



Gardiner Scholarship

2019-2020 End of Year Report



Report Summary

- In 2019-2020, there were 14,319 students participating in the Gardiner Scholarship program. Of these students, 13,463 students received their scholarship through Step Up For Students.
- More of these students were enrolled in the elementary grades of Kindergarten through 5th grade (44%) than in middle or high school.
- The majority of Gardiner students, 62%, were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- There has been a slight increase in the percentage of Gardiner students who are home school students with 29.5% being home schooled in 14-15 and 33.0% of students being educated at home in 19-20.
- More Gardiner students lived in Miami-Dade county than in any other county (13%) followed by Orange county (8%).
- The average Gardiner scholarship award was \$10,392.53, compared to \$10,265 in 2018-19.
- Fewer families are spending scholarship funds on tuition and fees.
- Families spent their money in more diverse categories than was found in previous years.
- Around 57% of families spent funds on tuition and fees in 19-20, while 33% spent funds on instructional materials.
- The largest expenditure category, tuition and fees, made up just 56.8% of all expenditure in 19-20 compared to 77.4% of all expenditures during the 14-15 school year.
- Instructional materials is the category with the largest increase in spending from the previous school year with an increase from 22.2% of all funds spent in 18-19 to 24.7% of all funds spent in 19-20.
- Instructional materials is also the category with the largest increase in funds spent since the Gardiner program began with only 10.5% of all spending in 14-15 falling under the instructional materials category compared to the 24.7% spent in 19-20.
- Around 84% of all scholarship funds awarded in 2019-20 were expended by June 30, 2020.
- The percentage of non-spenders has sharply declined. Only about 2.5% of families did not spend any of their scholarship funds in 19-20 compared to 23.8% of families in 14-15.

Introduction

The Gardiner Scholarship program is a Florida School Choice program designed to help parents individualize educational options for their children with specific special needs. The program has served students for 6 complete school years and is currently administered by two state-approved, non-profit scholarship funding organizations (SFO), Step Up For Students and AAA Scholarship Foundation. This report provides summary information for students participating in the Gardiner Scholarship program through Step Up For Students (SUFS) during the 2019-2020 school year.

Program Eligibility Requirements

Gardiner Scholarship eligibility is based on residency, age, and disability. To be eligible to receive the scholarship for the 2019-2020 year, a student must have been:

- A Florida resident
- Is eligible to enroll in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school in this state or will be 3 or 4 years old before September 1;
- The subject of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education or has received a disability diagnosis as defined from a physician who is licensed under Florida Statutes chapter 458 or chapter 459, or a psychologist who is licensed in Florida
- Diagnosed with one of the following disabilities: Autism spectrum disorder, Muscular dystrophy, Cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Phelan McDermid syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Spina bifida, Williams syndrome, Intellectual disability (severe cognitive impairment), rare diseases as defined by the National Organization for Rare Disorders, anaphylaxis, deaf, visually impaired, dual sensory impaired, traumatic brain injured, hospital or homebound as defined by the rules of the State Board of Education and evidenced by reports from local school districts, or 3-5 year-olds who are deemed high-risk due to developmental delays and not older than 5 on Sept. 1 may be eligible for the year they apply .
- The date that eligibility is confirmed influences the scholarship amount awarded. A full (100%) scholarship will be given to those who qualify by September 1st, while 75% will be given if eligibility is confirmed by November 1st. For those who qualify later in the school year, 50% of the scholarship will be given to those whose eligibility is confirmed by February 1st, and 25% will be given for those who qualify by April 1st.

