies are NOT affiliated, endorsed, or approved by any governmental entity. The items offered in the advertisements have NOT been approved or endorsed by any governmental agency, and the offers are NOT being made by an agency of the government. The documents offered by these advertisements are available to Florida consumers free of charge or for a lesser price from government agencies.

3. A Federal Employer Identification Number (FEI/EIN) will be required after registering as a company. Apply with the IRS online at:

<https://sa.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp>

4. Open a bank account with your school's name and EIN.

5. Register your new school with the Florida Department of Education (DOE).

5.1. New private school owners must [Request a School Code and Password](#) to register as a private school.

5.2. Within five days of establishing a private school, the owner must file with the [Department of Law Enforcement](#) for a criminal background check. See steps below.

6. [Private School Fingerprinting Process](#)

Please follow the instructions below to obtain the required fingerprint results for the private school's owner/chief administrative officer:

6.1. The owner/chief administrator must prepare a written statement declaring that he/she is the owner or chief administrative officer of a private school registered with the State of Florida as required by Section 1002.42(2)(g), Florida Statutes. The owner's contact

information must be included. This will allow FDLE to set up an account/ORI number (Originating Agency Identification number) for your school and release sealed and/or expunged criminal history data.

- 6.2. The owner must send the above information to the following address:
Florida Department of Law Enforcement USB Public Records Section
Post Office Box 1489
Tallahassee, Florida 32302-1489
- 6.3. FDLE will send correspondence and a blank fingerprint card to the owner/chief administrator listing the school's account/ORI number.
- 6.4. The owner/chief administrator must take the fingerprint card to local law enforcement for fingerprinting.
- 6.5. Send the fingerprint card to the FDLE address listed above along with the \$24.00 processing fee.

Note: Section 1002.421(1)(p), Florida Statutes, requires private schools that intend to participate in state scholarship programs to have each owner/chief administrator and operator undergo a level 2 background screening regardless of direct contact with scholarship students. Each owner/chief administrator and operator MUST submit fingerprints electronically through the Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) for a level 2 background check. Further information on the VECHS program can be obtained at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Background-Checks/VECHS-Home.aspx> or by calling 850-410-8161.

Private school participating in an educational scholarship program established pursuant to chapter 1002, must have their staff cleared by the Agency for Health Care Administration's (AHCA) clearinghouse system. [435.12\(3\), F.S.](#)

- 6.6. Complete and submit the [annual private school survey](#) to provide the Florida DOE with the following:
 - 6.6.1. Fill the form out online.
 - 6.6.2. Make a copy of the form.
 - 6.6.3. Sign and date the front page and have it notarized.
 - 6.6.4. Mail a signed and notarized copy of the annual private school survey to the DOE.
Click [here](#) for more information.

Note: This survey must be completed and sent to DOE annually and is required of all private schools whether private, scholarship approved, or virtual.

7. Set up a process to collect and maintain a Florida Certification of Immunization for each child and collect an annual immunization report for kindergarten and 7th-grade students. Find out more at this [link](#).
8. Set up a process to collect and maintain certain student health examination [documentation](#). Each student must submit a Student Health Entry Form before attending school. See [\(1002.42\(5\)\)](#) and [1003.22\(1\) and \(2\), F.S.](#) for what is required by Florida statutes. Find out more at this [link](#).

9. Set up a process to collect and maintain required attendance records. See ([1002.42\(4\)](#) and [1003.23\(2\), F.S.](#)) for what is required by Florida statutes.
10. Things to consider
 - 10.1. Accreditation: is optional. OptimaEd has been accredited by Cognia.
 - 10.2. Teacher Certification: is optional.
 - 10.3. Registration: Required.
 - 10.4. Licensing: Business licensing may be required by local government.
 - 10.5. Approval: Required.
 - 10.6. Length of School Year and Days: same as public schools.
 - 10.7. Curriculum: Minimal requirements.
 - 10.8. State Testing: is required for ESA students.
 - 10.9. Health and Safety Requirements: Immunization is required. Must present a certification of school-entry health examination.
 - 10.10. Nursing and Health: Health screening is required.

