# NEW WORLDS READING SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

arlottes



PARENT HANDBOOK



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# **Overview**

Step Up For Students is a state-approved nonprofit scholarship funding organization that empowers families to pursue and engage in the most appropriate learning options for their children, with an emphasis on families who lack the information and financial resources to access these options. By pursuing this mission, we help public education fulfill the promise of equal opportunity.

One of the primary focuses of Step Up For Students is the administration of four scholarships for students in Florida: the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC) for lower to middle income families; the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES), which has two components, one for students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) and a second for lower to middle income families and for students who meet other categorical requirements (FES-EO); the Hope Scholarship for students who are bullied or are victims of violence, and the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts Program (formerly Reading Scholarship Accounts Program) for public school students in kindergarten through fifth grades who struggle with reading.

In 2018, the Florida Legislature established Reading Scholarship Accounts to provide educational options for public school students in grades 3 through 5 who struggle with reading. In 2022, the program was renamed the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts program and the Florida Legislature expanded eligibility for the scholarship to include public school students in grades kindergarten through 5 who have a substantial reading deficiency.

Florida is the first state to offer an education savings account program for students enrolled in public schools. The program provides parents with access to education savings accounts, worth \$500 each, to pay for tuition and fees related to part-time tutoring in reading, summer and afterschool programs designed to improve reading or literacy skills, instructional materials, which includes limited technology, or curriculum related to reading and literacy.

The sections following this introduction will guide you as you utilize your New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts funding.

# **Qualifying for a New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account**

New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts are available to students who are enrolled in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade in a Florida public school and

• Who have a substantial reading deficiency **or** 



• who scored a level 1 or 2 on their third- or fourth-grade English Language Arts section of the Florida Standards Assessment (ELA FSA) in the prior year.

Students who are classified as English Language Learners and who are enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of English Language Learner students will receive funding priority.

# Applying for a New Worlds Reading Scholarship

Families will need to create a Step Up For Students Online Account before applying.

# Create a Step Up For Students Online Account

<u>After you create your account, you can use the "Apply Now/Login" button found at</u> <u>www.sufs.org/reading to login to the scholarship portal. You will use the scholarship portal</u> <u>to manage your funds and/or apply for a scholarship.</u>

To create a new account, a valid email address is required.

- 1. New families can click <u>here</u> to create their account. Families with funds remaining from previous years must use the unique link that was emailed to them to create their account.
- 2. From the Step Up For Students New Worlds Reading Scholarship portal, select Sign Up.
- 3. Remember, only the parent or guardian completes the scholarship application.
- 4. In the Email Address box, enter your Email Address, and select SEND CODE. The Verification Code is sent to the entered Email address.
- 5. In the Verification code box, enter the Verification code from the Email, and then select VERIFY CODE.
- 6. Select CONTINUE.
- 7. Complete the required fields, review the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy, and then select SIGN UP. The Security questions will display.
- 8. Complete the security questions and then select CONTINUE. The My Scholar Portal displays.
- 9. Certify the Terms and Conditions, and then complete the Profile fields in the following sections:
  - a. Mailing Address
  - b. Physical Address



- c. Contact Information
- d. Marital Status
- e. Language Preferences
- f. Consent
- g. Manage Contact Preferences

10. Select SAVE. Congratulations, your account is created!

The scholarship portal allows parents and guardians access to:

- Apply for a scholarship
- Review and update your contact information
- Change your account password
- Review and update your banking information
- Check the status of your scholarship application
- Upload documents to your application or print documents associated with your application
- View your student's account statement
- Submit a reimbursement request
- Upload documents to a reimbursement

Please DO NOT provide your login information to ANYONE. Providing login information will allow them to access this critical information, make changes, and approve expenditures from your student's account. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes and/or charges made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared.

#### **Complete a New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts Application**

Step Up For Students will email you when it is time to apply for the 2022-2023 school year. Parents can visit www.sufs.org/reading to sign up for the interest list and receive notifications about the upcoming school year.

