



GEORGIA PROMISE
— SCHOLARSHIP —
ACCESS . ACHIEVE . SUCCEED .



Georgia Promise Scholarship Program

Private School Handbook

Introduction

This guide has been assembled to support Georgia's eligible private schools through the implementation of the Georgia Promise Scholarship, the state's new education savings account program.

Signed into law in 2024 through Senate Bill 233, the Georgia Promise Scholarship Program will empower families to pursue exceptional educational programs, amongst which may include attending a Georgia private school. The **Georgia Promise Scholarship will allow eligible families to use funds for private school tuition, fees, textbooks, and other eligible expenses**. This handbook will provide more information about the Georgia Promise Scholarship, including the program's structure, eligibility requirements, and application timeline for the 2025-2026 school year. This handbook has been updated to reflect comprehensive details included in the program regulations, which are available at MyGeorgiaPromise.org.

Thank you for your interest and support of the Georgia Promise Scholarship Program.

Mitch Seabaugh
Senior Vice President
Georgia Promise Scholarship

What is the Georgia Education Savings Authority (GESA)?

GESA was created as part of SB 233 to administer the Promise Scholarship. GESA is a companion entity to the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), which runs the HOPE / Zell Miller scholarships, ACE grant program, and various loan programs, among others.

Contact the Georgia Education Savings Authority

Questions? Please contact the Georgia Education Savings Authority:



Website

MyGeorgiaPromise.org



Phone

1 (877) 454-3788
1 (877) HLP-4-EDU



Email

Promise.Scholarship@gsfc.org

Georgia Promise Scholarship Program



Background

- The Georgia Promise Scholarship provides funding for eligible students to cover eligible expenses at participating schools or service providers
- Eligible expenses for the 2025-2026 school year include **tuition and fees, required textbooks, and tutoring services**, among others



Funding

- For the 2025-2026 school year, eligible families are entitled to a maximum award of **\$6,500** per student for eligible expenses (up to 5% may be withheld for admin fees)
- **Quarterly funding** will be made available to student accounts; families will then direct payment of funds for eligible expenses to private schools/service providers



Eligible Students

- For the 2025-2026 school year, students are eligible if:
 - Enrolled in a Georgia public school for the 2024-2025 school year* **OR** entering kindergarten **AND**
 - The student resides in the attendance zone of a public school included on the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) published list of lower performing public schools **AND**
 - Parent has resided in Georgia for 1+ year*

**Exceptions for active-duty military*

More information can be found in the program regulations, which are available at [MyGeorgiaPromise.org](https://mygeorgiapromise.org)

Attendance Zone Eligibility

Attendance Zone Eligibility Overview



Eligible students must reside in the attendance zone of ANY public school included on the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) published list of lower performing schools.

Steps for Parents to Check Attendance Zone Eligibility

1

Review list of lower performing schools to be published by GOSA by December 1. Upon its release, schools and families should refer to MyGeorgiaPromise.org for more information.

2

Check for ANY schools in the attendance zone they reside in (i.e., the elementary, middle, and high school). Note that a student does NOT need to be actively attending the school to be eligible.

If a student resides in the attendance zone of at least one school on the list, they would meet the attendance zone requirement.

Private School Eligibility

To participate in the Georgia Promise Scholarship Program, private schools must be located in Georgia and meet certain eligibility requirements:



Accreditation

- Be accredited (or in the process of receiving accreditation) by an accrediting agency approved by GESA. The following is a list of preapproved accreditation agencies:
 - Association of Christian Schools International
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Cognia/AdvancED)
 - Georgia Accrediting Commission
 - Georgia Association of Christian Schools
 - Georgia Independent School Association
 - Georgia Private School Accreditation Council
 - Southern Association of Independent Schools



Financial

- Be in operation for at least one school year
- OR**
- Provide GESA with an Independent Auditor's Report completed by a certified public accountant



Administrative Compliance

- Continue to comply with already existing laws:
- Comply with state antidiscrimination provisions [42 U.S.C. Section 2000d]
 - Comply with all health and safety laws or codes that apply to private schools
 - Comply with all other state laws applicable to private schools (i.e., provide the equivalent of 180 school days of education, provide basic educational program including core subjects, etc.) [Code Section 20-2-690]

Administrative Responsibilities

Schools that receive Georgia Promise Scholarship funds are subject to the following testing and reporting requirements:



Testing Requirements

- Participating schools are required to annually administer one of the following to participating students:
 - A nationally norm-referenced test approved by GESA (*see p.7 for a list of approved tests*)
 - A state-wide assessment



Reporting Requirements

- Schools must report the following to GESA on an annual basis for participating students:
 - Student testing results (*see p.7 for a list of approved tests*)
 - Enrollment dates
 - Per-student funding amounts
 - On-time graduation rates (beginning in 2029)



Dual Enrollment Reporting

- For participating students in a dual enrollment program, participating schools must report attendance rates and course completion rates*

**The aggregate data of attendance rates and course completion rates as required by the Dual Enrollment Act (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161.3).*



GESA will *not* require participating schools to alter beliefs, admission policies, employment policies, or curricula in order to receive account funds under the program

Participating schools are required to administer a nationally norm-referenced test or a state-wide assessment on an annual basis. See below for a list of approved nationally norm-referenced tests.