Private School Statutes & Rules

The Education Freedom Foundation has relied on the [U.S. Department of Education's State Regulation of Private and Home Schools Map](#) for relevant statutes. Over time, the state pages on this map have been updated since their initial creation. In some cases, states have changed their laws without these updates being reflected on the map. Given the various methods each state uses to publicize changes to its laws, the most recent information for the Start-A-School project was often obtained directly from the U.S. Department of Education website. Users are encouraged to verify any information before making decisions based on it.

Accreditation, Registration, Licensing, and Approval

- Accreditation: no requirements
- Registration: required
- The chief administrator of each private school must complete an annual database survey and file it with the Florida Department of Education (FDE). s. [1002.42, Florida Statute \(F.S.\)](#).
- Registration for each school can be found at: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/private-schools/general-requirements.shtml>.
- Licensing: no requirements
- Approval: no requirements

Curriculum

- The state and local school district do not have the authority to oversee or control the curriculum or academic programs of private schools or home instruction programs. s. [1002.42\(2\)\(h\), F.S.](#)
- Florida regulates biological experiments performed on living subjects conducted in grades K–12. For example, no dissection may be performed on any living mammal or bird. Students can be excused upon written request by a parent from dissection of

nonliving mammals or birds. Private schools keeping live animals on the premises must house them in a humane and safe manner. Teachers failing to comply with these provisions may be disciplined by the school authorities. [s. 1003.47, F.S.](#)

- A private school that wishes to engage in high school athletic competitions with a public high school may become a member of the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSA). [ss. 1006.20\(1\)](#) and [1002.42\(8\), F.S.](#)

Health and Safety Requirements

- Private schools must require each student, upon his or her initial entrance into school, to present a certification of school-entry health examination performed within one year before enrollment. Students are exempt if parents object in writing based on religious grounds. [ss. 1002.42\(5\),\(6\)](#) and [1003.22\(1\),\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools may permit a student up to 30 school days to present health exam certification. Students who are homeless, dependent, or in shelter care are given temporary exemptions and assistance in obtaining the health exam. [s. 1003.22\(5\), F.S.](#)
- Prior to attending a private school, children must submit Department of Health Form 680 documenting immunizations to prevent communicable diseases. Immunizations, with age-appropriate doses, are required for poliomyelitis, diphtheria, rubeola (measles), rubella (German measles), pertussis, mumps, tetanus, and other communicable diseases as determined by the rules of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. Students are exempt if their parents object in writing based on a conflict with religious tenets or practices. [ss. 1002.42\(5\), \(6\)](#) and [1003.22\(1\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools must provide appropriate pupil screening at the proper age for scoliosis. Students are exempt if their parents object in writing based on a conflict with religious tenets or practices. [ss. 1002.42\(6\)](#) and [1003.22\(1\)\(f\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools that prepare food intended for individual portion service must comply with the minimum sanitation standards promulgated by the Department of Health. [s. 381.0072 \(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)
- Chief administrative officers of private schools must file a complete set of fingerprints for state processing and checking for criminal background. The cost must be borne by the applicant or private school. Persons convicted of crimes involving moral turpitude are prohibited from owning or operating a private school. The chief administrative officer may also require school employees to file a complete set of fingerprints. [s. 1002.42\(2\)\(c\), \(3\)](#). If participating in a scholarship program, owners must be American citizens. See [Fla. Stat. 288.860](#).
- Private school teachers, officials, and other personnel who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused or neglected must report the information to the Department of Children and Families' central abuse registry and tracking system. [s. 39.201, F.S.](#)
- Each private school that accepts scholarship students under [ss. 1002.394](#) or [1002.395, F.S.](#) must post a notice in a prominent place indicating that, pursuant to chapter 39, all employees have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. The schools also have a duty to comply with child

protective investigations relating to such. The notice must be posted in a prominent place on the school's website (if available) indicating the policies and procedure for reporting alleged misconduct by school employees that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. The principal will be required, at the request of Department of Children and Families, to act as a liaison with the Department and the child protection team when there is a case of suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, or an unlawful sexual offense involving a child. [s. 1006.061, F.S.](#)

