



NEW WORLDS SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK



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Overview

The New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program provides \$1,200 to help eligible students who struggle with reading or math.

Step Up For Students is a state-approved, eligible nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that empowers families to pursue and engage in the most appropriate learning options for their children.

Step Up For Students is one of the SFOs that administers Florida's education choice programs, including the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program.

In 2024, the Florida Legislature increased the scholarship amount from \$500 to \$1,200 per student and expanded the scholarship to include students in Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) programs.

This handbook guides families through the process of qualifying for, applying for, and using the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program.

Qualifying For A New Worlds Scholarship Account

New Worlds Scholarship Accounts are available to students who are enrolled in a Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program or a Florida public school in kindergarten through grade five (5) who:

- Have a substantial deficiency in either reading or mathematics;
- Exhibit characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia;
- Scored below a Level 3 on the most recent statewide, statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) or Mathematics assessment; or
- For VPK students enrolled in public school or private school programs, exhibit a substantial deficiency in early literacy skills based on the most recent progress monitoring results.

An eligible student who is classified as an English Language Learner (ELL) and is enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of ELL students will receive funding priority.

Applying For A New Worlds Scholarship Account

Step Up For Students requires parents and guardians to submit a complete scholarship application each year through their account in EMA, which can be accessed [here](#).

Create An Account In EMA

EMA allows parents and guardians access to:

- Apply for scholarships
- Review and update contact information
- Change account passwords



- Check the status of a submitted scholarship application
- Upload and attach documents to a submitted application
- Save and print documents associated with a submitted application
- View account statements
- Shop for pre-approved service providers
- Shop for educational materials

Add Students To EMA

Before applying for a scholarship, parents or guardians must add all eligible students for whom they are applying to their account in [EMA](#) as explained in [this guide](#).

Students added to EMA during previous school years, even if for a different scholarship program, do not need to be added again. Parents and guardians should ensure their information is up to date.

Complete An Application

Parents and guardians can apply online by logging into [EMA](#). There is no fee to apply. Students must be added to the My Students page in EMA before applying for the program.

Step Up For Students and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) will determine if a student is eligible for the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program. This process may take several weeks. Parents and guardians will receive email notifications to the email address listed in their guardian profile when there is an update in the scholarship status. Parents and guardians can view an application's status at any time by logging into EMA.

Application Processing Status Definitions

- **Submitted:** The application has been received and the student's eligibility is under review.
- **On Hold:** The application did not have the information needed to determine the student's eligibility, or the information provided must be updated. The application may remain On Hold until eligibility is determined.
- **Eligible:** The FLDOE has confirmed the student's eligibility for the program.
- **Awarded:** The student has been awarded a scholarship.
- **Ineligible:** The student was found to be ineligible for the New Worlds Scholarship Account program and will not receive scholarship funds.
- **At Capacity:** All currently available program funds have been awarded to other students. See the [Program At Capacity](#) section for more information.

Funding For New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

Funding for the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program comes from the State of Florida. The scholarship award amount is \$1,200 per student for the 2024-25 school year.

Step Up typically receives the scholarship funds from the FLDOE within 45 days of a student being found eligible. After Step Up receives the funds, they are deposited into the student's



account, typically within ten (10) business days. Funding will be disbursed on a first-come, first-served basis, with students who are English Language Learners receiving priority.

Parents and guardians will be notified via email when funds have been deposited into their student's New Worlds Scholarship Account. Parents and guardians may view their student's funding status by logging into EMA.

Once funds have been deposited into the student's account, parents and guardians may use the scholarship funds for a variety of products and services (see the [Authorized Uses of New Worlds Scholarship Account Funds](#) section, below).

A few days after funds are deposited into the student's account, tabs will appear in the student's EMA portal to allow parent/guardians to search and shop for approved goods and services directly through Step Up's Marketplace and in MyScholarShop. See the [Direct Payment Through the EMA Marketplace](#) and [MyScholarShop](#) sections for more information. Any unused funds will be rolled over for use in subsequent school years, as long as the account remains active.

