



# PARENT HANDBOOK

## GARDINER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

2016-17

### Step Up For Students

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# Overview

Thank you for your interest in this unique educational option.

Step Up For Students (SUFS) is a private, nonprofit organization and an approved Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO). In addition to the Gardiner Scholarship Program, SUFS also administers the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship which provides K-12 private school scholarships for students from low-income families.

The Gardiner Scholarship program (formerly known as the Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts or PLSA) is a unique program for children with special needs. The scholarship allows parents to personalize the education of their children by directing money toward a combination of programs and approved providers. Florida became the second state in the nation, after Arizona, to create an education savings account program for children with special needs in 2014. In 2016, the Florida legislature renamed the program in honor of Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner and his family. Gardiner and his wife, Camille, have championed the cause of children with unique abilities for many years. The Gardiners have two daughters and a son, Andrew, who has Down syndrome.

The sections following this introduction will guide you as you utilize your Gardiner Scholarship funding.

## Qualifying for the Gardiner Scholarship Program

The Gardiner Scholarship is available to students ages 3 to 22 with the following diagnoses: **Autism spectrum disorder, Muscular dystrophy, Cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Phelan McDermid syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Spina bifida, Williams syndrome, Intellectual disability (severe cognitive impairment), or three, four or five year-olds who are deemed high-risk due to developmental delays.** For a detailed definition of these diagnosis, please see the appendix at the end of this document. Families must submit an application each year by creating an account or accessing their account at [www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org). Using this login, parents complete an online application and submit documentation required to confirm the student's age, diagnosis, residency in the state of Florida and confirmation of compliance with the rules of the program (Sworn Compliance Statement). These documents may be submitted within the parent's online account via fax or via document upload.

Once a student is found eligible, parents will be notified via email and directed to access the conditional eligibility letter within the parent login area of the Step Up For Students website. Prior to the distribution of scholarship dollars, the Florida Department of Education will cross-check the eligible student with Florida public school records, VPK records, McKay Scholarship records, and the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship records, to ensure the students are only enrolled in the Gardiner Scholarship.

**Please note:** Should a student appear as enrolled and funded in a public school after the student has been funded for the Gardiner Scholarship program, any funds deposited to the student's Gardiner account for that school year will be returned to the State of Florida. If your student is reported as enrolled in public school or another scholarship program, you will be notified in an email and you should contact SUFS immediately regarding your student's scholarship status.

If your student wishes to leave the Gardiner Scholarship program to participate in another scholarship program, VPK, or public school, you **must** contact Step Up For Students at [Gardiner@sufs.org](mailto:Gardiner@sufs.org) or 1-877-735-7837.

Acceptable documentation to validate the student's diagnosis is either a current IEP or a Florida physician or psychologist's diagnosis. For *most* of the acceptable diagnoses, a document from the Florida physician / psychologist has proven to be the best validation. This document might be in the form of a letter, testing analysis, diagnostic report, etc.

# Funding for the Gardiner Scholarship Program

Funding for the Gardiner Scholarship program comes from the State of Florida and the award amount for all students defaults to a matrix that assigns the student to support Level III of services.

A parent of a student with a disability who does not have an IEP or who would like a reevaluation of an existing IEP may choose to request an IEP meeting and evaluation from the school district in order to obtain or revise a matrix of services from the school district. The amount of the scholarship payment will be adjusted **up or down** based on the revised level of services, after the district completes the matrix.

To seek an evaluation or reevaluation from the school district in order to obtain or revise a matrix of services:

- Access your online account at [www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org).
- Select “Request Matrix Review” on the “Application Status” page to notify Step Up for Students.
- Contact your local school district to schedule the evaluation and/or matrix review
- The school district will complete the evaluation and matrix review and notify the DOE of the student’s updated matrix level.
- The DOE will send a notification to SUFS and the parent
- Step Up For Students will update the matrix level on the student’s account, which will generate a notification email and an updated eligibility letter.

**Please note:** The new matrix level reported by the school district could increase *or decrease* your student’s scholarship amount.

Funding is prorated based on the date the student is found eligible by the SFO.

- Application must be received on or before August 1 and found eligible on or before September 1 = 100%
- Application must be received on or before October 1 and found eligible on or before November 1 = 75%
- Application must be received on or before January 1 and found eligible on or before February 1 = 50%
- Application must be received on or before March 1 and found eligible on or before April 1 = 25%

Funding amounts for the 2016-17 school year can be found [here](#).