Follow the instructions below to complete your application once the application season opens.



- 1. From your Dashboard, locate the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts listing and select APPLY. The New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts application will display.
- From the Student Information section, enter the student information into the applicable fields, complete the Current Status question, and then upload your student's prior year ELA Assessment score report.
  - a. Applicants must upload one of the following documents before submitting the application:
    - i. English Language Arts FSA score report from the prior school year.
    - ii. Providing the English Language Arts FSA score report from the prior year is highly encouraged, as it may help with application processing time. This document is provided to the parent or guardian by the school district via mail or by logging in to the student's school's online portal.
    - iii. A snapshot of the student's ELA FSA test score
    - iv. A recent report card
- 3. Select CONTINUE.
- 4. From the Guardian Information section, confirm your Identity and Location guardian information in the applicable fields.
  - a. Tip: The information from your Profile will already be entered into the Guardian Information section; if you need to update it, select EDIT.
- 5. Select CONTINUE.
- 6. Review Your Application details, and then select the accurate information certification box.
- 7. In the Signature of\* field, enter your full name, and then in the Your Signature\* box, write your full name. After you have written your full name, the APPLY and CLEAR options will display.
- 8. Select APPLY, and then select SUBMIT to complete your application.

Step Up For Students reviews the application and supporting documentation to determine conditional eligibility. Once a student has been determined to be "conditionally eligible" by Step Up For Students, the student's information will be sent to the Florida Department of Education for final eligibility review and funding. Parents/guardians will receive email notifications to the

email address on file when there is an update in the scholarship status. Parents can also login to their <u>scholarship portal</u> to view their application status at any time.

A student may only receive one scholarship at a time. Parents must notify Step Up if the student leaves the Florida Public School system. Leaving the Florida Public School system could affect the student's scholarship status.

# Application Processing Status Definitions

- **Pending Processing** The application has been received and is being reviewed for eligibility
- **On Hold** The application did not have the information needed to determine eligibility. The parent/guardian must submit additional information
- **Conditionally Eligible** The student appears to be eligible; the application is awaiting confirmation of eligibility from the Florida Department of Education
- **DOE Confirmed Eligible/Awarded** The Florida Department of Education has confirmed the student's eligibility for the scholarship and Step Up is waiting for funding to arrive
- Funded The scholarship dollars have been deposited into the student's account
- **Denied** The student was found not eligible for a New Worlds Reading Scholarship and will not be funded.

# Funding for New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts

Funding for the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts comes from the State of Florida. Each scholarship is \$500.

#### Program funding is limited.

If a student has been found eligible by the Florida Department of Education, scholarship funds will be deposited into a student's scholarship account approximately 30 days after receiving confirmation of final eligibility, as long as program funds are available. Funding will be established on a first-come, first-served basis, with English Language Learner students receiving priority. Students are required to be enrolled in a Florida public school to be funded.

Parents will be notified via email when the student's account has been funded by the Florida Department of Education, and funds have been deposited into the student's New Worlds Reading Scholarship account. Parent may also



Once funds have been deposited into the student's account, parents may use the scholarship funds for a variety of services (described in the sections below). Any unused funds will be rolled over for use in subsequent school years.

A student's scholarship account must be closed, and any remaining funds must be sent back to the Florida Department of Education after:

- Denial or revocation of scholarship eligibility by the Commissioner of Education for fraud or abuse, including but not limited to, the student or student's parent accepting any payment, refund, or rebate, in any manner, from a provider of any services; or
- Three (3) consecutive fiscal years in which an account has been inactive.

Parents of students receiving scholarship funds through a New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account may not take possession of funds at any time, unless provided as a reimbursement by Step Up For Students. If a parent receives a refund for any services or goods purchased with New Worlds Reading Scholarship funds, those funds must be returned to Step Up For Students for deposit into the student's scholarship account.

