

Education Scholarship Account Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Education Scholarship Account Program?

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. It was created by *The Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act (SB 2695)* that was signed into law by Governor Phil Bryant during the 2015 session of the Mississippi Legislature. It is being administered by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Office of Special Education (OSE).

2. When does it go into effect?

Beginning July 1, 2016, the application for the Education Scholarship Account program will be made available through the MDE website at www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA, the MDE Office of Special Education located at 359 North West Street, Jackson, MS, or their local public school

3. What are the requirements for participation in the Education Scholarship account Program?

Applicant must be a resident of Mississippi and the student must have had an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) within the last five years.

4. What constitutes an “Active IEP”?

An “active IEP” is an IEP developed by a public school district and the student must have been enrolled in that district and have received services within the last five years.

5. If a parent has already placed their child in a private school, do they have an IEP?

No, students in private schools receive services plans. A Service Plan is defined as a written statement that describes the special education and related services the LEA will provide to a child with a disability that is enrolled by their parents in a private school (you may hear this referenced as a parentally-placed private school child) who has been designated to receive services. The Service Plan is developed in accordance with 34 C.F.R. 300.137 through 300.139.

6. How much money is allocated in the Education Scholarship Account?

Each Education Scholarship Account is valued at \$6,637.00 for the 2016–2017 School Year.

7. How will the funds be dispersed?

Funds will be paid to the parent on a **reimbursement basis** quarterly (subject to availability of funds) after submission of a reimbursement request with proper documentation of expenses incurred. Funds can also be paid **quarterly** directly to an educational service provider if approved by the parent.

8. Can my child be enrolled in a public school and still participate in the Education Scholarship Account Program?

No. As a condition of *The Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act (SB 2695)* parents must agree to not enroll their participating student in a public school and to acknowledge as part of the agreement that the home school district has provided clear notice to the parent that the participating student has no individual entitlement to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) from their home school district, including special education and related services, for as long as the student is participating in the program. Parents must also agree not to file for their participating student a certificate of enrollment in a home instruction (i.e....home school) program.

9. How can I spend Education Scholarship Account funds?

Funds can be spent on any of the following: Tuition and/or fees at an eligible school; Textbooks; Payment to a tutor; Payment for purchase of curriculum; Fees for transportation to and from an educational service provider paid to a fee-for-service provider; Tuition and fees for online learning programs/courses; Fees for certain standardized tests; Educational services or therapies from licensed or certified practitioners; Tuition and fees at a postsecondary institution and related textbooks; Up to \$50.00 in annual consumable school supplies; Computer hardware, software, and other technological devices deemed necessary by an eligible school or service provider.

10. If I get accepted into the Education Scholarship Account Program, how do I choose a school?

"Eligible school" means a nonpublic school that has enrolled a participating student. An eligible school must be accredited by a state or regional accrediting

agency or possess a provisional letter of accreditation from a state or regional accrediting agency or be approved/licensed by the State Department of Education. An eligible school does not include a home instruction program under Section 37-13-91, Mississippi Code of 1972.