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 utilization in subsequent school years, assuming the student remains eligible for the Gardiner Scholarship program.

Funding to the account will continue each year, based on the annual application submission and agreement to comply with the rules (Sworn Compliance Statement). Once the student graduates from high school or turns 22 on or before September 1 (whichever comes first) no additional funds will be deposited into the student’s account, however, the scholarship account can remain in place until the funds have been used or three consecutive years during which the student has not been enrolled in an eligible postsecondary educational institution or a program offered by the institution. At that point, the account is closed and any remaining money reverts to the state.

Parents of students receiving scholarship funds through the Gardiner Scholarship program cannot take possession of funds at any time and are prohibited from providing specialized services to their own Gardiner Scholarship student. Parents are subject to all of the Gardiner Scholarship program responsibilities as outlined in the annual Sworn Compliance Statement. If a parent receives a refund for any services or goods purchased with Gardiner Scholarship funds, those funds must be returned to Step Up For Students for deposit into the student’s scholarship account.

If a student leaves the program at any time during the school year, parents are responsible for contacting Step Up For Students immediately.

# Approved Usages for Gardiner Scholarship Funding

Program funds must be used to meet the individual educational needs of the eligible student. The following categories of items and services are approved uses for the Gardiner Scholarship funds.

**If the item you are interested in purchasing is *not* on the pre-approved list, please submit a *pre-authorization request* prior to making the purchase to ensure the item will be covered under the Gardiner Scholarship Program.**

## Instructional Materials

Instructional material includes, but is not limited to:

- Device - Digital
- Device - Digital periphery
- Device - Assistive technology
- [Device - Training associated with use](#)
- [Device – Maintenance Agreement \(not warranties\)](#)
- Digital material
- Stand-alone online class
- Internet resources
- Sensory material
- PE supplies
- Books
- Musical instrument
- [Home education co-ops](#)
- [Sports lessons](#)
- [Programs through museums](#)
- Other instructional material (requires a pre-authorization)

A list of pre-approved instructional materials may be found here, [Pre-Approved Instructional Material](#).

## 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. Pre-approved curriculum may be found here, [Pre-Approved Curriculum](#).

## Specialized Services

Specialized services are those provided by approved providers. An approved provider is one licensed by the state of Florida Department of Health to perform the service; approved as a provider by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities; or approved as a Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) Provider by the Office of Early Learning. An approved provider must provide services in the specialized area in which they are approved. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services
- Services provided by a Florida licensed Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)
- Services provided by a Florida licensed occupational therapist
- Services provided by Florida licensed physical therapists
- Services provided by listening and spoken language specialists
- Other specialized services (require a pre-authorization)

## Eligible Private School

Tuition and fees *required for enrollment* at a private school approved by the Florida Department of Education to participate in the Gardiner Scholarship Program are covered by the Gardiner Scholarship.

- Not all private schools are eligible to participate. Schools must *elect* to participate in the Gardiner Scholarship program with the Florida Department of Education.
- Schools determined eligible by the Florida Department of Education may be found at [Florida Private Schools Directory](#). Choose “Gardiner Schools.”
  - **Please note:** This list is only updated periodically and may not be 100% accurate, so you should contact the private school to confirm their participation in the Gardiner Scholarship.

There is no need for a parent to provide a student’s eligibility letter to an eligible private school. Gardiner Scholarship students are considered *private-pay students* at a private school; therefore, the eligible private school DOES NOT need to know the total amount of a student’s scholarship award before the tuition and fees are agreed upon with the parent. The agreed upon amount of tuition and fees for each student should be a contractual agreement between the parent and the eligible private school.

## Home Education Program Tuition/Fees

Programs, courses, or classes that are offered to home education students through an eligible, private school and are a part of the sequentially progressive instruction of the student according to the definition of a home education program.

A “home education program” means the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent in order to satisfy the attendance requirement of ss.1002.41, 1003,01(13), and 1003,21(1), F.S.

An eligible, private school is one that has been found compliant to participate in the Gardiner Scholarship Program by the Florida Department of Education.

To visit the Department of Education’s website for additional information about home education programs, click this link: [Home Education Programs](#)

## Eligible Postsecondary Institution or Program

This includes the following institutions or programs offered by:

- A Florida College System institution listed at [Florida Colleges](#)
- A state university listed at [State University System of Florida - Universities](#)
- A school district technical center listed at [Technical Center Directors](#)
- A school district adult general education center list at [Adult Education Directors](#)
- An independent college or university that is eligible to participate in the FRAG program listed at [2016-17 Florida Resident Access Grant Program Eligible Institutions](#)
- An accredited nonpublic postsecondary educational institution, which is licensed to operate in the state, listed at [Eligible Service Providers](#). Choose “List of accredited nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions.”

