

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
December 17, 2015

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

16. Report on the *Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act* [Goal 1 – MDE Strategic Plan]

Executive Summary

The Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act (Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-181-1 through 37-181-21) was signed into law during the 2015 session of the Mississippi Legislature and established Education Scholarship Accounts. The Education Scholarship Account (ESA) provides an opportunity for parents who wish to withdraw their child with special needs from the public school system to use scholarship money to help defray the cost of private school tuition or other specific allowable activities to educate their child.

This item references Goal 1 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Discussion Only

Back-up material attached

**Office of Special Education
2015 Education Scholarship Account Update**

- *The Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act* enacted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2015 Session created the Education Scholarship Account (ESA) program, Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-181-1 through 37-181-21. It is a program designed to give those parents with special needs students the option of withdrawing their child from the public school system and receiving a designated amount of funds to help defray the cost of private school tuition or other specific allowable activities to educate their child.
- The ESA allows for a maximum of 433 scholarships to be made available to Mississippi residents and to be disbursed into four equal quarterly reimbursement periods of \$1625.00 or the amount of actual receipts not to exceed \$6500.00 per year. The reimbursement chart is as follows:

Reimbursement Request Deadline:	Payment Disbursed By:	Amount Available for Reimbursement:
8/31/15	9/30/15	\$1625.00
11/30/15	12/20/15	\$1625.00
2/29/16	3/31/16	\$1625.00
5/31/16	6/30/16	\$1625.00

The following pages contain a detailed expenditure report of the disbursement of funds to those participating in the Education Scholarship Account program for the First Quarter period ending August 31, 2015, including a summative list by eligibility category.

- There are a total of two hundred fifty-one (251) persons who were approved to receive funds during this period.
- Of the total number of approved persons, one hundred seven (107) of those chose to activate their accounts by submitting reimbursement documents.
- A total of fifty-seven (57) disbursements were submitted directly back to parents and the others were distributed directly back to eleven (11) schools who are approved vendors to receive Education Scholarship Account funds. The schools are:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central Academy 2. Christ Missionary and Industrial School 3. Heidelberg Academy 4. Lord of the Harvest/Hope Academy 5. Magnolia Heights School 6. New Learning Resources (North New Summit-Greenwood) 7. New Learning Resources (New Summit-Jackson) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Our Lady of Lourdes School 9. St Joseph Catholic School-Greenwood 10. St Joseph Catholic School-Jackson 11. St Richard Catholic School-Jackson. |
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Education Scholarship Account (ESA)
1st Quarter Reimbursement Submission
(Due by August 31, 2015 Disbursed September 30, 2015)

Total Active ESA Accounts	251
Total ESA Reimbursements Submitted to Accounting for Reimbursement	107
Total ESA Disbursed Directly to Parents	\$74,253.08
Total ESA Disbursed Directly to Schools (11 schools)	\$71,974.33
Total 1 st Quarter ESA Disbursed on September 30, 2015	\$146,227.41

Eligible Expenses:	Reimbursement Request Amount	Number of Students
(a) Tuition/fees from eligible school	\$ 19,199.30	102
(b) Textbooks	\$ 4,038.44	18
(c) Payment to a tutor (Must include a copy of tutor's license or certification.)	\$ 5,307.36	9
(d) Payment for purchase of curriculum, including any supplemental materials required by the curriculum	\$ 60.00	1
(e) Transportation expense to/from a provider paid to fee-for-service transportation provider	\$ 1,060.00	2
(f) Tuition/fees for online learning programs or courses	\$ 295.20	3
(g) Fees for nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests, including alternate assessments; Advanced Placement exams or similar courses; and any exams related to college/university administrations	\$ 582.00	2
(h) Educational services or therapies from a licensed or certified practitioner or provider, paraprofessional, or educational aide (Must include of copy of license or certification.)	\$ 1,670.00	2
(i) Services provided by a public school, incl. individual classes/ extracurricular programs	\$ 25.00	1
(j) Tuition/fees at a postsecondary institution	\$ 0	
(k) Textbooks related to coursework at a postsecondary institution	\$ 0	
(l) Surety bond payments, if required by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)	NOT CURRENTLY REQUIRED BY MDE	
(m) Consumable school supplies necessary for educational services therapy, daily classroom activities, and tutoring (\$50 max. annually)	\$ 89.24	14
(n) Computer hardware/software/technological devices if an eligible school, licensed/certified provider, or licensed medical professional verifies in writing it is essential to meet annual, measurable goals (Original signed copy of verification must be attached.)	\$ 599.99	1
Total Amount of Funds Requested from participant's ESA:	\$206,224.53	
Total Amount of Funds Disbursed from participant's ESA:	\$146,227.41	



**Education Scholarship Account (ESA)
1st Quarter Reimbursement Submission
Breakdown by Disability Category**

Disability Category	Number of Active ESA Accounts	Number of ESA Reimbursements Submitted	ESA 1st Quarter Reimbursement Requests
Autism	39	13	\$ 16,589.18
Deaf/Blind	0	0	\$ 0.00
Developmentally Delayed	26	17	\$ 16,921.70
Emotional Disability	15	5	\$ 8,050.00
Hearing Impaired	9	3	\$ 4,436.25
Intellectual Disability	12	2	\$ 3,250.00
Language Speech	24	11	\$ 13,643.96
Multiple Disability	10	3	\$ 4,610.00
Orthopedic Impairment	3	0	\$ 0.00
Other Health Impairment	60	27	\$ 40,663.57
Specific Learning Disability	49	25	\$ 36,437.75
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	\$ 0.00
Visual Impairment	4	1	\$ 1,625.00
Totals	251	107	\$ 146,227.41

**Education Scholarship Account (ESA)
1st Quarter Reimbursement Submission
Breakdown by District**

District Name	# of Students Enrolled	# of Reimbursements Submitted	Total Funds Disbursed
Desoto County	21	11	\$16,765.00
Hinds County	16	7	\$7099.19
Jackson Public	40	13	\$18,858.00
Madison County	26	12	\$16,943.73
Rankin County	29	18	\$26,403.00
Total	132	61	\$86,068.92

Note: In order to protect student confidentiality, the Mississippi Department of Education does not report specific data on districts if number of participants enrolled is ten (10) or under. Other districts with students awarded ESA's whose enrollments are ten (10) or under include:

*Biloxi
Brookhaven
Canton
Carroll County
Clay County
Cleveland Public
Clinton Public
Coahoma County
Columbia Municipal
Columbus Municipal
Corinth
Forrest County
Greenville Public
Greenwood Municipal
Grenada
Gulfport
Hancock County*

*Harrison County
Hattiesburg Public
Hazlehurst Municipal
Houston Public
Jefferson County
Jones County
Lamar County
Laurel Public
Leflore County
Lincoln County
Lowndes County
Lumberton
McComb
Meridian
Moss Point
Nettleton
Newton County*

*North Panola
Noxubee County
Ocean Springs
Poplarville
Quitman Public
Scott County
Simpson County
Smith County
Starkville
Sunflower County
Tate County
Tupelo Public
Vicksburg Warren
West Point
Wilkerson County*