EVERY CHILD DESERVES A CHANCE TO SUCCEED.
Step Up For Students (SUFS) is a state-approved nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization that helps administer the Personal Learning Scholarship Account-PLSA (Special Needs Scholarship) and the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (Income-Based Scholarship).
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)
For students in kindergarten-12th grade

- **Personal Learning Scholarship Account- PLSA**
  - Different than other state scholarships
    - Allows parents to **customize** the education of their children with special needs/unique abilities by directing money toward a **combination of programs and approved providers**.
      - Including private schools, therapists, specialists, curriculum, technology even a college savings account.
    - Signed into law June 20, 2014.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)
Students Who Qualify

- Florida students in kindergarten through 12th grade with **one of the following disabilities:**
  - Autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Spina bifida, Williams syndrome, or intellectual disability. Also, kindergarten students who are five years old and deemed “high risk” because of developmental delays may be eligible.

- The students need either/or:
  - Current **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** from a Florida school district
  - **Formal diagnosis** from a Florida licensed physician or psychologist.

- Students entering kindergarten must be 5 on or before Sept 1.
- Students entering first grade must be 6 on or before Sept 1.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)
Students Who Qualify: Additional Information

- Continue to receive the scholarship until...
  they graduate from high school, reach age 22 or return to public school.

- Students are **not eligible** to participate in the PLSA while enrolled in
  public school or receiving any other state-sponsored scholarship (McKay
  or FTC).
  They can participate as part of **home education** or private school education.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)

Scholarship Amount

• The scholarship amount varies according to grade, county and disability, but the average amount for most students for 2014-15 is $10,000.
  Amount may increase in 2015 16
  Students with most severe disabilities are eligible for a higher scholarship amount

• For the full list of scholarship amounts by grade and county, click here, or visit www.StepUpForStudents.org/PLSA (Section: How much is the scholarship worth)
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)

How Can the Money Be Used

- Parents can use the account to pay for a *variety* of approved services and materials.

  *May include:* tuition and fees at an eligible private school, applied behavior analysis services, speech language pathologists, occupational therapy, physical therapy, services from listening and spoken language specialists, full time private tutoring programs, virtual programs or online courses, exam fees, contract services from school districts, contributions to the state prepaid college program, instructional materials such as digital devices and assistive technology, and curriculum materials.

- Money in the account *can roll over* from one year to the next, as long as the student remains in the program, and the account can remain in place until:

  A student graduates from a postsecondary education institution, such as college or technical institute
  Or, has gone four consecutive years after high school with no further education

  - At that point, the account is closed and any remaining money reverts to the state.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA) Approved Providers

- According to the PLSA statute: “specialized services by approved providers that are selected by the parent.”

- **Approved providers** are defined to include only those providers who are approved by the APD (Agency for Persons with Disabilities), licensed under one of the categories of health care practitioners in s. 456.001(4), Florida Statutes, or approved through the Office of Early Learning as a Specialized Instructional Services provider under s. 1002.66, Florida Statutes.

To search for approved providers or to become an approved provider:
- Please visit:
  - [Health Care Practitioners - License Search](#)
  - [Health Care Practitioners - Regulation](#)
  - [Agency for Persons with Disabilities Providers](#)
  - [Office of Early Learning - SIS Providers](#)

- Interested providers should follow the application instructions on the SIS website, contact APD to apply, or obtain a license as one of the health care practitioners listed in the statute.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)
Personal Learning Plan Advisor

- Families receiving a PLSA through Step Up For Students will:

  Have access to a Personal Learning Plan Advisor.
  - These advisors have several decades of experience working with PLSA eligible students.
  - Will be available to answer any questions families may have about choosing the services that best meet their children’s individual needs.

  Have access to a free online tool that will help them oversee the progress of their children.
Special Needs Scholarship (PLSA)
Application Process

- Application is completed online at www.StepUpForStudents.org/PLSA.
- Applications are now being accepted for the August 2014-15 school year. Families interested in the PLSA for August 2015-16 school year, can sign up for the interest list on our website. We will begin accepting applications for the 2015-16 school year in November 2014.
- There is no application fee.
- Scholarships are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
For students in kindergarten-12th grade

- **Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program- FTC:**
  Created in 2001 by the Florida Legislature
  - Step Up For Students has since provided nearly **399,000 scholarships** to low income Florida schoolchildren, children who are in foster care and children who are homeless.
  - In June 2014, a bill was signed which now allows children in out of home care to benefit.

- With the scholarship, families are empowered to find the school that best meets their children’s learning needs
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
Scholarship Options

- Families can choose between **two** scholarship options:
  - A scholarship to help cover **private school tuition and fees**, worth up to $5,272*.
  - A scholarship to assist with **transportation costs to attend a public school in a different county**, worth up to $500.

(These scholarship amounts are for the 2014-15 school year. The private school scholarship amount may increase for the 2015-16 school year.)