## Full-Time Private Tutoring

A full-time private tutoring program authorized under [s. 1002.43, Florida Statutes](#)

- The tutor must hold a current, valid Florida teaching certificate for the subject or grade level
- The tutor must complete and submit the Step Up For Students’ full-time tutor participation agreement and a W9
- For grades K-3, full time tutoring is considered 720 hours per school year
- For grades 4-12, full time tutoring is considered 900 hours (equivalent to 180 teaching days)

## 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 certifications:

- 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.

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.

### Florida Department of Education Approved Online Courses

- [Edmentum, Inc. \(Grades 6-12\) approved courses listed at Edmentum Courses for 2016-17](#)
- [Odysseyware Academy \(Grades 6-12\) approved courses listed at Odysseyware](#)

### Florida Department of Education Approved Online Providers

- [Edgenuity \(Grades 6-12 for 2016-17 to 2018-19\)](#)
- [Florida Connections Academy \(Grades K-12 for 2016-17 to 2018-19\)](#)
- [K12 Florida \(Grades K-12 for 2016-17 to 2018-19\)](#)
- [Mater Virtual Academy \(Grades 6-12 for 2016-17\)](#)
- [Somerset Virtual Academy \(Grades 6-12 for 2016-17 to 2017-18\)](#)

### Florida Virtual School (FLVS)

Students utilizing Florida Virtual School must be enrolled as a *private-paying student*. Florida Virtual School will submit reimbursement requests to Step Up For Students, which must be approved by the parent prior to payment being released.

**Please note:** If a student is enrolled in Florida Virtual School and funded as a public school student, the student may lose eligibility and funding for the Gardiner Scholarship program.

### Standardized Testing Fees

- Nationally standardized, [Norm-Referenced Assessments](#)
- Advanced Placement (AP) examinations
- Industry certification examinations



- Assessments related to postsecondary education
- Other assessments

## Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program

- 1-Year University Plan
- [4-Year University Plan](#)
- 2-Year College Plan
- 4-Year College Plan
- [2+2 Florida Plan](#)
- Dormitory Plan

There are restrictions on Gardiner Scholarship funds contributed to a Florida Prepaid College account.

- The account owner cannot change the beneficiary of an account that contains Gardiner funds.
- The privately contributed funds in the account (if any) will be used to pay plan benefits before the Gardiner funds.
- If a Prepaid College account is closed, the money will go back to the open Gardiner Scholarship account along with any interest accumulated, or to the State of Florida if the Gardiner Scholarship account has been or is being closed.
- If a student's Gardiner Scholarship account closes for any reason, any money in the student's Florida Prepaid account contributed through the Gardiner Scholarship will be returned to the State of Florida.

Click here for more information about the [Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program](#).

## Florida 529 College Savings Program

There are restrictions on Gardiner Scholarship funds contributed a Florida 529 College Savings account.

- [The account owner cannot change the beneficiary of an account that contains Gardiner funds.](#)
- [The privately contributed funds in the account \(if any\) will be used to pay plan benefits before the Gardiner funds.](#)
- [If a Florida 529 College Savings account is closed, the money will go back to the open Gardiner Scholarship account along with any interest accumulated, or to the State of Florida if the Gardiner Scholarship account has been or is being closed.](#)
- [If a student's Gardiner Scholarship account closes for any reason, any money in the student's 529 College Savings account contributed through the Gardiner Scholarship will be returned to the State of Florida.](#)
- [If you have an existing Florida 529 College Savings plan, Gardiner Scholarship funds will be managed in a separate account from private funds that are invested. To open a new account \[click here\]\(#\).](#)

Click here for more information about the [Florida 529 College Savings Program](#).

## Contracted Public School Services

Services provided by a Florida public school or school district, including classes.

- A Gardiner Scholarship recipient may take courses or receive services from a public school (including the Florida Virtual School), as long as the student contracts for classes/services on a *private pay basis*.
- The parent can pay for services and request reimbursement, or the school district can choose to be paid directly as a provider.
- There is no requirement for public schools or school districts to contract for services with a Gardiner Scholarship participant or to set up an account for payment as a provider. Participation is optional for the public schools and/or districts.
- If the district reports the student for any FTE funding or other state funding, the student will be ineligible for the Gardiner Scholarship and jeopardize his/her scholarship.



