

**Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program**  
**Private School Financial Guidance**  
**2009 – 2010 School Year**

1. Can a private school enroll a public school student after the September 11, 2009 deadline and the parent(s)/guardian(s) still receive scholarship funds for the student?

No, a student must have enrolled at a participating private school by September 11, 2009 to receive funding under the program.

2. Can a private school enroll a student transferring from another private school and the parent(s)/guardian(s) still receive scholarship funds for the student?

Yes, transfers can occur any time during the school year as long as the private school is an authorized school participating in the GSNS program and the student is a recipient of a scholarship. Transferring a student to another private school does not release parent(s)/guardian(s) from their obligation to pay tuition and/or fees owed to the original private school.

The following is the process private schools would need to follow when a student transfers:

- The private school the student transferred from would mark him/her as withdrawn in their enrollment data and enter the date of the student's withdrawal using the GSNS portal.
- The school the student transferred to would need to report him/her as a new student by the next student enrollment submission date using the GSNS portal.

Students need to attend a private school **for a minimum of 35 school days** during a payment cycle for a school to be eligible to receive a scholarship payment. Private schools must divide a payment if a student transfers between payment cycles.

The following is only an example of how schools can divide a scholarship payment received for a student. Schools can decide between themselves how the payment will be divided.

- **EXAMPLE-** Student's scholarship payment was \$2,000 for a payment cycle. Student attended School A for 35 school days during the payment cycle and then transferred to School B. School A would receive the payment. School A determines the student calculates its per diem costs at \$50/day and retains \$1,750 of the payment. School A would issue a check drawn from its school account to School B for the remaining \$250. During the next payment cycle, School B would submit the student as enrolled at the school and School A would

submit the students as withdrawn using the appropriate code from the drop down menu in the GSNS portal. School B would receive the next scholarship payment.

The State can only legally make scholarship payments to parents on a quarterly basis. If a student withdraws from a private school prior to the 35 school days and does not transfer to another approved private school, no scholarship payment would be issued. The withdrawal of a student does not release parent(s)/guardian(s) from their obligation to pay tuition and/or fees owed to the private school.

3. Can a student transfer to a private school from a public school after September 11, 2009 and receive scholarship funds for the 2009 – 2010 school year?

No, a student cannot transfer to a participating private school from a public school after September 11, 2009 and receive scholarship funds for the 2009 – 2010 school year.

4. What are the procedures for students who received the scholarship during the 2008 - 2009 school year and are continuing in the program for the 2009 - 2010 school year?

The data for a student received **will be run through the FY 2010 Quality Based Education funding formula.** Pending the State revenues, the approximate amount a student received during the 2008 – 2009 will become the student's scholarship amount for the 2009-2010 school year.

If a student is re-enrolling at the same private school he/she attended during the 2008-2009 school year, a parent(s)/guardian(s) would follow the private school's procedures for re-enrollment.

If a student is enrolling at a **new** private school, parent(s)/guardian(s) should contact each private school directly for information regarding their application process. The parent(s)/guardian(s) is required to provide the new private school with a copy of the scholarship award sheet since this is proof of a student's eligibility. If a parent(s)/guardian(s) does not have a copy of a calculation sheet, he/she needs to contact the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program Office.

5. How will GaDOE make payments to parent(s)/guardian(s) of eligible students attending private schools?

Four times during the school year, each private school will need to submit their enrolled GSNS students through the GSNS portal for the processing of scholarship payments. Each school will be issued a username and password to the GSNS web portal. Each school should restrict who has access to it. It is also recommend that two people in the office are responsible for submitting enrolled GSNS students to GaDOE. This way if one person is unavailable another staff person can complete the work.

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program Office will verify the information submitted with internal records of scholarship recipients. When verification is completed, scholarship **checks made payable to students' parent(s)/guardian(s)** will be mailed to the appropriate private school.

If a school fails to report a GSNS student to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), a scholarship payment for the student will not be issued. Therefore, it is important to submit accurate student information by deadlines established by the GaDOE.

6. How should tuition and fee charges be administered for families where one sibling has a scholarship and the other does not?

It is strongly recommended that the accounts for siblings receiving the scholarship be kept separate from siblings not receiving a scholarship. Scholarship funds of an eligible student **cannot** be used to pay for tuition or other fees of siblings attending the private school who are ineligible for the scholarship.

