



June 9, 2021

Dear Gardiner Scholarship Families,

On May 11, 2021, Governor DeSantis signed House Bill 7045 into law, resulting in several changes to the state funded scholarship programs, including the Gardiner Scholarship Program. Atlantis Academy is working closely with the Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFO) including Step Up for Students to ensure appropriate and effective implementation of these changes. For our students and families that participate in the Gardiner Scholarship Program, it is important to know that House Bill 7045 authorized the Gardiner Scholarship to be rolled into the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. While most aspects of the program, including eligibility and term of scholarship remain the same, there are some changes to be aware of.

- **When do the changes take effect?** The Gardiner Scholarship will be rolled into the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Disabilities effective July 1, 2021.
- **What does this mean for current Gardiner Scholarship recipients?** Current Gardiner Scholarship recipients will be transitioned into the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program by their scholarship funding organization (typically Step Up for Students or AAA Scholarship Foundation). Families are still required to renew participation through their scholarship funding organization and will want to ensure they have submitted all necessary renewal documentation.
- **What changes should I expect with my child's scholarship?** Beyond the name change, HB7045 results in several changes to the scholarship program.
 - Scholarship funds will be deposited quarterly into scholarship accounts instead of in one lump sum.
 - An account may be closed after 2 years of inactivity (previously 3 years).
 - Siblings of students found eligible under the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Disabilities (formerly the Gardiner Scholarship) may also qualify for a scholarship.
 - Dependent children of a member of the United States Armed Forces may be eligible for a scholarship.
- **Will funding change?** We will not know exactly how much the scholarship amounts will change until the legislature finalizes the state budget. Step Up for Students has estimated that the scholarship amounts for the majority of scholarship students will increase.
- **What do I need to do now?** Current Gardiner Scholarship recipients should renew participation in the program through their scholarship funding organization. You will want to ensure you have submitted all necessary renewal documentation.



- **Where can I get more information?** Please visit the Step Up for Students website for more information on these legislative changes or to renew your scholarship for the 2021-2022 school year.
 - Legislative Updates:
<https://www.stepupforstudents.org/legislative-updates/>
 - Renewal Application:
<https://www.stepupforstudents.org/scholarships/scholarships-for-private-school/apply/>

Atlantis Academy is committed to keeping our families informed of these important changes. As we receive information from the Department of Education or the scholarship funding organizations, we will continue to communicate important information to our families. If you should have any questions, please contact our office. We hope all our students have a safe, relaxing, and enriching summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark DiConsiglio'.

Mark DiConsiglio
Senior Vice President of Operations
Atlantis Academies