

Scholarship Student Assessment and Accountability



Florida requires annual evaluations of standardized test scores for students in grades 3-10 who receive Tax Credit Scholarships, Family Empowerment Scholarships or Personalized Education Program scholarships. In keeping with Florida's desire to balance top-down accountability with bottom-up accountability from parents, private schools and PEP families are free to choose among 26 FLDOE-approved national norm-referenced tests such as the ACT, SAT, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or even Florida's statewide assessment, FAST. This allows greater freedom in selecting curriculum or teaching subjects to students in a different order, or at a different pace, than public schools. This more flexible method of testing accountability has also been desired by Florida's public school districts.

All student test scores are reported annually to a state-selected independent evaluator. The last report covered the 2022-23 school year and was completed by Florida State University's Learning Systems Institute. Aggregate results are reported, as are three-year rolling learning gains for schools with 30 or more students in testing grades in consecutive years.

Learn more about testing accountability here: <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ftc/annual-assessment-requirement.stml> and test results here: <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/facts-figures.stml>

Since 2008, testing has reported a consistent theme: Students who choose the scholarship were struggling academically but are now making annual academic progress.

Three persistent findings:

- **Struggling students choose scholarships:** The 2013 report described the difference this way: "Scholarship participants have significantly poorer test performance in the year prior to starting the scholarship program than do nonparticipants. ... These differences are large in magnitude and are statistically significant."
- **Scholarship students are more economically disadvantaged:** Students who choose the scholarship are lower in income than those on free- or reduced-price lunch who remain in public schools.
- **Scholarship students are now learning a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time:** Students no longer lose ground compared to their eligible public school peers.

The comparison with low-income public school students:

Because public school students in Florida no longer take a nationally norm-referenced portion on their state tests, the annual evaluation of scholarship test scores no longer includes a comparison between scholarship students and public school students. But researchers were able to make such comparisons in the earlier years of the program and found that scholarship students modestly outperformed public school students between 2010 and 2012, but the results were only statistically significant in 2011.

See 2011 Report: <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2011.pdf>