**THIS APPLICATION IS FOR NEW PRIVATE SCHOOLS ONLY. DO NOT COMPLETE THIS FORM IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR IF YOU WERE AN APPROVED SCHOOL DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR. (EXCEPTIONS APPLY).**

* **Application Submission Deadlines**

**Completed** applications received by:

**5:00 pm, March 08, 2024**

will be presented to the State Board of Education for authorization in May 2024

(**Please Note:** There is no April State Board Meeting will be presented in May 2024).

**5:00 pm, April 05, 2024**

will be presented to the State Board of Education for authorization in May 2024

**5:00 pm, May 10, 2024**

will be presented to the State Board of Education for authorization in June 2024

**5:00 pm, June 28, 2024**

will be presented to the State Board of Education for authorization in July 2024

* **Handwritten applications will not be accepted.**
* **Applicants are encouraged not to delay when submitting applications in case revisions to an application are needed.**

**Applications cannot be revised and re-submitted after 5:00pm on JUNE 28, 2024, AND will not be considered for participation for the 2024 – 2025 school year.**

**Applications received after 5:00pm on JUNE 28, 2024, will not be considered for participation for the 2024 – 2025 school year.**

**Purpose**

The instructions below will assist a private school to prepare and complete an application for authorization to participate in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program for the 2024 - 2025 school year.

**Acronyms Used**

GSNS- Georgia Special Needs Scholarship

GaDOE- Georgia Department of Education

O.C.G.A. - Official Code of Georgia Annotated

State Board of Education- SBOE

Parent- refers to parent(s) or guardian(s)

**Contact person for Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program**

Iesha Parks at iparks@doe.k12.ga.us to ensure a reply to queries, please email do not call or leave a voice message.

**Link to Website**

**Prior to completing this application, applicants must read the documents posted on the GSNS web page** which provides extensive information about the program. The link to the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship web page is <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx> ; click on *Additional Resources* link.

**Legislative Requirements**

To participate in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program, a school must operate as a private school and meet all requirements of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated §20-2-690(b) and §20-2-2115(a). These requirements include, but are not limited to providing instruction equivalent to 4.5 hours a day for 180 days, maintaining a physical location in Georgia where scholarship students physically attend classes and have direct contact with the school´s teachers, and reporting monthly during the school year to a local school district the students enrolled at the private school. **IMPORTANT:** O.C.G.A. §20-2-2115(b) expressly prohibits home school programs and schools that provide only on-line instructional courses from participating in the GSNS Program. An applicant must be in compliance with all provisions outlined in the legislation or it will be ineligible for consideration in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program.

**PRIVATE SCHOOL APPLICANTS MUST:**

1. Be fully or provisionally accredited or in the process of receiving its accreditation with at least one of the following accrediting agencies:
	* + The Georgia Accrediting Commission- *accreditation from GAC must indicate the school is operated as a private school and not as a non-traditional school*;
		+ The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;
		+ The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council;
		+ The Association of Christian Schools International;
		+ Cognia formerly known as The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;
		+ The Southern Association Independent Schools;

**NOTE:** If an applicant is authorized by the State Board of Education to participate in the GSNS Program for the 2024– 2025 school year and is not fully accredited, it must demonstrate it has attained full or provisional accreditation with at least one of the accrediting agencies listed above to the GaDOE after its first year of participation or it will be removed from the GSNS Program.

1. Be physically located in the state of Georgia where students physically attend classes and have direct contact with the school´s teachers. The private school must offer a program of instruction sufficient to allow students to maintain regular attendance to meet the minimum compulsory attendance requirements of 180 days of instruction for 4.5 hours per day or its equivalent. **Homeschool programs and schools that provide only on-line instructional courses are not eligible to participate in the GSNS Program.**
2. Offer a program of instruction to students offering at a minimum the core subjects of instruction for math, science, language arts, reading, and social studies.
3. Demonstrate the school is financially secure. Schools must submit to GaDOE financial documentation for the school that complies with uniform financial accounting standards established by the GaDOE **and** conducted by a Certified Public Accountant.
4. Employ or contract only with teachers who hold a baccalaureate or higher degree, or have at least three years of experience in either education or health.
5. Meet all applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
6. The private school must comply with Section 42 USC section 2000(d) unless exempted by such law.
7. Conduct criminal background checks of teachers to ensure that potential educational employees have not been convicted of crimes that could invalidate their acceptability for employment **BEFORE** a teacher is assigned to eligible students participating in the GSNS Program. The school must maintain documentation of its process for teacher background checks. The private school must also have written protocols in place for proper administrative action in the event a criminal background check or other inspection reveals criminal history after a teacher has been hired at the private school.
8. Be able to administer valid and reliable pre- and post-academic assessments to potential GSNS students and report in writing to the parent(s) and the GaDOE the results of the pre- and post-academic assessments.
9. Provide clear written quarterly descriptions of academic progress to the parents of GSNS students during a school year e.g report cards.