Nationally Norm-Referenced Tests Approved for Use by Participating Private Schools

The following is a selection of providers / tests approved for use by participating schools:

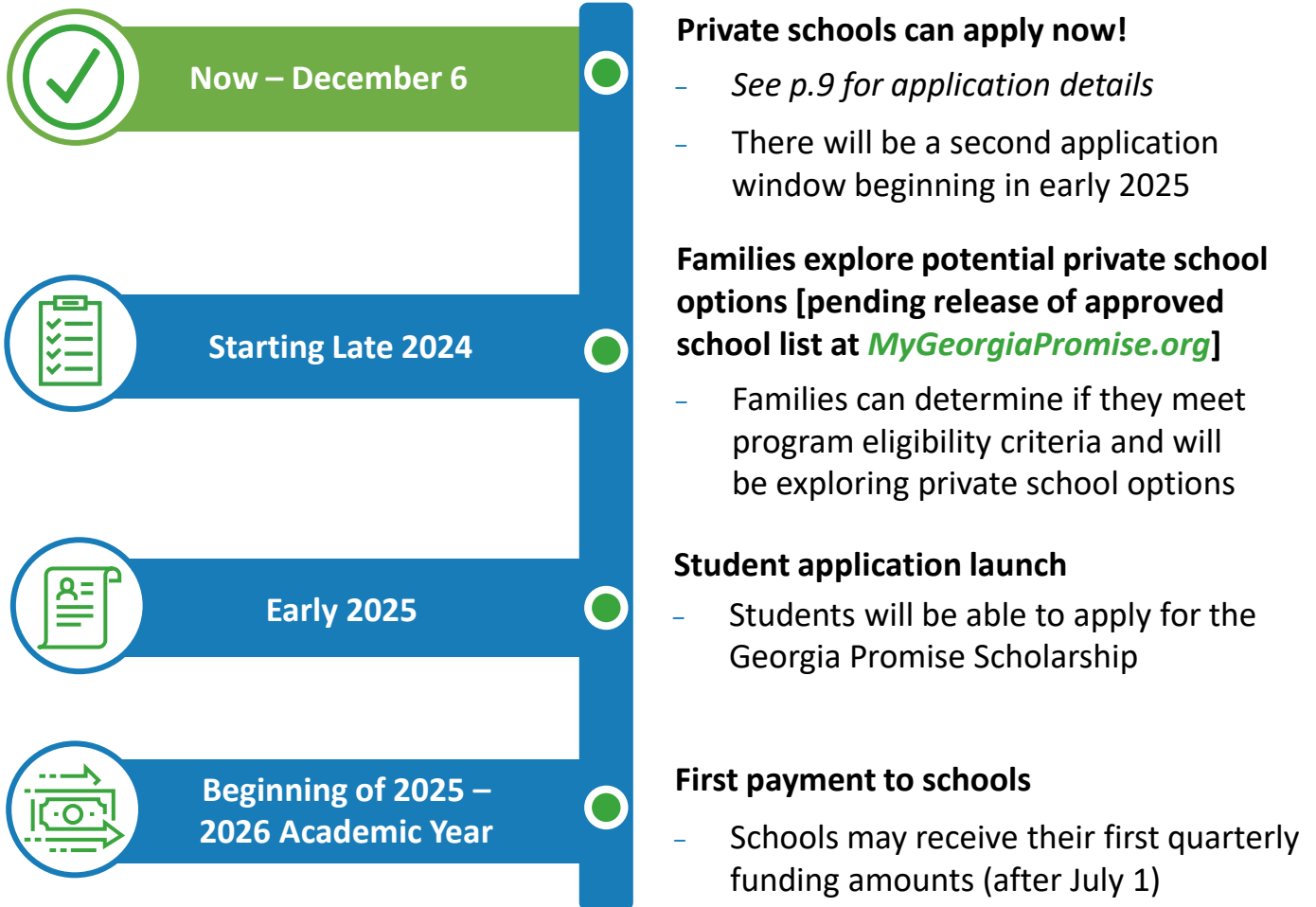
Test Provider	Approved Tests
American College Testing (ACT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ACT – Pre-ACT
Classic Learning Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Classic Learning Test 10 (CLT10)
Curriculum Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – i-Ready Assessments
Data Recognition Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – TerraNova, Third Edition (TerraNova 3) – TerraNova NEXT
Educational Records Bureau (ERB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP)
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
Pearson Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (Stanford 10)
Renaissance Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – STAR Assessments
Riverside Insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Iowa Assessments
The College Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) – Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST)

While this is the current list of approved tests, [please email GESA](#) with any questions regarding tests not included on this list.

