

# Parental Satisfaction Survey of the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) 2024-25 School Year



**SC EDUCATION  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

*Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.*

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## Introduction and Background

In June 2023, Act 8 of 2023 — or the [South Carolina Education Scholarship Trust Fund \(ESTF\)](#) — became effective. The law provides guidelines for implementation and evaluation of the ESTF program beginning in the 2024-25 school year. Eligible students are those who are residents of South Carolina, attended a public school during the 2023-24 school year or had not yet been kindergarten-eligible due to age, and whose household income does not exceed 200% [federal poverty rate](#). Eligible students approved to participate in the program could access a \$6,000 scholarship distributed on a quarterly basis in the amount of \$1,500 to be used on qualifying expenses approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

In October 2023, a lawsuit was initiated questioning the constitutionality of using tax dollars to fund the ESTF program. On September 11, 2024 the SC Supreme Court [found a direct benefit](#) to private industry using tax dollars and ESTF scholarship dollars for Education Service Provider tuition and fees. Therefore, tuition and fees for an approved non-public online Education Service Provider or course was found to be unconstitutional. On September 11, 2024 the SCDE halted use of ESTF funds for this use. Other uses of funds remained constitutional, according to the Court's opinion, and all of the categories of fund use are described below.

At the start of the 2024-25 school year, there were 13 related categories of approved expenses outlined and described in the South Carolina Education Scholarship Trust Fund Participant Guide. Expenses noted with an asterisk (\*) were not approved following the September 11, 2024 SC Supreme Court ruling.

- **\*Education Service Provider Tuition and Fees:** These items invoiced by public schools included costs or enrollment and registration, uniform fees purchased through the school, technology fees, supply and book fees, academic testing and assessment fees, and transportation fees.
- **Textbooks and student workbooks:** For students in grades K through 12 in the subject areas of Math, English (including Grammar, Reading and Writing), Science (including Coding and Engineering), Social Studies (including History), and Foreign Language.
- **Reading Books:** Books included on a class reading list and purchased through the school, including fiction, non-fiction, paperback and hardcover books.
- **Curriculum:** Curriculum in the subject areas of Math, English (including Grammar, Reading and Writing), Science (including Coding and Engineering), Social Studies (including History), and Foreign Language are approved expenses. Other subject areas are not approved.
- **Instructional Materials:** School supplies purchased for individual students (not bulk) including binders, calculators, pens, pencils, glue, notebooks, thesaurus, dictionary, and USB cards are approved expenses.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring by approved providers in the areas of Math, English (including Grammar, Reading and Math), Science, Social Studies (including History), Foreign Language and the supply fees charged by a tutor are approved expenses.
- **Computer Hardware:** Hardware such as a laptop, desktop, monitor and/or tablet used primarily for scholarship students' educational needs are approved, and limited to one purchase of each item every two years. Product warranties are approved as part of the cost.
- **Technological devices:** Materials such as printers and ink, headphones, keyboards, mouse/mouse pad, protective cases for technology, and apple pens are approved items to be used primarily for a scholarship student.
- **\*Tuition and fees for an Approved Non-public Online Education Service Provider or Course:** Classes and courses in the subject areas of Math, English (including Grammar, Reading, and Writing), Science (including Coding and Engineering), Social Studies (including History), Foreign Language, Test Preparation (AP, SAT, ACT etc.), or Study Skills. National Norm-Referenced Examinations: Advanced placement examinations, industry certification exams, or exams related to college or university admission or test preparation classes are approved.
- **Educational Therapies:** Fees for an initial evaluation and/or therapy needed to support a students success such as ABA, speech, Vision, Occupational, Dyslexia or Dysgraphia therapies are approved.
- **Services Provided by a Student's Non-Resident School District:** Out-of-district fees, afterschool tutoring, and fees or costs associated with participation in extracurricular activities are included.
- **Fees for Transportation:** Fees for transportation charged by the school, not to exceed \$750/year are approved fees for ESTF students.



# ESTF Timeline

## May 4, 2023

Governor McMaster signed Act 8 of 2023 into law to become effective June 3, 2023.

## October 2023

The SC State Conference of the NAACP, SC Education Association (SCEA) and six public school parents asked the court to strike down the law making it unconstitutional to use public money on private school education.

## Jan. 15 - March 15, 2024

Applications opened for the 2024-25 school year using the [ClassWallet](#) platform. Eligible applicants are students who live in SC, who attended a public school during the 2023-24 school year (or who were not old enough to attend kindergarten) and are at/under 200% [federal poverty rate](#).

## April 2024

Director of Education Choice and Family Engagement hired to manage ESTF, and EOC staff holds biweekly meetings May through December 2024 with ESTF staff. According to SCDE staff, approximately 2,879 applicants were approved for first quarter payments.

## July 31, 2024

First quarter payment of \$1,500/student released to the ClassWallet platform for use.

## September 1, 2024

SCDE compared the list of scholarship students with public school enrollment to avoid duplicate payments, per the language in the ESTF statute.

