



District Bulletin | March-April 2020

School Choice Office

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This month, we would like to introduce our new **Executive Director** for the School Choice office, **Dr. Graham!**

A few words from our Executive Director:



-Greetings!

My name is Dr. Dré Graham and I am incredibly excited about the opportunity to serve the students of the state of Florida as a member of the IEPC team! I look forward to our collaborative efforts to positively impact the next generation of world changers. My road to the Department was through the vessel of public education. I am a proud product of Hillsborough County Public Schools, graduating from the C. Leon King High School International Baccalaureate Program. After earning my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Music Education from the University of Florida, I went back to KHS and took over for my high school band director, where I have served as the Director of Instrumental Studies for the past 10 years. While there, I earned my second Master's Degree (Educational Leadership) and my Ph.D. (Music Education). Most recently, I served as the 2020 Florida Teacher of the Year and Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education. My desire has always been to promote equity in education and provide ALL students with an opportunity to succeed. I anxiously await the future victories

the Office for Independent Education and Parental Choice will experience by way of providing open doors for ALL the students in the great state of Florida!

-Dakeyan C. Graham, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

2020 Florida Teacher of the Year



COVID-19 UPDATES

Pursuant to the White House's announcement that social distancing guidelines be extended through April 30 to slow the spread of COVID-19, the CDC's guidance that states should reevaluate the need to extend school campus closures every 15 days, and the upcoming April 15 school campus closure deadline set forth in [DOE ORDER NO. 2020-EO-01](#), Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran has strongly recommended that school districts, public charter schools and private schools keep campuses closed through Friday, May 1, 2020. In an effort to help ensure a continuity of learning to Florida's students, private schools, and help stop the spread of COVID-19, school districts should continue working to protect teachers and families by implementing distance learning as an alternative instructional method during this time. Many private schools have followed suit by implementing online learning and/or instructional packets for students. In order to assist school districts with the implementation of "Distance Learning" for students, the Department has set guidelines for innovative plans for distance learning to ensure students have a seamless transition to this new way of "going to school." [District best practices can be found here.](#)

BEST PRACTICES FOR DISTANCE LEARNING FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



*If your student is receiving a State Scholarship, such as McKay, Family Empowerment, Florida Tax Credit, or Gardiner, and you are concerned about the statutory requirement for direct student contact and student attendance, virtual learning will count toward these requirements for private schools.

Considerations for Students with Disabilities

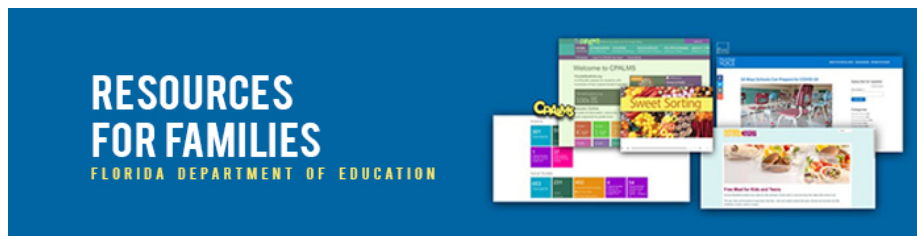
For guidance on providing distance learning in compliance with federal law, please [click here](#).
For FAQ's on providing services to children with disabilities during COVID-19, please [click here](#).

School Closures

Please visit the [Department's COVID-19 page](#) to view all announcements and the most up-to-date information on school closures. It is important to understand that the Florida Department of Education does not license, approve, accredit, or regulate private schools, therefore it is ultimately up to the discretion of the private school to determine how they can continue operation and provide the best instruction to their students. All private schools have been advised by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and our office that should they choose to remain open then precautionary measures should be enforced and to follow the minimum 10-person rule. For continued updates regarding the number of COVID-19 cases in Florida and health and safety tips, please visit the Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 website: www.floridahealth.gov/covid19. Should you feel the need to report a suspected case of the COVID-19, we strongly encourage you to contact the **Department of Health**:

- DOH hotline: 866-779-6121 (24 hours)
- DOH email: COVID-19@flhealth.gov
- CDC hotline: 800-232-4636 (24 hours)

For education-related information, the [U.S. Department of Education has established a dedicated Coronavirus webpage](#), which includes resources for institutions of higher education and for K-12.