Provided tests must measure student academic progress in math and language arts and be nationally norm-referenced (with the exception of Georgia state-wide assessments).

Georgia Promise Scholarship Key Dates

There are several upcoming key dates that impact schools interested in participating in the Georgia Promise Scholarship Program. More specific information on timing will be released in the near future:



Additional timeline information and milestones will be shared in the coming weeks and months

Private School Application Windows

- There are two application windows for the program:
 - Early application window: Now – December 6
 - Secondary window: Early 2025 (dates TBD)

Early Application Window: [Apply Now!](#)

- Applications are collected via a Qualtrics survey format, which you can find [here](#) (or at the QR code)
- Application will be open from now until December 6



Private School Application

Secondary Application Window: Early 2025 (Dates TBD)

- The second application window will be administered through the program's platform vendor
- Both applications will require the same required information for approval
- Logistical details will be released following closure of the early application window

Private School Application Approval

- Schools that apply in the early window will **receive approval decisions by late 2024**
- Approved schools will be able to **share their application status with prospective school applicants** interested in the Promise Scholarship Program

Prior to Applying Schools Should:



Application Preparation

- Confirm program eligibility (see p.5)
- Review program requirements (see p.6)
- Collect required application documents (see p.10)

School Application Checklist

Version as of: 11/21/2024

School Application Checklist

Before applying, schools should gather all of the following information and documentation as they will be required inputs.

School Information

Basic information:

☐

School contact and location information

☐

2025/26 student application timeline (opening, closing and decision dates)*

Enrollment information:

☐

Current enrollment, estimated enrollment for 2025/26

☐

Estimated capacity for 2025/26

Testing information:

☐

GESA approved norm-referenced assessment(s) to be used

School Documentation

☐

Proof of accreditation status

☐

2024/25 and 2025/26 annual tuition schedule* and required fees/expenses*

☐

2025/26 academic calendar*

☐

Proof of fiscal soundness

- Proof of being in operation for at least a year and a financial statement/report

OR

- An Independent Auditor's Report by a certified public accountant

**If your academic calendar, tuition and fee schedule, or application timeline are not available for the 2025/26 academic year, you may still apply and provide the information at a later time.*

Eligible Expenses

For the 2025-2026 school year, eligible education expenses include:



Educational services/materials

- **Tuition, fees, and required textbooks*** at approved private schools, post-secondary institutions, or non-public online learning programs

**For eligible core and CTAE courses*



Other eligible expenses include:

- Tutoring services provided by an educator certified by the Professional Standards Commission
- Therapy and other services provided by certified physicians or licensed therapists
- Curriculum, including required supplemental materials
- Up to \$500 per year for transportation

These expenses are most applicable to home study programs

- Other education expenses may be authorized by GESA
- Expenses for services or products billed by family members are not eligible

Expense Process

To facilitate efficient transfer of funds, GESA will contract with a platform vendor that has a proven track record of serving families and states for similar programs. The process for receiving funds and paying for eligible expenses is generally outlined below:

1

Student is accepted into the Georgia Promise Scholarship Program

2

Family receives guidance from the vendor on **setting up an account**

3

[If applicable] Family confirms **enrollment at a participating private school** on vendor portal

4

Each quarter, **GESA funds student accounts** through the vendor portal

5

Family requests payment of account funds to private schools, service providers, and vendors for services and items available on the vendor marketplace

School Eligibility

1 What schools are eligible? (see p.5 for more details)

To enroll participating students, schools must:

- Be located in Georgia
- Be accredited or provide evidence of working toward accreditation
- Demonstrate fiscal soundness by having been in operation for one school year or by submitting a financial information report
- Comply with state antidiscrimination provisions, all health and safety codes applicable to private schools, and any other state laws applicable to private schools

School Requirements

2 Do participating schools have to change their existing admissions criteria / other processes?

No. Participating schools are not required to alter creed, current practices, admission policies, employment policies, or curricula in order to receive account funds as part of the Promise Scholarship program.

3 What are the testing requirements for participating schools?

For Georgia Promise Scholarship students only, participating schools are required to annually administer a nationally norm-referenced test approved by GESA or a state-wide assessment and must measure student academic progress in math and language arts. Schools must report test results to GESA (for Promise Scholarship students only).

See p.7 for a list of approved tests.