If Step Up For Students deposits excess funds in error to a student's scholarship account, Step Up will recover the excess funds by potentially adjusting future funding amounts. Parents and guardians should be aware of the amount of funds in the student's scholarship account when making purchases and try to avoid spending any funds that may have been deposited into the student's account by mistake. If a student switches scholarship programs mid-year, Step Up may need to recover excess funds tied to their previous scholarship program.

Accrued Interest

Florida law requires Step Up to establish separate scholarship accounts for each scholarship student. It also requires us to record interest accrued on each student's account and make sure any interest is reserved for that student's benefit. This means accrued interest counts toward each student's scholarship funds.

Program At Capacity

The number of applications received by Step Up For Students may exceed program capacity. The number of scholarships available each school year is limited by the amount of funds the Florida Legislature appropriates to the program in its annual state budget.

Program funding is limited. Please apply as soon as possible once applications are open. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Once the program reaches capacity, Step Up will award additional scholarships if funds become available later in the school year. Please note: There is no guarantee additional funds will become available once the program reaches capacity. Awarded students will receive an email notification if they are awarded a scholarship after the initial capacity is reached.



Multiple Scholarships

An eligible student may participate in the Transportation Stipend and the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program at the same time. A student may not participate in the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program and any other Florida K-12 scholarship program at the same time.

Declining A Scholarship

If a parent or guardian decides they don't want a New Worlds Scholarship Account for their student after an application is submitted, they must notify Step Up For Students immediately. At this time, we ask that all parents/guardians contact us at 1-877-735-7837 so that we can quickly and accurately complete this change request for you. Parents and guardians must notify Step Up For Students if their student intends to participate in the Family Empowerment Scholarship or Florida Tax Credit Scholarship programs or intends to leave the Florida public school system. Leaving the Florida public school system or a VPK program at an eligible private school could affect the student's scholarship eligibility.

Authorized Uses of New Worlds Scholarship Account Funds

The following categories of items are approved uses of funds for the New Worlds Scholarship Account program. Please see the appendix at the end of this handbook for a chart outlining the Authorized Uses of Funds and payment types (direct pay or reimbursement) for each program.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials must be related to reading and literacy or math, including, but not limited to:

- Digital devices, limited to desktop computers, laptop computers, and tablets
- Digital materials or stand-alone online class
- Online software programs related to reading and literacy or math
- Books, including workbooks

Curriculum

Curriculum is defined as a complete course of study for a particular content area or grade level, including any required supplemental materials and associated online instruction related to reading and literacy or math.

Tuition and Fees For Part-Time Tutoring Services

Part-time tutoring services must be provided by a person who holds one of the following:

- A current, valid Florida educator's certificate under Florida Statute [1012.56](#);
- An adjunct teaching certificate under Florida Statute [1012.57](#);
- A baccalaureate or graduate degree in the subject area taught;
- Demonstrated mastery of subject area knowledge under Florida Statute [1012.56\(5\)](#);



- A micro-credential under [1003.485](#); or
- For a prekindergarten student, a person who holds a credential under Florida Statute [1002.55\(3\)\(c\)1](#), or an educational credential under Florida Statute [1002.55\(4\)](#).

Mastery of Subject Area Knowledge:

Acceptable means of showing master of subject area knowledge are listed under Florida Statute [1012.56\(5\)](#):