To return funds to the student's New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account, the parent/guardian must send a check that includes the student's name and student ID number to:

Step Up For Students Accounts Receivable 4655 Salisbury Rd, Suite 400 Jacksonville, FL 32256

If you need to get your student's ID number or if you wish to close your student's New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account, you must contact Step Up For Students at reading@sufs.org or 1-877-735-7837.

# Approved Uses of New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account Funds

The following categories of items are approved uses of funds for the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account.

If would like to use a provider that is not on the pre-approved list and you don't know if they meet the requirements, please show the provider this section of the Handbook and ask them if they meet any one of the requirements needed to be eligible to serve your scholarship student.



The reimbursement process will be faster is the provider is pre-approved by Step Up For Students. Pre-approved providers may also opt-in to our direct-pay service, eliminating the need for families to pay out-of-pocket and wait to be reimbursed. If your provider would like to become pre-approved, they may contact us at <u>ReadingProvider@sufs.org</u>.

# Part-Time Tutoring Services

Part-time tutoring includes tuition and fees for part-time tutoring services provided by a person who holds one of the following:

- A current, valid Florida educator's certificate pursuant to s. 1012.56, Florida Statutes; or
- A person who holds an adjunct teaching certificate given by a Florida school district pursuant to s. 1012.57, Florida Statutes; or
- A baccalaureate or graduate degree in Reading, Elementary Education, or English Education

The part-time tutor may be a person who has demonstrated a mastery of subject area knowledge pursuant to s. 1012.56(5), Florida Statutes.

Mastery could be achieved through one or more of the following:

- An official Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FTCE) score report indicating a passing score on a Florida subject area exam, not more than 10 years old; OR
- A passing score report that is not more than 10 years old, above the intermediate level, on both the oral and written exams for a foreign language subject area (excluding French, German or Spanish) administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL); OR
- A form provided by a Florida school district and signed by the school district, indicating there is no standardized exam in the subject area, but the person has attained the essential subject matter competencies and subject area specialization requirements; OR
- A valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS); OR
- A valid certificate issued by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE); OR
- A valid Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Professional Certificate; OR



- For a subject requiring a master's or higher degree (i.e., Educational Leadership, Guidance Counseling, Reading, or School Psychologist) a score report indicating a passing score on a Florida subject area exam (not more than 10 years old) AND a valid Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Temporary or Professional Certificate; OR
- A valid Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Temporary Certificate but does not list a passing score on the subject area exam under the Professional Certificate requirements

Please click <u>here</u> for a list of pre-approved part-time tutors.

#### Fees Associated with Summer Education Programs

Summer education programs must be designed to improve reading or literacy skills.

• This means a summer education program that is primarily focused on reading, literacy, English language, English usage, grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, literature, and informational text, or writing in English.

Please click <u>here</u> for a list of approved programs.

#### Fees Associated with After-School Education

After-school education programs must be designed to improve reading or literacy skills.

• This means an after-school education program that is primarily focused on reading, literacy, English language, English usage, grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, literature, and informational text, or writing in English.

Please click <u>here</u> for a list of approved programs.

#### **Instructional Materials**

Instructional materials must be related to reading or literacy. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Digital devices—limited to desktop computers, laptop computers, and tablets
- Digital material or stand-alone online class
- Online software programs related to reading or literacy
- Books, including workbooks



# Curriculum

Curriculum is defined as a complete course of study for a particular content area or grade level, including any required supplemental materials and associated online instruction related to reading or literacy.

# **Direct Payment Authorization**

Step Up For Students has direct pay partnerships with reading and literacy providers across the state, as well as with virtual providers. These partnerships prevent upfront costs to New Worlds Reading Scholarship families.

Step Up For Students will regularly email a link to the Payment Authorization Tool to parents/guardians whose student have funds remaining in their account. If parents/guardians cannot find this link in their email, they can reach out to Step Up For Students to request this link. This link should not be shared with providers to prevent a provider from authorizing payment on behalf of parents/guardians.