Click here for a listing of [Public Schools / Districts](#).

## Fees Associated with Specialized Summer Education Programs

The term “specialized” is intended to mean a program developed specifically for students with special needs. A program that is open to all students would require documentation from an approved provider of specialized services indicating how that specific program meets the *educational needs* of that student.

## Fees Associated with Specialized After-School Education Programs

Please see the definition of “specialized” above.

## Transition Services Provided by Job Coaches

Students age 14 through 22 may submit reimbursements for transition services by job coaches.

The job coach must meet one of the following criteria:

- Hired by the private school as a job coach;
- Hired by the public school system as a job coach;
- Meet the criteria/training of the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities for job coaches;
- Meet the criteria/training of the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities;
- Have an Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ARCE) certification;
- Have an Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) certification;
- Have an Institution for Community Inclusion certification; or
- Employment Specialist Vendor for Vocational Rehabilitation.

Types of Transition Services that may be provided by the job coach:

- Conducting career and interest assessments
- Self-determination/Self-advocacy training
- Employability/Soft skill education
- Job development
- Job training
- Interview skill development and support—assistance with preparation and post-interview, resume development
- Onsite job coaching
- Follow-along support to maintain employment
- Monitoring and re-training for changes on the job site
- Benefits planning and financial literacy services (ex. Working with the student to understand the impact of work on SSI benefits and income)
- Advocacy services (ex. Working on benefit issues, social security, facilitating transportation services)
- Career Exploration
- Career Counseling

Gardiner Scholarship participants should explore all available State resources including Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and financial aid. Vocational Rehabilitation helps youth with disabilities in high school establish a foundation for a seamless transition to individualized training, education, and employment.

For more information on VR’s Transition Program, visit the [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#).

## Annual Educational Evaluation Fees

Section 1002.41(1)(c), Florida Statutes, requires parents of students in home education programs to select one of five methods of annual educational evaluation. Fees covered by the Gardiner Scholarship are limited to the annual evaluations of educational progress of the home education student, completed by a state-certified teacher.

Scholarship funds may be used to cover the fees associated with the evaluation if one of the methods listed below is chosen:

- Evaluation of a student’s educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the student, by a teacher, selected by the parent.
  - The teacher must hold a valid regular Florida certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level.
- Administration of any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher.
- Administration of a state student assessment test used by the school district, administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district.

## Tuition and Fees Associated with Programs Offered by Approved Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program Providers

The student must be a 4- or 5 year-old who is not enrolled in kindergarten.

A Gardiner Scholarship student may enroll, on a *private-pay basis*, in a program offered by an approved VPK program provider and may use scholarship funds to cover the tuition and fees required for the program. Tuition and fees must be for the 2016-17 program year, must be for the educational needs of the student, and may cover a full-day program. School lunch and other fees that are not mandatory or are not educational are not covered by the Gardiner Scholarship Program.

A Gardiner Scholarship student may be in a class mixed with students who are funded through other state programs such as VPK, VPKSIS, or Head Start. However, please note, the Gardiner Scholarship student must enroll with the VPK provider as a student who is *privately paying* for tuition and fees, and cannot be counted or reported to the Early Learning Coalition to receive public funding for the VPK program. If the Gardiner Scholarship student is funded through the VPK program, the scholarship may be lost and the parent may be responsible for repaying funds to the student’s Gardiner Scholarship account.

If a student receives services funded through the Florida Education Finance Program, the student is considered to be enrolled in public school, and the student will lose eligibility to participate in the Gardiner Scholarship Program and any funds remaining in the account will be returned to the State of Florida.

Local Early Learning Coalitions approve providers for the VPK program or the School Readiness Program, and could assist you in finding one of these providers. Click here to access a map of the Early Learning Coalitions and their contact information: [Early Learning Coalitions](#)

## Tuition and Fees Associated with Programs Offered by Approved School Readiness Providers

A student may continue to receive federal funding for a school readiness program if they are between the ages of 3 and 12. However, if a student is receiving simultaneous services funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), such as a VPK program, the student is considered to be enrolled in public school, and the student will lose eligibility to participate in the Gardiner Scholarship Program and any remaining funds in the account will be returned to the State of Florida.

Under this category, the Gardiner Scholarship student **may** participate in the VPK program by enrolling as a private pay student.

