



TEXAS EDUCATION FREEDOM ACCOUNTS

Freedom to learn your way.



Lutheran South Academy
January 14 6:30pm



TONIGHT'S AGENDA

- ✦ Introductions
- ✦ Background, Core Components, & Principles
- ✦ How & When to Apply
- ✦ Next Steps
- ✦ Questions





Scott Fogo
LEAH CEO



Scott Browning
LSA Head of School



Theresa Richards
Administrative
Assistant



Patrick Maynard
Director of Admissions



Valerie Green Powers
LEAH Accounts
Receivable Manager



Lance Cleaver
LEAH CFO



Liz Cattau
Admissions



Lutheran Education Association of Houston



LEAH School's mission is to operate and champion exemplary Lutheran schools in the Houston area and by doing so expanding Christ's kingdom.

- 3 schools in Houston area
- Entire organization-wide vision, strategy, operations
- Business Office
- Financial/Legal Matters
- Sets Tuition Amounts
- Determines Financial Aid Amount
- 225 E Edgewood

Lutheran South Academy



Guided by God's grace, LSA will provide an exceptional educational experience through abundant opportunities and meaningful relationships.

- LSA specific vision, strategy, operation
- Admissions Process
- Issue Enrollment Contracts
- 12555 Ryewater Drive

Mission Focused

Serve Students & Families

- Senate Bill 2 passed, creating Education Savings Accounts ESA's
- Some people call the funds "Vouchers"
- Official Name is Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA)

ESAs/Vouchers/TEFA- all the same for this presentation



- TEFA provides parents of students in non-public Texas schools a publicly-funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for their children's education.
- \$500,000,000 for this coming year





- Texas Private School Association (TPSA) helped inform and influence how this bill was written and how the rules were developed.



Autonomy

An education service provider or vendor who receives ESA money is not a recipient of federal financial assistance and may not be considered a state actor.

The state may not impose limits or requirements contrary to religious or institutional values of a provider, vendor, or participant regarding curriculum, admissions practices, operations, policies, standards, etc.



- Private school admission and educational autonomy remains intact. No interference in Christian teaching, etc. ...
- no “state testing”, but rather a norm-referenced test (MAP, SAT, etc.)
- Good for students and families, but also good for private schools



Administering the Program

- Texas Comptroller's office has partnered with Odyssey, a certified educational assistance organization, to manage parent applications, work with schools, and handle the financial transactions, through a digital wallet.



\$500M– Maybe 70,000 students? Maybe less?

Per student without a disability, annually:\$10,474

A child with a disability: up to \$30,000

Home-schooled participants: \$2,000



Eligible expenses include:

- **School tuition**
- Tutoring- approved vendors only
- Uniforms
- School breakfast and lunch at private schools
- Online education programs
- Therapies for students with special needs
- Textbooks or other instructional materials



Eligible students:

- Student must be a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful resident eligible to attend a Texas public school.
- Priority for children from low-income families and with special learning needs.
- Siblings are approved together; family does not have to reapply each year.
- PreK eligibility different!



Who is eligible, and what are the categories?

- Any Texas K–12 student (U.S. citizen or lawful resident and lives in Texas)

However, TEFA has limited funding each year. The state will place applicants into 4 categories and award seats in this priority order.

- Once a child is accepted into any category, siblings will also receive funding (through 12th grade).



Prioritization Categories

1. Children with disabilities whose family income is equal or less than 500% of FPG.
2. Families with income 200% or less than FPG.
3. Family income between 200-500% of FPG.
4. All others. Within this group:
 1. Priority for students coming from public schools
 2. Capped at 20% of total



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Household Number	Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) yearly income	200% of FPG yearly income	500% of FPG yearly income
1	\$15,650	\$31,300	\$78,250
2	\$21,150	\$42,300	\$105,750
3	\$26,650	\$53,300	\$133,250
4	\$32,150	\$64,300	\$160,750
5	\$37,650	\$75,300	\$188,250
6	\$43,150	\$86,300	\$215,750