Resources for Families- Free Food and Internet Resources

The Department is providing assistance to all families with a compiled a list of free resources, offered by state and federal agencies, private companies, and non-profit organizations to help school districts, colleges, educators and families ensure continuity of learning during this time. Our number one priority is providing as much assistance as possible in regards to food and other resources. Here is a link to our Department's COVID-19 Information page for additional resources: <http://www.fldoe.org/em-response/index.stml>

For food resources as well as reduced/free Internet Wi-Fi-access, please visit:

[Food-Related Resources](#)

[Free Internet & Communications Providers](#)

Florida Virtual School Resources

In order to provide educational relief to schools and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, Florida Virtual School is providing [100 free digital courses](#) to all Florida private school students through the end of the school year, for grades K-12 on select Learning Management Systems (LMS). Courses will be available as an emergency service from **March 25th through June 30, 2020**. Charter and private schools must contract with FLVS by **May 31, 2020**. Schools must have one of the following LMS platforms to access the courses: Blackboard (Ultra and v9.1), Buzz, Canvas, Bright space (v9, v10), Moodle or Schoology. Please note: Courses selected through this option will not jeopardize the eligibility of a scholarship student. For more information, please visit flvs.net or contact your [FLVS District Relations Manager](#).

Annual Assessment Testing for Public and Private Schools

Norm-Referenced Testing Requirement: 2019-2020 Waiver

Per the Florida Department of Education's Emergency Order No.2020-EO-1, dated March 23, 2020:

"The requirement for private schools with scholarship students participating in the Florida Tax Credit, Family Empowerment, Hope and Gardner Scholarship programs to administer or cooperate in the administration of K-12 state assessments, and the requirement that the students participate in a norm-referenced assessment, is waived for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. The requirement to report the results of these cancelled or waived assessments to a state university under section 1002.395(8)(b), Florida Statutes, is also necessarily waived."

2020 Legislative Update

During the 2020 Legislative Session, a total of 210 bills passed in both the House and Senate Chambers. Included in this total, is [CS/HB-7067, K-12 Scholarship Programs](#), and [HB-5001, the General Appropriations Act](#). Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Governor has yet to sign either of these bills into law. The IEPC Office will continue to monitor the Governor's actions on pending legislation, however, you may also choose to monitor his actions on your own time by following [this link](#).

McKay Eligibility for Pre-K

The McKay Scholarship may be awarded to eligible students beginning in their kindergarten year; however, pursuant to section 1002.39(2), F.S., a student may file intent and establish eligibility for the program in pre-kindergarten in one of two ways. A student must either:

- have been enrolled and reported for funding during the preceding October and February FEFP surveys and have been eligible for services under section 1003.21(1)(e), F.S. (i.e., as a pre-k student with disabilities); or
- have received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education Program pursuant to section 1002.66, F.S. during the previous school year.

Assigning Pre-K Intents:

McKay District Contacts,

As you all know, during this time of year, you all will receive intents for Pre-K students that are planning to enter Kindergarten for the upcoming school year. There are **two categories** of pre-kindergarten students who may be eligible for the FULL McKay Scholarship funding when they enter kindergarten. We want to make sure you all understand the process of what to look for on these types of intents, so that students are assigned correctly based on their intent.

#1 - Public School FTE Reporting

1. First are those with an IEP that receive (**full or part time**) services from their public school district under s. 1003.21(1)(e), F.S. (i.e., as a pre-k student with disabilities) and;
 - a. are **counted in both the October and February Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) surveys.**
 - b. These students may also be attending public or private VPK programs.

Examples:

- Student enrolls in full-day ESE Pre-K program in the school district receiving services identified on the IEP October and February FTE attendance survey. OR
- Student receives “walk in” IEP services (ex. OT, Speech and Language) with the school district and is counted in the October and February FTE attendance survey.

**** For Pre-K students**, it is important to identify that as long as the student was reported for FTE in your district, then consideration is made to award the full scholarship, and there is no need to input the part time services hours in the School Choice portal.

