



# **Opportunity Scholarship Grants**

**Information for Parents and School  
Administrators**

**September 30, 2013**

# Opportunity Scholarship Program



- Provides funding of up to \$4,200 per year for eligible children who choose to attend a private school
- Administered by the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA)
- First scholarships will be awarded for the 2014-15 school year
- Approximately 2,400 students will receive funding in the first year

# Eligibility

## 2014-15 Academic Year

Eligibility requirements for the first year of the program are slightly different than those for subsequent years. To qualify for a scholarship for the 2014-15 school year, a child must:

- Reside in a household with an income level not in excess of the amount required for the student to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program
- Be a full-time student who has not graduated from high school and attended a North Carolina public school during the 2014 spring semester

Scholarship students will qualify to receive a scholarship of up to \$4,200, though the amount cannot exceed the actual cost of tuition and fees.

If the number of eligible applications exceeds the amount of funding available, a random lottery will be used to choose recipients.

# Income Eligibility Level 2014-15 Academic Year

A student applying for a scholarship for the 2014-15 school year must be from a household with an annual income that does not exceed the amount required to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

Income Eligibility for Opportunity Scholarships*	
Persons in Household	Estimated FY 14-15 Eligibility (100% federal free or reduced-price lunch program)
2	\$28,694
3	\$36,131
4	\$43,568
5	\$51,005
6	\$58,442
7	\$65,879
8	\$73,316

*\*These numbers are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2013  
and are subject to change annually.*

# Eligibility

## 2015-16 Academic Year and Beyond

Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, students will be eligible if they have not yet received a high school diploma and meet at least one of the following requirements:

- Was a full-time student assigned to and attending a public school during the previous semester
- Received a scholarship during the previous school year
- Is entering kindergarten or the first grade
- Is a child in foster care
- Is a child whose adoption decree was entered not more than a year prior to applying for the scholarship

Students must reside in a household with an income level not in excess of 133% of the amount required for the student to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program as determined by the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2015.



# Scholarship Priority for 2015-16 and Later Years

First priority will be given to eligible students who received a scholarship during the previous school year.

After scholarships have been awarded to prior recipients, the following priority guidelines will apply:

- At least 50% of the remaining funds must go to students who live in a household with an income that qualifies the student for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.
- No more than 35% of the remaining funds can be awarded to students entering either kindergarten or first grade.
- Any remaining funds will then be awarded to other eligible students.



# Maximum Scholarship Amounts for 2015-16 and later years

**\$4,200:** Students residing in a household with an income that qualifies for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program may be eligible for a scholarship of up to \$4,200. The scholarship may be lower than the maximum if tuition and fees are less than \$4,200.

**90% of tuition and fees:** Students residing in a household with an income level between **100% and 133%** of the amount required to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program may be eligible to receive a scholarship of up to 90% of their tuition and fees at the nonpublic school, but not more than \$4,200.

# Income Eligibility Level 2015-16 and Later Years

Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, students must be from a household with an annual income that does not exceed 133% of the amount required to qualify for federal free or reduced-price lunch program. The chart below can be used as a guide for understanding the program; the income figures will be updated in January 2015.

<b>Example of Income Eligibility for Opportunity Scholarships*</b>	
<b>Persons in Household</b>	<b>Estimated 2015-16 Eligibility (133% federal free or reduced-price lunch program)</b>
2	\$38,162
3	\$48,054
4	\$57,945
5	\$67,836
6	\$77,727
7	\$87,618
8	\$97,510

*\*These numbers are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2013 and are used for illustrative purposes only. The official figures will be updated in January 2015.*

# How Will It Work?

- Online applications will be available for the 2014-15 school year no later than February 1, 2014 at [www.ncseaa.edu](http://www.ncseaa.edu)
  - Applicants must report 2013 annual income for all household members when they complete the application.
- Awarding of scholarships will begin by March 1, 2014.
- The February 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> dates also apply to the program in future years.
- SEAA will send the scholarship funds to the appropriate nonpublic school at least twice a year. The student's parent or guardian will be required to endorse the scholarship funds to the nonpublic school for deposit into the school's account. Endorsement must be done in person at the site of the nonpublic school.

# Verification of Eligibility



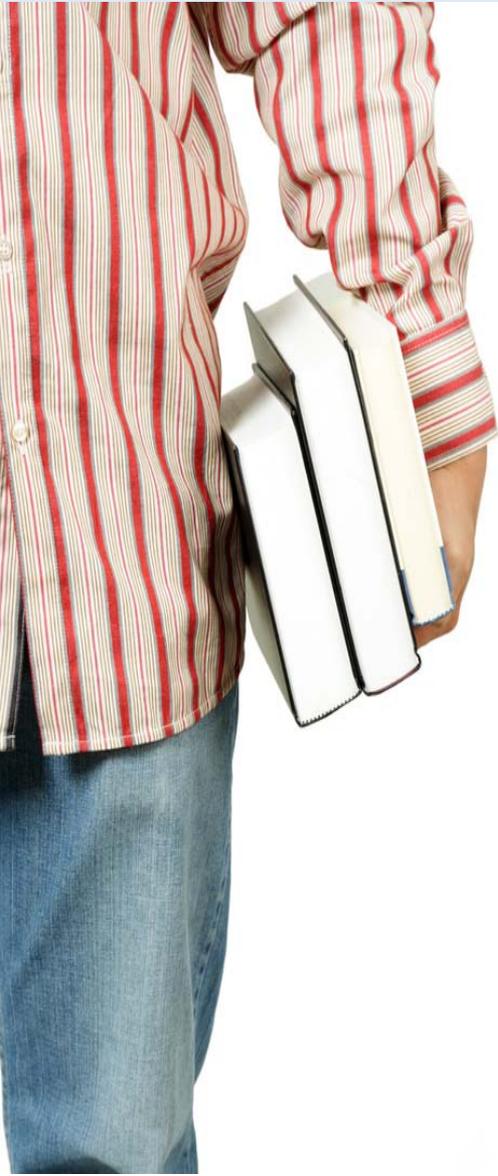
- The SEAA is authorized to verify information on any scholarship application from eligible students.
- Household members of scholarship applicants will be required to authorize the SEAA to access relevant information held by other state agencies. If a household fails to cooperate with verification efforts, the student's scholarship award will be revoked.

# Requirements for Nonpublic Schools

Nonpublic schools that participate in the Opportunity Scholarship Program must comply with the following requirements:

- Provide the SEAA with documentation for tuition and fees charged to the student
- Conduct a criminal background check for the staff member with the highest decision-making authority
- Provide each recipient's parent/guardian an annual explanation of the student's progress (including scores on standardized tests)
- Administer a nationally standardized test to all scholarship recipients in grades three or higher at least once a year. The test must measure performance in the areas of English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics. Scores must be reported to the SEAA each year by July 15

# Requirements for Nonpublic Schools - Continued



- Nonpublic schools must also provide the SEAA with the graduation rates of scholarship students.
- For schools where the total amount of student scholarships exceed \$300,000 for an academic year, a CPA must perform a financial review.
- The school cannot require any additional fees based on the status of the student as a scholarship recipient.
- Schools enrolling more than 25 scholarship students must report test performance data in the aggregate.

# Additional Information

Information about the program will be posted on the State Education Assistance Authority's website as it becomes available.

**[www.ncseaa.edu](http://www.ncseaa.edu)**

**For questions, contact**

**[OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu](mailto:OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu)**

**1-855-330-3955 (toll-free)**

