



## Comparison of The Opportunity Scholarship and Education Student Accounts (ESA+) Programs

The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) administers two State-funded programs that help families afford non-public schools.\* Applications are currently open for students who plan to attend a [participating nonpublic school](#) for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

Families may apply to both programs as long as they meet the eligibility requirements of each.

### Program Options

- **The Opportunity Scholarship** is an income-based program (home schools are not eligible)
- **The Education Student Accounts (ESA+)** is a program for students with disabilities (home schools are eligible)

### **\*What is a Nonpublic School?**

North Carolina defines school options as follows:

#### **Public Schools**

Traditional Public Schools  
Magnet Schools  
Charter Schools

#### **Nonpublic Schools**

Private Schools  
Home Schools\*\*

\*\* Home school option available through the ESA+ program

## Minimum Requirements for Both Programs

To qualify for the Opportunity Scholarship or ESA+ programs, a student must meet **all** of the following requirements:

- Lives in North Carolina
- Will be at least 5 years old by August 31 or at least 4 years old by April 16 (with school administrator approval for kindergarten)
- Has not graduated high school
- Has not enrolled in a post-secondary institution full-time (12 or more credit hours given in a semester)

## Program Differences

**Additional Required Eligibility Criteria (in addition to the minimum requirements listed above)**

### **Opportunity Scholarship (Required)**

• Student lives in a household that meets Income Eligibility Guidelines or is in Foster Care

### **(One of the following required)**

- Student attended a NC public school or Department of Defense school as a full-time student in the prior semester; or two years prior to the school year for which the parent is applying, and attended the private school for the year immediately prior
- In foster care, or adopted within the last year
- Has a parent on full-time active military duty, or a parent who received an honorable discharge within the last year
- Rising Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student

### **ESA+**

• Student requires special education, as documented by the Eligibility Determination from the NC Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**School Choice**

• Nonpublic school, not including home schools

• Nonpublic school, including home schools

<b>Part-Time Public School &amp; Nonpublic School Enrollment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted - Students who are enrolled part time in a public school and part time in a nonpublic school (not including home schools) can be eligible and receive half the award amount</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted - Students who are enrolled part time in a public school and part time in a nonpublic school can be eligible and receive half the award amount</li> </ul>
<b>Award is Used for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuition and required fees at a participating nonpublic school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuition and required fees at a participating nonpublic school</li> <li>• Qualified expenses related to educating a child with a disability in a nonpublic or home school</li> </ul>
<b>Payment Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEAA will pay schools on behalf of the student recipients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEAA will pay schools on behalf of the student recipients</li> <li>• Funds other than for tuition and fees will go into an electronic account for parents to use for purchases and services such as educational therapies, tutoring, and technology. Home school families can also use funds to purchase curriculum.</li> </ul>
<b>Award Amount</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$6,168 (full time, per school year)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$9,000 (full time, per school year)</li> <li>• Students with certain designated primary or secondary disabilities may be eligible for up to \$17,000 per full-time nonpublic school student per year</li> </ul>
<b>Application Timelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority is given to students funded in the prior year</li> <li>• New student application opens February 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ March 1 is the deadline for priority consideration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority is given to students funded in the prior year</li> <li>• In 2022, new student application opens March 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ April 1 is the deadline for priority consideration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In 2023, new student application opens February 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ March 1 is the deadline for priority consideration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Nothing in this document should be construed to supersede the Program Statute, Program Rules, or other program policies. In addition, any policies contained herein do not represent an exhaustive list of all policies; rather these policies are set forth to provide a broad overview of the ESA+ Program. See the ESA+ Program Rules and Statute on SEAA's website for more details.