- Private schools may not exist at either end of a runway of a publicly owned, public-use airport. [s. 333.03\(3\), F.S.](#)
- Each principal or designee of each private school must notify the appropriate law enforcement agency to prohibit any person from loitering within 500 feet of school property who does not have legitimate business in the area or any other authorization or license to enter or remain in the area. [s. 810.0975, F.S.](#)

Length of School Year and Days

- Attendance at a private school satisfies the compulsory school attendance law if the child maintains regular attendance during the school term of either 180 actual school days or a minimum of 170 actual school days and the hourly equivalent of 180 actual school days. In kindergarten, this requires 540 net instructional hours; in grades one through three, 720 net instructional hours; and in grades four through 12, 900 net instructional hours. [Rule 6A-1.09512, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#).

Nursing and Health

- Each county health department shall develop, jointly with the district school board and the local school health advisory committee, a school health services plan. The plan must require that local private schools be notified of the school health services program and of the opportunity for local private school representatives to participate in developing the cooperative health services plan. A private school may request to participate in the school health services program. A private school voluntarily participating in the school health services program shall fulfill certain requirements. [ss. 381.0056\(4\)\(a\)18 and 381.0056\(5\), F.S.](#)

Professional Development

- Private school teachers and administrators may participate in in-service teacher education programs on comprehensive health education and substance abuse prevention on a fee-for-service basis. [ss. 1012.985\(1\) and 1012.98\(6\), F.S.](#)
- An organization of private schools with at least 10 members in Florida may develop a professional development system to be filed with FDE in accordance with the provisions of [s. 1012.98\(6\), F.S.](#) The system may be used for extension of a certificate or a new endorsement. [ss. 1012.585\(3\)\(a\) and 1002.42\(13\), F.S.](#)

Public Aid for Private Education

- Constitutional Provisions: “No revenue of the state or any political subdivision or agency thereof shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution.” [Florida Constitution, Article 1, §3.](#)

Recordkeeping and Reports

- Parochial, denominational, and private schools must keep a register of student enrollment and daily attendance in a manner prescribed by the state and open for inspection by the local superintendent or designated school representative. [s. 1003.23, F.S.](#)
- The register may be used as evidence in a court procedure for the enforcement of the Florida compulsory education statute. [s. 1003.27\(5\), F.S.](#)
- Prior to admission to prekindergarten or kindergarten, a private school principal must require that the child provide evidence of age, such as a transcript of the child’s birth record or certificate of baptism. [s. 1003.21\(4\), F.S.](#)
- An Immunization Annual Report of Compliance must be completed for private schools that enroll kindergarten or seventh grade students. Private schools may collect the necessary form ‘*Immunization Annual Report of Compliance for Kindergarten and Seventh Grade*’ Department of Health Form 684 from their local Florida county health departments. You can also request for the Form 684 instructions. [ss. 1002.42\(6\) and 1003.22\(8\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools that become defunct must arrange for the transfer of student records to the local public school superintendent or, if a member, the principal office of a private school system or association. Notice of transfer must be given to the FDE. [s. 1002.42\(3\)\(b\) and \(c\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools serving K-12 students must file a database survey form with the FDE indicating the name of the institution, address, telephone number, type, administrative officers, enrollment by grade or special group, number of graduates, number of instructional and administrative personnel, number of school days, and other data as needed under [s. 1002.42\(2\), F.S.](#)

Reimbursement for Performing State and Local Functions

- No state policy addressing reimbursement to private schools for performing state and local functions currently exists.

Security

- A private school in a school district that has not voted, or has declined, to implement a guardian program may request that the sheriff in the county of the private school establish a guardian program for the purpose of training private school employees. If the county sheriff denies the request, the private school may contract with a sheriff

from another county who has established a guardian program to provide such training. The private school must notify the sheriff in the private school's county of the contract with a sheriff from another county before its execution. The private school is responsible for all training and screening-related costs for a school guardian program. The sheriff providing such training must ensure that any moneys paid by a private school are not commingled with any funds provided by the state to the sheriff as reimbursement for screening-related and training-related costs of any school district or charter school employee. [s. 30.15, F.S.](#)

