

Gardiner Scholarship

2014 – 2015 Summary Report for Step Up For Students

The Gardiner Scholarship (previously known as the Personal Learning Scholarship Account) program is a newly created Florida School Choice program designed to help parents individualize educational options for their children with specific special needs. The program was created by the Florida Legislature in 2014 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 only participating in the Gardiner Scholarship program through Step Up For Students (SUFS).

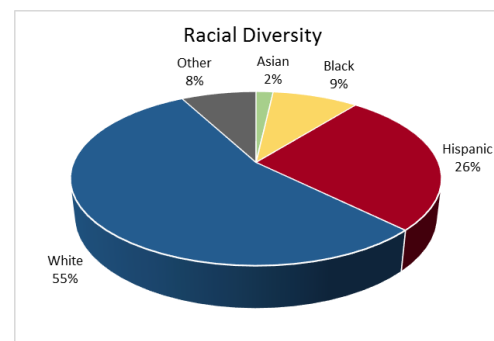


Julie and Faith Kleffel, Scholarship Family

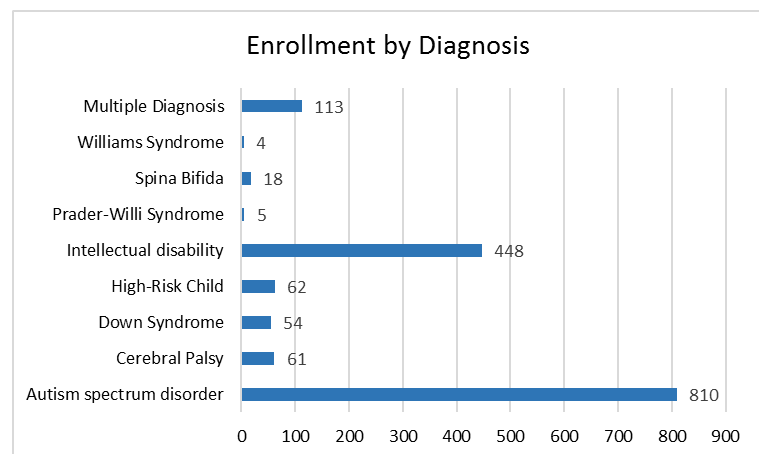
The Gardiner Scholarship is different than other state scholarships because it allows parents the flexibility to customize educational plans for their children by directing funds to any combination of education services, programs, and approved providers which may include schools, therapists, specialists, curriculum, and technology.

Student Enrollment

In 2014-2015, there were 1,575 students who participated in the Gardiner Scholarship program through Step Up For Students. Students ranged from 5 years old to 12th grade and comprised several different grade levels, races, and disabilities.



Gender	
Female	32%
Male	68%
Grade Level	
Elementary Grades K-5	48%
Middle Grades 6-8	26%
High Grades 9-12	23%
Prior School Type	
Florida Home School	20%
Florida Private School	43%
Florida Public School	22%



Eligibility Requirements

Gardiner Scholarship eligibility is based on residency, age/grade, and specific disability. In order to be eligible to receive the scholarship for the 2014-15 year, a student must have been:

- A Florida resident
- Eligible to enroll in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school in this state
- Diagnosed with one of the following disabilities: **autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Spina bifida, Williams syndrome or intellectual disability (severe cognitive impairment)**. Also, students in kindergarten deemed **“high risk” due to developmental delays** and not older than 5 on Sept. 1 may have been eligible for the year they applied
- The subject of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education or has received a diagnosis of a disability as defined below from a physician who is licensed under Florida Statutes chapter 458 or chapter 459, or a psychologist who is licensed in Florida

Scholarship Awards

The State of Florida provides funding for each eligible student to the SFOs through the Department of Education. The SFOs deposit scholarship funds into students' scholarship accounts. Once the scholarship account is funded, parents and providers may submit documented requests for services rendered and/or purchases made.

On average, the Gardiner Scholarship awards approximately \$10,000 to each student. However, the actual amount of a child's award is based on his/her grade and county of residence. For Step Up For Students, \$15,935,672 was awarded to 1,575 students from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. The average scholarship award for 2014-2015, as of June 30, 2015, was \$10,117.89 per student.