**O.C.G.A. §20-2-690**



**Steps for Sending a Completed Application to the GaDOE**

* Completed applications must be emailed to the following email address iparks@doe.k12.ga.us with the following in the SUBJECT LINE (faxes or electronic copies ARE ACCEPTED):

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program: “Name of your private school”

**Attn: 2024 – 2025 Private School Application**

**Fax To 678-692-0111 With Cover Letter**

* It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure and verify that the signed application with all required documents is received by the deadline.
* If an application is incomplete or needs revisions, the applicant will receive an email outlining any missing document(s) and/or problems with the application. Applicants will then have the opportunity to make corrections and resubmit an application. **Note:** **Applications cannot be revised and re-submitted after 5:00 pm on JUNE 28, 2024 and will not be considered for participation for the 2024 – 2025 school year.**
* If a private school’s application is complete and meets the eligibility requirement for authorization, an email will be sent providing the date the school will be submitted to the State Board of Education for authorization.
* A private school will be notified by email if it receives SBOE authorization. The authorization will apply starting with the 2024 – 2025 school year.
* Once authorized by the SBOE, the private school will be added to the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship authorized private school list which is posted on the GSNS web page and can accept students eligible for the program for the 2024 – 2025 school year.
* Completed applications from private schools, with financial information removed, will be made available to the public upon request.

**Contact Information for Private School**

1. Provide the Legal Name of the Private School. *Note- if a private school is owned by a corporation and does business as a school under a name differing from the corporation, list both names e.g. Enterprise Learning, L.L.C. dba ABC Private School*:

2. Full Legal Name of School Education Director/Principal/or Headmaster:

4. Provide the tax identification number the private school uses to file federal, state, and/or local taxes and which is registered with the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office:

5. Private school’s Website Address:

7. Private school’s official Email Address:

6. Private School’s Telephone Number: ( )

8. Private school’s Complete Mailing Address (no P.O. Boxes):

[Street]

[City] , [GA] [Zip + 4]

9. School’s Complete Physical Address:

 [Street]

[City] , [GA] [Zip + 4]

10. List only the name(s) and contact information of staff at the private school that will be responsible for reporting GSNS students to the GaDOE:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Title** | **Phone Number** | **Email address** |
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**Accreditation Information**

11. Is this school **fully accredited** with one of the following accreditation agencies listed below? *If No, go to question 12. If Yes, select agency then skip to question 13.* [ ]  No [ ]  Yes

**Applicant must select at least one:**

[ ]  The Georgia Accrediting Commission- *accreditation from GAC must indicate the school is operated as a private school and not as a non-traditional school*;

[ ]  The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;

[ ]  The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council;

[ ]  The Association of Christian Schools International;

[ ]  Cognia formerly known as The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;

[ ]  The Southern Association Independent Schools;

12. Is this school in the process of receiving its accreditation with one of the following accreditation agencies? [ ] No [ ] Yes

 **Applicant must select at least one:**

[ ]  The Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC);

[ ]  The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;

[ ]  The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council;

[ ]  The Association of Christian Schools International;

[ ]  Cognia formerly known as The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;

[ ]  The Southern Association Independent Schools;

***Note:*** *If a private school is still in process of receiving its accreditation, it must include with its application a copy of its provisional accreditation certificate* ***or*** *a copy of a letter from one of the accreditation agencies listed above. The letter must be on the accreditation agency’s letterhead and state that the school is in process of receiving its accreditation with a date the accreditation agency expects the school to complete the accreditation process. Accreditation documentation from GAC must indicate the school is operated as a private school and not as a non-traditional school.*

**Length of School’s Operation**

13. Provide the year the school began operating in Georgia as a private school using the legal school name provided in item 1. (YYYY)

 13a. Is the school non-profit or for-profit? **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Financial Information**

A private school must be fiscally sound and cannot rely solely on funds received through the GSNS Program for its operation. As with all state funded programs, scholarships paid through the GSNS Program are dependent on appropriations made by the Georgia General Assembly. Scholarship funds received by parents through the GSNS Program are not intended to cover all the costs of tuition and fees charged by a private school. Costs not covered by the scholarship are the financial responsibility of a parent/guardian.