Special Education

- Diagnostic and resource centers are authorized to provide testing and evaluation services to private school students. [ss. 1002.42\(11\)](#) and [1006.03\(3\), F.S.](#)
- The local district school boards may provide instruction for exceptional students through contractual arrangements with approved private schools at a cost determined by those boards. [ss. 1002.42\(12\)](#) and [1003.57\(1\)\(b\), F.S. Rule 6A-6.0361, F.A.C.](#)
- IDEA; Private schools are not obligated to provide a "free and appropriate public education" ("FAPE") under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). See [34 CFR § 300.101](#). Local school boards may elect to serve exceptional students through contractual arrangements with approved private schools. [Fla. Stat. 1002.42\(12\)](#) and [Fla. Stat. 1003.57\(1\)\(b\), Rule 6A-6.0361 F.A.C.](#) Private schools receiving federal funds are subject to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- ADA; Private schools without a religious exemption are subject to [Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act \("ADA"\)](#).

Tax Exemption

- Educational institutions, including parochial church or private schools and their property, are exempt from taxation. [ss. 196.198](#) and [196.012\(5\), F.S.](#)
- Educational institutions, including church and nonprofit private schools meeting certain requirements, are also exempt from tax on the sale and use of tangible personal property (such as school books and lunches), annual and nonrecurring tax on intangible personal property, and local occupational license tax. [ss. 212.08](#) and [199.183, F.S.](#)
- Motor fuel taxes paid by private schools for operating school buses will be returned to the schools to be used for transportation-related purposes. [s. 206.41\(4\)\(e\), F.S.](#)

Teacher Certification

- Teacher certification is not required for instructional personnel in private schools. However, an owner of a private school may require school employees to file a complete set of fingerprints with the Department of Law Enforcement for processing and criminal records checking. Findings from such processing and checking shall be reported to the owner for use in employment decisions. [s. 1002.42\(2\)\(c\)3, F.S.](#)

Technology

- No state policy addressing the use of technology in private schools exists at this time.

Testing

- No statutory requirement exists for student assessment. The owners of private elementary and secondary schools in Florida are solely responsible for all aspects of their educational programs, including student assessment. [s. 1002.42\(2\)\(h\), F.S.](#)
- A private school that participates in state school choice scholarship programs must administer annually or make a provision for students in grades three through 10 who participate in the scholarship program to take one of the FDE-approved nationally norm-referenced tests or the statewide assessments. A participating private school must report annually the scores to the independent organization selected by the FDE. [s. 1002.395\(8\), F.S. Fla. Stat. 1002.394\(9\)\(c\).](#)

Textbooks

- The FDE is authorized to sell at cost to private schools and the general public educational materials and products developed by or under its direction. [ss. 1002.42\(9\) and 1006.39\(2\), F.S.](#)
- Local district school boards may give private schools instructional materials when they become surplus, unserviceable, or no longer on state contract, in accordance with ss. 1006.41(1)(a) and [1002.42\(10\), F.S.](#)

Transportation

- Private schools operating school buses with a seating capacity of 24 or more pupils must comply with state requirements outlined in [ss. 1006 and 316.615\(1\), F.S.](#)
- Private schools operating school buses seating fewer than 24 students must comply with state requirements regarding inspections, equipment, liability insurance, and driver physical examination requirements. [s. 316.615\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)
- District school boards may make available, by contract, bus driver training programs to private school bus drivers. [ss. 1002.42\(14\). and 1012.45\(4\), F.S.](#)
- Florida private schools with racially nondiscriminatory student admission policies may purchase school buses through the state pool purchase program. [s. 1002.42\(15\)\(a\), F.S.](#)
- School crossing guard training programs administered by local government entities may provide training to private schools by contract. [s. 316.75, F.S.](#)
- Private school students may be transported on public school buses; and public school students may be transported on private school buses where there is a mutual agreement between the local school board and the applicable private school and the buses are equipped with safety belts or with any other restraint system approved by the federal government. [ss. 316.6145 and 316.6146, F.S.](#)

Florida Rules

[Rule 69A-60 The Florida Fire Prevention Code](#)

