

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Action Item**  
July 18, 2018

**SUBJECT:** New Rule 6A-6.0962, Reading Scholarship Accounts

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**PROPOSED BOARD ACTION**

For Approval

**AUTHORITY FOR STATE BOARD ACTION**

Section 1002.411, Florida Statutes

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Reading Scholarship Account program was created during the 2018 legislative session. The program provides scholarships to public school students in grades 3 through 5 who scored below a level 3 on the grade 3 or grade 4 statewide standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in the prior school year. The scholarships may be used by parents to purchase instructional materials, curriculum, tutoring, or summer or after school educational programs focused on literacy. An eligible student who is classified as an English Language Learner shall receive priority. The proposed rule:

1. Establishes that an eligible Scholarship funding Organization (SFO) that is approved under section 1002.395, Florida Statutes, may establish Reading Scholarship Accounts for eligible students.
2. Establishes that SFOs are responsible for receiving applications, determining student eligibility and verifying eligible expenditures in accordance with section 1002.411, Florida Statutes. This process includes setting annual deadlines for participation and distributing funds on a first-come, first-served basis based upon the priorities established in law.
3. Establishes the process for SFOs to request funding for a student from the department.
4. Establishes Commissioner's authority to revoke a student's participation in the program and the SFO's obligation to return any funds that were received in error or associated with a scholarship account that has been closed.
5. Describes the format, data and timing of the quarterly reports that SFOs must submit to the department.

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**Supporting Documentation Included:** Proposed Rule 6A-6.0962, F.A.C.

**Facilitator/Presenter:** Adam Miller, Executive Director, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice



6A-6.0962 Reading Scholarship Accounts.

(1) Eligibility of nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations. An eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization that is approved pursuant to section 1002.395, F.S., may establish Reading Scholarship accounts for eligible students.

(2) Nonprofit scholarship-funding organization requirements. Eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations shall:

(a) Receive applications and determine eligibility of students in accordance with the requirements of section 1002.411(2), F.S.;

(b) Verify eligible expenditures before the distribution of funds for any expenditures made pursuant to section 1002.411(3)(a)2., F.S.

(3) Eligible students. Applications for a Reading Scholarship Account shall be made by parents directly through an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization. The nonprofit scholarship-funding organization shall verify the eligibility of students pursuant to the criteria established in section 1002.411, F.S., and award scholarships consistent with the requirements of section 1002.411, F.S.

(4) Scholarship payments. The following provisions relate to the distribution of funds from the Department of Education to an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization.

(a) An eligible scholarship funding organization may request a payment from the Department of Education for an eligible student after it has confirmed that the student has met the eligibility criteria in section 1002.411(2), F.S. Using the Department's web-based system ([https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/login/login\\_sfo.asp](https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/login/login_sfo.asp)), the nonprofit scholarship-funding organization must:

1. Confirm the eligibility of each scholarship student and include:

a. Student name, date of birth, Florida Education Identification number (FLEID), English Language Learner status, gender, race, grade level, and address including public school district attended; and,

b. Date and time the nonprofit scholarship-funding organization confirmed eligibility.

2. Submit a signed invoice requesting payment which must include the amount requested for each individual student as well as the total amount requested.

(b) Eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations must set an annual deadline for scholarship participation.

(c) The Department shall distribute funds on a first-come first-served basis, in the following order of priority for each invoice period:

1. Students confirmed by the SFO as English Language Learners who are enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of English Language Learner students;

2. Date and time the scholarship-funding organization confirmed eligibility.

(d) Requests for payments by a nonprofit scholarship-funding organization must be submitted no later than May 1 for the fiscal year in which the student is eligible to receive a scholarship.

(e) The Commissioner may revoke a student's participation in the program and withhold or request the return of a scholarship payment if it is determined that the parent is in violation of section 1002.411(3), F.S.

(f) Eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations are responsible for the return of all scholarship funds to the Department that were received in error or associated with a scholarship account that has been closed pursuant to section 1002.411(7)(i), F.S. Funds returned must include the administrative fee if no reimbursements were made for expenditures that occurred in the fiscal year in which the scholarship was awarded.

(5) Quarterly Reports: Four (4) times a year, no later than October 30, January 30, April 30, and July 30 of each year, an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization shall submit in a format to be specified by the Department an electronic list of all participating scholarship students and eligible expenditures. For purposes of the quarterly report, a participating scholarship student is one whose scholarship account has been funded in the current fiscal year.

(a) The list shall include the following information:

1. Demographic information for each student, including name, date of birth, FLEID, English Language Learner status, grade level, gender, race, and public school district attended;

2. Program award amount for each student;

3. Information on providers of services; and,

4. Total year-to-date expenditures on behalf of participating students by purpose type.

(b) No later than October 30 of each year, an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization shall provide the department a report that indicates the status of participants who did not renew participation for the current fiscal year.

(c) Nothing in this rule shall limit the Department's authority to request any other information related to the

scholarship program.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.02, 1002.395(13)(d), 1002.39(18), 1002.411 FS. Law Implemented 1002.411 FS.

History—New

