



FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
2020-2021 End of Year Report

Introduction

This school report looks at characteristics of private schools and the students enrolled who received a Florida Tax Credit scholarship through Step Up For Students during the 2020-2021 school year. In particular, the report examines the distribution of private schools by various characteristics and calculates graduation rates for 12th grade scholarship students enrolled in these schools. There is also an analysis of student demographics both in terms of overall program enrollment and graduation rates.

The graduation portion of the report is modeled after the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) biennial report: "Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the 2019-2020 Private School Universe Survey (PSS)." The mandate of the NCES is to collect, analyze, and report on education throughout the U.S. and abroad. The PSS serves as their primary source of data on private schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This report is only focused on private schools in Florida that serve students who receive a Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship through Step Up For Students.

Data

In examining these private schools, data from the Florida Department of Education was utilized along with data collected by Step Up For Students through surveys of schools and students' primary guardians. In doing so, data was collected at the school level concerning religious affiliation. At the student level, information was obtained in relation to the students' gender, race/ethnicity, grade, single parent household status, poverty level, and graduation status.

Private schools that had Step Up For Students participants enrolled in the 12th grade during the 2020-2021 school year were surveyed online to determine the exit status of these students at the end of the academic year. Schools that did not respond to the online survey received follow-up phone calls and emails. For the remaining schools that did not respond to requests for exit status information, we contacted the parents of scholarship students enrolled in the 12th grade during the 2020-2021 school year to obtain the exit status for these students. This resulted in a 96.6% response rate.¹

Similar to the NCES report, we calculate the graduation rate for FTC students enrolled at these schools by focusing on FTC students who were enrolled in the 12th grade at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year and compared that number to how many of these students graduated at the end of the school year. A graduate is defined as those 12th grade students who received a standard diploma, special education diploma, or other certificate or diploma by the end of the academic year. Those students who dropped out or otherwise failed to complete the 12th grade were calculated as not graduating.² This resulted in a total of 4,083 12th grade students included in this analysis.

¹ One hundred forty-seven students with no response concerning exit status were not included in the analysis.

² Ninety-two students who transferred out of a private school to a public school and twenty-two students who received a GED were also excluded from the private school analysis.

Selected Findings

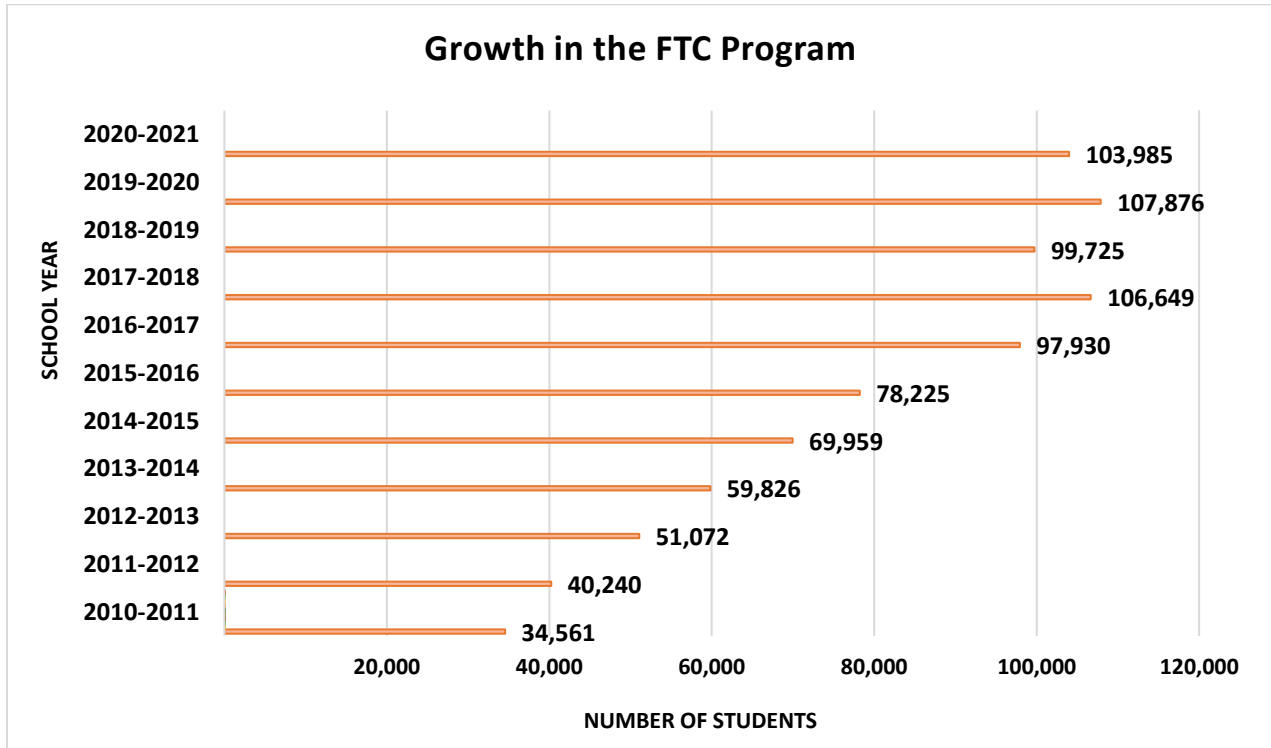
- At the end of the Fall 2020-2021 school year, there were 1,931 private schools serving 103,985 FTC students.
- A total of \$645,641,386 FTC funds was awarded to students with the average scholarship amount being \$6,645.50³
- In terms of demographics, there were slightly more female scholarship students (51%) than male scholarship students.
- More scholarship students were Hispanic than any other ethnicity/race (39%). However, a large percentage of scholarship students were also black and white.
- 1,223 of these private schools were religious schools, and about 80% of scholarship students attended one of these schools.
- There were 586 private schools with 4,344 FTC students enrolled in the 12th grade.
- Among these students who were enrolled in the 12th grade during the 2020-2021 school year, there was a high graduation rate with 3,744 students or 91.7% of all students included in the analysis graduating from a private school.⁴
- More students graduated from religious schools than students who attended non-religious schools.
- Black and multi-racial students had lower graduation rates than other racial/ethnic groups in the analysis.
- There was a small advantage noted in graduation rates for students coming from two-parent households as compared to those students residing in a single parent household.
- Those students who were among the most impoverished had slightly lower graduation rates than those who came from households with higher incomes.

