



Family Empowerment Scholarship Program Summary

- **HB 7075** creates the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program (FESP) to provide parents, no matter what their economic status, the opportunity to choose what is best for their child's education.
- There are over 100,000 low-income students participating in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program with, at least, another 13,000 students waiting to participate. The FESP prioritizes low-income families by fully funding the FTC waitlist.
- Florida offers four scholarship programs that allow parents of eligible students to register and attend private schools that may better serve a student's particular needs. We have two programs for students with disabilities, one program for low-income students and one program for students who are bullied.
- No other programs in the state offer private school choice options for middle-income families.
- Research shows that 97.2 percent of parents of students with special needs participating in a scholarship program were satisfied or very satisfied with their private school choice and students participating in another scholarship program were 15 percent more likely to enroll in a public college than their peers.

How will the program work?

1. Eligible student submits application to a Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) who notifies DOE of the number of eligible students.
2. DOE determines the number of scholarships available (approximately 28,000), which are limited to one percent of public school enrollment.
3. DOE notifies eligible SFOs of students who are eligible for an initial scholarship award on a first-come, first-served basis. First to students whose household income does not exceed 185% FPL and then to siblings of current participants.
4. The school district reports the student for funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).
5. The scholarship amount is calculated and DOE transmits funds, from general revenue, to the SFO for deposit in the student's account.
6. Student enrolls in a private school.
7. SFO pays for tuition and fees from student's account.



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Who is eligible?

Students entering kindergarten and students who spent the prior year in a public school in grades 1-12 who meet the following income limitations:

Program	School Year	Percent of Poverty Level	Income Threshold for Family of Four ¹	Examples of Middle-Income Families
FTC		--	\$25,750	
		185%	\$47,638	Cashier (\$20,810) married to a Child Care Worker (\$22,330)
		260%	\$66,950	Bank Teller (\$30,530) married to Child Care Worker (\$22,330)
FESP	2019-20	300%	\$77,250	Cashier (\$20,810) married to a Firefighter (\$52,170) Occupational Therapy Aide (\$32,560) married to Auto Repair Tech (\$40,770)
	2020-21	325%	\$83,687	Firefighter (\$52,170) married to Vet Assistant (\$26,260) Firefighter (\$52,170) married to Bank Teller (\$30,530)
	2021-22	350%	\$90,125	Vet Assistant (\$26,260) married to Police Officer (\$58,400) Special Education Teacher (\$50,290) married to Dental Assistant (\$37,920)
	2022-23 and beyond	375%	\$96,572	Police Officer (\$58,400) married to Dental Assistant (\$37,920)

How much will the student receive?

The amount a specific student will receive will be based on the school district where the student resides. The amounts provided below are approximate based upon the statewide average.

Comparison of Current and Proposed Scholarship Amounts			
Grade Grouping	FTC/Hope Amount	Average District Amount	New Scholarship Amount
K-3	\$6421 (88% x \$7296)	\$7267	\$7048 (97% x \$7267)
4-8	\$6713 (92% x \$7296)	\$6216	\$6030 (97% x \$6216)
9-12	\$7004 (96% x \$7296)	\$6225	\$6038 (97% x \$6225)

Who will administer the program?

Non-profit scholarship funding organizations will be responsible for verifying the household income of students and reimbursing private schools for tuition and fees. The department will be responsible for determining the number of new scholarships that are available each year and notifying SFO of students who are eligible for an initial scholarship. Renewing students do not count against the program cap and are not subject to annual income verification. The SFO is responsible for determining continued eligibility for a renewal student.

¹ HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2019, *2019 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia* <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines> (last visited Mar. 11, 2019). The poverty guideline for a family of four is \$25,750.



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How will private schools be held accountable?

The same accountability and transparency that applies to private schools under existing choice programs, will apply to private schools that participate in FESP. In addition, the annual report on the academic performance of students participating in FTC will also include students participating in Hope and FESP.

How does this bill help public school students?

For too long public school and school choice advocates have been at odds. By using the same funding source and linking the scholarship amounts to the public school student amount, public school and school choice advocates can work together to raise per student funding so that all students can receive the best education.