By selecting a provider through Step Up For Students' payment authorization tool, you will not have to pay a provider out-of-pocket and wait to be reimbursed.

Once you have the link, please follow the instructions below to use the direct pay option:

- Search for a provider
  - You can search for a provider on the "<u>Provider Search</u>" page on our website.
  - Select the direct pay filter to only see direct pay providers.
  - You should contact the provider before selecting them to make sure they are a good fit for your student.
  - When you reach out to a provider, make sure to ask about pricing. You will need to enter an amount you're allowing them to bill to your student's account later in this process.
- Select a provider
  - We will give you a drop-down menu of direct pay providers to select from. Start typing your provider's name and click on them when they appear.
  - Please note: Only direct pay providers will appear in the drop-down. If your provider is not on the list, they have not yet been approved for direct pay.



#### • Enter your information and sign

- We'll need your contact information and some information about your student in order to allow your provider to bill your child's New Worlds Reading Scholarship Account.
- You will be able to electronically sign the document.
- Keep a copy for your records
  - Many providers will want to see proof of completion before they provide services to your student.
  - Print or take a screenshot of the last page to send to your provider. See below for an example of that page.

# **Reading Direct Payment Authorization**

#### Thank You!

Thank you for selecting a direct pay provider. Below is a summary of your Payment Approval Authorization. Please save, take a screen shot, or <u>print this page</u> to show your provider. Many providers will not provide services to your student until they see proof of Payment Approval Authorization. We've added the "Find a Provider" tool at the bottom of this page just in case you need to pull up your provider's contact info.

#### Provider Information Provider/Program Name: BookNook Amount Provider is allowed to bill to account: \$500.00

#### Student Information Student Name: John Smith Student Date of Birth: 12/08/2014 Student Home Address: 123 Main St, Tampa, FL 33788

Parent/Guardian Information Parent/Guardian Name: Jane Smith Parent/Guardian Email: jane.smith@gmail.com Parent/Guardian Phone: 555-555-5555

# **MyScholarShop**

MyScholarShop is an educational e-purchasing platform built to assist you in purchasing instructional materials using your scholarship funds *without* any upfront cost to you.

- Items available through MyScholarShop are approved for purchase using the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts funds. If you do not see an item in MyScholarShop, it does not mean the item is not approved.
- Make sure you have available funds in your scholarship account to cover the entire purchase.



- This partnership is ONLY for goods purchased through MyScholarShop and does NOT apply to in-store purchases or purchases from the vendor's website.
- MyScholarShop orders cannot be shipped out-of-state or to a post office box.
- When purchasing multiple items, include ALL items on one order!
- Please be aware that Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny requests.
- Access to MyScholarShop will be activated once your student's account has funding.
- Step Up For Students reserves the right to limit or deny access to MyScholarShop.

#### Purchasing

To access MyScholarShop, you will need to login to your scholarship portal by clicking <u>here</u>. MyScholarShop will appear under the Marketplace option and will only appear in the portal once your student's funds have been deposited in their account.

- 1. Log in using your current credentials (email and password).
- 2. Select the "Marketplace" tab.
  - a. When logging in the first time to the MyScholarShop platform, you will be required to read and acknowledge the Privacy Statement.
- 3. Confirm the address on file using the "Update Address" option.
- 4. Select the student account.
- 5. Search for the items you wish to purchase.
- 6. Choose the tile with the item category or type the item name in the search window.
- 7. Hover or select the item and click "Add to Cart".
- 8. Review your cart.
  - a. After reviewing the cart, choose "Check Out".
- 9. Review your 'ship to' information.
- 10. Choose "Send Request" to complete the purchase.



# Returns

Returns are done through the vendor they were purchased from and not through Step Up For Students.

- 1. To return an item purchased via MyScholarShop click here.
- 2. Find the correct vendor and follow the instructions.

Once the vendor has received the item, it may take up to 14 days for the funds to be credited to the student's scholarship account.