[Rule 69A-60, F.A.C. The Florida Fire Prevention Code](#)

[Rule 6A-2.0040, Sanitation Standards in K-12 Private Schools](#)

[Chapter 381 Public Health: General Provisions](#)

[Section 381.006 Environmental health](#)

[Section 381.0056 – School Health Services Program](#)

[Section 381.0072 Food service protection](#)

[Section 381.0098 – Biomedical Waste](#)

[Chapter 404 Radiation](#)

[Section 404.056 Environmental radiation standards and projects](#)

[Chapter 1002 Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices](#)

[Section 1002.01 Private School Definition Section](#)

[Section 1002.20 K-12 Student and Parent Rights](#)

[Section 1002.42 Private schools.](#)

[Section 1002.421 State School Choice Scholarship Program Accountability and Oversight](#)

[Chapter 1003 Public K-12 Education](#)

[Section 1003.22 School-entry health examinations; immunization against communicable diseases; exemptions; duties of Department of Health](#)

[Section 1003.23 Attendance Records and Reports](#)

Resources

[Open My Florida Business](#) provides guidance on how to open a business in Florida. It includes links to most state agencies.

Budget Template

The Education Freedom Foundation can provide a template for a Florida Private School Budget. This template could be used to plan and manage your new school. The Education Freedom Foundation is available to help you get started using this template.

Step-Up-For-Students Resources

- [Marketing Toolkit](#)
- [Eligible Services Per Scholarship Type](#)
- [Document Checklist for Service Providers](#)
- [New Worlds Scholarship Provider](#)
- Provider Office Hours Newsletter
 - [November 2024](#)
 - [December 2024](#)
 - [February 2025](#)
 - [March 2025](#)

Contact Information – State and Federal Departments of Education

- Florida Department of Education
Turlington Building
Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
Phone: (850) 245-0505
Fax: (850) 245-9667
Email: commissioner@fldoe.org
Website: <http://www.fldoe.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education, [Florida](#)

Information and Legislative

- [Florida Department of Education: Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice – Private School Information for Administrators](#)
- [Florida Department of Education: Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice – Home Education](#)
- [Florida Department of Education: Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice – McKay Scholarships](#)
- [Florida Department of Education: Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice – Florida Tax Credit Scholarships Program](#)
- [Florida Administrative Code](#)

School Choice Programs

There are multiple educational savings accounts (ESA) programs and scholarship opportunities available.

Scholarships for private schools are available through:

- The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO)
- The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC)

Scholarships for children with unique abilities are available through:

- The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

The FES-UA scholarship enables families to personalize the education of their students by directing funds to where they're needed most. The funds can be used for a combination of programs and approved expenses including therapists, specialists, curriculum, private school, a college savings account and more.

Scholarships for Florida students who are not full-time private or public school students can access the Personalized Education Program (PEP) through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. This scholarship provides an education savings account (ESA) to fund the educational needs of eligible students.

Following is more information about each educational savings account program including links to the scholarship funding organization's website:

Family Empowerment Scholarship-Educational Options (FES-EO)

The Florida Empowerment Scholarship (FES-EO) ESA Program offers families a wide array of options to tailor their children's education according to their needs and preferences. Here's a breakdown of some key aspects of the program:

- **Scope and Coverage:** With nearly 3 million eligible students, the FES-EO ESA Program is the most expansive education savings account program in the United States. This large coverage indicates a substantial commitment to providing educational choice to families across Florida.
- **Flexibility:** The program offers flexibility in how families can use the funds provided through the ESA. This flexibility allows parents to choose from a variety of educational services that best suit their children's needs. These services include private school tuition, tutoring, online education, home education, curriculum, unbundled courses and services at public schools, tuition and fees for choice navigators, therapy, and postsecondary educational institutions in Florida, among other defined educational services.

- **Parental Choice:** By empowering parents to make decisions about their children's education, the FES-EO ESA Program places a strong emphasis on parental choice. This approach recognizes that parents are in the best position to understand their children's unique learning needs and preferences.
- **Administration:** The program is administered by approved scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs). These organizations play a crucial role in managing the distribution of funds and ensuring compliance with program requirements.
- **Access to Educational Opportunities:** By providing funding for a wide range of educational services, the FES-EO ESA Program aims to expand access to quality education for students across Florida. This includes access to private schools, specialized tutoring, online learning resources, and other educational opportunities that may not be available through traditional public schools alone.
- **Funding:** The funding for 2024-2025 can be found [online](#).