Local Early Learning Coalitions approve providers for the VPK program or the School Readiness Program, and could assist you in finding one of these providers. Click here to access a map of the Early Learning Coalitions and their contact information: [Early Learning Coalitions](#)

## Pre-Authorization

Many items and services have been pre-approved as authorized uses of Gardiner Scholarship funds. These fall into different categories, such as instructional material, curriculum, technology and specialized services. The first step in using funds from the Gardiner Scholarship account is to check the list of pre-approved items and services to see if the item or service you are interested in purchasing is on the list.

If the item or service is not on the pre-approved list, then it is highly recommended that a pre-authorization be submitted, prior to purchasing the item or service. The pre-authorization is for the item or service only and is not a confirmation of the provider's eligibility or the funding available for the reimbursement. A pre-authorization will *require* supporting documentation and along with an explanation of how the item will meet the *individual* educational needs of the student and will allow the student to access instruction or instructional content. In other words, parents will need to provide the answer to this question—*How will this item or service help my student learn?*

### Submitting Pre-Authorization Requests

1. Go to [stepupforstudents.org](http://stepupforstudents.org) and choose "LOGIN."
2. Under "Special Needs Scholarship" choose "LOGIN" or click here: [Account Login](#).
3. Enter User ID and Password and click "Log In."
4. Choose "Reimbursement Requests."
5. Choose "Submit a Pre-Authorization Request."
6. Complete the Provider Information and Pre-Authorization Details sections, providing the answer to the question, "How will this item or service help my student learn?" in the Description box.
7. Click "Save This Item."
8. Add additional items, if applicable, or click "Submit."
9. Upload documentation supporting the requested item or service by choosing "Upload Documents," following the instructions and choose "Finish."
10. To fax, choose "Print Fax Cover Sheet," open the Fax Cover Sheet document and print. Choose "Finish" and then fax the supporting documentation using the cover sheet provided.

The pre-authorization request will be reviewed and a notification of the outcome will be sent via email. If the preauthorization is approved, once you have purchased the item or service, you may submit a request for payment.

To view our pre-authorization submission video, [click here](#).

## Submitting Reimbursement Requests

All reimbursements paid to the parent are done via ACH bank transfers. This requires submission of your banking information.

**DO NOT provide anyone, especially service providers, access to your Gardiner Scholarship account by giving them your username and password. Doing so may result in loss of scholarship eligibility and funding.**

Providers of specialized services and tutoring may submit invoices directly to Step Up For Students and once approved by the parent, payment is made directly to the provider. (For more detail about how this works, please see the [2016-17 Gardiner Provider Handbook](#).)

Reimbursement requests are year specific. Unused funds from a prior year will roll forward into the current school year's balance. Only reimbursements requested for items or services purchased between July 1 and June 30 of the school year

will be approved. *IF* funds remain from a prior year and a reimbursement request is submitted for a purchase or service from July 1 to June 30 of that school year, with proper documentation, the request may be reviewed and paid.

### Setting-Up The Gardiner Scholarship Account

1. Go to [stepforstudents.org](http://stepforstudents.org) and choose "LOGIN."
2. Under "Special Needs Scholarship" choose "LOGIN" or click here: [Account Login](#).
3. Enter User ID and Password and click "Log In."
4. Choose "My Information" and scroll to the "ACH Bank Information" section at the bottom of the page.
5. Click the Paper/Pencil icon in the lower right corner and enter your banking information, making sure to *read* and click the authorization statement.
6. Click the Computer Disk icon in the lower right corner to save.

### Submitting a Reimbursement Request

Once funds have been deposited into the student's Gardiner Scholarship account, reimbursement requests may be submitted.

1. Go to [stepforstudents.org](http://stepforstudents.org) and choose "LOGIN."
  2. Under "Special Needs Scholarship" choose "LOGIN" or click here: [Account Login](#).
  3. Enter User ID and Password and click "Log In."
  4. Choose "Reimbursement Requests."
  5. Choose "Submit a Reimbursement Request."
  6. If a pre-authorization was submitted and approved, choose the pre-authorization from the Pre-Authorization Reimbursement Code dropdown. Choosing this will pre-fill the reimbursement form with the information from the Pre-Authorization.
  7. If no pre-authorization was submitted, complete the Provider Information and Reimbursement Request Details sections of the form and click "Save This Item."
    - There are two "Pay To" options: Myself and Provider. If you have purchased the item or service and want the reimbursement deposited into your account, choose "Myself." If you are being invoiced for the service and want the provider paid directly, choose "Provider."
- NOTE:** Multiple items from the same provider may be entered on the same form if the provider is a retailer. If the provider is providing specialized services, please submit individual reimbursement requests for each provider.
8. Once all the items have been entered, *read* and certify the Certification Statement and click "Submit."
  9. Upload documentation supporting the requested item or service by choosing "Upload Documents," following the instructions and choose "Finish."
  10. To fax, choose "Print Fax Cover Sheet," open the Fax Cover Sheet document and print. Choose "Finish" and then fax the supporting documentation using the cover sheet provided.