## September 11, 2024

The South Carolina Supreme Court issued opinion which finds a portion of the ESTF law unconstitutional, striking portions of the program allowing funds to be spent on tuition for private schools.

## January 15, 2024

SCDE again compared the list of scholarship students with public school enrollment to avoid duplicate payments.

## March 15, 2024

SCDE again compared the list of scholarship students with public school enrollment to avoid duplicate payments.

## October 15, 2024

SCDE staff performs confirmation of student eligibility requiring that students are no longer enrolled in their district of residence. According to SCDE, approximately 1,000 student accounts were suspended when it was discovered students were still enrolled in school district of residence. Three students were displaced due to Hurricane Helene, but their eligibility was not impacted and their access to funds remained stable.

## October 29, 2024

Satisfaction surveys administered to all parents (representing 2,879 student accounts) who were approved to participate in the program. Surveys were sent out from the SCDE, on behalf of the EOC. All parents received a survey, even if they were impacted by the September 11 SC Supreme Court decision or were found ineligible to participate due to enrollment in school of residence.

## October 30, 2024

Second payments went out to those confirmed eligible; number of confirmed eligible is not available.

## November 15, 2024

Survey closed and 243 responses collected.

## Enabling Legislation

Pursuant to Section 59-8-110(E):

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) shall:

(1) comply with all student privacy laws;

(2) report on and publish associated learning gains and graduation rates to the public by means of a state website with data aggregated by grade level, gender, family income level, number of years participating in the program, and race and a report for any participating school if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the ESTF program in the prior school year or if there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing the personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to fewer than ten participating students;

(3) evaluate and report the academic performance of scholarship students compared to similar public school populations; and

(4) collaborate with the department to develop and administer an annual parental satisfaction survey for all parents of scholarship students on issues relevant to the ESTF program, to include effectiveness and length of the program participation. Results of this survey must be provided to the General Assembly by December thirty-first of each year.

Given the timeline of implementation, the EOC can only report the parent satisfaction survey results in the initial report. In the 2025 report, academic data is expected to be included.

At the time of publication of this report, a bill to alleviate the issues resulting from the Supreme Court decision and other issues of implementation addressed in this report was pre-filed on December 11, 2024.



## Parental Satisfaction Survey Research from Other States:

### Other States with Similar Programs:

Several other states have similar school choice programs for public school students, so research was completed to determine how these states assess parent satisfaction. After review of publications from national groups, individual states identified as having school choice programming were contacted to inquire about parent satisfaction surveys. A list of resources consulted to develop this list can be found in the *Works Consulted* section.

The following states were contacted:

|          |           |                |               |
|----------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| Alabama  | Indiana   | Mississippi    | Rhode Island  |
| Arkansas | Kansas    | Montana        | South Dakota  |
| Arizona  | Louisiana | North Carolina | Utah          |
| Florida  | Maryland  | New Hampshire  | Virginia      |
| Georgia  | Maine     | Nevada         | Washington DC |
| Iowa     | Minnesota | Ohio           | Wisconsin     |
| Illinois | Missouri  | Pennsylvania   | West Virginia |

Of the 28 states with a school choice program of any kind, all were contacted, nine do not conduct a survey, seventeen did not respond, and two offer a parent satisfaction survey and shared the items on it with EOC staff.

## *Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program Parent Satisfaction Survey:*

These questions are used on the parent survey of the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program:

- How satisfied were you with the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program during the 2023-2024 school year?
- How likely are you to recommend the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship program to others?
- How satisfied were you with the participating private school your child attended during the 2023-2024 school year?
- Overall, how satisfied were you with the educational program your child received at the participating private school he or she attended during the 2023-2024 school year?
- Overall, how effective do you believe the participating private school's curriculum was preparing your child for the next grade and future success during the 2023-2024 school year?
- How satisfied were you with the participating private school's ability to keep you updated about the progress of your child during the 2023-2024 school year?

## *Missouri MOScholars Scholarship Program Survey Items:*

These items are used on the parent survey of the MOScholars Program:

- For how many years has your student been a recipient of a MOScholars scholarship?
- How satisfied are you with your student's academic achievement at the school(s) the child attends through the MOScholars scholarship program versus academic achievement at the school previously attended?
- What is your level of satisfaction with school safety at the school(s) your student attends through the MOScholars scholarship program versus safety at the school(s) previously attended?
- How satisfied are you with the ClassWallet virtual platform?
- What is your overall satisfaction with the MOScholars scholarship program?
- What improvements and changes would you like to see made to the MOScholars scholarship program?
- Is your child graduating High School this year?
- If you answered yes, where are they heading after graduation?



## **Survey Development Process and Methodology:**

In 2023, EOC Chair April Allen created a special ad-hoc subcommittee, a Survey Advisory Group (SAG), to advise and assist with decision-making related to surveys, administration, and related projects. The SAG was instrumental in the development of the parental satisfaction survey administered by the EOC in partnership with SCDE. EOC staff collected feedback from SAG members after items from Georgia and Missouri were edited to reflect South Carolina's ESTF program. Additional information about the SAG and details of this process can be found in Appendix A, with the survey items distributed in Appendix B. Not all respondents answered every survey item, as the survey was designed to skip to the next logical item and not all items required a response.