Overall, the FES-EO ESA Program represents a significant step towards expanding educational choice and opportunity for families in Florida, offering a model that other states may look to emulate or adapt based on their own contexts and priorities.

Family Empowerment Scholarship-Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

The Family Empowerment Scholarship Program for Students with Unique Abilities in Florida is specifically tailored to provide educational opportunities for students with special needs. Here are some key features of the program:

- **Targeted Support:** The program is designed to cater to students with unique abilities or special needs, ensuring that they have access to appropriate educational resources and services.
- **Education Savings Account (ESA):** Qualified students receive an ESA funded by the state, which is managed and distributed by approved scholarship funding organizations (SFOs). This funding mechanism empowers parents to make choices regarding their child's education.
- **Wide Range of Eligible Expenses:** Parents can use the funds from the ESA to cover a diverse array of educational expenses. These include private school tuition and fees, instructional materials and devices, specialized services from approved providers or hospitals, tutoring, online education, home education, curriculum materials, therapies (such as speech and behavior analysis), services from speech pathologists, fees for standardized tests, AP exams, industry certifications, unbundled courses and services at public schools, tuition or fees for choice navigators, and postsecondary educational institutions in Florida.
- **Flexibility and Customization:** The program offers flexibility for parents to tailor their child's education according to their unique needs and preferences. This includes the ability to choose from various educational services and providers, ensuring that each student receives a personalized learning experience.

- Access to Specialized Support: By providing funding for specialized services and therapies, the program aims to support the holistic development of students with special needs, addressing their academic, social, and emotional needs.
- Funding: The funding for 2024-2025 can be found [online](#).

Overall, the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program for Students with Unique Abilities serves as a crucial resource for families of students with special needs in Florida, empowering them to access quality education and support services that meet their individual requirements.

Florida Tax-Credit Scholarship and Personalized Education Program (PEP)

The tax credit program for donations to scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs) in Florida serves as a mechanism to support educational choice for students across the state. Here are some key aspects of the program:

- Corporate Tax Credit and Insurance Premium Tax Credit: Florida offers tax credits on corporate income taxes and insurance premium taxes for donations made to SFOs. This incentivizes corporations and insurance companies to contribute to scholarships for K–12 students in Florida.
- Eligibility: All students in grades K–12 are eligible to receive scholarships funded through this program. However, priority is given to students from low-income families and those in foster care, ensuring that those who may face financial barriers to education have greater access to educational opportunities.
- Use of Scholarships: Families can use the scholarships provided through SFOs to cover various educational expenses, including tuition at the school of their choice. Additionally, the scholarships can be used for instructional materials, curriculum, homeschooling tuition and fees, fees for standardized tests (such as nationally norm-referenced tests, AP exams, and industry certifications), unbundled courses and services at public schools, fees for choice navigators, tutoring, virtual education programs, educational therapies, and extracurricular programs. This broad range of eligible expenses allows families to tailor their children's education according to their individual needs and preferences.
- Promotion of Educational Choice: By providing scholarships for students to attend the school of their choice and supporting various educational expenses, the program promotes educational choice and empowers families to make decisions that best suit their children's educational needs.
- Support for Low-Income and Foster Care Students: The prioritization of students from low-income families and those in foster care ensures that those who may face socioeconomic challenges have equitable access to educational opportunities and resources.
- Funding: The funding for 2024-2025 can be found [online](#).

Overall, the tax credit program for donations to SFOs in Florida plays a significant role in expanding educational access and choice for students, particularly those from underserved

communities. It aligns with the state's commitment to providing quality education options for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Florida students who are not full-time private or public school students can access the [Personalized Education Program \(PEP\)](#) through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. This scholarship provides an educational savings account (ESA) to fund the educational needs of eligible students.

