

FLORIDA

Overall Market Rating: **Growth Ready**

With the addition of universal eligibility in 2023, Florida has the nation’s largest education savings account programs, making it one of the strongest markets for private school creation. Florida combines a streamlined regulatory structure with adequate per-pupil funding and significant need and demand. More than 400,000 students statewide were awarded a publicly funded scholarship or ESA for 2024-25.

Scholarship amounts vary by county, based on relative cost of living, and average around \$7,800 per pupil. There is essentially no cap, although it’s possible for the state budget allocation to fall short of demand. Were that to happen in a given year, students from low-income households would have priority. Over 100,000 students with special needs receive a Florida Empowerment Scholarship for Unique Abilities (FES-UA), which can yield about 20% more funding than a regular ESA. While there are numerous and reasonable reporting requirements for schools in Florida, most find the state’s approval process for accepting ESA students to be manageable. Schools must assess students with a nationally normed test of their choosing, and teachers must hold a BA/BS degree or have three years of teaching experience. Schools in operation less than three years must obtain a surety bond or letter of credit equivalent to one quarter’s worth of ESA revenue.

Facilities have proved to be a big obstacle to school creation and expansion in recent years. Florida rents and real estate prices have soared as a result of rapid population growth, and both local zoning rules and strict fire safety requirements for school facilities have challenged newly formed schools. A law passed in 2024 attempts to ease the burden by limiting the need for rezoning when schools occupy former community-oriented facilities such as libraries, child care centers and university buildings.

+ Best ✓ Fair - Inadequate	Program(s) Prioritize Low- Income HHS	Funding Is Adequate to Meet Demand (High or No Cap)	New Schools Eligible in First Year	Per-Pupil Amount Is Adequate	The Application Process Is Family-Friendly	There Is a Supportive Ecosystem for Private Schools
FLORIDA	+	+	✓	✓	+	+

K-12 Enrollment

FLORIDA 2023-24			
Total PK-12*	Public District	Public Charter	Private
3,380,118	2,474,664 (73%)	397,656 (12%)	507,798 (15%)

*Doesn't include homeschool students and certain specialized placements (approx. 160,000 pupils)

Choice Program Details

Florida Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options Florida Tax Credit Scholarship

Eligibility	Amounts	Participation	Other
All K-12 students are eligible; those with household income up to 185% of federal poverty level have first priority, followed by those in HHs up to 400% of FPL	\$7,380 to \$11,950 per pupil, based on grade level and county cost index	307,609 recipients in 2024-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families fill out a single universal application and may receive either an FES-EO or FTC scholarship; the amount will be the same either way Students renewing their ESA must apply by April 30 each year, but new applicants can apply up until Nov. 15

Florida Empowerment Scholarship for Unique Abilities

Eligibility	Amounts	Participation	Other
Students aged 3-22 (not yet graduated from high school) with an individualized education plan or a qualifying diagnosis by a physician or psychologist	Varies based on student's specific needs; avg. \$10,000 per pupil	107,006 recipients in 2024-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FES-UA is not stackable with an FES-EO or FTC award

Sources: State of Florida, [Step Up for Students](#), [EdChoice.org](#), [National Alliance of Public Charter Schools](#)