- For a subject requiring only a baccalaureate degree for which a Florida subject area examination has been developed, achievement of a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination specified in state board rule;
- For a subject for which a Florida subject area examination has not been developed, achievement of a passing score on a standardized examination specified in state board rule, including, but not limited to, passing scores on both the oral proficiency and written proficiency examinations administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages;
- For a subject for which a Florida subject area examination has not been developed or a standardized examination has not been specified in state board rule, completion of the subject area specialization requirements specified in state board rule and verification of the attainment of the essential subject matter competencies by the district school superintendent of the employing school district or chief administrative officer of the employing state-supported or private school;
- For a subject requiring a master's or higher degree, completion of the subject area specialization requirements specified in state board rule and achievement of a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination or a standardized examination that is directly related to the subject specified in state board rule;
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education;
- Documentation of successful completion of a United States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program;
- Documentation of a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT); or
- For a subject requiring only a baccalaureate degree for which a Florida subject area examination has been developed, documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary educational institution that the Department of Education has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher in the certificate subject area as identified by state board rule



Fees For Summer Education Programs

Summer education programs must be designed to improve reading and literacy or math skills.

Fees For After-School Education Programs

After-school education programs must be designed to improve reading and literacy or math skills.

Direct Payment Through The EMA Marketplace

Parents and guardians will make direct purchases of goods and services through the EMA Marketplace. Please note the EMA Marketplace cannot schedule services. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to contact the service provider and schedule services for their student.

Parents and guardians must be aware of their student's scholarship account balance. Any purchases made that exceed the amount of funds in the student's account are the parent or guardian's responsibility and will not be reimbursed.

If a student already works with an eligible provider, but that provider is not listed in EMA or MyScholarShop, please contact Step Up For Students [here](#) to request that they be added. Some providers may choose not to participate in the scholarship.

Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny requests or to limit or deny access to EMA or MyScholarShop.

To shop for providers, [login to EMA](#).

MyScholarShop

MyScholarShop is an educational e-purchasing platform built to assist in purchasing instructional materials using scholarship funds without any upfront cost.

Items available through MyScholarShop are preapproved for purchase using New Worlds Scholarship Accounts funds. If you do not see an item in MyScholarShop, please contact us [here](#) to request that it be added.

Make sure there are enough available funds in the student's scholarship account to cover the entire purchase.

MyScholarShop orders cannot be shipped to an address that is outside of the State of Florida or to a post office box.

The first digital device purchased does not require pre-authorization. Subsequent purchases of digital devices must be pre-authorized through MyScholarShop before ordering.

When purchasing multiple items, include all items in one order. Creating multiple orders may cause delays.

Access to MyScholarShop will be activated within a few days of a student's account being funded.



Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny requests or to limit or deny access to EMA or MyScholarShop.

Making Purchases Through MyScholarShop

Before shopping on MyScholarShop, parents and guardians must confirm their residential mailing address in their guardian profile in EMA. If the address is incorrect in EMA, a parent or guardian must update it with their current, correct Florida residential address and allow 2-3 business days for the new address to populate in MyScholarShop. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for any purchases shipped to an address that is not correctly entered into EMA or has not been updated to the current address.

To access MyScholarShop, login to EMA by clicking [here](#). MyScholarShop will appear under the Marketplace tab and will only appear in the portal once the student's funds have been deposited in their account.

Returns Through MyScholarShop

Returns are made through the vendor they were purchased from and not through Step Up For Students. [Click here](#) to learn more about vendor-specific return information.

Once the vendor has received the item, it may take up to fourteen (14) business days for the funds to be credited to the student's scholarship account.

MyScholarShop Status Definitions

- **Composing:** The MyScholarShop request is pending. Items in the shopping cart have not been submitted for purchase.
- **Submitted:** The MyScholarShop request was submitted and is pending review.
- **Approved:** The order has been approved
- **Denied:** The purchase request has been denied.
- **Ordering:** An approved order is being generated.
- **Ordered:** All items associated with an order have been sent to the vendor to fulfil.
- **Cancelling:** The order was cancelled after it was placed.
- **Cancelled:** The order was cancelled after being submitted and approved.
- **Receiving:** Ordered items have been shipped and are in the process of being delivered.
- **Received:** Ordered items have been delivered.

For more in-depth information on MyScholarShop, [click here](#).