Student Enrollment

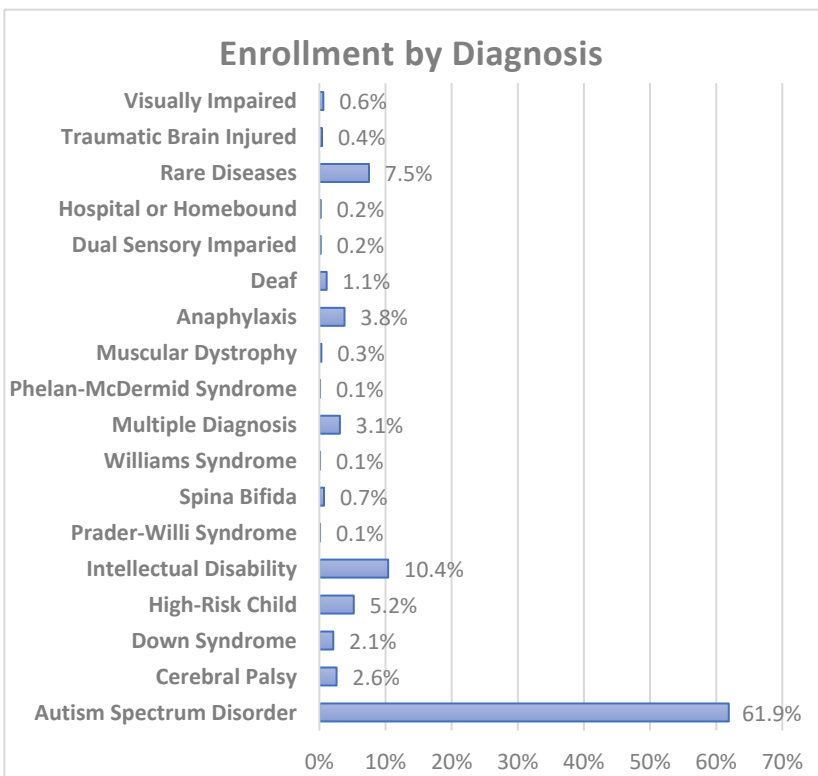
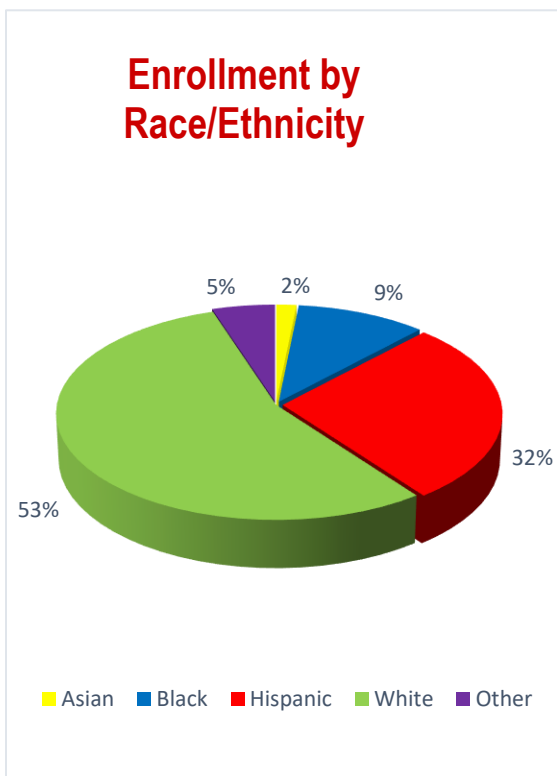
In 2019-2020, there were 13,463 students who participated in the Gardiner Scholarship program through Step Up For Students, compared to 11,393 students in the 2018-2019 school year. Students ranged from 3 years old to 12th grade and comprised several different races, grade levels, prior school types, and

disabilities.¹ Students were likewise found to be primarily enrolled in private school, while 33% of Gardiner students were home schooled.



2019-2020 Enrollment Summary

New	27%
Renewal	73%
Grade Level	
3-4 Years Old	10%
Elem. Grades (K-5)	44%
Middle Grades (6-8)	22%
High Grades (9-12)	24%
Current School Type	
Private School	67.0%
Home School	33.0%
Prior School Type (New Students)	
Home School	22%
Public School	28%
Private School	50%



¹ The calculation of prior school type for new students excludes students who did not provide information on their prior school.

