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News / Metro 

# Prudential donates \$1 million to help poor children go to private schools

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By [Teresa Stepzinski](#)

Prudential Financial Inc. donated \$1 million for scholarships to send low-income Florida students to private schools so they'll have the same options as children from affluent families.

The contribution will benefit more than 223 students statewide through scholarships from the Step Up for Students Scholarship Program. Also known as the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, it allows corporations to redirect a portion of some state tax liabilities to fund annual scholarships for low-income Florida students. The whole idea "is to level the playing field" in education, said Doug Tuthill, president of Step Up for Students, the nonprofit administering the scholarships.

"Affluent families have all kinds of options to meet the needs of their children. Low-income families don't have those same options. We believe in a democracy, everybody ought to have equal opportunity for every child," Tuthill said.

Each \$4,335 scholarship will allow a kindergarten through 12th grade student to attend a private school that might better meet their individual needs. The recipients are children who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch and are entering kindergarten or first grade, or who have attended a public school the prior year, Tuthill said.

Established in 2001, the program has provided more than 265,000 scholarships statewide including about 2,400 to students in Northeast Florida.