



Special Needs Scholarship Program How Payments are Made

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

How many payments are made and when?

- Four times during a school year scholarship checks are issued by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program. The GaDOE is authorized to make one payment per student per quarter and is not authorized to make any partial or retroactive payments. Payment for each quarter is for instruction and services provided to a student.
- A payment calendar is posted each school year and outlines the periods each payment covers and when payments will be sent during a school year. A parent must go to the GSNS web page <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx> (click *Additional Resources* on the right side of the page) and review the payment calendar that applies to the current school year.

What does a parent do to receive funds for a student?

- A scholarship calculator is available on the web page for parents/guardians, but will only work if a student is eligible for the GSNS Program. Print the award sheet generated by the scholarship calculator. It is the only proof needed of a student's eligibility. A parent/guardian must provide a copy of the student's scholarship award sheet to the private school. Authorized private schools have access to an electronic system which they use to report eligible students enrolled at their schools to the GaDOE. Each school year private schools report enrolled students, so the GaDOE knows which students are participating in the private school choice option and where they are enrolled. Without notification of a student's eligibility, the private school will not report the student as enrolled in the GSNS Program to the GaDOE. This will affect the scholarship payments for a student and could affect his/her eligibility for the GSNS Program.
- Scholarship funds received through the GSNS Program are only intended to offset the tuition and fees charged by a private school. If tuition and fees charged by a private school are higher than the scholarship award, a parent is responsible for paying the additional costs. If tuition and fees charged by a private school are less than the scholarship award, the lesser amount is paid. Fees and tuition not covered by GSNS funds e.g. meals can be charged by private schools; parent(s) would be financially responsible for these fees.

What if a student transfers?

A student must be enrolled and attending an authorized private school for a majority of school days during a payment cycle to be eligible to receive a payment for that cycle. The majority date for each payment cycle is listed on the payment calendar. Note for any of the above transfer examples below, a private school can collect amounts owed it directly from a student's parent(s).

- If a student transfers from one authorized private school to another **before** the majority date during a payment cycle then the private school the student **transferred to** will receive the payment.
- If a student transfers from one authorized private school to another **after** the majority date during a payment cycle then the private school the student **transferred from** will receive the payment.
- If a student withdraws from a private school before the majority date during a payment cycle and does not transfer to another authorized private school, no scholarship payment for the student will be issued.



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Payment Procedures

- Scholarship checks issued by the GaDOE are made out to the parent(s) of record submitted by a private school, but are mailed directly to a private school.
- A private school must notify the parent(s) of students in writing when scholarship payments are received by the school.
- A parent is required to endorse scholarship checks over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement (see example below) within 30 days of his/her receipt of the notice from the private school.

ABC School's Bank Deposit Stamp goes here on check

Pay to the order of ABC School: For Deposit Only

Example

John Doe

- A private school must provide a reasonable opportunity for parent(s) to restrictively endorse a check to the school.
- Upon endorsing a check to the private school, the parent(s) and the private school validate that the payment amount is correct. Any discrepancies thereafter shall be resolved between the parent(s) and the private school.
- Parent(s) cannot remove a scholarship check from a school's premises and cannot refuse to endorse a check; either or both could result in forfeiture of the scholarship. Parent(s) could remain responsible for payment of any tuition and/or fees owed to the private school.

Important: The GaDOE cannot honor requests for early payment. While the GaDOE makes every effort to provide funding in a timely manner, circumstances can arise which result in a delay in the delivery of scholarship payments. For further information regarding the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program contact Carmen Hernandez-Freemire, cfreemir@doe.k12.ga.us or 404-463-5546.