School Enrollment

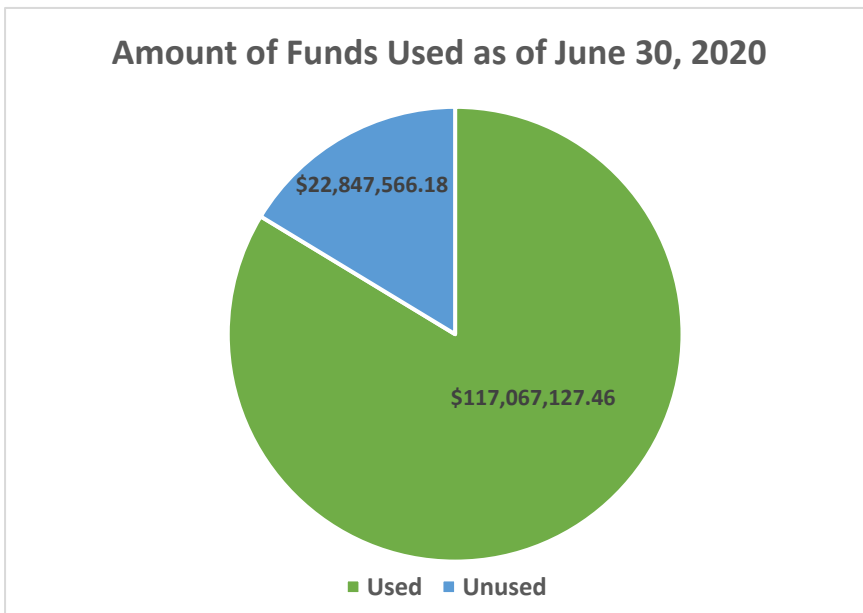
There were 1,892 approved private schools participating in the Gardiner Scholarship program in 2019-20. Of these schools, 1,180, or 60%, received payments for tuition or other educational services for 7,653 students.

Scholarship Awards

The average scholarship awarded for 2019-2020 was \$10,392.53. However, the actual amount of a child's award is based on his/her grade, county of residence, and the date eligibility is confirmed. For Step Up for Students, a total of \$139,914,693.64 was awarded to 13,463 students. As of June 30, 2020, SUFS families spent \$117,067,127.46 on qualifying educational expenses. On average, SUFS families submitted 35 reimbursements per child and spent \$8,695.47 of each child's scholarship award. Unspent funds in student accounts roll over from year to year and are refunded to the state if the student has not enrolled in any eligible post-secondary institution for three consecutive years following high school graduation.

Findings Regarding Scholarship Expenditures

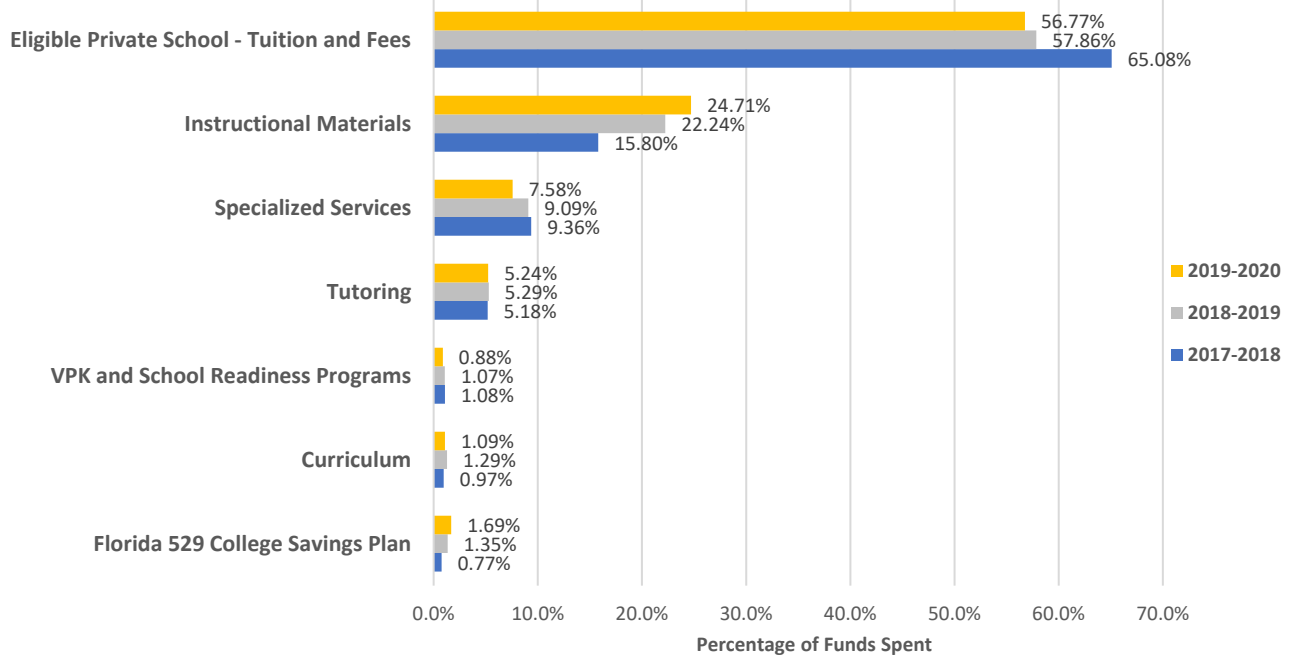
- Around 84% of scholarship funds awarded in 2019-20 were expended by June 30, 2020.
- While there was a small increase in spending on instructional materials and the Florida 529 College Savings Plan, families spent slightly less on enrollment tuition and fees, specialized services, part-time tutoring, and curriculum compared to the previous year.
- Around 57% of funds were spent on enrollment tuition and fees, while about 25% was spent on instructional materials.
- Families who spent money on tutoring spent an average of \$3,442.32 on tutoring services.



