



## Private School Scholarship Newsletter | February 2023

### All Scholarship Programs: March 1 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 Scholarship, Family Empowerment Scholarship Education Option, Family Empowerment Scholarship Unique Abilities, or Hope Scholarship Program.

- **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 2023-2024 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.

### Additional 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](http://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) 410-8161.

#### ***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](http://www.sunbiz.org).

## ***Employee Ethics Policy: Abuse and Misconduct Notices***

Florida law requires private schools participating in any state scholarship program to adopt policies that establish certain minimum standards of ethical conduct for teachers and administrators. The policy must specifically mention a **requirement for employee training** on the ethical conduct standards. It must also contain the **duty of school staff to report alleged employee or administrator misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student, as well as the procedures for reporting alleged employee or administrator misconduct.**

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/](http://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/](http://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.

### **Website Posting Requirements**

Schools that participate in state scholarship programs must also post notices at the school site and on the school's website with information about reporting professional misconduct by school staff.

Section 1006.061(2), Florida Statutes, requires private school that accepts scholarship students to post at the school site and on the schools' internet site (if available) the policies and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety or welfare of a student.

Please refer to the **new template** emailed with your checklist for further guidance.

## Norm-Referenced Testing

Private schools participating in the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship, Family Empowerment Scholarship (Education Option), 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. Students awarded the Family Empowerment Scholarship (Unique Abilities) option for whom the tests are appropriate are also included in this requirement. **A list of approved assessments, specific instructions, and deadlines are available on the [School Choice website](#)**

## Apply to Administer Statewide Assessments

Participating scholarship schools with at least one Florida Tax Credit, Family Empowerment, and/or Hope Scholarship student have the opportunity to apply and participate in administering Florida State Assessments including, Florida Assessment of Student Thinking [FAST], Florida EOC assessments, and Statewide Science Assessment to all students at the private school. This program is one of many available options that private schools with students receiving a scholarship may use to fulfill the annual private school assessment requirement. The application to participate, along with Frequently Asked Questions, is available on the [Department of Education website](#).

**The application window for the 2023-2024 school year is open thru March 1, 2023, with school eligibility determinations finalized in August 2023.**

## Reporting Assessment Results

Participating private schools must report student's scores to the parent and must submit scholarship student's 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

## 2023 Scholarship Compliance 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 2023-2024 school year.

### **May 1**

Date by which all Compliance Renewal issues must be resolved.

## Useful Links:

[Regional Managers](#)

[Application & Renewal Instructions](#)

[Compliance Resources](#)

[Update Notification Form](#)

## Other Resources



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. PST, on March 6, 2023.



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 14, 2023 and the registration deadline is February 24, 2023.

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