Hope Scholarship

The Hope Scholarship is for students in grades kindergarten through 12 who are enrolled in a Florida public school and have been subjected to an incident of battery; harassment; hazing; bullying; kidnapping; simple battery; robbery; sexual offenses, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexual battery; threat or intimidation; or fighting at school to have the opportunity to transfer to another public school with capacity or to receive a scholarship to enroll in an approved private school. Incidents reported may be investigated at the district level, however, there does not have to be substantiation on the part of the district to offer a transfer to another public school with capacity or the ability for the student to move to an eligible private school on scholarship. School district personnel in Florida have a responsibility to notify families of the Hope Scholarship Program. For more details on the scholarship, please visit [Step Up for Students](#), the scholarship funding organization that administers this program.

The law provides for eligible sales tax contributions from the purchase of a motor vehicle to eligible nonprofit [scholarship funding organizations](#) (SFOs). Contingent upon available funds, the SFOs then award the scholarships to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis.

The option for purchasers of motor vehicles in Florida to donate their sales tax to scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs) represents a unique initiative aimed at supporting victims of bullying and violence in public schools. Here's how the program works:

- **Donation of Sales Tax:** When individuals purchase motor vehicles in Florida, they have the option to donate a portion of their sales tax to SFOs. These organizations are nonprofits dedicated to providing private school scholarships to students who have been victims of bullying and violence in public schools.
- **Scholarships for Victims:** The funds collected through these donations are used to provide scholarships to students who have experienced bullying or violence in public schools. These scholarships enable these students to attend private schools, where they may find a safer and more supportive educational environment.
- **Transfer to Other Public School Districts:** In addition to providing scholarships for private school education, students who have been victims of bullying or violence in public schools may also have the option to transfer to other public school districts. This transfer option allows students to seek educational environments where they feel safe and secure.
- **Supporting Victims of Bullying and Violence:** The program aims to support students who have faced bullying or violence in public schools by providing them with alternative

educational opportunities. By offering scholarships for private school education and the option to transfer to other public school districts, the program seeks to address the needs of these students and ensure that they have access to a safe and supportive learning environment.

Overall, the initiative to allow purchasers of motor vehicles to donate their sales tax to SFOs for scholarships to victims of bullying and violence in public schools demonstrates a commitment to addressing the challenges faced by these students and providing them with opportunities for a better educational experience.

New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

Effective July 1, 2023, the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts Program expanded eligibility to include public school students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 5 who:

- have a substantial deficiency in either reading or mathematics;
- exhibit characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia; or
- scored below a Level 3 on the statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) or Mathematics assessment in the prior school year.

For the 2024-2025 school year, the amount of the scholarship is \$750 per eligible student.

Transportation Stipend for Public School

Florida offers a wide variety of educational options within the public school system, including magnet schools with specific themes, charter schools with unique approaches, and other innovative models.

Every child has unique needs and sometimes the best school may be one other than the one he/she is assigned. To support the transportation costs associated with traveling to a different public school than the one the student has been assigned, families of K-8 students can benefit from a transportation stipend of \$750.

Florida ESA Application Process

Review the information at this link for [Requirements for Participating in State Scholarship Programs](#).

Private school administrators may log in through the link below to access additional technical assistance on this topic and to notify the Department of Education of their intent to participate in the state scholarship programs.

[Private School Administrator Log-In](#)

Additional Requirements to participate in the Florida Scholarship programs:

In order to participate in a state scholarship program, a private school must:

1. Maintain in this state a physical location where students regularly attend classes (full time, onsite).
2. Notify the Department of Education of their intent to participate.
3. Demonstrate fiscal soundness by:
 - a. Being in operation for at least three (3) school years, or
 - b. Filing with the Department of Education a surety bond or letter of credit for the amount equal to the scholarship funds for any quarter.
4. Comply with the anti-discrimination provisions of 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d.
5. Employ or contract only with teachers who hold a baccalaureate or higher degree, or have at least three years of teaching experience in public or private schools, or have special skills, knowledge, or expertise that qualifies them to provide instruction in subjects taught.
6. Submit a signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form certifying that:
 - a. All owners, operators, and chief administrative officers have undergone the required background screening.
 - b. All school employees and contracted personnel with direct student contact have undergone the required background screening.
7. Meet state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
8. The Department will conduct site visits to private schools entering a scholarship program for the first time. A private school is not eligible to receive scholarship payments until a satisfactory site visit has been conducted by the Department.
9. For initial eligibility to participate in a scholarship program, a school must submit a signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form no later than October 1 and all outstanding compliance documentation issues are to be resolved by December 1. A school that fails to meet either of these deadlines may not participate in the scholarship program until the subsequent school year.

