

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program Understanding the Program

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program is a parental choice program for special needs students attending Georgia public schools who are served under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The following provides information regarding eligibility and the different choice options available under the GSNS Program. The GSNS web page <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-NeedsScholarship-Program.aspx> also has important information regarding the GSNS Program.

Parents of students continuing in the private school choice option must read the Continuing Participation document posted on the web page for the requirements of continuing eligibility in the private school choice option.

STEP 1- CONFIRM A STUDENT'S ELIGIBILITY

In order to qualify for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program a student must meet the following requirements:

Student Eligibility Criteria 1- A student must be a Georgia resident.

Student Eligibility Criteria 3- A student was reported attending a Georgia public school by a school district(s) during mandatory student counts conducted in October and March of the qualifying year.

Student Eligibility Criteria 4 - A student does not have a current out-of-state residence as of October 1st of the qualifying year.

At the end of the school year, school systems update student records for students served by an IEP after the March FTE submissions to reflect that they are special education students. In mid-July the database for the scholarship calculator is updated to include these students.

The table on the next two pages will assist a parent/guardian verify a student's eligibility for the school year.

October Student Count	March Student Count	Final Student Record	Student Eligible for Upcoming School Year?
Student counted YES	Student counted YES	Student reported as	
Student reported as special education student? YES	Student reported as special education student? YES		

Student counted.

YES

Student reported as
special education

Student reported as special education student? YES	Student reported as special education student? NO		
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For students that do not meet thes

Note: Transportation under all school choice options are the responsibility of a parent/guardian. Funds received through the GSNS Program can only be used to offset tuition and fees at a private school authorized by the State Board of Education to participate in the program. Funds cannot be used to offset the costs of out of district tuition, charter schools, or other options available under public school choice.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE OPTION

If a student meets the eligibility criteria, a parent/guardian has the right to request a public school transfer from a student's current public school to:

- Another public school within their school system or
- Another public school system outside their school system.

If a student attended a private school through the Special Needs Scholarship Program during the prior school year, a parent/guardian is eligible for public school choice options for the upcoming school year.

The authority to allow or deny transfer requests belongs to a school system NOT the Georgia Department of Education. Parents/guardians must contact a school system directly regarding the process the school system uses for public school transfer requests available through the GSNS Program. School systems can create their own forms and set deadlines for transfer requests. A parent can link to any school system from the Georgia Department of Education's home page at www.gadoe.org, look for the school finder icon on the home

page.  If a transfer request is granted by a school system, the student must be allowed to complete all grades at a school. For example, if a student is granted a transfer request to a middle school that serves grades 6 - 8, the transfer request would apply to the student's attendance through grade 8. The parent would need to file another transfer request if the parent wished to send the student to a different high school.

TRANSFERS WITHIN A SCHOOL SYSTEM (e.g. transfer from one public school in a county to another in the same county)

A school system reviewing a transfer request must evaluate the request based on availability of space and/or the availability of a special education program at the requested public school that can meet the services outlined in a student's IEP. If there is no space available and/or if the public school requested by a

PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICEOPTION

There are no application or income restrictions for eligibility in the GSNS Program. Eligibility is only based on requirements outlined on page 1. Scholarships generally range from \$2,500 - \$13,500.

3. March 4th of each **year- Filing of intent form required. See instructions** below.

For ONLY the December and March dates parents must complete an Intent to File form which will be posted on the web page in October. Scholarship payments are prorated for students enrolling by December 15 (1/2 of scholarship amount printed on the award sheet paid) or March 4 (1/4 of scholarship amount printed on the award sheet paid) for the upcoming school year.

The multiple enrollment dates only apply for students that completed the current school year in a Georgia public school. It DOES NOT apply to students that used the private school choice i

application with instructions and

- ./ Student's parent/guardian remain residents of Georgia; and
- ./ Student has continual enrollment and attendance in a private school participating in the GSNS Program; and
- ./ Parent/guardian complies with GSNS Program law and rule.

An IEP does not need to be kept current to continue a student's participation in the GSNS Program.

Promotion or retention of a student does not affect eligibility for the GSNS Program. GSNS

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING FORMULA

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship amount is based on information reported by each school system during the previous year's October Full-Time Enrollment (FTE) count. That would be October for the current school year funding. State funding for students with disabilities can vary greatly and is determined by the services the school district reported as providing to the student during the prior school year's data collection cycle for six segments. Scholarship payments for continuing GSNS students are calculated using the data from the last year a student was in a Georgia public school. The data is entered into the State public education funding formula that applies to the upcoming school year.

This is the maximum amount the Georgia Department of Education can give out for a student's scholarship. The scholarship is made up of only state funds. Not all special education services provided by a public school for a student are paid for with state funds. By law, federal and local funds are not included in the scholarship.

Important note for parent(s)/guardian(s) whose child's IEP was put into place after October: The funds accessed for scholarships are the state funding a public school earned for a student during the previous

October. For students with later IEPs the local school district will only earn the base level of state funding for a student (approx. \$2,500 - \$3,000). Therefore, a parent/guardian has two choices for the upcoming school year. First, a um

Below is a numerical example for two different students:

		Student #1	Student #2
Segments for School Year	Per Segment (class) amount	Per Segment (class) amount	

SED	1,719	Total of 6 Segments	5,323	Total of 6 Segments	6,527
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Under the GSNS Program, if tuition and fees charged by a private school are higher than the scholarship award, a parent/guardian is responsible for paying the additional tuition. Most private schools participating in the GSNS Program charge tuition and fees that are more than the amount of a student's scholarship. GSNS funds cannot be used to pay for the following:

- x Transportation
- x Before or after school care
- x Meals x Tutoring x Field trip fees
- x Athletic fees x School supplies