³ The average scholarship amount is for those students who received 100% of the scholarship award.

⁴ The NCES report, which attempted to survey all private schools in the U.S., found a 96% graduation rate for 12th graders.

STUDENT LEVEL DATA

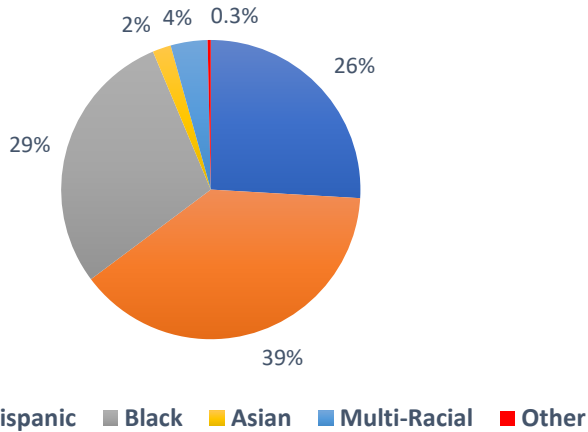
There were 103,985 students enrolled in the FTC program during the 2020-2021 school year, and a total of \$645,641,386 was awarded to these students with an average scholarship amount of \$6,645.50.⁵ The number of students in the program has decreased slightly from 2019-2020 when 107,876 students participated in the program but has increased substantially since the program began during the 2010-2011 school year. The chart below demonstrates the growth in FTC students over this ten-year period.



Of those students enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year, the majority (53.2%) were found in the elementary grades of K-5, while 26.3% of students were in the middle school grades of 6-8 and 20.5% were in high school. There were slightly more female FTC students (51%) than male students. There was also a noted racial/ethnic diversity found among FTC students with more students identifying as Hispanic (39%) followed by black (29%) and white (26%).

⁵ There was a total of 142,237 applications started to receive a FTC scholarship, but only 103,985 students were awarded a scholarship and subsequently enrolled in a private school.

