



FEA's Frequently Asked Questions about the 2015 FL Best and Brightest "Scholarship"

Where did this crazy bill come from?

Representative Eric Fresen claimed he got the idea on a plane, while reading Amanda Ripley's book, *The Smartest Kids in the World*. Rep. Fresen, a republican from Miami, is the House Education Appropriations chairman.

The bill that contained this language was never brought to a vote on the floor and died at the end of the regular session. With almost no opportunities for discussion, this language was added to the budget implementing bill during the budget special session. The Senate went along with the language passing it as part of the budget.

FEA had advocated for better, research-based programs for recruiting and retaining quality educators. We also recommended that the governor veto this misspending of taxpayer money.

What are the requirements for receiving this scholarship?

Three basic requirements:

- 1) Score 80th percentile or higher on either the ACT or the SAT based on the rankings when you took the test.
- 2) Receive a highly effective evaluation from your most recent evaluation or be a first year teacher with no evaluation.
- 3) Turn in your documentation to the district by the October 1st deadline.

Who can qualify for the bonus:

Teachers eligible for the program are classroom teachers as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a), F.S., who are employed by Florida school districts, charter schools, or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

SS. 1012.01(2)(a), F.S. defines classroom teachers as staff members assigned the professional activity of instructing students in courses in classroom situations, including basic instruction, exceptional student education, career education, and adult education, including substitute teachers*. * Since most substitute teachers do not receive an evaluation, we do not believe they are eligible.

Is it really \$10,000? Do I have to spend it on school?

The \$44 million appropriation caps the maximum potential bonus at \$10,000 per teacher. This assumed 4,402 teacher might qualify. If more teachers qualify than estimated, the bonus amount will be prorated and distributed to the qualifying teachers.

There are no restrictions on how the money can be spent by a teacher.

I was educated overseas and never took the SAT or ACT. What test could I use?

The language only allows for ACT and SAT scores as a means to qualify for the bonus.

Neither SAT nor ACT was required when I went to college. What about my GRE score?

The language only allows for ACT and SAT scores as a means to qualify for the bonus.

Could I go take one of those tests now?

You could take the college entrance tests, but it is unlikely you could sit for the test and receive scores before the submission deadline. Your documentation to the district is required by October 1st.

I took these tests many years ago. Where can I get my scores?

You will need to contact either the College Board (SAT) or the Education Testing Service (ACT) to request official scores.

- Call first to see if your percentile rankings are available.
- You may also find these scores on a high school or college transcript, depending on where you went to school.

I found my scores. Now what?

You will need to contact your school district for information about how they want you to submit your documentation. The time frames are as follows:

- October 1, 2015 - Deadline for teacher to submit documents to the school district.
- December 1, 2015 - Deadline for school district, charter schools and FSDB to submit list of qualifying teachers to the Florida Department of Education.
- April 1, 2016 – eligible teachers receive the bonus payment.

This doesn't make sense! What can I do?

Your college entrance exam scores is not a reliable or valid indicator of your performance in the classroom. \$44 million could have been used in many other ways to directly benefit students and teachers.

- Contact your local legislators expressing your concerns about the program.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and use social media and share with friends and neighbors.

Requesting your scores:

Note: there is a charge that differs depending on which test you took and when you took the test. For example if you took the ACT before the fall of 2012, it has been archived, and will cost more to receive the report.

ACT website: <http://www.actstudent.org/scores/>

- By telephone: (319) 337-1270. Note: There is a worksheet of information to complete before you call, and an additional charge for a phone order.
- By computer: https://services.actstudent.org/OA_HTML/actibeCAcdLogin.jsp
Create an account, choose the date you took the test. If you don't remember the exact date, estimate. Typically, you would take the ACT in the spring of your junior year in high school, and perhaps again during your senior year. If you took the test before 2007, you may not have an ACT identification number. You can choose to have a copy sent to your home address. You can choose "I don't know" if you can't remember specific information.

SAT website: <https://sat.collegeboard.org/scores/send-old-sat-scores>

- By Telephone: (866) 756-7346

Call Customer Service, and have the following information ready:

- Current name and address
 - Test date and registration number (if available)
 - Name and address at the time you tested
 - College and scholarship program codes of score recipients
 - Credit card number and expiration date
- By mail: Check the date on the form posted on the website. At this time, the posted form has expired.