Recommendations from the SAG resulted in a final version of the survey with eight items designed to take less than 15 minutes to complete. The survey was developed using the Qualtrics platform and was shared to all ESTF families approved to participate (2,899) using the SCDE listserv to all parents approved to participate. Responses are kept anonymous in reporting of results, with any potentially identifying information, such as a child's name or school shared by respondents, redacted. Parents were instructed to complete the survey once per participating child, so that each child's experience could be captured. For example, if a parent had two children receiving ESTF funds, they were asked to take the survey twice.

The survey used a Net Promoter Score (NPS) to gauge overall satisfaction and those findings are described in the next section. The NPS is used with an item with a scale of 10 options and is widely used to measure customer experience. In this case, the NPS was used to measure satisfaction or likelihood to recommend the program to others. A score of 10 is the most satisfied, or highest promoter, with 0 representing the least satisfied, or strongest detractor. Depending on the response, participants in the ESTF program fall into one of three categories to find the NPS score:

- Promoters respond with a score of 9 or 10. These participants are enthusiastic and happy with their experience with the program.
- Passives respond with a score of 7 or 8. These participants are satisfied with service but are not happy enough to be considered promoters.
- Detractors respond with scores from 0 to 6. These are unhappy participants who are unlikely to recommend the program and may discourage others from participating in it.

The NPS score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters.

- Above 0 is good as there are more promoters than detractors.
- Above 20 is favorable.
- Above 50 is excellent.
- Above 80 is world class.

The NPS was used in this survey development and analysis as a recommendation of the SAG and it’s potential to build a culture of action. It is very useful identifying areas of poor performance and drivers for dissatisfaction so they can be adjusted in the future. Similarly, the same is true for areas of excellent performance and these will be illustrated in the next section.



## Findings and Respondents:

The survey responses from 243 parents/caregivers of ESTF participants yielded several findings. When participants were unsatisfied, it was often the result of how the program was implemented or changes related to policy as a result of outside influences.

Of the 243 respondents, several responded that they elected not to participate, or their children became ineligible after being originally accepted into the program due to residency requirements. This information about respondents is relevant in a satisfaction survey because their experience is unique. Most of the respondents had only one child participating; however, the number of children accepted into the program ranged from one to six. One respondent noted that three children applied while only one was accepted, and another parent described that he/she applied for one student and didn’t realize the other siblings could also apply.

Respondents were asked where their children attended school during the 2023-24 school year to determine if any patterns in satisfaction were detected across previous education environments. Table 1 illustrates the previous educational setting for respondents. No statistically significant correlations were found when analyzing satisfaction scores by previous educational environment.

Table 1: Previous Educational Environment:

| School Environment  | Homeschool | School in a Different State | Public Charter School | Public School (Includes Magnet Program) | Virtual School (Online Program through District or Other Organization) | Other*   |
|---|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|----------|
| Number of Respondents Moving from that School Environment | 6 (3%)     | 1 (0.4%)                    | 18 (8%)               | 110 (46%)                               | 5 (2%)   | 46 (19%) |



Respondents who selected “other” were asked to describe the educational environment in a text box. Responses include: Preschool, Private School, College, “a school outside of our district”, homeschool. According to Act 8 of 2023, students are eligible to participate in ESTF if they participated in a public school in SC the previous school year, which suggests that students participating in private school, homeschool, a school outside the district in SC, or college should not have been found eligible to receive funds. This ineligibility, if discovered by SCDE staff during reviews, may have resulted in second quarter funds not being released to these families, potentially influencing their satisfaction with the program.

Respondents were also asked if they experienced a disruption in educational services funded by ESTF this year. This item was not completed by all potential respondents, but of the 178 who did, 37% reported yes, and the same amount reported no. Forty-five, or 25% of respondents reported that they did not yet experience a disruption, but they might. Of those who reported they may experience a disruption, most reported that was a result of the Supreme Court decision and changes to what ESTF funds could be used for. Another frequent topic that respondents listed for experiencing or anticipating a disruption was due to the eligibility requirement to not be enrolled in a school district of residency, when funds were distributed and families were approved in the first quarter.

## Survey comments related to eligibility:



“My children would have to leave the school district they had been in for years!”

“Funds were taken from us because my child was enrolled in her zoned school even though the funds were being used for tutoring.”

“Well, my fund got stopped because my daughter goes to the assigned school where she supposed to. I didn’t know she not supposed to, if I would’ve known I wouldn’t even apply for this. I wanted to use it for her tutoring, but my fund got stopped before I could arrange the payments with the tutors. So it’s absolutely pointless at this point for us.”

## Survey comments related to the SC Supreme Court decision:



“My children have thrived at the school we chose, expecting the ESTF to help fund, but I’m not sure they can continue in the future if funds will no longer be available for private school. I will not send them back to public school and I can’t afford full private education.”