# **Status Definitions**

- **Composing** The MyScholarShop request is pending; the cart has not been submitted for purchase.
- **Submitted** The MyScholarShop request was submitted and is pending review.
- Approved The order has been approved and sent to the vendor(s) for fulfillment
- **Denied** Items requiring review have been denied. One appeal is allowed.
- Ordering A fully approved order is in the process of being generated. Once the order is fully generated, it will be sent to the vendor(s) for fulfillment and the status will be updated to "Ordered".
- **Ordered** All items associated with an order or requisition have been sent to the vendor to fulfil.
- **Cancelling** The order was canceled after it was placed.
- **Cancelled** An order cancelled after being submitted and approved.
- **Receiving** Ordered items have been shipped and are in the process of being delivered.
- **Received** Ordered items have been fully received.

For more in-depth information on MyScholarShop, click here.

# **Reimbursement Requests**

Reimbursement requests will be processed as they are received. Please <u>click here</u> to learn more about how reimbursement payments are made. You will receive your card after your first



reimbursement request is approved. Once you receive your card, keep it in a safe place. Any future reimbursements will be loaded onto the same card.

Reimbursement requests will be processed as they are received.

To submit a reimbursement request, you will need to login to your <u>scholarship portal</u> and go to the reimbursement tab on the left side of the dashboard. The reimbursement option will only appear in the scholarship portal once your student's funds have been deposited in their account.

In the reimbursement tab, you will be able to:

- Submit a reimbursement request
- View and search current statuses for your requests.

Reimbursements may be submitted for purchases <u>made after July 1, 2022</u>.

Requests for reimbursement for the 2022-23 school year, must be submitted, with all the required supporting documentation, no later than August 31, 2023, to be considered for payment.

If a single reimbursement is submitted that totals more than the maximum scholarship award (\$500) OR the account balance at the time of submission, the reimbursement will be adjusted to the maximum scholarship amount or the amount available.

If multiple reimbursements are submitted totaling more than the maximum scholarship award (\$500) OR the account balance at the time of submission, the reimbursements will be paid in the order received by Step Up until the account balance is used. This could result in a partial payment or a denial of one or more of the reimbursements due to a lack of available funds.

#### How to submit a reimbursement request

- 1. Once logged into your <u>scholarship portal</u>, click on "New Reimbursement".
- 2. Select the student and click "Continue".
- 3. Upload your reimbursement document. Please see the following section for required documentation. *You will have the option of adding additional documents later if you have more reimbursement requests.*
- 4. Click "Continue" until you come to the page to enter reimbursement information.
- 5. Enter information for each line item of your receipt. Be sure to include the educational benefit for your request. The educational benefit will need to demonstrate *how the item or service will help the student learn.*



- a. If you only have one item to submit for reimbursement on your receipt, click "Done".
- b. If there are multiple items on your receipt, click "Add Item". You may add as many items as needed. After adding all items, click "Done".
- 6. Review your reimbursement request. Click back to make any edits or I click "Submit for Approval" if the information is correct.
- If your request amount exceeds the balance in your student's account, an onscreen error will appear as shown below. The screen will refresh and will go back to the request form so you can adjust the amount.

Portal	Error		
		Requested amount exceeds available balance.	
		ОК	0
		Review your purchases for July Wayne	

8. If your student has enough funds in their account, your request will be submitted to Step Up for approval. You will then see an onscreen confirmation. As a reminder, reimbursements may be submitted for purchases made after July 1, 2022, until you have exhausted your funds.

