

**Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program
Parent Responsibilities
For Students Continuing in Scholarship Program**

IMPORTANT: This document is for a parent/guardian whose child(ren) participated in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program during the 2010 - 2011 school year. If a parent/guardian is interested in having a student participate for the **first time** in the GSNS Program for the 2011 - 2012 school year, refer to *Understanding the Program* document in the For Parents box on the web page.

This is an attempt to summarize important requirements related to the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program. This page is only a guide. The provisions written in GSNS law and rule take precedence.

The GSNS Program is a program administered by the Georgia Department of Education. A parent/guardian interested in the GSNS Program must first visit the GSNS web page at <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/sb10.aspx>. Public or private schools and school districts are not responsible for providing information regarding the GSNS Program nor are they responsible for administering the program.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The GSNS web page <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/sb10.aspx> contains all information regarding the GSNS Program. It is recommend that a parent/guardian bookmark it and check it often since it is updated continuously.
2. A parent/guardian is responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines associated with the GSNS Program.

PARENT/GUARDIAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENROLLING THEIR CHILDREN IN AN AUTHORIZED PRIVATE SCHOOL

1. **The calculator for the 2011 - 2012 school year will be available in May 2011.** The calculator will contain the award amounts for students who are eligible to continue in the GSNS program for the 2011 - 2012 school year. A parent will need to enter the last public school a student attended, not the private school the student currently attends.
2. A parent/guardian is required to provide a private school with a copy of the estimated 2011 – 2012 scholarship award sheet for the student. This notifies the private school that a student is still eligible for the GSNS Program.
3. The award sheet generated by the scholarship calculator for eligible students is the only document needed by a parent/guardian for proof of a student’s eligibility for the GSNS Program. An award sheet will only be generated by the calculator if a student is eligible for the GSNS Program.
4. A parent/guardian re-enrolling a student at the same private school for the 2011 – 2012 school year must follow the re-enrollment procedures in place at the private school. Parent/guardian must notify the private school that a student is continuing his/her participation in the GSNS Program.

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program
Parent Responsibilities
For Students Continuing in Scholarship Program

5. A parent/guardian enrolling a student at a different private school than the one a student attended during the previous school year will need to contact a private school directly to learn about its admissions procedures. The scholarship can only be used at a private school authorized to participate in the GSNS Program. The list of authorized private schools with contact information is posted on the GSNS web page and will be updated through August 2011.
6. If a parent/guardian fails to notify a private school of a student's continuing eligibility, the private school may not report that student as enrolled in the GSNS Program to the Georgia Department of Education. This will affect the scholarship payments for a student and could affect his/her eligibility for the GSNS Program.

UNDERSTANDING GSNS PROGRAM PAYMENTS

1. Scholarship payments for returning 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 2011 - 2012 school year. Scholarships actually paid through the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program are dependent on appropriations made by the Georgia General Assembly.
2. If tuition and fees charged are higher at a private school than the scholarship award, a parent/guardian is responsible for paying the additional tuition. If tuition and fees are less than the scholarship award, the lesser amount will be paid under the scholarship. The GSNS Program by law will always pay the **lesser** of the two amounts.
3. By law, scholarship checks are issued four times a year. Payment is for instruction and services already received.
4. Checks are made out to parent/guardian of record at the private school, but are mailed directly to a private school. The private school is required to notify all parent(s)/guardian(s) when it receives scholarship payments. By law, parent/guardian is required to endorse scholarship checks over to a private school using a restrictive endorsement within 30 days of the notice from the private school. A parent/guardian cannot take a scholarship check from a school nor can he/she refuse to endorse a check; both will result in forfeiture of scholarship. It is illegal for private schools to endorse scholarship checks for parents.

**Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program
Parent Responsibilities
For Students Continuing in Scholarship Program**

5. The GSNS Program is authorized to make one payment per student per quarter and is not authorized to make any retroactive payments. Upon endorsing a check to the private school, a parent/guardian and a private school validate that the quarterly payment amount is correct. Any discrepancies thereafter shall be resolved between a parent/guardian and a private school.
6. A private school participating in the GSNS Program is not required to alter any of its business practices or policies under the GSNS Program. Therefore, parent/guardian is responsible for complying with the private school's business practices and policies.
7. Parent/guardian must read and understand any contracts/agreements entered into with a private school. Parent/guardian must obtain written copies of any contracts/agreements entered with the school (e.g. tuition reimbursement, fee schedules). Parent/guardian must keep track of any payments made to a private school. GaDOE staff **cannot** resolve any disputes that may arise between a parent/guardian and a private school.
8. Parent/guardian must keep a student in attendance at a participating private school throughout the school year unless excused by the school for illness or other good cause.
9. A student may continue to participate in the GSNS Program as long as:
 - Student remains a resident of Georgia; 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 law and rule.

Eligibility for the GSNS Program ends once a student graduates from high school or if the student turns 21 years old and has not yet graduated from high school.

10. If a parent/guardian transfers a student back into public school, the scholarship for a student will end. A student will need to regain eligibility for the GSNS Program.
11. GSNS funds **cannot** be used to pay for the following:
 - **Transportation**
 - **Before or after school care**
 - **Meals**
 - **Tutoring**
 - **Fees associated with field trips**
 - **Athletic fees**
 - **School supplies**
 - **Summer school programs**
 - **Other fees as determined by the GaDOE.**