“I’m a single parent to an autistic child and this scholarship afforded my daughter the opportunity to attend a private school where she benefits from the smaller class size and individual support. Since the revoking of using funds for private school I have had to make significant changes in our life to continue my daughter’s education. “

“I have had to contact my parents and ask them for assistance in paying for my child’s education. They have helped me with tuition for last month and will continue. My father is putting off his retirement to continue to help fund *my child’s* education.”

*\*italics are used to show edits have been made to quotes to protect identity.*

## Overall Satisfaction and Drivers:

Survey respondents were asked “Based on your experience, how likely are you to recommend the ESTF program to others” and responses ranged from 0 “not at all likely”, to 10 “Extremely likely”. The highest percentage of scores were at the extremes with almost 60% of respondents selecting either 0 or 10. This suggests there were strong and varied experiences among respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Scores on How Likely Respondents are to Recommend the ESTF Program:

| Score 0-10<br>(10 highest)  | 0   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10  |
|---|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Number of Respondents who Reported that Score                                 | 41  | 12 | 6  | 5  | 10 | 16 | 5  | 4  | 20 | 12 | 81  |
| Percent of Respondents who Reported that Score of Total who Answered the Item | 19% | 6% | 3% | 2% | 5% | 8% | 2% | 2% | 9% | 6% | 38% |

The NPS for this item is  $-.92$ , meaning there are slightly fewer to recommend the program than to advise against it during the first year of implementation.

### Respondents NPS Category on Likelihood to Recommend ESTF

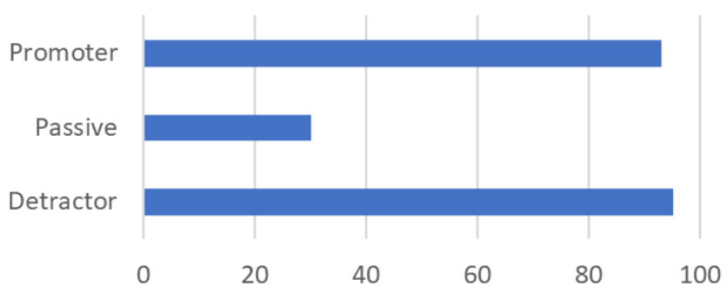


Table 3: Percentage and Count of NPS Category on Likely to Recommend ESTF

| Based on your most recent experience, how likely are you to recommend the ESTF program? | Percentage | Count |
|---|------------|-------|
| Promoter  | 43%        | 93    |
| Passive   | 14%        | 30    |
| Detractor   | 44%        | 95    |

**Promoters** respond with a score of 9 or 10. These participants are enthusiastic and happy with their experience with the program.

**Passives** respond with a score of 7 or 8. These participants are satisfied with service but are not happy enough to be considered promoters.

**Detractors** respond with scores from 0 to 6. These are unhappy participants who are unlikely to recommend the program and may discourage others from participating in it.

Another similar item on the survey asked parents “How satisfied are you with the ESTF program during the current school year (2024-25)?” and the NPS for this item was -20. This result means there are more dissatisfied than satisfied respondents and there are opportunities to improve the parent experience in future implementations.

Chart 2: NPS on Satisfaction

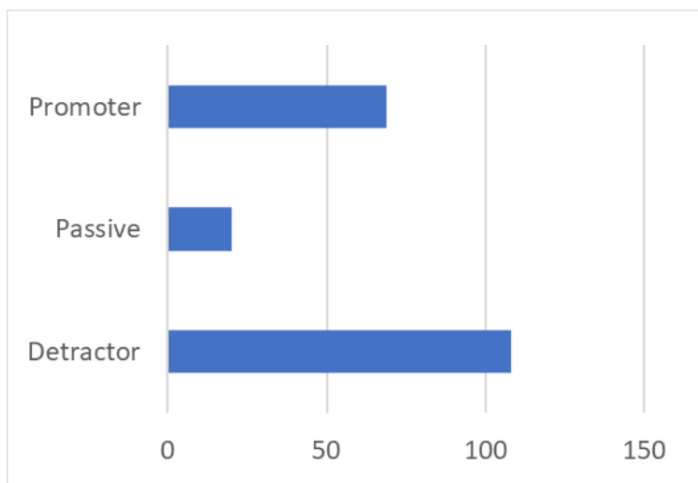


Table 4: Percentage and Count of NPS Category on Satisfaction

| How satisfied are you with the ESTF program during the 2024-25 school year | Percentage | Count |
|--|------------|-------|
| Promoter   | 35%        | 69    |
| Passive  | 10%        | 20    |
| Detractor  | 55%        | 108   |

Respondents who were dissatisfied by the program provided information about why, and the primary reason was that initially accepted students were not able to use funds either because they were never eligible due to age or enrollment in resident public school, or were rejected due to challenges with vendors not being approved. Some respondents indicated frustration escalated due to poor communication such as unanswered calls or emails.