Race/Ethnicity of 2020-2021 FTC Students

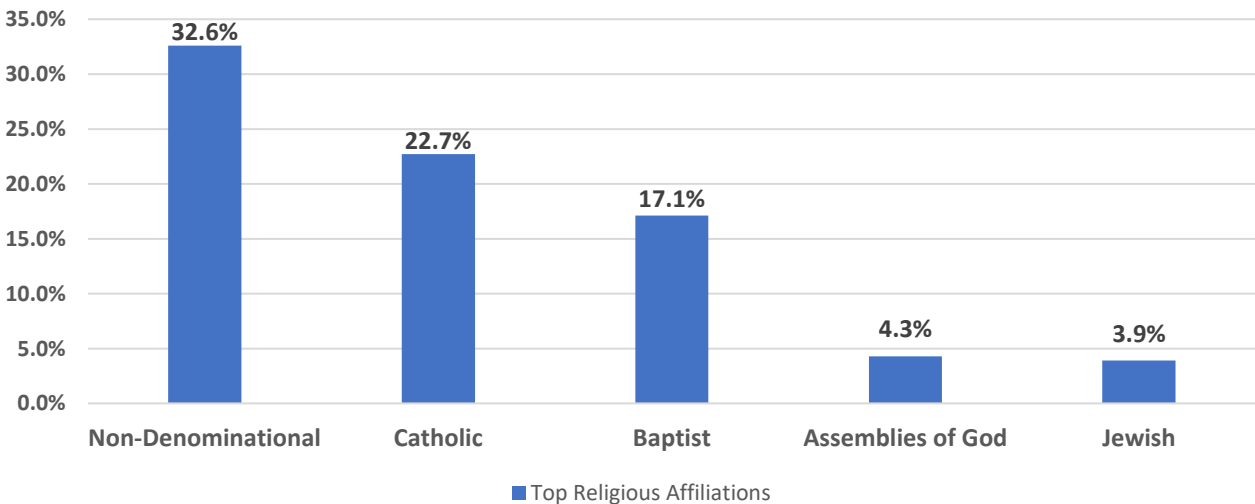


As for the household makeup of these students, 58.7% of FTC students lived in single parent households and about 73% came from households at or below the 185% federal poverty threshold.

SCHOOL LEVEL DATA

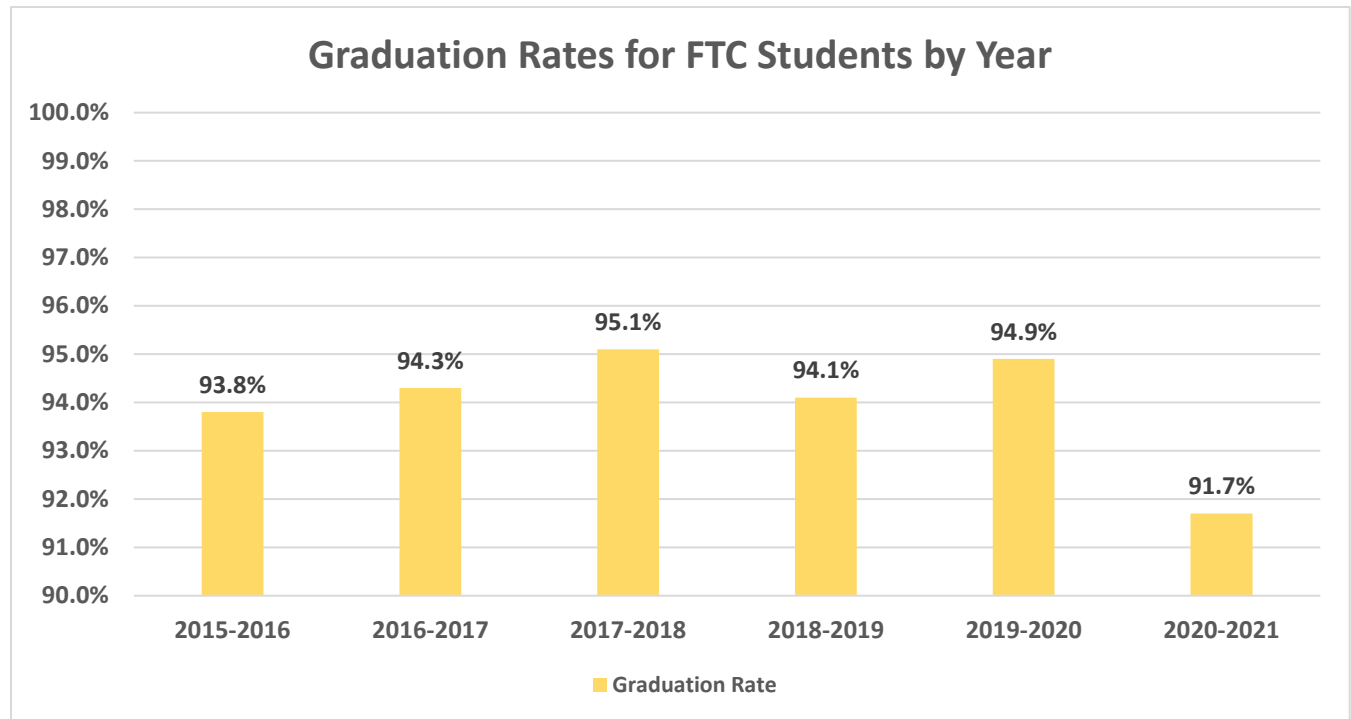
At the school level, there were 1,931 schools with FTC students enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year. Most schools (63.3%) have a religious affiliation with 79.7% of FTC students enrolled in one of these religious schools. Among those attending these schools, around 33% attended a Non-Denominational school, which was followed by 23% who attended Catholic schools and 17% who attended Baptist schools.