7. Can a school charge different tuition to GSNS students?

A private school cannot charge higher tuition or apply unique fees to only its GSNS students. Private schools participating in the GSNS Program can use a differentiated tuition and fee schedule (e.g. by grade level). A differentiated tuition and fee schedule established by a school must be clearly defined in writing for parents and applied equitably to all students attending the school.

For example, a private school could charge an additional \$2,000 in tuition for students who are in a transition program to help them mainstream into a school's regular classes. This is permissible because all special needs students attending this school pay the additional tuition, not just the GSNS students at the school.

A private school cannot charge higher tuition to a GSNS student in order to obtain the full amount a student qualifies for under the program. Any school found doing so will be in violation of the GSNS Program and could lose their eligibility to participate.

8. If checks are made payable to a student's parent or guardian, how does the private school receive payment?

Checks will be sent to the private school. Private schools should notify the parents/guardians of students that the scholarship payment has been received by the school. The parent/guardian, to whom the check has been issued, has 30 calendar days from date of notice to restrictively endorse the check over to the private school for deposit. Private schools must return the check to the Georgia Department of Education within 30 calendar days if a parent(s)/guardian(s) fails to endorse the check within the timeframe outlined.

Schools must provide a reasonable opportunity for parent(s)/guardian(s) to restrictively endorse the check to the school.

9. Can a parent(s)/guardian(s) refuse to endorse the scholarship check over to the private school and deposit it?

Parental/guardian refusal to endorse the check results in forfeiture of the scholarship for the student and no further checks would be issued. Parent(s)/guardian(s) would be responsible to pay tuition to the private school.

If parent(s)/guardian(s) refuses to endorse check over to the private school, the private school must return the check to GaDOE within 30 calendar days.

Under no circumstances is a parent(s)/guardian(s) to be allowed to take a check away from a private school.

Under no circumstances is a school to endorse a check for a parent/guardian even if they have given a school permission to do so.

Under no circumstances is a school to deposit a scholarship check without a parent/guardian's signature.

10. Can a parent(s)/guardian(s) refuse to submit their social security number to a private school?

In order to print out scholarship checks, our accounting system requires a social security number. Therefore, a school must obtain a social security number from one of the parent(s)/guardian(s). Remember, the parent(s)/guardian(s) who will be at the school the most, is the person who should submit their name and social security number for the scholarship payment. The portal private schools will use to submit this information is password protected and secure. If a parent still refuses to give that information, they can call the GSNS Program Office directly.

11. How does a private school reimburse a parent(s)/guardian(s) who has already paid tuition?

Parent(s)/guardian(s) would still need to endorse the check over to the private school. The school would issue a refund to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on funds drawn directly from the school.

12. What happens if a private school is not paid for a student it has enrolled in the scholarship program?

Private school should immediately contact GaDOE to report the error and request funds for student. Private school would need to provide proof the student was enrolled prior to September 11, 2009.

If GaDOE can verify the student was enrolled prior to September 11, 2009, it will notify the private school of funds it is due and a payment will be issued at the next payment cycle.

13. How does a private school return funds to GaDOE?

Schools need to complete the *Check Return* form found on the GSNS web page when returning scholarship checks to GaDOE.

14. What happens if a private school fails to follow the procedures issued under the GSNS Program?

A private school failing to follow procedures will forfeit its eligibility under the GSNS program for the upcoming school year. Students participating in the program would have to transfer to other private schools or parent(s)/guardian(s) would assume responsibility for paying the ineligible private school's tuition.

15. Does a private school participating in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program have to alter any of its business practices?

A private school's participation in the GSNS Program is under no obligation to alter its business practices. Private schools participating in the program are not required to provide any additional services or assistive technology to a student who leaves a public school using the private school choice option under the GSNS Program.

16. Tuition and fees are paid under the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program. What types of expenses would **not** be covered by the scholarship?

**GSNS funds cannot be used to pay for the following:**

- **Before or after school care**
- **Meals**
- **Tutoring**
- **Transportation**
- **Fees associated with field trips**
- **Athletic fees**
- **School supplies**
- **Summer school programs**
- **Other fees as determined by the GaDOE.**

17. Is a private school responsible for students who withdraw from the school?

If a student withdraws from a private school, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will no longer receive funds from the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program for tuition payment for that school. The private school would no longer be responsible for the student.