*“I'm not satisfied for the following reasons:*

- 1. No communication about potential loss of funds.*
- 2. Unclear communication from Class wallet employees after Supreme Court Ruling (said funds could still be used for this school year but later said they could only be used for books and supplies, which also got denied when payment request was submitted).*
- 3. It took two weeks to receive a denial and after inquiring about escalation, I found out supplies could not be covered because it was going to a private school.*
- 4. When I asked if there was a number to call the program director or office that oversees the ESTF program, I was told there was no email or number to directly ask them about these funds and their uses.”*

*“My daughter was awarded a scholarship, she hasn't been able to use the funds. We were told she will not receive the funds because she goes to USC. We did not know the funds were for k-12 and it did not specify on the application. I've emailed and called but no one responds.”*

*“The limitations and restrictions are not friendly. Additionally, the programs offered are geared more toward elementary-aged students. Options for SAT/ACT help and vendors who offer those types of programs should be included.*

*“Reimbursement is not allowed even from vendors approved in list.”*



Some parents were frustrated at barriers to accessing the educational environment they wanted for their children despite being approved for the program. Prior to the SC Supreme Court decision, there was not a mandate for private schools to accept ESTF funds.

“I was unable to use the scholarship because no school(s) in our area accept the educational scholarship. It would help (a) family in areas where there are school(s) willing to accept the educational scholarship.”  
(parentheses indicate additions made by researchers for clarity)



Some families were frustrated that the risk of covering tuition rested on families who had to meet a poverty threshold to participate when the lawsuit was already initiated. Some families were angry at the decision to move forward with the ESTF program while the constitutionality of payments to providers was in question.

“Leading up to this decision and dispersion, more research should have been conducted to ensure families would(n't) have to be stuck at a school they couldn't afford.”

“I wish that if (it) might be taken away I could have been notified in advance. I think what the education department did was disgusting.” (parentheses indicate additions made by researchers for clarity)

Many of the satisfied parents reported that the program supported their child and the access to financial assistance was a benefit.

- (I rated this program a 9) because of the limited resources (tutors on the list) that is it, this is a great program!
- I am able to help my child in a way as I see (f)it, with the best education through this trust fund.
- I haven't run into any problems using the funds. I am happy with the services it provided.

Satisfied respondents also referenced tuition supports — despite the challenges associated with them during the first year of implementation, and homeschooling children, and despite a provision against using funds to do so in Act 8 of 2023. While the law prohibits the use of funds for homeschooling, funds can be used for materials such as curricula, assessments, school supplies and technology. These allowances can create potential ambiguity and confusion for parents.

“It has made it possible for me to home educate my children.”





*Marketplace Satisfaction:*

Despite being less satisfied with the ESTF program implementation, families were satisfied to receive the ESTF funds in the first quarter with an NPS of 43, which is very favorable. The thirteen categories of approved use of funds have a separate NPS and parents were asked if they perceived an improvement in their child’s academic achievement as a result of the use of funds.

Table 5: Use of Funds NPS and Improved Student Achievement:

| <b>Use of Funds:</b>   | <b>Net Promoter Score by Use of Funds</b> | <b>Percent of Parents who Reported Improvement in Student Achievement as a Result of ESTF by Use</b> |
|--|---|--|
| Textbooks and Workbooks  | 75  | 83%  |
| Reading Books  | 78  | 89%  |
| Curriculum   | 83  | 83%  |
| Instructional Materials  | 77  | 68%  |
| Tutoring   | 56  | 89%  |
| Computer Hardware  | 100                                       | 86%  |
| Technological Devices  | 50  | 25%  |
| Services Provided by a Student’s Non-Resident District                       | -100                                      | 0%   |
| Education Service Provider Tuition and Fees*                                 | 41  | 65%  |
| Tuition and Fees for Approved Non-public Online Education Service Providers* | 77  | 77%  |

*\*After September 11, 2024 using ESTF funds for these services was no longer allowable.*

*\*\*Small number of participants using funds for Norm-referenced tests and Educational Therapies; therefore data for these categories is not reported in this table.*

Some parents reported that they would appreciate additional approved vendors and training for vendors and service providers so that approval and use of funds could be completed rapidly for shorter wait times to begin accessing educational supports:

*“We need more marketplace options”*

*“Have more online stores that we can use for educational materials.”*

*“I think the process for getting a service provider approved needs to be smoother and conducted in a more timely manner. For example, it took about 2.5 months and many phone calls to clarify issues that came up with one service provider. Two of our service providers were initially denied over confusion over how to fill out the application and what the questions were asking, which caused many delays. Our preferred school was finally approved just before the school year, but it left us scrambling and under much stress touring other schools last minute in case it didn't work out with that one. It might also be helpful for the new service provider to receive a little more coaching on the ESTF program and how to fill out the form.”*

The SC Supreme Court decision and a variety of eligibility requirements related to school enrollment resulted in a disruption in the ESTF funded educational experience for 66 respondents, with 46 additional respondents anticipating a future disruption for the same reasons.