- **Flexibility:** Scholarships are awarded to students, not schools, making them portable.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
Students Who Qualify

- **Children who qualify based on income**
  - If a family's household income qualifies for free or reduced price lunch, i.e. %
  - 185% of the federal poverty guidelines, %
  - Or, if a family receives SNAP (food stamps), TANF, or FDPIR, %

- **Children who are in foster care or in out-of-home care.**

- **Children who are homeless**

- Age requirement for all children.
  - A child entering kindergarten must be 5 on or before Sept. 1.
  - A child entering 1st grade must be 6 on or before Sept. 1.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)

Eligibility Criteria:
Children who qualify based on income %

- **Income guidelines:**
  Household income for the family must be **at or below** the income criteria found in the chart.

- If a family receives SNAP (food stamps), TANF, or FDPIR, the student may also qualify. Or, if a family’s household income qualifies for free or reduced price lunch, the student may qualify.

### Total Gross Monthly Household Income

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<th># OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$4,303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
Eligibility Criteria:
Children who are in foster care or out-of-home care %

• Income guidelines:
  There is no income threshold for a child who is in foster care or in out of home care.

• Documentation requirements:
  Documentation to validate that the child is in foster care or out of home care must be provided.
  ▪ If the child is in foster care, a copy of the foster care placement paperwork must be provided.
  ▪ If the child is placed in out of home care, a copy of the court order signed by the judge must be provided. Please check the Step Up For Students website for details.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)

Additional Information:

Children who are in foster care or out-of-home care

- A child in foster care or out-of-home care may apply for a scholarship year-round.

- A child in foster care or out-of-home care who receives a scholarship, may maintain the scholarship until he/she graduates high school or reaches the age of 21, whichever comes first.

Please visit the website for additional details.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
Eligibility Criteria:
Children Who Are Homeless

- **Income guidelines:**
  There is **no income threshold** for a child who is homeless.

- **Documentation requirements:**
  Documentation must be provided to validate that the child is homeless.
  - The homeless liaison in the public school district to which the child is assigned can create a letter or document to be included with their application packet or a letter may be submitted (on letterhead) by the owner or Executive Director of the shelter or transitional housing facility.

- **Acceptable documentation must include:**
  - Child’s name
  - Effective date(s)
  - Signature of the local educational liaison or the director of the homeless shelter.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
How The Private School Scholarship Works

- The scholarship can be used at more than 1600 participating private schools across the state.

- Worth up to $5,272* for the 2014-15 school year. (Amt. may increase for the 2015-16 school year.)

  The scholarship will pay for the following school expenses, in this order until maximum award amount is reached, or until all fees are satisfied, whichever is first:

  1) Tuition; 2) Books*; 3) Registration; 4) Transportation; 5) Uniforms*; 6) Testing; 7) Other. (*Applicable for books and uniforms sold by the school, not a third party vendor.)

- A list of participating schools is available at www.StepUpForStudents.org
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)  
How The Transportation Scholarship Works

- This scholarship is to assist with transportation costs to attend a public school in another county.
- Worth up to $500 for the 2014-15 school year.
- Both the transportation and private school scholarship have the same application and eligibility process.
- To consider:
  The public school must be out of the student’s assigned district, which typically means it is in a different county.
  The student must have permission from both the district in which the student resides and the district in which the student wants to attend.
  Step Up will need documentation of the approval by both districts before being able to award the scholarship.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC)
Success Partners

- Step Up For Students helps schools and parents create true partnerships through **Success Partners**, a program designed to improve student achievement.

- More than **300 schools** currently participate in this **free** program, which includes an online tool that lets teachers create lesson plans, and allows families to review their children's assignments and monitor their grades.

- Each child has a **personal learning plan**, where the teacher, the parent and even the child have agreed upon specific responsibilities.

- Step Up For Students and its Office of Student Learning are dedicated to **helping every child succeed**.
Income-based Scholarship (FTC) Application Process

- We are **no longer** accepting applications and are currently on a waiting list for the 2014-15 school year.
  Families interested in the income based scholarship for the **2015-16** school year are asked to sign up for the income **based interest list** so they may receive updates. New families will be able to begin applying in **Spring 2015**.

- Application is completed online at [www.StepUpForStudents.org](http://www.StepUpForStudents.org)

- Application fee for the 2015-16 school year will be $29/application.

- Applications may take 4-6 weeks to process. Families should check email (or login to account) during application processing period.

- Scholarships are awarded on a **first-come, first-served basis**.
EVERY CHILD DESERVES A CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

INCOME-BASED SCHOLARSHIP (FTC)
ASSISTS WITH
PRIVATE SCHOOL TUITION & FEES
TRANSPORTATION COSTS TO AN OUT-OF-DISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL

SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIP
PERSONAL LEARNING SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT (PLSA)
ASSISTS WITH
COMBINATION OF APPROVED PROGRAMS & PROVIDERS
Questions/Contacts

- Questions regarding both the Income based & PLSA Scholarships:
  Glenton Gilzean, ggilzean@sufs.org, 813 498 1986

- For application questions:
  Scholarship hotline: 877.735.7837
  Email for the Income Based Scholarship: info@sufs.org
  Email for the PLSA Scholarship: PLSA@sufs.org

To learn more about the Income based Scholarship
To learn more about the PLSA Scholarship