Top Religious Affiliations of Schools with 2020-2021 FTC Students Enrolled



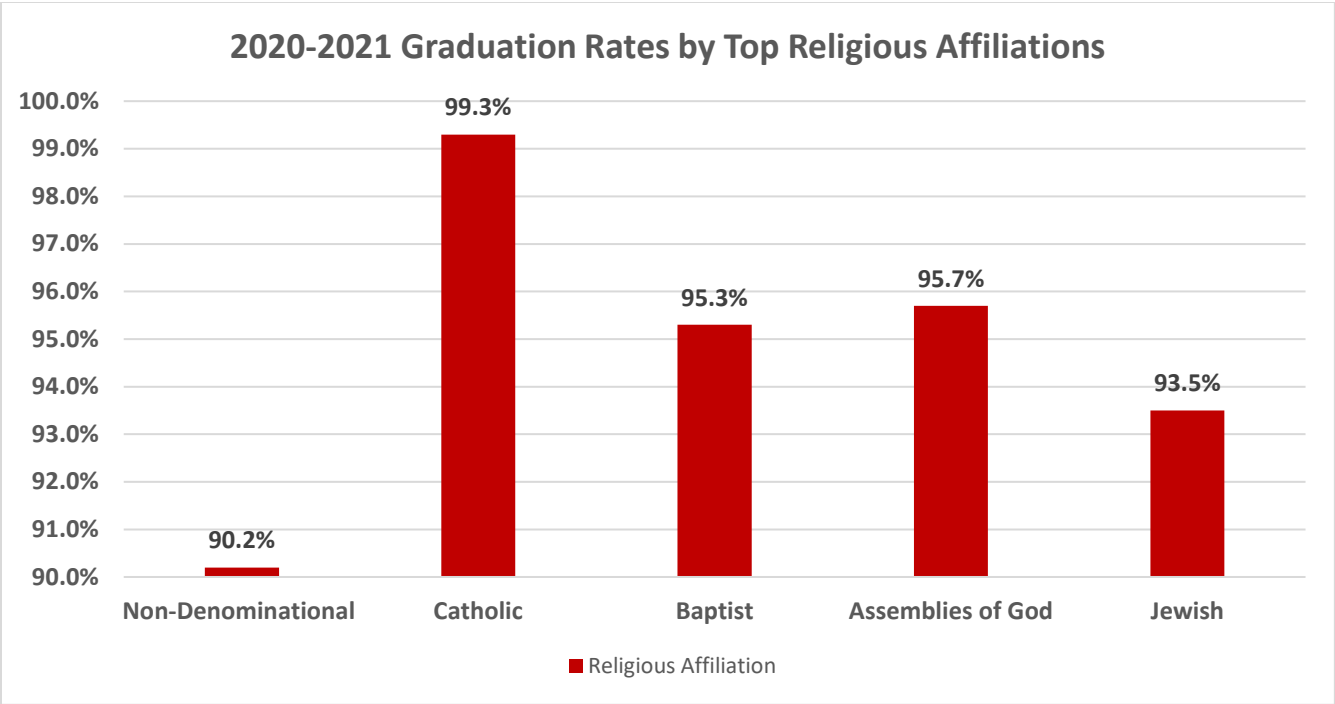
GRADUATION SURVEY

There were 586 schools with 4,344 FTC students enrolled in the 12th grade. Of these students who were enrolled at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, 91.7%, or 3,744 students included in the analysis, graduated by the end of the 2020-2021 school year.⁶ This is a slight decrease from the previous year but follows a trend of high graduation rates reported since the survey began during the 2015-2016 school year.