Many respondents reported feeling surprised by a variety of aspects of the program. The topics and degree of positive to negative impact fell along a continuum – ranging from surprise that the SC Supreme Court decision would take effect immediately and that to access funds, families must move out of public school in their resident district, to enthusiasm regarding the variety of items parents can use funds for and relief about a child’s safety in a new school.

*“Yes - greatly surprised me that our child, who qualified and desperately needs the help, was denied help because we didn't want to switch public schools. Left us paying \$200 out of pocket every month to get help that should have been covered by this program. BIG, BIG fail.”*

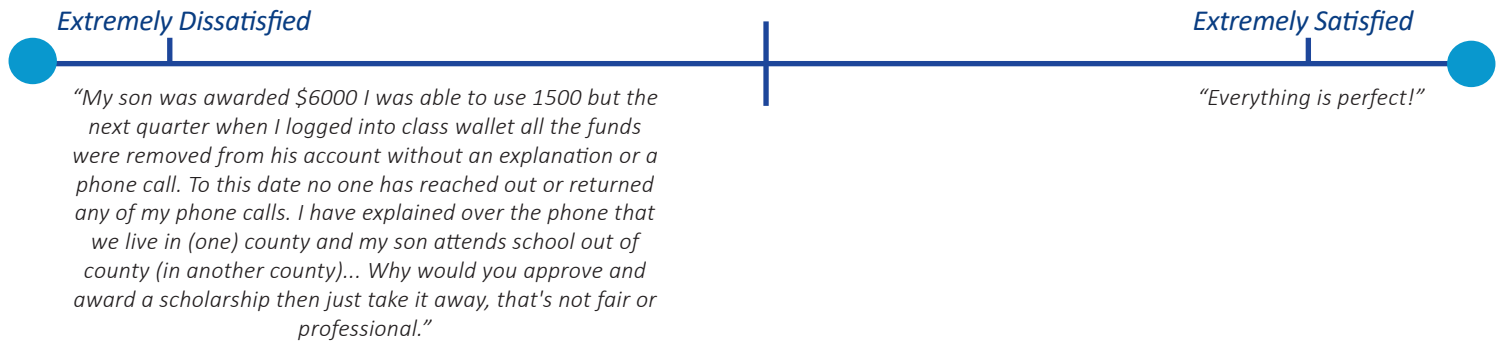
*“I was surprised at how the choice to use the funding towards private schools was taken away so fast, as soon as those kids just had started school.”*

*“Just how much stuff you can get for your children that parents aren’t able to afford”*

*“The opportunity to enroll my daughter in a Christian private school , I feel she is in a safe place.”*

*“We were so happy my daughter got the scholarship, my husband died March 11, 2024 and we really needed those funds.”*

## Satisfaction with Portals and Parent Support:



### ClassWallet and Outbridge

ClassWallet is the portal that was used to disperse funds to families and access approved vender information. While some respondents offered information about ClassWallet as a means for vender approval or other programmatic pieces, ClassWallet conducts its own evaluation of users, so this survey did not duplicate those efforts. ClassWallet holds the contract to do this work for the SC Department of Education.

Outbridge is a company that was hired to help parents participating in the ESTF access and use funds. Outbridge is separate from ClassWallet which was the portal for parents to access and use funds. The primary use of Outbridge is to answer questions and reach out to families who had not opened a ClassWallet account or who did but hadn’t spent funds to ensure they were properly supported.

Respondents reported varying degrees of satisfaction with communication and who to contact with questions or problems during the first year of implementation. Parents

who referenced communication were as likely to be satisfied as they were to be frustrated by it. To alleviate stress for families during the first year of implementation and after the SC Supreme Court decision, Outbridge support was used by the SCDE to support parents navigating program changes. Seventeen percent of respondents used Outbridge support during their participation in the program to access funds, make decisions during participation, and get questions answered. Almost 70% of respondents did not utilize Outbridge support and 15% didn’t know if they did or did not. Of the 30 respondents who did use Outbridge, 55% promoted the support structure, while 31% were detractors providing an NPS of 24, which is favorable. Despite overall favorable results, some parents reported being frustrated with Outbridge. When asked to rate how important Outbridge was in navigating the program the results were overall positive, but for those who had a negative experience, it was very intense.

## Implications of Findings & Recommendations:

While the first year of implementation of a program of this magnitude on a short timeline is likely to have errors, most of the detractor drivers were related to poor implementation. Based on the results of the survey, areas of poor performance in the implementation of the ESTF program included: eligibility determination, communication, and vendor approval processes. While there is reason to believe the second year of implementation will mitigate these issues of implementation, it cannot be assumed. Therefore, the following recommendations are built from the Parent Satisfaction Survey data.

### *Prioritize Communication of Program Eligibility and Participation Requirements:*



Despite efforts to communicate the requirements for participation in the ESTF program, many parents reported not being told they must attend a program outside of their school zone of residence. Several families who would be ineligible due to previously participating in private school or homeschool settings, and students in college were initially approved to participate and later unable to access funds for second quarter. Being removed from the program was illustrated to be more problematic than not being approved to begin with. Prioritizing the delivery of clear communication around eligibility may alleviate dissatisfaction as it relates to which students can participate.