Frequency of Purchase Limitations

Program rules limit the frequency with which families can purchase certain items using scholarship funds. For the New Worlds program, digital devices, including desktop computers, laptop computers, and tablets may only be purchased using scholarship funds once every two years. The first digital device purchased does not require pre-authorization. Subsequent purchases of digital devices must be pre-authorized through MyScholarShop before ordering.



These rules apply by calendar year. For example, a laptop may have a two-year purchasing frequency, meaning a student who purchased a laptop on November 10, 2024, will be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds on or after November 11, 2026.

Frequency of purchase rules apply to all scholarship programs, even if a student changes programs. For example, if a parent or guardian purchased a tablet with New Worlds Scholarship Accounts funds on November 10, 2024, the student will not be eligible to purchase a tablet using funds from any other scholarship until November 11, 2026.

Account Closure

To close a student's New Worlds Scholarship Account, please [contact Step Up For Students](#).

Parents and guardians must notify Step Up if the student plans to participate in the Family Empowerment Scholarship or Florida Tax Credit Scholarship programs or plans to leave the Florida Public School system. Leaving the Florida Public School system could affect the student's scholarship eligibility.

If no money is spent from the student's account for three (3) consecutive fiscal years (July 1-June 30), the student's account will be closed, and all remaining funds will be returned to the FLDOE.

If scholarship eligibility is denied or revoked by the commissioner for fraud or abuse, including but not limited to, the student or student's parent or guardian accepting any payment, refund, or rebate, in any manner, from a provider of any services, their account will be closed, and all remaining funds will be returned to the FLDOE.

For More Information

- [NWSA SUFS Page](#)
- [New Worlds Scholarship Accounts Statute](#)
- [New Worlds Scholarship Accounts FLDOE Rule](#)
- [Name Change Request Form](#)
- [EMA Provider Request Form](#)
- [MyScholarShop Vendor Request Form](#)

Parent & Guardian Rights & Responsibilities

Parents and guardians of scholarship recipients are subject to all scholarship program rules and responsibilities described in the application and Terms & Conditions in EMA, relevant Florida statutes, and rules set by FLDOE.

For an eligible student to receive a scholarship account, the student's parent or guardian must:

- Submit an application to an SFO by the deadline established by the SFO; and
- Utilize the SFO's system to make direct purchases of qualifying expenditures. Step Up For Students offers EMA and MyScholarShop systems for parents and guardians to make direct purchases.



Parents, guardians, students, or providers of any services may not bill any insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid for using scholarship funds.

The parent or guardian is responsible for the payment of all eligible expenses in excess of the amount of the scholarship in accordance with the terms agreed to between the parent or guardian and any providers.

The terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change.

Receiving Payments, Refunds, or Rebates Prohibited

Parents or guardians may not receive payments, refunds, or rebates of scholarship funds from a provider. Parents and guardians may not keep the proceeds from selling an item purchased using scholarship funds.

If a service provider issues a payment, refund, or rebate of scholarship funds to a parent or guardian, or if a parent or guardian sells an item purchased using scholarship funds, the returned funds or proceeds must be returned to the student's scholarship account.

A check, made payable to Step Up For Students, listing the scholarship student's name and student ID number, should be sent to Step Up For Students at the following address:

Step Up For Students
Attention: Accounts Receivable
P.O. Box 54429
Jacksonville, FL 32245-4367

Data Confidentiality

Parent and guardian information in EMA and MyScholarShop, including login credentials, is personal and confidential.

A parent or guardian may not assign responsibility for submitting any application or documentation to another user and must not provide anyone, including service providers or personnel at a private school, access to a student's scholarship account by providing a username and password.

Doing so may result in loss of scholarship eligibility and funding, or financial or criminal penalties. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes or purchases made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared.

This policy is intended to prevent misuse of scholarship funds and protect the confidentiality of sensitive personal financial and educational information that belongs to students and their parents or guardians.