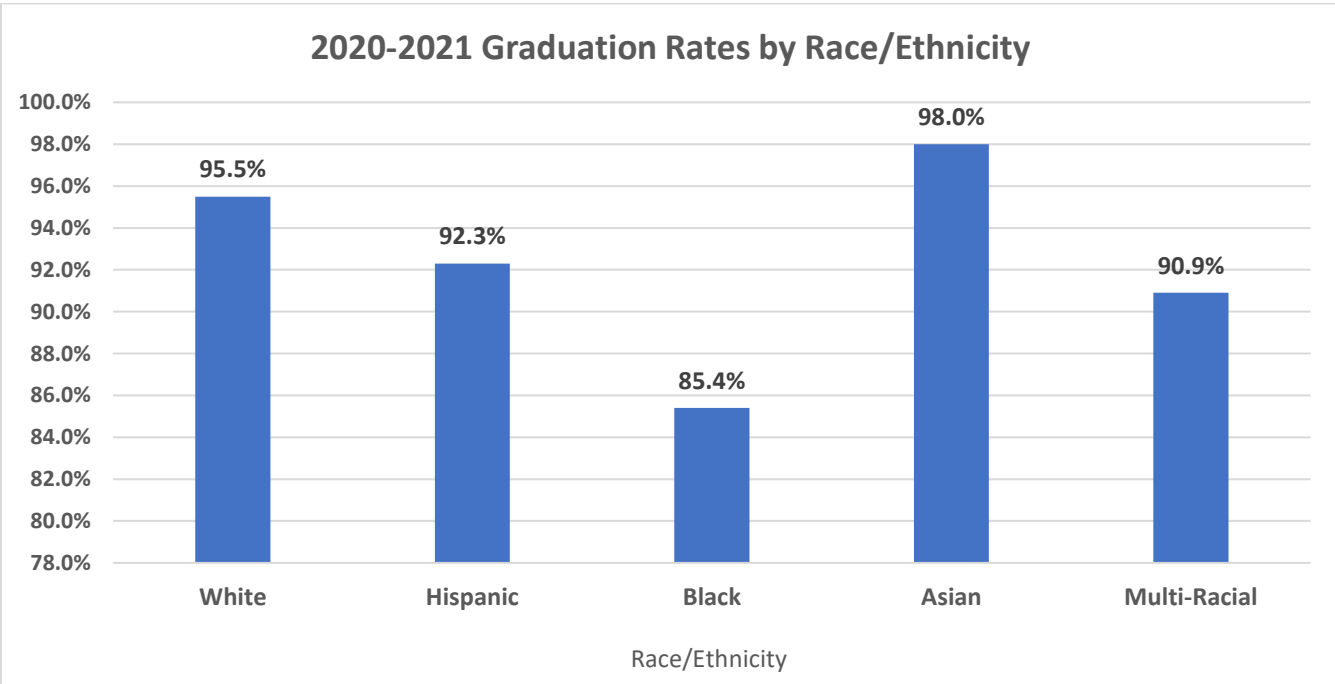


As for what factors may influence graduation rates, more students enrolled in religious schools graduated during the 2020-2021 school year (94.9%) than those students enrolled in non-religious schools (72.3%). Of the top religious affiliations with FTC students enrolled, Catholic schools, which had the largest percentage of students who are enrolled in religious schools, had the highest graduation rate (99.3%) and Non-Denominational schools had the lowest graduation rate (90.2%).

⁶ There were 4,083 students included in the graduation analysis. The remaining 261 students who were in the 12th grade at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year were excluded from the analysis because there was either a lack of a response concerning graduation, the student transferred to a public school, or the student received a GED.



When it comes to demographic data, there was a slightly higher graduation rate for female students (92.1%) in comparison to male students (91.4%). Furthermore, differing graduation rates were noted by race/ethnicity. Specifically, black students at 85.4% and multi-racial students at 90.9% had slightly lower graduation rates than other races and ethnicities.



In examining household demographics, there was a slight difference noted in graduation rates for those coming from either single parent households or from the most impoverished households. In fact, students from single parent households had a lower graduation rate (88.7%) as compared to

those from two-parent households (95.6%). Likewise, when examining income for the first time, there was a small gap in graduation rates found between those who are at or below the 185% federal poverty threshold (90.4%) and those who come from households with higher incomes (95.3%)