### *Confirm Eligibility Before Funds are Released on July 31st First Quarter Payment:*



In accordance with Section 59-8-120 (E) it is recommended that SCDE confirm eligibility of enrollment in non-residential school, at the time of approval before quarter one payments (on or before July 31st) instead of accepting applicants and waiting to verify. This will ensure families accessing funds are eligible and won't experience a termination when eligibility cannot be confirmed.

*"Nothing in the qualifications stated the children could not live in their zoned school area. This is unfair and not right."*

*"After an application was submitted, reviewed and accepted months later we get a response that my child technically wasn't eligible and that his account was deactivated. Nowhere did we see he had to not reside within his district. That literally doesn't make any sense whatsoever."*

## Conclusion and Next Steps:

All open response items have been shared with the SCDE so they have access and can make programmatic decisions using all of the data collected from these surveys. Exemplars have been shared in this report to illustrate the breadth of parent satisfaction; however, the SCDE, Outbridge and ClassWallet have all data pertaining to them.

Overall, parents reported satisfaction receiving funds and the use of funds despite being surprised by eligibility requirements and frustrated by a lack of clear and responsive communication. Some of the dissatisfaction was the result of first year implementation lessons and the SC Supreme Court Decision. The next year of implementation will likely bring improvements made from lessons learned and experience implementing the program. Impacts of the SC Supreme Court decision have begun to be addressed by SC legislators in advance of the legislative session's official opening. EOC staff will continue to monitor efforts and resulting questions.

# Appendix A



# Appendix A The SAG and Review Process for ESTF Parent Satisfaction Survey Development:

## *SAG Background, Description and Current Membership:*

Beginning with the 2022 School Report Cards, South Carolina has incorporated the SC School Climate Surveys in its statewide educational accountability system to meet both state and federal requirements. There are three versions of the SC School Climate Survey designed for different groups of stakeholders. The Student School Climate Survey (SSCS or “Student Survey”), the Teacher School Climate Survey (TSCS or “Teacher Survey”), and the Parent / Guardian School Climate Survey (PSCS or “Parent Survey”) may be referred to collectively as the “Climate Surveys.” The Climate Surveys were developed per the Educational Accountability Act of 1998 and the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act of 2000 and have been administered annually to students in SC public schools, their teachers, and their parents or guardians. Prior to their use in accountability, the Climate Surveys were only given to students in the highest grade level at a school but are now administered to all students from Grade 3 through Grade 12 enrolled at any school in the state. All the Climate Surveys are currently administered electronically. Given their broader use in the state, their administration to all students in all schools, and the higher stakes associated with their use in accountability, the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC), in collaboration with the SC Department of Education (SCDE), has begun to explore ways to make the Climate Surveys more accessible and relevant to more stakeholders, to make the information that the Climate Surveys provide to school and district leaders clearer and more relevant to ongoing continuous improvement efforts, and to improve the quality of the scores that they produce for the state’s accountability system.

In addition, the EOC has been tasked with additional responsibilities which require the development, administration, and analysis of additional surveys for which the input of relevant stakeholders would be valued. To that end, the EOC has established the Survey Advisory Group (SAG), a special subcommittee of the EOC and also a standing advisory group of relevant stakeholders who provides input on work to improve Climate Surveys and their use, provides input on the development and use of other surveys related to the EOC’s work, advocates for the unique interests and needs of the stakeholders they represent on issues related to surveys, and advises on the development of relevant policies, procedures, and support documents related to surveys (e.g., survey administration manuals).

SAG membership is comprised of 12 leaders in education with a vested interest in the surveys used in SC, who were nominated to participate. These leaders serve 1 to 2 year terms, with the exception of a past chair and additional historian who will serve 3 years to preserve the culture of the group, while other members will change to maintain a fresh perspective. The group is diverse and includes classroom teachers, district leadership, psychometricians, and a consultant from SCDE staffed by EOC staff. The group of 12 includes:

Jeff Maxey- Chair

Jessica Adamson

Julia Sowell Byrd

Nikkina McKnight

Frank Rodriguez

Darleen Sutton

Angela Crosland-Vice-Chair

Kandace Bethea

AJ Chambers

Helena Miller

Scott Smith

Amy Young

### *ESTF Parent Satisfaction Survey Development:*

The following draft items include options from both states edited only to reflect South Carolina's ESTF program, and some original items designed to collect data for the initial implementation year of the ESTF program. If the item is from another state, that is noted with the state abbreviation in front of the item. A final draft was developed using SAG feedback for October 2024 administration.

Survey compilation:

1) GA: How satisfied were you with the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program during the 2023-2024 school year?

MO: What is your overall satisfaction with the MOScholars scholarship program?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

2) GA: How likely are you to recommend the Educational Scholarship program to others?

- Extremely likely
- Fairly likely
- Neutral
- Fairly unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

3) MO: What improvements and changes would you like to see made to the MOScholars scholarship program? (Type your response below)

4) Did your child attend a private school as a result of ESTF funds? (If yes items 4a-f, if no item 5.)

