



Scholarship Bulletin | February 2021

All Scholarship Programs: March 1st Renewal Deadline Approaching!

Participating private schools have less than one month left to submit a Scholarship Compliance Form in order to renew participation in the Florida Tax Credit, Family Empowerment, McKay, Hope, and/or Gardiner Scholarship programs.

- **Step 1:** The form must be submitted online, and a signed and notarized **hard copy** must be mailed to our office with a postmark date no later than **March 1**.
- **Step 2:** For renewing private schools that submit their compliance forms by the deadline, any outstanding compliance issues must be resolved and any additional requested compliance documentation must be received by our office no later than **May 1**.

Schools that do not meet these deadlines **will not be eligible** to participate in these scholarship programs for the 2021-2022 school year.

Your Regional Manager can assist you with any questions. Schools are advised to contact their Regional Manager as early as possible, as the increasing volume of calls and e-mails may delay their response time as deadline approaches.

Scholarship Compliance Notes

Fingerprint Retention: Requirements for Owners/Operators:

Section 1002.421(p), Florida Statutes, requires private schools that intend to participate in state scholarship programs to have **each owner/chief administrator, operator, officer, and board member** reported to the Division of Corporations (www.sunbiz.org) undergo a level 2 background screening **regardless of their contact with scholarship students**. The fingerprints must be submitted electronically through the school's **Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System (VECHS)**. Further information on the VECHS program can be obtained at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Background-Checks/VECHS-Home.aspx> or by calling 850-410-8324.



Ownership Documentation: Sunbiz Reporting

Private schools participating in state scholarship programs (for-profit or nonprofit organizations) must also have its own listing, either as a Fictitious Name Registration (i.e., “doing business as”) or as a separate entity for each campus. Otherwise, the school hasn’t satisfied the requirements for doing business in Florida. This requirement can be met by submitting a printed copy of your school’s information on the Florida Division of Corporations’ Sunbiz™ website: www.sunbiz.org.

Employee Ethics Policy: Abuse and Misconduct Notices

All private schools must post notices about their duty to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Reporting to the Florida Department of Children and Families can be done by phone, fax or online at reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/.

Schools that participate in state scholarship programs must also post notices with information about reporting professional misconduct by school staff at the school and on the school’s website. The posting must include a contact person and a statement about the penalties for failing to report misconduct. Additional information as well as samples of the abuse and misconduct notices are available on the Office of Professional Practices Services (OPPS) website at www.fldoe.org/teaching/professional-practices/.

When you visit the OPPS website, there are several posters listed. The 4 notices that the school should post are the following:

- 1.) Either the **“DCF Mandatory Abuse Reporting”** or the **“Text Version”** poster should be posted in a prominent place.
- 2.) An 11” x 17” “English Poster” regarding **abuse reporting** should be posted on the student’s level in a public area widely used by students.
- 3.) An 11” x 17” “Spanish Poster” regarding **abuse reporting should be posted** on the student’s level in a public area widely used by students.
- 4.) **Any 1 of the 8 misconduct posters** should be posted in a prominent place and included on the school’s website, if available. Remember to fill in the contact information on the poster.



McKay & Family Empowerment: Minimum Attendance for Payment

In order for a McKay or FES student to be eligible for a quarterly payment, the student must have **attended for at least ten school days** during that payment period. Rule [6A-6.0970\(5\)\(d\) and \(e\)](#), F.A.C., requires private schools participating in the McKay and FES Scholarship Program to **ONLY** return to the Department of Education any scholarship funds issued for a student that did not attend the private school for ten or more school days during the payment period. **If your school receives a payment for a student who did not attend for at least 10 school days within the payment period, the warrant must be immediately returned to the following address:**

Florida Department of Education, OIEPC
Attn: K-12 Scholarship Office
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 1044
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

McKay and FES Student Guardian Changes

When a McKay or FES scholarship family needs to change the parent or guardian who is listed on the scholarship checks, please submit a proper **Guardian Issue Form** to our office. Be sure to attach the applicable supporting documents, such as legal documentation, new social security number, marriage/death certificate, or power of attorney documentation. For McKay ONLY, a [Parent Affidavit](#) for the new guardian should also be submitted. Scholarship forms are available for download from the [McKay Student Technical Assistance](#) link on our website. **Please contact your Regional Manager for the FES forms** or if you have any questions.