The documentation provided by a private school must confirm that it is insured and the owner(s) have sufficient capital or credit to operate the school for the upcoming school year serving the number of students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other sources apart from the GSNS Program that may be reasonably expected.

14. An applicant MUST submit financial documentation that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States. **All financial documentation provided by an applicant must include verification that it was completed by a Certified Public Accountant. Any financial documentation that does not meet this requirement will result in an incomplete application.**

 Applicants only need to submit one of the following financial documents:

* **Most recent proof of audit** that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. The documentation provided by a private school must confirm that it is insured and the owner(s) have sufficient capital or credit to operate the school for the upcoming school year serving the number of students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other sources apart from the GSNS Program that may be reasonably expected. OR
* **A compilation report** stating assets, liabilities, and net assets of the private school with all required disclosures that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. The documentation provided by a private school must confirm that it is insured and the owner(s) have sufficient capital or credit to operate the school for the upcoming school year serving the number of students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other sources apart from the GSNS Program that may be reasonably expected. OR
* **An annual report** from the end of the school’s most recent fiscal year that includes unaudited financial statements that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. The documentation provided by a private school must confirm that it is insured and the owner(s) have sufficient capital or credit to operate the school for the upcoming school year serving the number of students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other sources apart from the GSNS Program that may be reasonably expected. OR
* **A profit and loss statement and balance sheet** from the start to end of the school’s most recent fiscal year with all required disclosures that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. The documentation provided by a private school must confirm that it is insured and the owner(s) have sufficient capital or credit to operate the school for the upcoming school year serving the number of students anticipated with expected revenues from tuition and other sources apart from the GSNS Program that may be reasonably expected.

**Employees and Students at the School**

15. Describe in detail using text box below how the school conducts criminal background checks on teachers and paraprofessionals assigned to GSNS students to ensure that potential educational employees have not been convicted of crimes that could invalidate their acceptability for employment.

[Type answer here.

15a. Does the school require finger printing as part of its teacher and paraprofessional background checks?

 [ ]  No [ ]  Yes

16. Describe in detail how the private school will provide in writing (includes electronic communication e.g. School website) to parents of GSNS students the relevant credentials of the teachers who are teaching their children.

[Type answer here.

17. Does the school maintain a student record system that contains at a minimum a student’s full name, date of birth, parent/guardian name(s), location of last school attended, date of enrollment, number of days present and absent, courses taken, grades, standardized test scores, teacher comments, special reports, and if applicable date of withdrawal or transfer? [ ]  No [ ]  Yes

17a. Describe in detail the student record system used by the school; include if system is electronic or paper based.

[Type answer here.

18. What was the school’s total number of student enrolled for the 2023– 2024 school year?

18a. What percent of the school’s student enrollment for the 2024 - 2025 school year is estimated to be comprised of GSNS students? %

19. Grades at the school accepting GSNS students. Check all that apply:

[ ] Grade K

[ ] Grade 1

[ ] Grade 2

[ ] Grade 3

[ ] Grade 4

[ ] Grade 5

[ ] Grade 6

[ ] Grade 7

[ ] Grade 8

[ ] Grade 9

[ ] Grade 10

[ ] Grade 11

 [ ] Grade 12

20. *O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2115 (a)(7)* requires that all teachers employed by a private school must have a Bachelor’s degree or at least 3 years of of experience in education or health. Describe in detail how the school ensures that teachers assigned to work with GSNS students meet these minimum requirements.

[Type answer here.

**Services Provided by School**

21. Describe in detail the specific special eduation services the school offers to special needs students. School must clearly explain and give specifics on what services it provides, how these services are provided, and why these services were chosen. In addition, school must describe how it shares this information with individual parents. Attach additional documentation if needed.

[Type answer here.

22. Describe in detail the curriculum the school uses to provide instruction in the subjects of math, science, language arts, reading, and social studies. School must identify **all** subjects taught to students and provide specifics on the curriculum used. School must describe how it shares this information with individual parents. Attach additional documentation if needed.