GA: How satisfied were you with the participating private school your child attended during the 2023-2024 school year?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Neutral
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

GA: Overall, how satisfied were you with the educational program your child received at the participating private school he or she attended during the 2023-2024 school year?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Neutral
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

GA: Overall, how effective do you believe the participating private school's curriculum was preparing your child for the next grade and future success during the 2023-2024 school year?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied

- Neutral
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

d. GA: How satisfied were you with the participating private school's ability to keep you updated about the progress of your child during the 2023-2024 school year?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Neutral
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

e. MO: How satisfied are you with your student's academic achievement at the school(s) the child attends through the MOScholars scholarship program versus academic achievement at the school previously attended?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

f. MO: What is your level of satisfaction with school safety at the school(s) your student attends through the MOScholars scholarship program versus safety at the school(s) previously attended?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

5) Did you spend your ESTF funds on tutoring? (if yes items 5a-b, if no item 6)

a) How satisfied are you with the tutor?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

b) Do you see an improvement in your student's achievement that you believe is a result of tutoring?

- Yes
- No

6) Did you spend your ESTF funds on school supplies or technology? (if yes items 6.a-b, if no item 7-9)

a) How satisfied are you with the supplies/technology you purchased using ESTF funds?

- Extremely satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

b) Do you see an improvement in your student's achievement that you believe is a result of these supplies?

- Yes
- No

Closing:

7) MO: How satisfied are you with the ClassWallet virtual platform?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

8) MO: Is your child graduating High School this year? (If yes, 8b, if no item 9)

- Yes
- No

B\_If you answered yes, what are their plans after graduation? (type your response below)

9) What else should we know about your experience with the ESTF program, but didn't ask? (type your response below)

# **Appendix B**



## Appendix B Final Parent Satisfaction Survey for ESTF:

Thank you for participating in the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) Parent Satisfaction Survey! State law requires that this survey is offered to all families who participated in the program. The survey is conducted by the Education Oversight Committee and the results will be shared with the General Assembly.

The survey is designed to:

1. understand how the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) program is working, and
2. identify ways to improve the program.

The short survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Please complete a separate survey for each student using Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) funds. We value your honest feedback, and no information that could identify you or your child will be shared in any reporting of survey results.

The survey will remain open until Friday, November 15, 2024. If you can't complete the survey at one time, it will automatically save and later you can pick up where you left off. Please contact Jenny May (jmay@eoc.sc.gov or 803-734-9925) with questions.

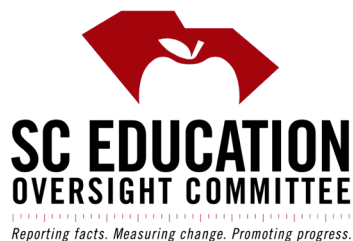
### Section I:

1. How likely are you to recommend the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) program to others?\* (10 options)
2. How satisfied were you with the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) program during the 2024-25 school year?\* (10 options)
3. Was there anything that surprised you about the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) program as you participated? (text box)
4. How many children do you have participating in Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) program this school year?
  - a. Not to please complete the survey separately, for each child participating.
5. Where was your student enrolled in school last year/during the 2023-24 school year? (define what these are in items)
  - a. Public school
  - b. Public charter school
  - c. Homeschool
  - d. Virtual school
  - e. In school out of state
  - f. Other (text box)
6. How did you use the funds from Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) this school year? (description included)
  - i. Education Service Provider Tuition and Fees
  - ii. Textbook and Student Workbooks (K-12 in the subjects of: Math, English, Science, Social Studies, or Foreign Language)
  - iii. Reading Books
  - iv. Curriculum in the Following Subject Areas: Math, English, Science, Social Studies, or Foreign Language
  - v. Instructional Materials/School Supplies
  - vi. Tutoring
  - vii. Computer Hardware (desktop, laptop etc.)
  - viii. Technological Devices (printers, apple pen, keyboard etc.)
  - ix. Tuition and Fees for an Approved Nonpublic Online Education Service Provider or Course
  - x. National Norm-Referenced Examinations (AP, industry certification etc.)
  - xi. Educational Therapies (ABA therapy, vision therapy, evaluation for therapy equipment etc.)
  - xii. Services Provided by a Student's Non-Resident District (out-of-district fees, transportation, fees or costs associated with participation in extracurricular activities etc.)

Section II (Items are included specific to categories of fund use---pop up after selection of how funds spent)

7. Overall, how satisfied are you with (use of funds) so far?\*
8. Do you see an improvement in your student's achievement that you believe is the result of (use of funds)? (yes, no, I'm not sure)

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*The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is an independent, nonpartisan group of 18 educators, business people, and elected officials appointed by the legislature and governor. The EOC enacts the South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998, which sets standards for improving the state's K-12 educational system. The EOC reviews the state's education improvement process, assesses how schools are doing, and evaluates the standards schools must meet to build the education system needed to compete in this century.*