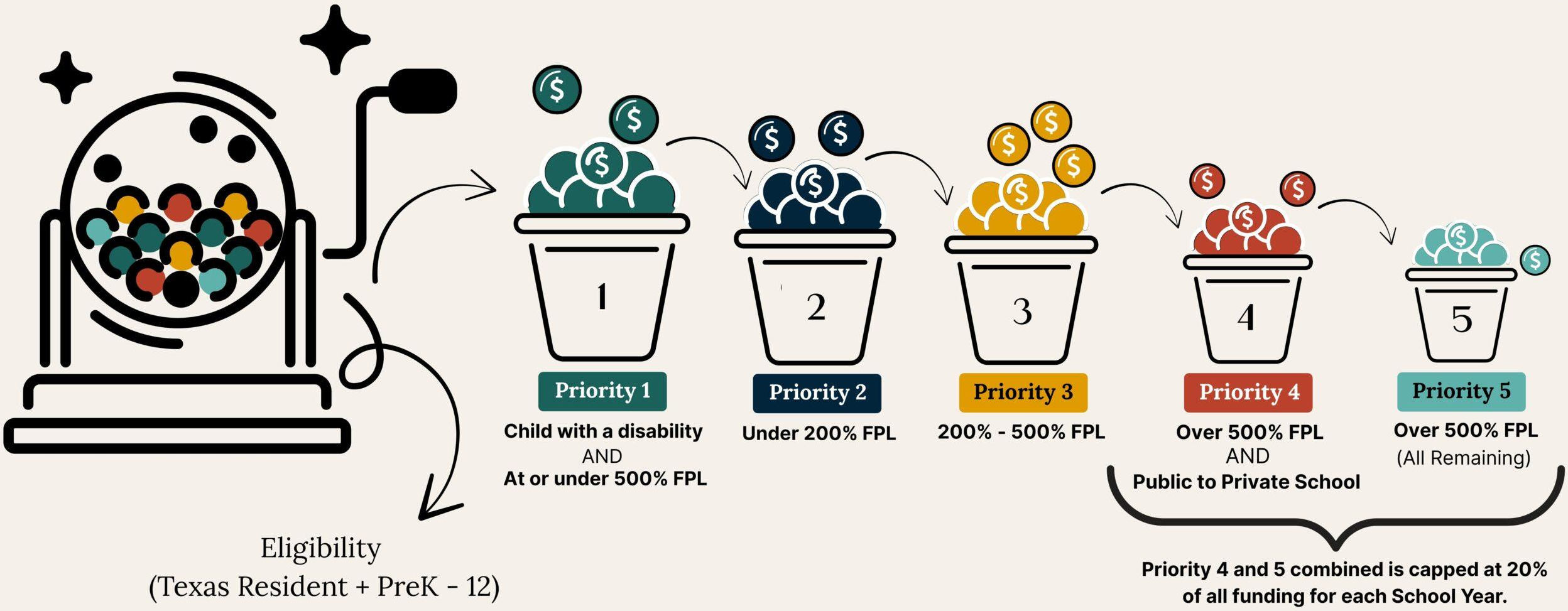
Lottery in Each Category



TEFA LOTTERY PROCESS



Once the application window closes, each group will be funded based on the prioritization criteria. If there is an oversubscription of applicants, students will be randomized within that priority group, and those students not selected shall be placed on a waitlist.





LEAH & LSA RULES



- ✦ If your family applies for financial aid (LEAH/FACTS), then you **MUST** apply for TEFA.
- ✦ If you don't apply for LEAH/LSA financial aid, you **MAY** still choose to apply for TEFA! We strongly encourage you to do that.



LEAH & LSA RULES



- ✦ **LSA tuition rates exceed the state's general Texas Education Freedom Account dollar amount. All general State funding will go towards tuition payments.**
- ✦ **Students with diagnosed learning differences whose Texas Education Freedom Account award goes above tuition rates can use funding for fees or other appropriate expenses.**



LEAH & LSA RULES



- ✦ **LEAH has issued "in-house" financial aid awards (through FACTS) that are CONTINGENT on families applying to TEFA.**
 - ✦ **If the family receives TEFA funds, the amount of financial aid awarded will be adjusted because the family's financial situation has changed.**
 - ✦ **Families will always fund some portion of tuition.**
- The only exception might be a case of special needs where the amount granted by TEFA far exceeds LSA tuition.**

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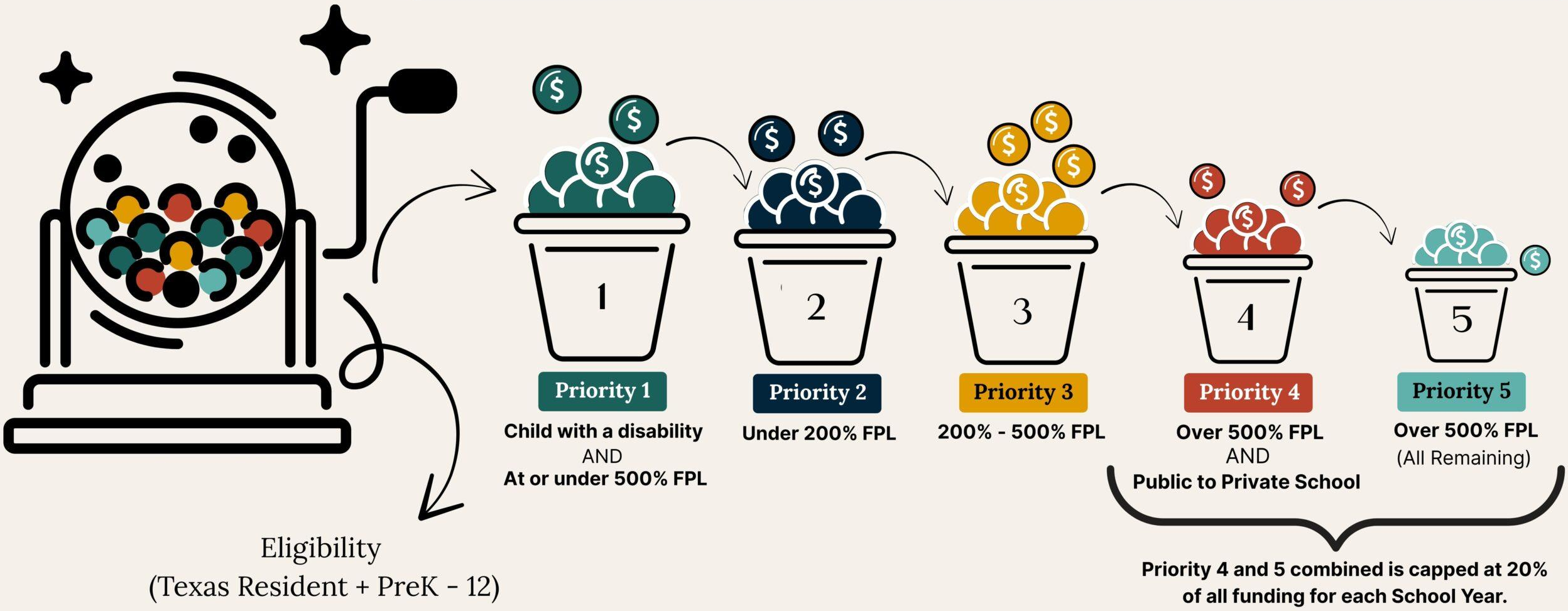
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Special Education Considerations

