



## **Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is the Education Scholarship Trust Fund?**

The Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program (ESTF) is **administered by the South Carolina Department of Education**. The ESTF Program allows qualifying South Carolina families with a student in K-12th grades to apply for a scholarship of \$7,500 per student for the 2025-2026 school year. The award amount increases to \$7,634 for the 2026-2027 school year. The state has contracted with ClassWallet for programmatic support and to manage the distribution of scholarship funds to participating families.

### **2. What can the scholarship be used for?**

All approved expenses and restrictions can be found within the [Participant Guide](#).

- **Tuition and Fees at an approved independent school**
- **Tuition and fees for an approved nonpublic online education service provider or course**
  - Math
  - English / Grammar / Reading
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - Foreign Language
  - Art
  - Music
  - Test Preparation
  - Study Skills
- **Textbooks and student workbooks**
  - Math
  - English/Grammar/Reading

- Science
- Social Studies
- Foreign Language
- Art
- Music
- **Reading books**
- **Instructional materials**
- **Computer hardware (view the Participant Guide for detailed information)**
- **Technological devices (view the Participant Guide for detailed information)**
- **Curriculum**
  - Math
  - English/Grammar/Reading
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - Foreign Language
  - Art
  - Music
- **Tutoring**
  - Math
  - English/Grammar/Reading
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - Foreign Language
  - Art
  - Music
- **Educational therapies for students with disabilities**
  - ABA Therapy
  - Speech Therapy
  - Physical Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Vision Therapy
  - Dyslexia and Dysgraphia Therapies
- **Services provided by a student's non-resident public school**

- Individual classes
- After school tutoring
- Extracurricular activity fees or costs such as music and sports.
- Out-of-district fees

- **Fees for transportation through an approved school or service provider.** This does not include gas mileage provided by a parent or guardian. \$3,000 annual limit.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Transportation fees MUST be submitted as a separate transaction (not included on a tuition invoice).

### **3. How will I be able to use my funds in ClassWallet?**

You will be able to issue a Direct Pay payment to an approved provider using your student's Digital Wallet. You are also able to make purchases through the ClassWallet Marketplace. The Marketplace includes school supplies, technology devices, and more!

To initiate a Direct Pay payment, you will need an invoice from the provider that contains the following information:

- Provider or school name (including address)
- Student name
- Parent name
- Date of invoice
- Date of service
- What the payment is for (tuition, tutoring, etc.)
- Total amount due

### **4. Can my student remain in public school and participate?**

While scholarship funds can be used to pay for some public school programs, **an ESTF participant cannot be enrolled in their resident public school as a full-time student. Your resident public school is the school your district has zoned for your child.** Students are able to use ESTF while attending a public school that is not their zoned school.

### **5. Can homeschooling families use the ESTF Program Scholarship to pay for expenses? Can families who educate at home qualify for the ESTF Program Scholarship?**

If you are enrolled in an Option 1-3 homeschool association, you are not eligible to participate in the ESTF program. In South Carolina, Options 1-3 allow for families to satisfy the compulsory attendance requirements.

However, by joining the ESTF program, your signed agreement when you accept the award also satisfies the compulsory attendance requirements [Section 59-8-115(i)]. Some families are choosing to educate at home and take advantage of ESTF to purchase curricular materials, technology, tutoring, and educational therapies.

To participate in the program, you cannot attend your resident public school and you cannot enroll in an Option 1-3 association, but other than that, you have lots of options to customize your child's educational program.

## **6. Can I attend a charter school and still be eligible for the SC ESTF program?**

All charter school students may enroll in ESTF. Click [here](#) for more information on charter school student eligibility.

## **7. Who qualifies for the ESTF Program?**

To qualify for the **2025-2026** school year, the student must:

- Be a resident of South Carolina;
- Have a household income that does not exceed 300% of the federal poverty guidelines
- Agree to enroll the student (in any year between Kindergarten and 12th Grade) for the 2025-26 school year in a school other than a public school in your residential school district.

To qualify for the **2026-2027** school year, the student must:

- Be a resident of South Carolina;
- Have a household income that does not exceed 500% of the federal poverty guidelines
- Agree to enroll the student (in any year between Kindergarten and 12th Grade) for the 2026-27 school year in a school other than a public school in your residential school district.

## 8. How do I apply?

Applications for the 2026-27 school year are open now at [ESTFSC.com](https://www.estfsc.com).

## 9. What are the 2026-2027 application priority windows?

- Window 1: Returning awarded students and their siblings. Opens November 1st and closes January 14th and priority will be given until Window 2 opens.
- Window 2: Priority students. Open January 15th - February 8th
  - Active-duty parent or guardian stationed in South Carolina OR
  - Household income at or below 300% FPL OR
  - Prior year public school attendance OR
  - Returning awarded student or sibling who missed Window 1
- Window 3: All eligible students – any SC household with income at or below 500% FPL. Opens February 9th.

