

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Florida Scholarships and Programs at OptimaEd

Florida offers an alternate of school choice options for Florida students. Scholarships are administered by scholarship-funding organizations such as [Step Up for Students](#) (SUFS).

Read about the different scholarship from the [Florida Department of Education K-12 Scholarship Programs](#).

Each scholarship has independent requirements for both eligibility and access to virtual courses. If you have any questions on how to use your scholarship, how to apply for scholarships, or the status of your scholarship application, click on the [Step Up for Students](#) link to be directed to your scholarship organization.

**What are the categorical scholarships provided by Step Up for Students?** Step Up for Students offers two categorical scholarships: Florida Tax Credit (FTC)/Personalized Education Plan (PEP) and Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO). FES-EO has a specific option for children with disabilities called FES-UA, previously known as The Gardiner Scholarship.

**What scholarships does OptimaEd accept?** OptimaEd accepts Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES-EO and FES-UA) and Florida Tax Credit/PEP scholarships. Please refer to Step up for Students for clarity on each of those scholarships.

**What happens after I apply for a Florida Scholarship?** If approved for a scholarship, you'll work with Step Up for Students to access your savings account and navigate the vendor page. Once you've been granted access to your scholarship funds, you may choose from the options below:

1. For FES-EO/PEP recipients, you may choose from OptimaEd's offerings in the Education Market Assistant (EMA) system.
2. For FES-UA recipients, you may choose from OptimaEd's offerings in MyScholarShop.

**What products does OptimaEd offer?** OptimaEd offers virtual reality (VR) Explorations, allowing students to immerse themselves in interactive virtual experiences. Additionally, Optima Academy Online offers on-demand courses for grades K-9. Find more details about each product on our [Optima Academy Online](#) website.

**Can I use scholarship funds for OptimaEd products?** Yes, you can use scholarship funds for OptimaEd products. Once you've been approved for a scholarship, you can choose products from our offerings and use your allocated funds for purchase.

**What if I already receive scholarship funds from Step Up for Students?** If you already receive scholarship funds from Step Up for Students, you can visit their website and select the OptimaEd product you wish to purchase.

**I am a scholarship recipient. Why do I have to pay for OptimaEd courses?** School choice scholarships offer educational choice by allowing public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that best fit their needs. The state recently introduced new rules through [House Bill \(HB\) 1](#), which require all scholarship recipients taking Virtual Instruction Program (VIP) courses to either use the scholarship funds or pay for tuition directly for courses taken. VIP providers will not receive funds through the Department

of Education (DOE) for completed courses. If students are awarded scholarships, payment responsibility for course(s) lies with parents directly.

**Can my child access LIVE courses with scholarship funds?** Yes, we offer On-Demand and LIVE courses. You can find our courses in the Education Market Assistant (EMA). As scholarship recipients, families can use scholarship funds or pay out of pocket to enroll in OptimaEd's courses.

**How do I pay with my funds?** Funds must be available in your scholarship account. To check the status of available funds, please log in to the account provided by Step Up for Students. If scholarship funds are available, follow the instructions provided by Step Up for Students to submit an invoice for direct payment to OptimaEd.

**Can I take OptimaEd courses without using scholarship funds?** Certainly, you can choose to take OptimaEd courses without using scholarship funds. For more information, contact [info-oao@optimaed.com](mailto:info-oao@optimaed.com).

**I withdrew from the course, how do I request a refund?** Please contact the enrollment office at [oao-registrar@optimaed.com](mailto:oao-registrar@optimaed.com).

**What if I need financial assistance for equipment or supplies?** For inquiries about financial assistance related to equipment or supplies, please contact the enrollment office at [oao-registrar@optimaed.com](mailto:oao-registrar@optimaed.com) before making any final decisions.

**What are the costs for Optima Academy Online courses with scholarships?** For detailed costs of different courses and bundles, please refer to the Step Up for Students Purchasing Guide.

**What accommodations does Optima Academy Online provide?** Optima Academy Online provides accommodations based on current Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), excluding specialized academic instruction and therapies. For more information about additional services, please contact [info-oao@optimaed.com](mailto:info-oao@optimaed.com).

## PEP FAQ

Please submit questions to Step Up for Students for more detailed information.

Florida Tax Credit scholarship allows a new homeschooling option called the Personalized Education Program (PEP). This program is similar to home education with a few key differences, including:

**How Does the PEP Program Work?** The Personalized Education Program (PEP) allows homeschooling with state-provided educational funds. To enroll in PEP, parents must first apply for FTC FES EO or the Transportation Scholarship in the EMA Portal. Once awarded the FES-EO, parents can contact Step Up for Students to opt for the PEP option. PEP scholars cannot be enrolled full time in public, private, or charter schools. However, Personalized Education Program (PEP) scholarship recipients must register as "PEP" student CATEGORY in the admissions and registrations process. Choose PEP, for proper reporting.

**What are the requirements for PEP enrollment?** PEP requires students to be registered with the Department of Education (DOE) and Step Up for Students as PEP students. If interested in PEP, parents first apply for **FTC FES EO OR The Transportation Scholarship** in the EMA Portal. Once awarded the FES-EO,

parents then contact Step Up for Students to tell them they want to use the PEP option. If you have any questions on scholarship application and requirements, click on the [PEP Step Up for Students](#) link to be directed to your scholarship organization.

**What's the process for terminating a Home Education Program for PEP enrollment?** Parents will receive an email confirming PEP approval and guiding them to terminate their home education program if applicable. Termination requires sending a Letter of Termination and an evaluation to the home education contact in the district within 30 days of termination.

**What's the process for terminating Private, Charter, or Public for PEP enrollment?** If the student is registered in a public or private school, they will need to withdraw the student. Students must not be enrolled full-time in a private, charter or public school while in a PEP program.

**How can I track Funding Amounts and Progress for PEP?** Parents will be directed on how to track funding amounts and progress in their accounts using the EMA computer system. The Student Learning Plan for PEP must be submitted by August 31st and updated annually.

**What does the Student Learning Plan for the PEP require?** The Student Learning Plan for the PEP serves the same purpose as a Letter of Intent does for home education, which you will submit to Step Up for Students. Completing the Student Learning Plan keeps a child from being considered truant. Parents will have until Aug. 31st to submit the Student Learning Plan. This plan can be edited during the year and must be updated each year when renewing the scholarship.

Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (PEP) students who complete their courses after June 30, 2023 must apply scholarship funds or pay VIP providers directly for course(s).

Scholarships can cover eligible expenses such as tuition and fees at eligible private schools and/or VIP. Scholarships will be applied to private schools for their tuition and fees first. Remaining scholarship funds can be applied to VIP tuition.