



Scholarship Bulletin | October 2020

Scholarship Program Technical Assistance

The 2021 Compliance season is around the corner! Private schools that participate in state scholarship programs are responsible for complying with the laws and rules related to the programs every year. Our office has created web-based tutorials and other technical assistance to help familiarize administrators with the state's requirements. Log in at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and select **Compliance Resources** from the left hand menu to access this information.

Compliance Notes:

Employee Screening Before employing instructional personnel or school administrators in any position that requires direct contact with students, participating private schools must conduct an employment history check on potential hires by contacting previous employers and retaining documentation of the results in the employee's personnel file.

Potential employees must also be screened using the two employee screening tools available through the Department: the Teacher Certification Database and the Professional Practices Database of Disciplinary Action. See **Employee Compliance Resources** when logged into our website for more information on the screening requirement and for links to the two databases.

Fiscal Soundness

To demonstrate fiscal soundness and accountability for scholarship programs, private schools that have been in existence for less than three years (through the submission of an Annual Survey) are required to obtain a Letter of Credit (from a bank or other financial institution), or a Surety Bond (from an insurance company) in an amount equal to 25% of the school's annual scholarship funding.

If your school falls under this requirement, and your enrollment has exceeded your original estimate, you may need to amend your bond or letter of credit to secure a higher amount. Contact your [Regional Manager](#) to discuss the amount of surety required for your school.



McKay and FES Updates:

Private School Attendance – Regular and Direct Contact

Attendance verification is now available to submit for currently enrolled McKay and FES students online. The Commissioner's [Emergency Order](#) provides for flexibility of instructional delivery through the entirety of the first semester (through December, 2020). As long as your school has an established system of maintaining accurate attendance, this will serve as direct contact – so select yes, **IF** you have a system in place **AND** you have submitted an ICP (Instructional Continuity Plan) to the Department in order to participate in the provided flexibilities. As always, if you have any questions, please contact our office.

Please note, students attending a private school must satisfy the compulsory school attendance requirement of maintaining 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, as stated in [Rule](#)

- Kindergarten, this requires 540 net instructional hours;
- Grades 1 - 3, 720 net instructional hours;
- Grades 4 – 12, 900 net instructional hours.

In order to complete the Attendance Verification process, the private school administrator should do the following:

- 1) Go to www.floridaschoolchoice.org - Click on "Private School Login"
- 2) Enter the private school's 4-digit school code and password.
- 3) On the "Welcome" page, click on "Attendance Verification" at the bottom of the page. This link will only appear on the "Welcome" page during the attendance verification period listed on the current year's deadline chart.
- 4) Read the provided information and complete the following four (4) steps:
 - a) Confirm the continued attendance of each student by clicking "Yes" or "No" by each student's name. If the school administrator selects "No," then the system will prompt them to withdraw the student.
 - b) Confirm the regular and direct contact of each student by clicking "Yes" or "No" by each student's name.
 - c) Enter the first and last name of the person completing the verification.
 - d) Click on "Continue."
- 5) Click on "Finish" to complete the Attendance Verification process. Click the "Previous" button to go back and make changes.



McKay Parent Affidavit Submission Updates - New Parent Affidavit Email

An approved parent affidavit is required for new students currently enrolled in the McKay Scholarship Program at your school. Remember parents of McKay private school students are required to have an approved Parent Affidavit Form on file with the Department in order to receive scholarship payments. Moving forward please submit Parent Affidavit Forms (PDF Preferred) **ONLY** to parentaffidavit@fldoe.org. **Our office will no longer be accepting picture format.** This email domain is **ONLY** for parent affidavits, **please avoid sending any other documentation.**

How to Check the Affidavit Status

To find out which of your enrolled students do not have a valid Parent Affidavit on file or a Parent Mismatch:

1. Click on the **“McKay Student List”** link when logged in to our website and look at the “Affidavit Status” column.
2. If the column is blank, then our office has not yet received a Parent Affidavit for the student and one will be required to receive future payments.
3. If the column has a “Denied” status, then the parent name on the affidavit does not match the parent name associated with the student in our records.
4. Please compare the parent name in our system with the name on the affidavit you submitted for the student. **If the parent name in the system is incorrect, then submit a Guardian Issue Form and supporting documents to our office.** If the affidavit has been completed by the wrong parent, please submit a new affidavit signed by the correct parent.