McKay Final Intent to Participate for 2020-2021

The last day for parents to file a McKay intent for the 2020-21 school year was January 31, 2021. Any new scholarship students who file an intent on or before this date must be **enrolled by March 2, 2021**, to be eligible to receive a fourth quarter scholarship payment on April 1, 2021.



McKay Intent to Participate for 2021-2022

Intents filed on or after February 1, 2021, will be for the 2021-22 school year. These students must be enrolled in a participating private school by **August 2, 2021**, in order to be eligible for a first quarter scholarship payment on September 1, 2021. After filing an intent to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program, the parent is provided with a confirmation number that may be used to check the status of the intent, including the student's intent date, eligibility, matrix number, and estimated scholarship amount.

Private schools may assist parents in checking the intent status on the School Choice website. Simply enter the student's last name, birth date, and the intent confirmation number provided by the parent. Please note that School Choice office personnel can provide student status information only to the parent or with the parent's permission.

Norm-Reference Testing

Private schools participating in the Florida Tax Credit, Family Empowerment, Gardiner, or Hope Scholarship Program are reminded of the statutory requirement to administer, or make provisions for students in grades 3-10 to take one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education. Participating private schools must make arrangements to administer one of the approved listed tests during the 2021-22 school year, unless the private school has requested and received approval to use an alternate assessment or has been approved to participate in Statewide Standardized Assessments. The approved assessments and specific instructions are available on the [School Choice website](#).

In preparation for testing students on campus, private schools should consider ways to administer assessments by providing flexibility for students and alternative methods to implement a safe testing environment. For example, consider administering in smaller groups, different time slots, or in different rooms of your school's facility. At this time, we advise reaching out to the testing company of your chosen assessment to learn more about their COVID-19 testing practices.



Reporting Assessment Results

Participating private schools must report a student's scores to the parent and must submit FTC students' scores to the independent research organization selected by the Department of Education by August 15 of each year. Please send copies of score sheets with name, testing date, and national percentile ranking to:

Melissa Dyehouse

Learning Systems Institute
Florida State University
Suite 4600 University Center Bldg. C
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2540

Participating private schools must report a FES, Hope, and Gardiner student scores to the parent.

2020-21 Scholarship Upcoming Deadlines

March 1

Date by which participating private schools must mail in an original Scholarship Compliance Form in order to renew scholarship program participation for the 2021-22 school year.

March 2

Date by which a new McKay and FES student must be enrolled to receive the April 1 (4th quarterly) payment.

March 3 - 10

McKay and FES Attendance Verification week for the final payment period.

May 1

Date by which all Compliance Renewal issues must be resolved.

Additional Information:

[McKay Deadlines](#)

[Regional Managers](#)

[McKay Parent Affidavit](#)

[McKay Student Technical Assistance](#)

[Application & Renewal Instructions](#)

[Compliance Resources](#)

[Update Notification Form](#)



Other Resources



First Lady Casey DeSantis has announced the theme for this year's Kindergarten through 12th grade art and essay contests will be **"Community Champions – Celebrating the Contributions of African Americans in Florida's Communities"**. Information about the contests and Florida's Black History Month is available at <http://www.floridablackhistory.com/>.



FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) invites teens from communities across the Southeast to apply for FEMA's National Youth Preparedness Council. The Council provides an opportunity for young leaders to share their perspectives, feedback and opinions on disaster preparedness with FEMA emergency managers and grow their leadership skills.

Students in 8th through 11th grade may apply online at <https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/apply-to-ypc>. All applications and supporting materials must be received by 11:59 p.m.



The Sunshine State Young Readers Award (SSYRA) Program is a statewide reading motivational program for children in grades 3 through 8. The purpose of the SSYRA program is to encourage students to read independently for pleasure and to read books that are on, above, and below their reading level in order to improve their reading fluency. Voting is open for the reading programs from March 8 – April 16, 2021 and the registration deadline is February 28, 2021.

For more information, go to <https://www.floridamediaed.org/ssyra.html>.