When making purchases from an individual or private seller who does not accept credit or debit cards, (i.e., garage sale, flea market, etc.), payment using a cashier's check or money order is required in order to be reimbursed. Using a cashier's check or money order provides the required proof of payment method for the purchase. **Reimbursement requests for purchases paid with cash will be denied.** 

# Documents requirements to submit a reimbursement Instructional materials and curriculum related to reading or literacy

- Proof of payment **must** include the following:
  - The item purchased related to reading or literacy; and
  - The date of purchase; **and**
  - The place of purchase or vendor/provider; and



- The amount of the purchase; and
- The method of payment

#### Part-time tutoring

- A form for invoicing for part-time tutoring is now available. It can be found <u>here.</u> Use of this form takes the place of the submission of any the payment documentation indicated below
- If not using the invoice form, an invoice on business letterhead or receipt must include the following:
  - The New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts student's first and last name; and
  - The New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts student's FLEID number; and
  - The tutor's first and last name; and
  - The company name, if applicable; and
  - Dates and hours of instruction; and
  - Hourly rate; and
  - Proof of payment
- If the provider has not been pre-approved, you will also need to submit documentation showing proof of credentials as a part-time tutor (See the Part-Time Tutoring Services section above for details)

# Summer and After-school Education Programs Designed to Improve Reading and Literacy Skills

- An invoice on business letterhead or receipt must include the following:
  - o The New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts student's first and last name; and
  - The New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts student's FLEID number; and
  - Date of program. Including the year; and
  - Amount of fees; and
  - Documentation that the program is primarily focused on reading, literacy, English language, English usage, grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, literature, and informational text, or writing in English; and



• Proof of payment (for reimbursement to parent)

#### **Reimbursement Status Definitions:**

You may login to the scholarship portal to review a reimbursement request status. The "Reimbursements" tab is on the left side of the screen.

In the reimbursement tab, you may view and search current statuses for reimbursement requests. The definitions are below:

- **Submitted** Reimbursement request submitted.
- In Review Reimbursement request is under review.
- **On Hold** Reimbursement request is missing needed information for approval. The parent/guardian must submit more information within the scholarship portal. Step Up For Students will provide more information in an email sent to your email on file.
- **Approved** Reimbursement request approved, and payment is on the way. <u>Click here</u> to learn more about how the payment process works.
- **Denied** Reimbursement request was not approved. Step Up For Students will provide the denial reason in an email sent to your email on file.
- Appealed Appeal submitted for a denied reimbursement request. *Families may appeal a reimbursement request one time.*
- **Cancelled** Reimbursement request cancelled by the parent/guardian.

#### **Denied reimbursements**

If a reimbursement request is denied, you may appeal that decision ONE TIME by reopening that request in the scholarship portal.

- 1. Open the Reimbursements tab on the left-hand side of the scholarship portal dashboard.
- 2. Select any request with a status of Denied. Select "Appeal" button.
- 3. Make any necessary edits, include new attachments, and submit.
  - a. The decision made by the Step Up For Student's appeal team is final. After the appeal decision is made, any additional appeals for the same item will NOT be reviewed.
- 4. Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny any reimbursement request submitted for payment.



# **Important Items to Note**

- Please keep your contact information current, especially your email address. This is the primary way Step Up For Students will communicate important information related to your student's scholarship.
- If you do not spend any money from your account for three consecutive fiscal years (July 1 June 30), your account will be closed, and all remaining funds will be returned to the Florida Department of Education. If your scholarship eligibility is denied or revoked by the commissioner for fraud or abuse, including but not limited to, the student or student's parent accepting any payment, refund, or rebate, in any manner, from a provider of any services, your account will be closed, and all remaining funds will be returned to the Florida Department of Education.
- Step Up For Students staff may request additional documentation or clarification when they review a reimbursement request. These requests will arrive via email to the email address associated with your account.
- Please update your email settings to accept email from Step Up For Students so it is not sent to your Spam or Junk folder.

# Contact us

For more information, you can contact us at <u>reading@sufs.org</u>, chat with us online, or call 877-735-7837. Press option "1", and then "3" for the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts program. Our Service Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. ET You may also utilize online chat by simply going to our website <u>www.stepupforstudents.org</u>.

The Step Up For Students New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts team wishes you and your New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts student a productive and fun-filled 2022-23 school year!