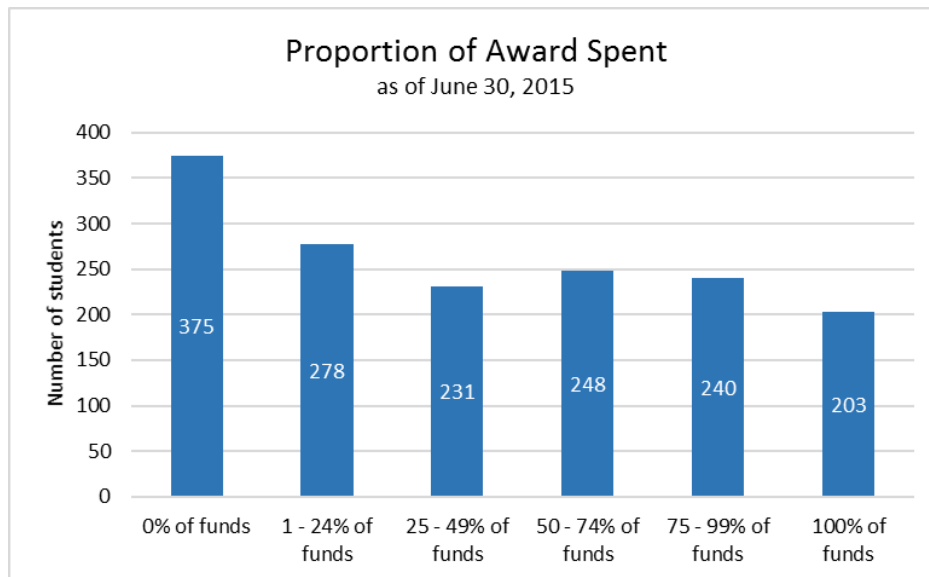
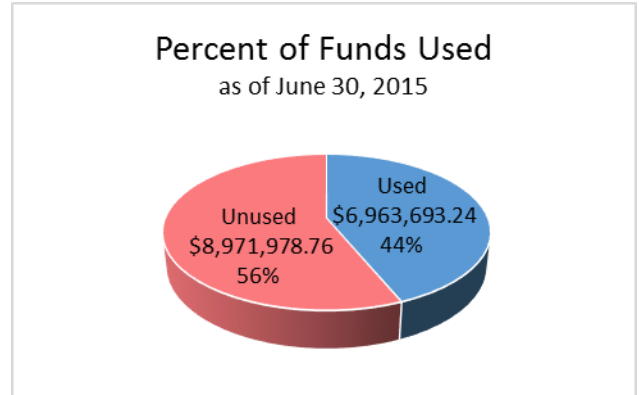
Scholarship Funding Process

Family Spending

Scholarship funds may be used for instructional materials, curriculum, specialized services by an approved provider, enrollment tuition and fees for eligible private schools or post-secondary institutions, assessments, contracted services, or contributions to the Stanley G. Tate Prepaid College Program. Further, while Gardiner Scholarship students may use scholarship funds for private school or home education, students are not eligible to receive the scholarship while attending public school or receiving any other state scholarship.

Overall, the majority of SUFS families used Gardiner Scholarship funds (approximately 80% of dollars spent) for enrollment, tuition, and fees at eligible private schools. The second largest proportion of funds was used for instructional materials and curriculum which totaled about 12% of scholarship dollars spent.

As of June 30, 2015, SUFS families of 1,200 students spent \$6,963,693.24 on qualifying educational expenses. On average, SUFS families submitted nearly six reimbursements per child and spent \$5,629.30 of each child's scholarship award. The proportion of the award that each family spent may have been influenced by the late start of the scholarship in its first year, and the fact that families were applying for and being awarded scholarships throughout the 12-month period. 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.



Appendix

<i>Enrollment by County (Top 25)</i>		
	Number	Percent
Dade	220	13.97%
Broward	105	6.67%
Duval	102	6.48%
Hillsborough	94	5.97%
Orange	92	5.84%
Pinellas	73	4.63%
Palm Beach	69	4.38%
Seminole	65	4.13%
Polk	63	4.00%
Leon	60	3.81%
Brevard	57	3.62%
Pasco	51	3.24%
Osceola	50	3.17%
Volusia	46	2.92%
Lake	43	2.73%
Hernando	34	2.16%
St. Johns	30	1.90%
Alachua	25	1.59%
Clay	23	1.46%
Manatee	21	1.33%
Okaloosa	21	1.33%
St. Lucie	20	1.27%
Columbia	18	1.14%
Escambia	18	1.14%
Sarasota	17	1.08%

<i>Enrollment by Grade</i>		
	Number	Percent
Kindergarten	56	3.56
First	183	11.62
Second	138	8.76
Third	127	8.06
Fourth	155	9.84
Fifth	146	9.27
Sixth	138	8.76
Seventh	144	9.14
Eighth	123	7.81
Ninth	134	8.51
Tenth	98	6.22
Eleventh	76	4.83
Twelfth	57	3.62