



Empowerment Scholarship Accounts

Empowerment scholarship accounts are private bank accounts that parents use for education expenses. The State of Arizona deposits part of a child's share of education funding into the account. Parents can use that money to pay for school tuition, online classes, tutoring, books, and other expenses. Any leftover money can be saved for college.

What to Do:

1. Check your child's eligibility. In the 2013-14 school year, students in "D" or "F"-rated schools and districts, children with an active-duty military parent, children adopted out of the state's foster care system, and children with special needs can apply for an account. Students must currently attend a public school to qualify.

To view your school's report card, visit the Arizona Department of Education's "A-F Accountability" page at www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/a-f-accountability.

2. Download a contract from www.azed.gov/esa and note when applications are due (usually in May). Parents or guardians must sign the contract and return it to the department. Parents of students with special needs will need to submit additional documentation, including an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) report.

Who Can Apply for Empowerment Scholarship Accounts?

Student eligibility for the program is defined as follows:

- Students with special needs (children with an IEP or 504 plan);
- Students attending Arizona public schools or school districts that received a "D" or lower on their state accountability report card;
- Students whose parents are active duty members of the U.S. military;
- Students who have been adopted from the state's foster care system or who are placed with a family and have a case plan of adoption.

All students applying to the program for the first time must have attended a public school for at least 100 days in the prior school year.

To apply for an account, go to www.azed.gov/esa or call (602) 364-1969. For more information, email the state department of education at esa@azed.gov.

EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

Making a difference for Moms like us!



Holland Hines's 6-year-old son Elias has autism and hyperlexia. Helping him navigate through school has been a challenge.

After her family moved to Arizona, Elias started backsliding. While Holland appreciated his teachers, she felt they weren't able to give him the help he needed. Elias's school day was cut back because he wasn't able to manage certain activities, and his emotional state became that of a 4-year-old, even though his reading ability was at a 6th-grade level. "He really loves school," says Holland, and an Empowerment Scholarship Account gave Elias the chance to be in a school that can meet his needs.

"This is an opportunity for us to take that money and make it work for the individual children who need it the most."



When Aaron McLemore was diagnosed with autism at age 3, it was apparent he would need special help. When he was placed in a class with a number of students with varying needs, his mother, Kelly, felt he was being overlooked.

When Arizona created Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, Kelly was first in line. "We were very, very thrilled," she says. The program deposits a portion of Aaron's state education funding into an account his parents can use on a variety of education services.

Kelly uses the education savings account to help cover tuition at Aaron's new school, which specializes in helping students like him. "Without that scholarship fund, we wouldn't have been able to afford to send Aaron to his new school. We're grateful to have the Empowerment Scholarship Account."



Katherine Visser was at a loss for how to help her son. "He didn't fit anywhere," she said of her son Jordan's struggles at school. Doctors couldn't explain his motor coordination and vision problems. Finally, Jordan was diagnosed with a mild form of cerebral palsy.

Eventually Katherine learned about Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, which provide a savings account for kids like Jordan. Money in the account can be used for a variety of education services, and Jordan is now attending a new school, which specializes in helping students with special needs. Now eight years old, Jordan enjoys reading and math. "It's been a Godsend," Katherine says.

Meet more moms and see if Empowerment Scholarship Accounts are right for you at www.AskAMomAZ.com