Top Spending Categories (2019-2020)²		
	Total Amount Spent	% of Total
Eligible Private School - Tuition and Fees	\$66,457,151.21	56.77%
Instructional Materials	\$28,927,795.86	24.71%
Specialized Services	\$8,868,600.28	7.58%
Part -Time Tutoring	\$5,704,214.42	4.87%
Florida 529 College Savings Plan	\$1,984,201.01	1.69%
Curriculum	\$1,272,362.97	1.09%

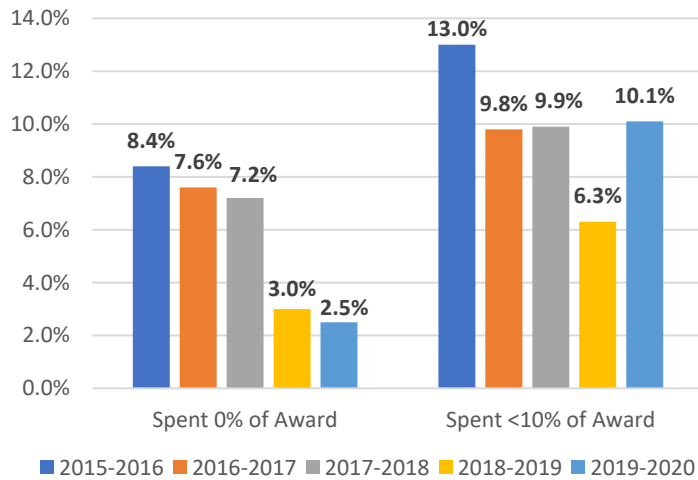
² Categories that include 1% or more of total funds spent are included in the chart. For all spending categories and total scholarship expenditures, see the appendix.

Top Spending Categories



Gardiner Non-Spending

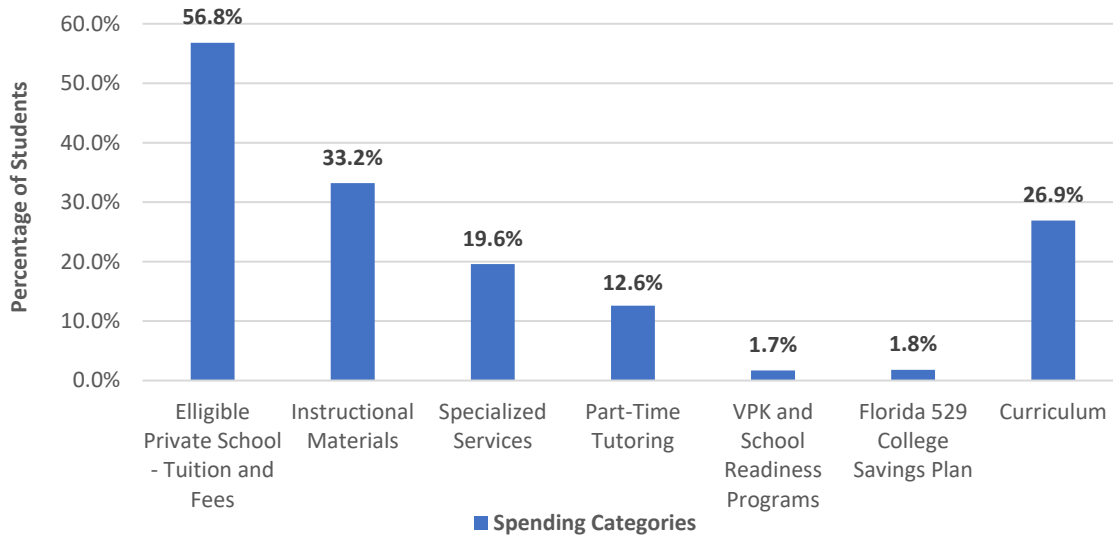
As of the end of the fiscal year



Expenditure Categories by School Type

	Private School	Home School
Eligible Private School	80.2%	0.0%
Instructional Materials	11.4%	55.0%
Specialized Services	3.2%	12.5%
Full-Time Tutoring	0.1%	1.0%
Part-Time Tutoring	2.0%	13.3%
Curriculum	0.3%	2.9%
Florida Virtual School	0.3%	1.4%
Florida 529 College Savings Plan	1.6%	2.2%