To view our reimbursement submission video, [click here](#).

### Required Supporting Documentation

When submitting reimbursement requests, you will be required to submit, via upload or fax, documentation supporting the purchase of the item or service. The type of information required may differ from one category of reimbursement to another.

*When making purchases from an individual (i.e. garage sale, Craig's list, etc.) payment in the form of a cashier's check or money order is preferred. This form of payment provides verification of the purchase, which is required for reimbursement.*

#### Instructional materials and curriculum

- Proof of payment that includes:
  - the item purchased

- the date of purchase
- the place of purchase
- the amount of the purchase
- the method of payment

### Specialized services

- Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the date the service was rendered
  - the type of service rendered
  - the first and last name of the therapist who rendered the service, if the payee is the service provider
  - indication of payment for the services, if the payee is the parent

### Full-time tutoring

- Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's ID number
  - the tutor's first and last name
  - the tutor's DOE certification number
  - the company name, if applicable
  - dates and hours of instruction
  - hourly rate
  - proof of payment, if the payee is the parent

### Part-time tutoring

- Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's ID number
  - the tutor's first and last name
  - the company name, if applicable
  - dates and hours of instruction
  - hourly rate
  - proof of payment, if the payee is the parent
- Documentation of certification:
  - the DOE certification number if the tutor is certified; or
  - the school district issuing the adjunct teaching certificate
- Documentation of mastery of subject area knowledge (if no documentation of certification):
  - An official 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.

### **Florida Prepaid College Program Plans and Florida 529 College Savings Plans**

- The reimbursement request must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's ID number
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's Florida Prepaid/529 College Savings Plan account number
  - the account type (for example, 1 year Florida University Plan)
  - a copy of the Florida Prepaid/529 College Savings Plan account statement and/or ID card showing proof of payment and payment date , if the payee is the parent

Parents may submit requests for reimbursement *or* for direct contributions. Reimbursement requests or direct contribution requests must be submitted by the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month, and will be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification **on a monthly basis before each reimbursement or payment is made**. The student name listed on the Gardiner Scholarship account must match with the name of the beneficiary of the Florida Prepaid account or the Florida 529 College Savings account.

Any requests received after the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month will not be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification until the next month.

### **Contracted public school services**

The parent may pay for services and request reimbursement, or the school district may choose to be paid directly as a provider.

- The reimbursement request must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's ID number
  - services provided
  - date the services were provided
  - a statement showing the amount paid (or billed)
  - proof of payment, if the payee is the parent

### **Tuition and fees** (for both Eligible Private School enrollment and Home Education)

- Eligible, participating private school – reimbursement requests submitted by the parent must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student's ID number
  - the 2016-17 annual tuition for the Gardiner Scholarship student
  - the name of the eligible, private school
  - the dates of the quarter being reimbursed
  - the amount of the tuition and fees required for enrollment for the quarter
  - proof of payment, if the payee is the parent

School lunch, before and after care and other *non-mandatory fees* are not covered by the Gardiner Scholarship program. Private schools may also bill Step Up For Students directly [Provider Handbook](#).

**Please note:** if a student withdraws or transfers, refunds (if any) will be based on the school's policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student's Gardiner Scholarship account. The parent may not accept refunds of Gardiner Scholarship dollars from the school.

- Florida Virtual school  
Florida Virtual School will submit invoices directly to SUFS. These invoices must be approved by the parent prior to reimbursement directly to FLVS.
- Eligible post-secondary institution, a home education program, a DOE-approved online provider, and a DOE-approved online course – reimbursement requests submitted by the parent must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s ID number
  - the name of the institution or course provider
  - course description
  - dates of course/service
  - amount of tuition and fees
  - proof of payment, on institution letterhead, if applicable
- Approved VPK program provider or an approved School Readiness provider – reimbursement requests must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s ID number
  - the name of the approved provider
  - dates of service (for the 2016-17 school year)
  - amount of tuition and fees
  - proof of payment

Tuition and fees must be for the educational needs of the student, and may cover a full-day program. School lunch and other fees that are not mandatory or are not educational are not covered by the Gardiner scholarship.