23. *O.C.G.A. §20-2-2115 (a)(6)* requires that each school year a private school administer valid and reliable pre- and post-academic assessments to GSNS students and report the results to parents of GSNS students and the GaDOE. The legislation governing the GSNS Program does not give the GaDOE the authority to mandate specific assessments to be used by private schools. Private schools select their own assessments to measure student progress. Name the assessment(s) (spell-out, do not use acronyms) the school will use to fulfill this requirement. School must also clearly describe how the school concluded that an assessment(s) was valid and reliable.

[Type answer here.

[Type answer here.

24. Provide a concise description detailing when during the school year pre- and post-assessments will be administered to GSNS students.

[Type answer here.

24a. Describe in detail the specific document(s) the school will use for required quarterly written reporting of the academic progress of GSNS students to parents. If preferred, applicant can attach a sample of the progress report and/or report card used by the school.

[Type answer here.

**Tuition and Fees Charged**

* All applicants must include a copy of the documentation the school provides to parents regarding its tuition and fees and policies for the 2024 - 2025 school year. Information should be easy for parents to read and understand.
* Tuition information must explain to parents how the school will handle the processing of tuition for GSNS students i.e. deducting a student’s scholarship amount upfront to calculate remaining tuition owed or reimbursing parents as payments are made by the GaDOE. **Note:** Payments made by the GaDOE cannot be given to parents as reimbursement; a school must issue a check drawn from its own accounts to reimburse parents of GSNS students.
* Due dates, penalties (if applicable), and payment plans should also be clearly outlined.

25. Provide estimated annual tuition the school will charge for the 2024 - 2025 school year: $

**School Facilities**

26. Does the school own or lease its facility? [ ]  Own [ ]  Lease

Applicant must submit a copy of the school’s Certificate of Occupancy. If applicant cannot provide a certificate of occupancy, a recent (no more than 18 months old) fire inspection report or safety inspection report conducted by the school’s insurance company will be accepted. **Tax certificates issued by a city or county DO NOT meet this requirement and WILL NOT be accepted.**

27. Does the school share its facility with another entity (i.e. church, another school)? [ ] No [ ] Yes

27a. If yes, list entity sharing facility.

27b. If yes, is there a written agreement between both parties regarding the use of the facility? [ ]  No [ ]  Yes *If yes, include a copy of the agreement.*

27 c. If no, describe in detail the agreement that exists between the parties.

[Type answer here.

**Assurances**

If authorized by the SBOE, a private school must abide by all assurances listed below. At the recommendation of the GaDOE, the State Board of Education may remove any private school who fails to comply with any of the Assurance items. **As part of the application, all applicants must initial the box accompanying each assurance and must sign and date the application to certify agreement to comply with each assurance.** Failure to complete the assurances pages will result in an incomplete application.

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| **Number** | **Initial in each box below. I certify by my initials:** | **Assurances** |
| 1. |  | I understand that in order to participate in the GSNS Program, a private school must comply with all requirements under O.C.G.A. §20-2-690(b) and O.C.G.A. §20-2-2115(a). An applicant must be in compliance with all provisions outlined in the legislation or it will be ineligible for consideration in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program.  |
| 2. |  | I understand that in order to participate in the GSNS Program, a private school must be fully or provisionally accredited or in the process of receiving its accreditation with at least one of the accrediting agencies oulined on page 3 of this application. |
| 3. |  | I understand that if this school is authorized by the State Board of Education to participate in the GSNS Program for the 2024 – 2025 school year, the school must demonstrate it has attained full or provisional accreditation with at least one of the accrediting agencies outlined on page 3 of this application to the GaDOE after its first year of participation or it will be removed from the GSNS Program. |
| 4. |  | I understand the private school must be physically located in the state of Georgia where students physically attend classes and have direct contact with the school´s teachers. The private school must offer a program of instruction sufficient to allow students to maintain regular attendance to meet the minimum compulsory attendance requirements of 180 days of instruction for 4.5 hours per day or its equivalent.  |