Persons in Family / Household	2025 Federal Poverty Guideline	300% of Federal Poverty Guideline	500% of Federal Poverty Guideline
1	\$15,650.00	\$46,950.00	\$78,250.00
2	\$21,150.00	\$63,450.00	\$105,750.00
3	\$26,650.00	\$79,950.00	\$133,250.00
4	\$32,150.00	\$96,450.00	\$160,750.00
5	\$37,650.00	\$112,950.00	\$188,250.00
6	\$43,150.00	\$129,450.00	\$215,750.00
7	\$48,650.00	\$145,950.00	\$243,250.00
8	\$54,150.00	\$162,450.00	\$270,750.00

## 10. What do I need to apply?

You will be asked to provide the following:

- **Proof of guardianship:** Birth certificate, tax return claiming

dependents, adoption decree, etc.

- **Proof of residency:** Driver's license or state-issued ID, utility bill, government-issued mail, or mortgage statement, etc.)
- **Proof of income:** IRS Form 1040 (pages 1 and 2, for 2024 or 2025, or other documentation regarding non-taxable income

Optional documents include documentation of active duty status (military orders are best) and verification of public school attendance during the previous school year (report card dated 2025-26). These are only needed if applicable to you.

### **11. When will I get funding?**

For 2025-2026, quarterly disbursements in the amount of \$1,875 will be distributed in the months of July, September, December, and February.

For 2026-2027, quarterly disbursements in the amount of \$1,908.50 will be distributed beginning late July 2026.

### **12. Do I have to pay out of pocket and then get reimbursed?**

There is no reimbursement. Your student's ESTF scholarship will be made available in a Digital Wallet provided by ClassWallet. Using this account, you will be able to make direct payments and purchases with your student's scholarship funds.

### **13. Where can I find a list of the approved schools and vendors?**

The list of approved Education Service Providers can be found [here](#). The providers on this list are approved by the South Carolina Department of Education to participate in the program. If your preferred school or provider is not on the list, please encourage them to complete the application available [here](#). **Education Service Providers will be added on an ongoing basis**, and the published list will be updated periodically.

### **14. Are there limits to the prices of specific items that can be purchased?**

*Technology:*

- Computers, laptops, and iPads up to \$1500 are allowed.

- Monitors and printers up to \$300 are allowed.
- Laptop, desktop, monitor, printer and tablet computers are limited to the purchase of one of each item every two years.
- Thumb drives, external hard drives, and memory cards are allowable but each item must be \$50 or less.
- The allowable amount for headphones each year is up to \$200.

*Calculators:*

- The total allowable cost for calculators is \$200 per year.
- One graphing calculator is able to be purchased every two years. *Printer*

*toner cartridges:*

- *The total amount allowed is \$100 per printer toner cartridge.*
- *The total allowed for the year is \$300.*

*Music:*

- *Instruments are limited to \$500 annually for purchases or \$150 a month for rental.*

*Uniforms*

- *The total allowed for the year is \$500.*

### **15. When do my SC ESTF funds expire?**

SC ESTF funds do not expire as long as the student remains eligible to participate in the program. Eligibility expires if the student graduates high school, moves out of South Carolina, or transfers to a public school in their residential school district.

### **16. Is my child required to complete testing to continue in the program?**

**Yes.** Every ESTF student currently in grades 3–11 must complete required testing.

*For grades 3–12:* students must take either **SCReady/SC PASS** (used in public schools) or a nationally norm-referenced summative test such as the **Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)**, or an approved formative assessment given three times a year, such as **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)**.

*For grades 9–12:* students may take a college or career readiness test such as the **ACT**, **SAT**, or **PSAT** in lieu of one of the options listed above.

If your child has an IEP that exempts them from testing, submit the IEP documentation to [ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov](mailto:ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov).

**17. How do I report my child's test information?**

Complete the [ESTF Testing Report Form](#) for each scholarship student. After you receive your child's test results, email a PDF copy of the score report to [ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov](mailto:ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov).

**18. My child's school is handling the testing. Do I still need to do anything?**

Yes. Even if your school already completed the testing (such as SCReady or Iowa Test), you still need to:

- Confirm with the school that the testing was completed
- Complete the [ESTF Testing Report Form](#)
- Submit the score report once you receive it

**19. How do I withdraw from the SC ESTF program?**

Send an email to [ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov](mailto:ESTFProgram@ed.sc.gov) to advise that you would like to withdraw from the program along with the reasoning.