Approved VPK program providers and approved School Readiness program providers may also bill Step Up For Students directly for tuition and fees as described in the [Provider Handbook](#).

**Please note:** if a student withdraws or transfers, refunds (if any) will be based on the provider’s policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student’s Gardiner Scholarship account. The parent may not accept refunds of Gardiner Scholarship dollars from providers.

- Fees associated with specialized after-school education programs or specialized summer education programs – reimbursements must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s ID number
  - date of the program
  - amount of fees
  - documentation that the program is specifically for students with special needs, **OR**
  - a letter from an approved provider of specialized services explaining why the program is needed for the special educational needs of the student, if the program is open to all students
  - proof of payment, if the payee is the parent
- Fees for annual evaluation for a home education student or standardized testing – reimbursement requests must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s ID number
  - the date of the evaluation/test
  - amount of the fees for the evaluation/test
  - documentation of the teacher’s Florida Department of Education certification number
  - proof of payment

#### **Transition services provided by job coaches**

- Transition services provided by job coaches at eligible private schools may be included in the school’s fees (see required documentation under **Tuition and Fees**)



- Transition services provided by a job coach outside an eligible private school – reimbursement request must include:
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s first and last name
  - the Gardiner Scholarship student’s ID number
  - the date of the services provided
  - the services provided
  - proof of payment
  - documentation that the job coach meets one of the criteria listed above in the **Approved Uses of Gardiner Scholarship Funding** section.

## Reviewing Payment Requests Submitted by Providers

Providers may request payment directly via a provider login site. This option allows you to use Gardiner Scholarship funds for approved specialized services without paying out of pocket and waiting for reimbursement. When a provider submits a payment request on your student’s behalf, you’ll be notified via email and on your online parent statement. You will have the ability to approve or reject provider requests in total or in part, and provide notes if you wish. **It is important the payment requests are reviewed in a timely manner. In addition, it is imperative that YOU, the parent and owner of the Gardiner Scholarship account, are the ONLY person with access to approve or deny payment requests from a provider. DO NOT provide anyone, especially service providers, access to your Gardiner Scholarship account by giving them your username and password. Doing so may result in loss of scholarship eligibility and funding.**

### Reviewing Provider Payment Requests

1. Go to [stepforstudents.org](http://stepforstudents.org) and choose “LOGIN.”
2. Under “Special Needs Scholarship” choose “LOGIN” or click here: [Account Login](#).
3. Enter User ID and Password and click “Log In.”
4. Choose “Reimbursement Requests.”
5. Choose “Approve a Provider Reimbursement.”
6. Choose “Review / Approve.”
7. After *carefully reviewing the request* choose “Approve Invoice” or “Deny Invoice.”
8. If denying the request, enter the reason.
9. Click “Submit.”

## Purchase Assistance with Best Buy

Step Up for Students and Best Buy have partnered together to assist you in purchasing much-needed educational technology *without* any upfront cost to you!

**Please read these instructions very carefully. The process has been updated to better serve you!**

1. Make sure you have available funds in your Gardiner account to cover the entire purchase.
2. This partnership is ONLY for goods purchased through this Best Buy website. It does NOT apply to in-store purchases or purchases from the main Best Buy website.
3. ONLY items included on the preapproved expenses list will be allowed for purchase using this program. If an item requires pre-authorization you must complete the pre-authorization process *prior* to placing your order. As inventory changes, some items may appear on the website that are not eligible expenses. Do not include these items on your order.
4. When purchasing multiple items, include ALL items on one order! Failing to do this will result in the orders being denied, and a new order will need to be submitted.

5. Within 48 hours of placing your Best Buy order, enter a SINGLE reimbursement request with ALL items listed separately via your Gardiner login on the Step Up for Students website. Failing to do so WILL result in the cancellation of your order.
6. Please be aware that Step Up for Student reserves the right to deny requests for more than one of the same technology item.

**IMPORTANT: Only one order per student will be approved during the following quarters, so please be sure to only submit ONE ORDER PER STUDENT within these time periods:**

- November 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016
- January 1, 2017 – March 31, 2017
- April 1, 2017 – June 30, 2017

These requirements help to allow the use of this program for all students while continuing to be able to process other reimbursements for Gardiner families.

To create your Step Up for Students/Best Buy account, [click here](#).

