



# School Choice FAQ

## 1. WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND SCHOOL CHOICE?

School choice puts parents in the driver's seat of their children's education by giving families access to their taxpayer funded education dollars. Empowered with financial means, families can use those dollars to access the education provider that best meets the needs of their children. All parents deserve choice, not just those with financial means. With school choice, taxpayer funding follows the child.

## 2. WHAT IS AN EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT (ESA)? HOW WOULD ONE BENEFIT ME AND MY CHILD(REN)?

ESAs give parents the power to use some of their child's education tax dollars on approved education expenses like tuition, tutoring, educational supports, and more. Qualified families will receive \$7,598 in an account and use that money to customize an education to fit their child's needs. Iowa is the 10<sup>th</sup> state to enact a school choice program. The ESA provides another payment method for parents. Any unused money stays in the account until the student graduates high school.

## 3. WHO QUALIFIES FOR AN ESA?

The ESAs will be available based on the following eligibility:

- **2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR**
  - ALL entering kindergarten students
  - ALL students not enrolled in nonpublic school in the 2022-2023 school year
  - A student enrolled in a nonpublic school in the 2022-2023 school year with a household income at or below 300% of the 2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines
- **2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR**
  - ALL entering kindergarten students
  - ALL students not enrolled in nonpublic school in the 2023-2024 school year
  - A student enrolled in a nonpublic school in the 2023-2024 school year with a household income at or below 400% of the 2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines
  - ALL students who received an ESA in 2023-2024
- **2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR**
  - ALL K-12 students in Iowa

## 4. WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO RECEIVE AN ESA?

The application process is in development now, and the start date will be provided soon. Applications will be due on **JUNE 30, 2023** for the 2023-2024 school year. Applications are valid for 1 year; a family must apply annually to remain eligible for the program.

## 5. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ILSTO PROGRAM?

The ILSTO program is still in place. By law, the ILSTO funds MUST be distributed. We are asking ALL families to complete an ILSTO form to ensure that all money is distributed. The STO money is applied to tuition first just as it has been in the past.

## **6. WON'T AN ESA TAKE MONEY AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOL? WHERE DOES THE FUNDING COME FROM?**

Funding for an ESA comes from taxpayer dollars – dollars paid by you as a taxpayer living in Iowa. School choice advocates believe that funding should follow the child, supporting students and not systems. Some may say that “public dollars support public services”. But where do public dollars come from? The taxpayer. Taxpayer funding already supports various programs in Iowa, such as the GI Bill, WIC, SNAP, the Iowa Tuition Grant (for colleges), and preschool funding. The Students First Act now supports K-12 education as well. It’s important to understand the public-school funding formula. On average, Iowa total spending per student in public schools is \$14,320. About 47% of this funding comes from federal funding and local property taxes (about \$6,700 per student). That money – paid partly by parents choosing to send their children to Christian schools – stays with the public school in an ESA program. Funding used for an ESA is state taxpayer funding (about \$7,600 per student in Iowa), which will be directed to parents to use how they choose for the education of their children. (Source: <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/state/iowa/> - click on Fast Facts)

## **7. WE LOVE THE FAMILY ATMOSPHERE AND SMALL CLASS SIZES, AND I AM CONCERNED THAT THIS WILL CHANGE BECAUSE OF THE ESA FUNDING. WILL IGLLS NEED TO ACCEPT ALL STUDENTS WHO APPLY?**

IGLLS is committed to carrying out our mission: “Our goal is to nurture the whole child – spirit, mind, and body – in a quality, Christ-centered learning environment.” We will maintain limited class sizes. We are not required to take all students who apply, and our admissions policies will not change.

## **8. WILL ACCEPTING ESA FUNDING CAUSE IGLLS TO COMPROMISE ITS VALUES?**

The Students First Act will not cause IGLLS to compromise our values. IGLLS will never accept funding that compromises its values. With an ESA, the funding is directed to the parent, who then chooses where those dollars go. Funding does not come directly to the school. IGLLS has already accepted taxpayer credit dollars (ILSTO), Title services, and other funding for decades without needing to compromise our values.

## **9. WHAT IF THE ESA THAT IS NOW PROVIDED GOES AWAY?**

The likelihood of an ESA being provided and taken away is low. Across the country, no school choice program that has been implemented and had students enroll in it has ever been repealed by a state legislature. For years in Iowa, IGLLS parents have benefited from ILSTO funding, nonpublic textbook services, bus reimbursements, and more. Once a program begins and students benefit, parents become supporters and advocates. Lawmakers keep these programs because they benefit the common good.

## **10. WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ESAs?**

Go to the Iowa Department of Education Website to keep up-to-date on ESAs: <https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/education-savings-accounts>. You can sign up to receive an email any time that website is updated.

***For more information and to ask questions, contact Sarah Popp, Principal, at [principal@igllstech.com](mailto:principal@igllstech.com).***