Diagnoses:

- Physical disability;
- Intellectual or developmental disability;
- Emotional disturbance;
- Learning disability including dyslexia;
- Autism;
- Speech disability; or
- Traumatic brain injury.



Special Education Diagnoses for Prioritization Only

For prioritization, NOT for increased funding, proof of eligibility to participate in a school district's special education program by meeting an eligibility described by 19 TAC 89.1040 signed by **one or more licensed professionals qualified to attest that the child meets the applicable eligibility definition**. An FIE will also be sufficient for prioritization.



Special Education Diagnoses for Prioritization Only

A licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP)/school psychologist, an educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified or licensed practitioner with experience and training in the area of the disability. Or a licensed or certified professional for a specific eligibility category.



IEPs Required for Increased Funding

Families may request evaluations from either the district that the child resides in OR from the district where the private school is located.

Materials and evaluations done at the private school may be helpful to the districts. Feel free to provide them.

The IEP is not time limited so can be from any date.



More Special Education Considerations

1. Out of state IEPs are acceptable.
2. Special education students must take a norm referenced nationally norm-referenced assessment like other program participants, but it can be an alternative assessment administered to a child with a disability. i.e. Kaufman Texas of Education Achievement, Brigance, Woodcock Johnson, Peabody, Wechsler, and STAAR Alternative 2 among others. Results must be to the CEAO by the end of the program year when assessment is administered.



- **TEFA Disability Certification Form** approved by the Comptroller (only required if the student requires special needs services and the student does not have an official individualized education program (IEP) on file with TEA). This form will be available in January 2026 on our website



Pre-K Eligibility – 3 and 4 year olds

1. Unable to speak and comprehend the English language.
2. Educationally disadvantaged, which means eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program which is up to 185% of federal poverty guidelines (up to \$59,477.50 for family of four).
3. Homeless.
4. Child of an active-duty member of the U.S. armed forces, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority.
5. A child of a member of the U.S. armed forces, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty.
6. Is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services or foster care in another state or territory if the child resides in this state.
7. Is the child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Award as a peace officer, firefighter, or an emergency medical first responder
8. Is the child of a person employed as a classroom teacher at a public primary or secondary school in the school district that offers a prekindergarten class under Education Code 29.153



Important Dates

January 15- Deadline for current LSA Family Priority Financial Aid from LSA/LEAH.

February 4- Odyssey will open the portal for parents to start applying for TEFA. That portal will remain open through March 17.

February 11- TEFA application help event at LSA- sign up for 20-minute blocks

Families will be notified by Odyssey of award **early April 2026.**

Current LSA Family

- Complete LSA Financial Aid (by Jan. 15)
- Complete Priority Re-enrollment (due January 31)
- Apply TEFA starting February 4.

Prospective LSA Family

- Contact Liz or Patrick
- Tour Campus
- Complete LSA application and entire admissions process
- Complete LSA Financial Aid (asap) and TEFA (before March 17!)
- Complete Contract of Enrollment

Parent TEFA Application Checklist

See Handout



<https://texasprivateschools.org/>

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/education/esa/>

www.lutheransouth.org

Scott.Browning@Lutheransouth.org



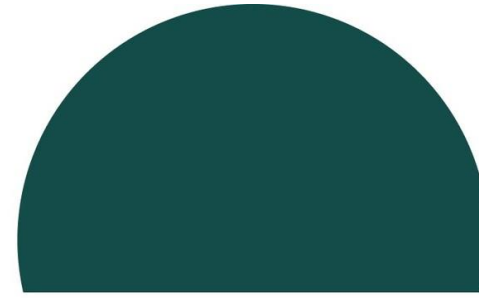
Questions





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FREEDOM ACCOUNTS**

Freedom to learn your way.



ODYSSEY



**TEXAS PRIVATE SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION**



FACTS
A  COMPANY