## Important Items to Note

- The Step Up For Students staff may request additional documentation or clarification when they review the reimbursement request. These requests will arrive via email to the email address associated with your account. Please update your computer to accept email from Step Up For Students so it is not sent to your Spam or Junk folder.
- Step Up For Students **MUST** be notified immediately if your Gardiner Scholarship student enrolls in one of the public school options listed below, or if you move out of state.
  - Public school or any public school classes
  - Charter school
  - Services funded through the Florida Education Finance Program
  - Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
  - Florida Virtual School – as a public school student, not as a private-pay student
  - McKay Scholarship program
  - Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program
- Periodic surveys intended to validate your Gardiner Scholarship student’s continued participation may be sent to you during the school year. Participation in these surveys will be required.
- Always check the balance of your student’s account prior to making purchases and when submitting reimbursement requests. You may view the balance on the online statement provided within your login.
- If you have been reimbursed from Gardiner Scholarship funds for an item that is returned, and for which you receive cash, that cash should be returned to the student’s Gardiner Scholarship account. A check, made payable to Step Up For Students, indicating the Gardiner Scholarship student’s name and ID number should be sent to Step Up For Students at the following address:  
Step Up For Students  
Attention: Accounts Receivable  
4655 Salisbury Road, Suite 400  
Jacksonville, Florida 32256
- If a reimbursement request is denied, [you may appeal that decision ONE TIME](#) by submitting a new reimbursement request, notating in the description box that this is an appeal or reconsideration request. This

form should be faxed to 904-302-8265 along with any supporting documentation that supports your reconsideration request. The decision made by the Step Up For Student's appeal team is final.

- Step Up For Students reserves the right to close any reimbursement request submitted for payment.
- If your Gardiner Scholarship student is placed in any residential program, it is important that you ask about the mandatory school attendance requirement while the student is in the program. If the program uses any Florida public school option (district school, charter school, Florida Virtual School), the student's Gardiner Scholarship will be in jeopardy. If the program uses a private school option, if the private school is an eligible, participating private school, your student's Gardiner Scholarship funds, may be available to cover the cost of tuition and fees while the student is attending.
- Students in grades 3-10 attending an eligible, private school using Gardiner Scholarship funds are required to take an approved, nationally standardized, norm-referenced assessment. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement.
- Gardiner students who choose to attend a private school will not be entitled to services under IDEA Part B *unless* they have been evaluated by the public school district.

## What Information is Available through My Online Account?

When you login to your Gardiner Scholarship account you are able to:

- Review and update your contact information
- Change your account password
- Review and update your banking information
- Check the status of your scholarship application
- Print your eligibility letter
- Upload documents to your application or print documents associated with your application
- View your student's account statement
- Submit a reimbursement request
- Submit a pre-authorization request
- Approve a provider request
- Upload documents to a reimbursement
- Print the student's ID card
- See a list of Frequently Asked Questions
- Send an email to Step Up For Students

The Step Up For Students Gardiner Scholarship team wishes you and your Gardiner Scholarship student a productive and fun-filled 2016-17 school year!

# Appendix

## Approved Disability Definitions

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

As defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association.

### **Cerebral palsy**

A group of disabling symptoms of extended duration which results from damage to the developing brain that may occur before, during, or after birth and that results in the loss or impairment of control over voluntary muscles. For the purposes of this definition, cerebral palsy does not include those symptoms or impairments resulting solely from a stroke.

### **Down syndrome**

A disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21.

### **High-risk child**

A 3-5 year old\*, being a high risk child with a developmental delay in cognition, language, or physical development. (\*On or before September 1 of the school year.)

### **Intellectual Disability**

Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior which manifests before the age of 18 and can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely. For the purposes of this definition, the term:

“Adaptive behavior” means the effectiveness or degree with which an individual meets the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected of his or her age, cultural group, and community.

“Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning” means performance that is two or more standard deviations from the mean score on a standardized intelligence test specified in the rules of the agency.

### **Muscular Dystrophy**

#### **Phelan-McDermid Syndrome**

A disorder caused by the loss of the terminal segment of the long arm of chromosome 22, which occurs near the end of the chromosome at a location designated q13.3, typically leading to developmental delay, intellectual disability, dolicocephaly, hypotonic, or absent or delayed speech.

#### **Prader-Willi syndrome**

An inherited condition typified by; neonatal hypotonia with failure to thrive, hyperphagia or an excessive drive to eat which leads to obesity usually at 18 to 36 months of age, mild to moderate mental retardation, hypogonadism, short stature, mild facial dysmorphism, characteristic neurobehavior.

#### **Spina bifida**

A person with a medical diagnosis of spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele.

#### **Williams syndrome**