Data Security

Step Up For Students will never ask a parent or guardian for the following information via email, phone call, or text message:

- Full account password or any part of it
- Full social security number (Step Up may ask for the last 4 digits for account verification purposes)
- Credit card number or banking details
- Any personal identification numbers other than the PIN provided on the scholarship application

Parents or guardians who receive any communication requesting this type of information or have received a suspicious email should not respond or click on any links. Instead, they should [report the activity immediately on the Contact Us page](#) on the Step Up For Students website.

Maintaining Up-To-Date Contact Information

Parents and guardians should keep contact information current, especially a primary email address that is checked regularly. This is the primary way Step Up For Students will communicate important information related to a student's scholarship.

Parents and guardians should update email filters to accept messages from Step Up For Students so emails are not sent to spam or junk folders.

If at any point there is a change of physical or mailing address, telephone number, cell phone number, or email address, the information must be updated in EMA. Parents and guardians should contact Step Up For Students if they need to update their Proof of Residency.

If there is a change of physical or mailing address, telephone number, cell phone number, or email address, the information must be updated in [EMA](#).

If a parent or guardian needs to change their name or the student's name in EMA, please complete the [Name Change Request Form](#).

Contact Us

Step Up For Students wishes all scholarship students a productive and fun-filled 2024-25 school year.

There are three ways to reach Step Up For Students:

 Chat with a live agent at StepUpForStudents.org

 Call (877) 735-7837

 Submit an inquiry through the [Contact Us](#) page



The Customer Engagement Center is generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST. During peak periods, hours may be extended. For Customer Engagement Center hours, visit the [Contact Us](#) page on the Step Up For Students website

Authorized Use of Scholarship Funds	Scholarship Program				Payment Method
	FES-UA	FTC/FES-EO	PEP	NWSA	
Instructional materials	X	X	X	X (DP)	DP or R
Curriculum and curriculum materials	X	X	X	X (DP)	DP or R
Tuition and fees for:					
Full-time, in-person private school	X	X			DP or R
Part-time, in-person eligible private school	X		X		DP or R
Hybrid private school			X		DP or R
Home education instructional programs	X		X		DP or R
Eligible postsecondary institution	X	X	X		DP or R
Dual enrollment	X	X	X		DP or R
Approved pre-apprenticeship programs	X	X	X		Reimbursement
Approved online or virtual provider	X	X	X		DP or R
Private-pay Florida Virtual School	X	X	X		DP or R
Approved VPK program provider	X				DP or R
Approved school readiness provider	X				DP or R
Standardized testing fees	X	X	X		DP or R
Contracted services provided by a public school or school district	X	X	X		DP or R
Private tutoring					
Full-time private tutoring	X		X		DP or R
Part-time private tutoring	X	X	X	X (DP)	DP or R
Services provided by a Choice Navigator	X	X	X		DP or R
Contributions to approved college savings programs					
Stanley G. Tate FL Prepaid College Program	X				Reimbursement
FL 529 Savings Program	X				Direct Pay
Specialized services by approved providers or a Florida hospital					
Applied behavior analysis	X				DP or R
Speech-language pathologist services	X				DP or R
Occupational therapy services	X				DP or R
Physical therapy services	X				DP or R
Listening and spoken language specialist services	X				DP or R
Fees for specialized summer education programs	X				DP or R
Fees for specialized after-school education programs	X				DP or R
Fees for summer education programs that improve reading, literacy, or math skills				X (DP)	Direct Pay
Fees for after-school education programs that improve reading, literacy, or math skills				X (DP)	Direct Pay
Transition services provided by job coaches	X				Reimbursement
Annual home education evaluation fees	X				DP or R
Fees for horse therapy	X				DP or R
Fees for music and art therapy	X				DP or R

"DP" = Direct Pay through EMA or MSS; "R" = Reimbursement. All NWSA purchases must be made by Direct Pay