#2 - SIS Reporting

2. Second are those with an IEP who receive services through the **Specialized Instructional Services Program**, which is administrated through local Early Learning Coalitions.
 - a) SIS is funded through the VPK program,
 - b) and a student may not be enrolled in public or private VPK while receiving SIS services.
 - c) Note – when you see SIS Program on the student’s intent, **this means that you DO NOT have to check for Oct/Feb FTE as this requirement is waived for SIS students.**
 - d) Simply proceed to the next step in verifying student’s Kindergarten IEP transition meeting plan. – This is all you have to review for SIS intents

Last Public School: Sis Program (7225)

Status: INTENT

In addition, the student must have an Individual Education Plan or 504 Accommodation Plan. If the intent is filed for a rising kindergarten student prior to their Pre-K transition meeting, the district may identify the student status in the system as “IEP pending transition meeting.” When the transition meeting is complete, the system will allow the district to assign the appropriate matrix or eligibility status.

- a) If intent is filed for a rising Kindergarten student prior to their Pre-K transition meeting, the district may identify the student status in the system as “Eligibility pending transition meeting.”
- b) When the transition meeting is complete, the system will allow the district to assign the correct matrix number or eligibility status.

Status:	INTENT
Current Private School:	
Primary Exceptionality:	Speech Impaired Edit
Eligibility:	Pre-K Student (IEP Pending Transition Meeting)

McKay Eligibility Notification Requirement

Earlier this month, the Department issued a memorandum related to the requirement for public school districts to notify parents of students with disabilities about McKay Scholarship Program options. Parental notifications must be sent by April 1st of each school year and within 10 days of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

Family Empowerment Scholarship Notification Requirement

Pursuant to Section 1002.394(6), Florida Statutes, states that by April 1 of each school year, a school district shall inform all households within the district receiving free or reduced priced meals under the National School Lunch Act of their eligibility to participate in the newly created Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program. The Department will send out an electronic survey in August requesting the district to confirm the notification was sent, the number of families the notification was sent to, and the method of the distribution. Additionally, each school district must publish information about the FES Program on the district’s website homepage. At a minimum, the published information must include a website link to the Department’s FES webpage ([Department's FES webpage](#)) as well as a telephone number and e-mail that students and parents may use to contact relevant personnel in the school district to obtain information about the scholarship. To certify compliance with this requirement, please complete and submit the Notification Verification Form.

Gardiner Matrix Request

Pursuant to section 1002.385, F.S., funding for a student’s Gardiner Scholarship account is initially calculated with a matrix of 253. At the parent’s request, district personnel must complete a revised matrix of services for a Gardiner student. Parents must make their scholarship funding organization (SFO) aware of their request, and they must also contact the district directly. Once the parent contacts the district, the matrix must be completed within thirty days of the request. In addition to completing the matrix, districts must notify our office of a student’s matrix level by logging into our website and entering the matrix using the Gardiner Student List link in the left menu. If the parent has notified their SFO that they are making a request for a matrix review, editing the matrix for the student will be enabled. If you have questions about entering a matrix for a Gardiner student, please contact your Regional Manager. More information on the Gardiner Scholarship Program is available on our website at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/gardiner/>.

School Choice Office - NEW REGIONAL MANAGER

Please welcome the newest staff member on our Regional Manager team, **Kembriel Robinson**! Kembriel will be overseeing scholarship schools in Hernando, Pasco, Hillsborough, Polk, and Osceola County. Before joining the Department, Kembriel was an abuse counselor for the Florida Abuse Hotline. Kembriel has a Bachelors' of Arts in Sociology from Albany State University, and is now taking on her first job in education here at the School Choice office. Kembriel is a proud mother and enjoys reading, traveling, shopping, and spending time with her family most. Kembriel is very happy to join our office as she says the Department brings a change of scenery she was looking for. As she loves to learn new things, Kembriel says her favorite part of the position so far is learning about all the Scholarship Programs offered to K-12 students in Florida! We are very happy to have her on board!😊



District Contact Information

Please take a moment to check the contact information for your district on the [School Choice website](#). You may edit or update the information by logging on to the District page. If you need assistance, please contact your regional manager.

Additional Resources:

[Regional Managers](#)

[McKay Calendar](#)

[McKay Deadlines](#)

STAY HOME. STAY SAFE. SAVE LIVES.



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