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| **Number** | **Initial in each box below. I certify by my initials:** | **Assurances** |
| 5. |  | I understand home school programs and schools that provide only on-line instruction are ineligible to participate in the GSNS Program. |
| 6. |  | I understand that a private school participating in the GSNS Program is not required to follow a student’s IEP from a public school per O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2114(f) which states: *Acceptance of scholarship must have the same effect as a parental refusal to consent to services pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C.A. Section 1400, et seq.*  |
| 7. |  | I understand the private school must administer valid and reliable pre- and post-academic assessments to GSNS students. The private school must report in writing to parents and the GaDOE the results of the pre- and post-academic assessments during the school year. |
| 8. |  | I understand the private school must provide clearly written quarterly descriptions of academic progress to the parents of GSNS students during the school year.  |
| 9. |  | I understand the private school must employ or contract only with teachers, assigned to GSNS students that hold a baccalaureate or higher degree, or have at least three years of experience in either education or health.  |
| 10. |  | I understand the private school must conduct criminal background checks of teachers assigned to GSNS students to ensure that potential educational employees have not been convicted of crimes that could invalidate their acceptability for employment.  |
| 11. |  | I understand the private school must annually provide in writing to parents of GSNS students the relevant credentials of the teachers who are teaching their children. |

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| **Number** | **Initial in each box below. I certify by my initials:** | **Assurances** |
| 12. |  | I understand the private school must report quarterly or as directed by the GaDOE the enrolled roster of eligible GSNS students on dates specified by the GaDOE.  |
| 13. |  | I understand the private school must provide written notification to parents of GSNS students immediately if the private school becomes ineligible to participate in the GSNS Program.  |
| 14. |  | I understand the private school must ensure that requests for information and access to a school for monitoring and evaluation purposes by the GaDOE are provided in a timely manner.  |
| 15. |  | I understand the private school must annually submit a completed and signed GSNS compliance form as developed by the GaDOE.  |
| 16. |  | I understand that failure by a private school to comply with any applicable state or federal law or regulation may result in the removal of the school from the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship authorized private school list. |
| 17. |  | I understand it is the school’s responsibility to stay informed regarding the GSNS Program by reading information provided to schools through e-mails, the GSNS web page <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx>, and other forms of communications used by the GaDOE. |
| 18. |  | I understand that the private school must be fiscally sound and cannot rely solely on funds received through the GSNS Program for its operation.  |
| 19. |  | I understand that scholarships paid through the GSNS Program are dependent on appropriations made by the Georgia General Assembly and are not a guaranteed source of revenue. Reductions to the State budget can result in reductions to the GSNS Program.  |

**Application Check List**

Applicants must submit the following:

[ ]  Signed original of application.

[ ]  Copy of school’s Certificate of Occupancy, or recent Fire or Insurance Inspection.

[ ]  Copy of the documents the school provides to parents regarding its tuition and fees for the 2024 - 2025 school year. Tuition information must explain to parents how the school will handle the processing of tuition for GSNS students.

**Proof of Accreditation (one of the following)**

[ ]  Copy of School’s Accreditation Certificate- *Note, accreditation documentation from GAC must indicate the school is operated as a private school and not a non-traditional school.*

[ ]  If school is not fully accredited, a copy of its provisional accreditation certificate

[ ]  If school is still in process of receiving accreditation and has no provisional accreditation, a letter from one of the accreditation agencies listed in item 11 of this application. The letter must be on the accreditation agency’s letterhead and state that the school is in process of receiving its accreditation with a date the accreditation agency expects the school to complete the accreditation process. *Accreditation documentation from GAC must indicate the school is operated as a private school and not a non-traditional school.*

**Financial Documentation**

Applicants MUST submit financial documentation that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States and conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. **Applicants only need to submit one of the following:**

 [ ]  Most recent proof of audit that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. OR

 [ ]  A compilation report stating assets, liabilities, and net assets of the private school with all required disclosures that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. OR

 [ ]  An annual report from the end of the school’s most recent fiscal year that includes unaudited financial statements that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant. OR

 [ ]  Profit and loss statement and balance sheet from the start to the end of the school’s most recent fiscal year with all required disclosures that complies with uniform financial accounting standards in the United States conducted by a Certified Public Accountant.

**Required Signature(s)**

I certify that I am legally authorized to sign and as required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-2117, I hereby certify that the complete application and all attachments for participating in the 2024 - 2025 Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program, are true, complete and correct. I also certify that all facilities used or sponsored by the school comply with all city, county, municipal, state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to private schools and entities serving the public. I understand that any intentional and substantial misrepresentation of information in this application or attachments will result in being barred from participating in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program. Furthermore, any willful false statement I made in this application may be a felony under O.C.G.A. §16-10-71 punishable by a fine of not more than $1,000.00 or by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years, or both.

I hereby certify and affirm that the above assurances are agreed upon and will be carried out.

Signature of Director or Authorized Official(s)

Printed name of Director or Authorized Official(s)

Date