Percentage of students who spent part of their reward in the top spending categories



APPENDIX

Spending by Category³

	# of Students Spending in Category	Average Spent Per Student	Total Amount of Reimbursements	% of Total Reimbursements
Annual Educational Evaluation Fees	486	\$61.52	\$29,900.19	0.03%
Certified Horse Therapy Centers	154	\$747.76	\$115,155.60	0.10%
Certified Music and Art Therapy	204	\$1,217.53	\$248,376.66	0.21%
Contracted Public School Services	2	\$767.00	\$1,534.00	0.00%
Curriculum	3,619	\$351.27	\$1,272,362.97	1.09%
DOE Approved Virtual Courses	2	\$375.00	\$750.00	0.00%
Eligible Postsecondary Institutions or Programs	80	\$1,452.67	\$116,213.84	0.10%
Eligible Private School - Tuition and Fees	7,653	\$8,683.80	\$66,457,151.21	56.77%
Florida 529 College Savings Plan	248	\$8,000.81	\$1,984,201.01	1.69%
Florida Virtual School (FLVS)	547	\$1,179.41	\$645,138.16	0.55%
Full-Time Tutoring	84	\$5,160.13	\$433,451.05	0.37%
Home Education Tuition/Fees	257	\$938.94	\$241,307.59	0.21%
Instructional Materials	4,470	\$6,471.54	\$28,927,795.86	24.71%
Part-Time Tutoring	1,699	\$3,357.40	\$5,704,214.42	4.87%
Programs Offered by VPK Program Providers	227	\$4,544.21	\$1,031,535.02	0.88%
Specialized After-School Education Programs	67	\$451.83	\$30,272.60	0.03%
Specialized Services	2,645	\$3,352.97	\$8,868,600.28	7.58%
Specialized Summer Education Programs	177	\$646.65	\$114,457.57	0.10%
Standardized Testing Fees	132	\$137.12	\$18,099.36	0.02%
Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Fees	152	\$2,925.05	\$444,606.98	0.38%
Transition Services	4	\$2,263.88	\$9,055.50	0.01%
Tuition or Fees for Nationally or Internationally Recognized Training Programs for Children with Neurological Disorders or Brain Damage	12	\$1,401.15	\$16,813.82	0.01%
Unknown	3	\$1,047.14	\$3,141.43	0.00%

³ There was a total of \$352,992.34 spent on sales tax.

Enrollment by County (Top 25)

	Number	Percent
Dade	1,791	13.3%
Orange	1,053	7.8%
Broward	806	6.0%
Hillsborough	717	5.3%
Palm Beach	695	5.2%
Brevard	676	5.0%
Polk	620	4.6%
Duval	574	4.3%
Pinellas	554	4.1%
Seminole	530	3.9%
Volusia	457	3.4%
Pasco	450	3.3%
Lake	424	3.2%
Osceola	391	2.9%
Leon	295	2.2%
Hernando	294	2.2%
St. Lucie	255	1.9%
Lee	234	1.7%
Alachua	226	1.7%
Manatee	219	1.6%
Marion	210	1.6%
Sarasota	170	1.3%
St. Johns	166	1.2%
Okaloosa	158	1.2%
Escambia	149	1.1%

Enrollment by Grade

	Number	Percent
3-year-old	517	3.8%
4-year-old	916	6.8%
Kindergarten	1,193	8.9%
First	982	7.3%
Second	917	6.8%
Third	932	6.9%
Fourth	946	7.0%
Fifth	900	6.7%
Sixth	1,019	7.6%
Seventh	953	7.1%
Eighth	1,005	7.5%
Ninth	921	6.8%
Tenth	827	6.1%
Eleventh	735	5.5%
Twelfth	700	5.2%