Once approved to participate in a state scholarship program, a private school must:

1. Comply with the requirements of individual scholarship programs, and be aware of all program deadlines.
2. Timely respond to requests for information from the Department, including responses to Departmental inquiries based upon complaints against your school.
3. Notify the Department of a change in the school's name, director, mailing address, or physical location within 15 days after the change.
4. Timely submit any updates to the required documents which may have been affected by the change in director or change in location.
5. Maintain current contact information on the Department's website, including e-mail addresses.
6. Return any funds received for services that were not provided.
7. Accurately report student withdrawal dates.
8. Complete and submit the signed and notarized Private School Annual Survey required by section [1002.42, F.S.](#)

9. Annually complete and submit the signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form by March 1 of each school year. Any additional documentation must be submitted by May 1 of that school year.
10. Annually meet scholarship compliance requirements and keep evidence and documentation demonstrating your school's compliance. We recommend keeping a binder of all important scholarship information.

Approved Norm-Referenced Test for Schools Participating in State Scholarship Programs

For students in grades 3 through 10 participating in state scholarship programs, an eligible private school must annually administer one of the [nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education](#) or the [statewide assessments](#) pursuant to [section 1008.22, F.S.](#)

Agreed Upon Procedure Guidelines

Private schools that receive funding from state scholarship programs are required to submit a report from an independent certified public accountant who performs the agreed-upon procedures developed pursuant to section [1002.395\(6\)\(o\), F.S.](#) if the private school received more than \$250,000 in scholarship funds. The private school must submit the report by September 15 to the scholarship funding organization that awarded the majority of the school's scholarship funds.

Further information related to the statewide assessment option is available at the [State Assessment Program](#) page.

Scholarship Funding Organizations

The below Scholarship Funding Organizations are approved to administer the Family Empowerment Scholarship, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, the Hope Scholarship, the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts, and the Transportation Stipends. Please contact the Scholarship Funding Organization to determine the programs they administer.

Step Up For Students

P.O. Box 54367

Jacksonville, FL 32245-4367

(877) 735-7837

info@stepupforstudents.org

[Step Up for Students Private School webpage](#)

Setting Up an Account In EMA

Eligible private schools should not create their own provider account in EMA. A unique invitation link will be sent to the school via email once a school has been approved by the FLDOE. Once the school receives the link, an EMA account can be created.

Eligible Private School Tuition & Fees

[A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation- FL, LLC](#)

P.O. Box 15719, Tampa, FL 33684

Phone/Fax: (888) 707-2465

info@aaascholarships.org

[AAA Scholarship webpage](#)

ESA Statutes and Rules

- [Rule 6A-6.03315 Private School Scholarship Compliance](#)
- [Rule 6A-6.0952 Family Empowerment Scholarship Program](#)
- [Rule 6A-6.0960 Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program](#)
- [Section 1002.394 - The Family Empowerment Scholarship Program.](#)
- [Section 1002.395 - Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program](#)
- [Section 1002.421 - State school choice scholarship program accountability and oversight.](#)

Resources

- [Service Provider Account Types and Document Checklist](#)
- [StepUp for Students Document Library](#)
- [Provider Handbook \(FES-UA, FES-EO, FTC, PEP, NWSA\)](#)
- [Private School Handbook \(FES-EO & FTC\)](#)
- [HOPE Scholarship School Handbook](#)
- [New Worlds Provider Handbook](#)
- [FTC/FES-EO Purchasing Guide](#)
- [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#)
- [2023-24 Full-Time Tutor Participation Agreement](#)
- [Direct-Pay Invoice Process by Scholarship Program](#)