Please be sure that every parent affidavit includes the following:

- a. County in which the school is located
- b. Printed name and signature of parent on file
- c. Students full name
- d. Notary signature and stamp

If the affidavit does not include all of the above, our office will not accept it. This may delay McKay payments.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND A COPY OF PARENT DRIVER’S LICENSE – this item is not required.

Note: Only if a scanner is not available for you, please fax or mail the parent affidavit.



McKay and FES Student List and Withdrawal Procedures

Now that a new school year is well under way, please take a moment to ensure your Student List is accurate. If a McKay or FES student is no longer enrolled or attending your school, the student should be immediately **withdrawn** from your Student List on the School Choice website. To withdraw a student, select the **Withdraw tab** on the student's general information page. Then enter the student's withdrawal date (last date of attendance), the name of the person completing the withdrawal, and a brief explanation of the reason for withdrawal.

The withdrawal date must be **on** or **after** the student's first date of attendance. Therefore, if a student was enrolled but never attended, the student's first date of attendance should be entered as the withdrawal date. The first date of attendance is provided on the withdrawal tab as a reference.

Private schools are responsible for the return of all scholarship funds that were received in error, including students who were not in attendance. Therefore, timely submission of withdrawal information will save your school the inconvenience of returning incorrectly issued scholarship payments.

Please note that even if the parent of a McKay/FES student has unpaid fees or incomplete documentation, the private school may not refuse to withdraw the student for these unresolved obligations.

Any payments you received for students not in attendance at your school should be returned to our office at the address below. If you have questions, please contact your Regional Manager.

Florida Department of Education
Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 1044
Tallahassee, FL 32399



Norm-Referenced Testing

Private schools participating in the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship, Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES), or Hope Scholarship Program must make provisions for students in grades 3-10 to take one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education. Gardiner Scholarship students for whom the tests are appropriate are also included in this requirement. Approved assessments and specific instructions are available [on our website](#).

2020-21 Scholarship Upcoming Deadlines

October 1

Deadline for all new participating private schools to submit a signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form to participate in K-12 Scholarship Programs for the current school year.

October 2

Enrollment deadline for the November 1st McKay and FES payment.

October 5-12

McKay and FES Attendance Verification for the 2nd payment period.

December 3

Date by which a new McKay and FES student intent must be filed in order to be eligible for the February 1st payment.

Additional Information:

[McKay Deadlines](#)

[Regional Managers](#)

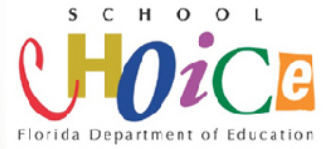
[McKay Parent Affidavit](#)

[McKay Student Technical Assistance](#)

[Application & Renewal Instructions](#)

[Compliance Resources](#)

[Update Notification Form](#)



Other Resources:

U.S. Blue Ribbon Schools

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has officially [announced](#) the 2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Fifty private schools around the country received this distinguished recognition. The [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) program recognizes public and private schools in two categories:

- 1) Exemplary High Performing Schools, and
- 2) Exemplary Improving Schools. Only public schools can be recognized under the second criteria.

Eligibility [details](#) are located on the National Blue Ribbon Schools webpage.

The Council for American Private Education (CAPE) nominates private schools, including parochial and independent schools. CAPE may nominate up to 50 private schools. Current application requirements are available on [CAPE's website](#).



[CPALMS](#) is a free, online toolbox of information, resources, and interactive tools based on Florida's teaching standards.