4 What student information do schools have to provide to GESA?

By August 1 of each year, a participating school shall submit a report to GESA and DOE. The report is limited to the following information (in addition to test results as described in question 3):

- The aggregate data of student attendance rates and course completion rates for eligible core courses and eligible CTAE courses of all participating students
- The dates of enrollment for each participating student in the previous year
- The amount of account funds received on behalf of each participating student during the previous school year

5 Is there a limit to how many Promise Scholarship students a school may have?

No. Schools are not limited in the number of GPSP students it may have.

Student Eligibility

6 What students are eligible?

A student may qualify for a Promise Scholarship if the student is:

- Enrolled in a Georgia public school for the 2024-2025 school year* or entering kindergarten in the 2025-2026 school year, and
- Residing in an attendance zone of a public school on the GOSA published list of lower performing public schools (list to be released by December 1) and
- Parents must have been a Georgia resident for at least one year*

**Exceptions for active-duty military*

7 Are there income eligibility requirements?

No, there are no income requirements for students to participate in the Georgia Promise Scholarship. However, students with a family income less than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level will receive priority in the application process.

8 How are students verified to be eligible?

To confirm eligibility, GESA will verify information submitted for students when families apply for the program in early 2025. This will be done through a platform vendor.

9 How long are students eligible to receive funding?

Once students are accepted into the program, they will remain eligible for the program in future years. Ultimately, students in the program remain eligible to receive funds until:

- Returning to a public school
- Graduating from high school
- Reaching the age of 20 (or age 21 for Special Education students) or
- Moving out of Georgia

10 Do participating students need to re-apply annually?

No. Upon acceptance into the program, participating families will remain in the program until they exit the program due to returning to public school, graduating high school, or moving out of the state. Families may be asked to complete a brief re-verification process each year to confirm their continued participation.

11 Will students lose their scholarship if they move to a district not meeting the lower 25% standard?

No, once students enter the program, they will remain eligible for funds.

Student Eligibility (cont.)

12 How does the Georgia Promise Scholarship overlap with the Greater Opportunities for Access to Learning (GOAL) (tax-credit) and Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program?

Schools may participate in multiple scholarship programs, however, students are unable to stack Promise Scholarship funds with Georgia Student Scholarship Organization (SSO) scholarships (such as the [Georgia GOAL Scholarship](#)) or the [Georgia Special Needs Scholarship](#). Schools and families may explore these other programs at the provided links.

Eligible Expenses

13 What expenses are eligible?

Scholarship funds may be used for the following qualified education expenses:

- Tuition, fees, and required textbooks for eligible core and CTAE courses at approved private schools, post-secondary institutions, or non-public online learning programs
- Qualifying curriculum and supplemental materials
- Tutoring services provided by an educator certified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission
- Eligible services from a physician or licensed therapist for occupational, behavioral, physical, or speech-language therapies
- Transportation from/to a service provider (up to \$500 per year)
- Other authorized expenses as approved by GESA

14 How and when will the parent review committee be established?

The parent review committee must be comprised of parents with children participating in the program; therefore, it cannot be established until after accounts are funded at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. The parent review committee will be made up of one parent with relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities, 4 parents residing within large school systems (10,000+ students), and 4 parents within smaller school systems. The chair of the committee will be the President of GESA (or whoever the President appoints).

Funding

15 How are payments disbursed?

The initial funding of approved student accounts will be at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year. Funds will be made available to families in quarterly installments, which can then be directed to private schools and service providers for payment of eligible educational expenses. This process will be done through a platform vendor.

16 When will parents know if they have been awarded funds?

Parents will be notified of student funding status following completion of the student application window (timing to be determined but expected in early 2025).

17 Are there any regulations for participating students' tuitions?

Participating schools shall not charge higher tuition or apply unique fees only to participating students.

18 Is the awarded amount different for students of different grade levels?

No, the award amount is the same for students regardless of their grade.

19 Can a family "pool" the money from one year to the next?

Families may carry over up to 50% of the funding amount for the current school year into the following school year.

20 Can schools stack the program with their own financial aid?

Schools are able to stack the program with a private school's own financial aid that comes through philanthropic or other sources/subsidies – unless that is derived through SSO scholarships (such as GOAL) or state scholarships such as the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program.

21 Will parents be responsible for the difference in the scholarship and the cost of tuition?

Students may receive up to \$6,500 per year in funding for eligible expenses. In the case that a private school's tuition is greater than \$6,500, parents will be responsible for the difference (potentially utilizing private school's financial aid).

Other FAQs**22 When will the list of lower performing schools be released?**

By law, the list must be published no later than December 1 each year.

23 When will schools be notified if they were accepted into the program?

The Georgia Promise Scholarship Act requires GESA to approve applications from schools and service providers no later than 60 days after receiving the applications.

24 How are students prioritized if the program reaches maximum capacity?

For year 1, students with family income under 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will be prioritized over other applications.

For following years, program prioritization will be as follows:

1. Returning students

- Once accepted, participating students shall always receive first consideration and remain in the program unless they become ineligible due to age, exiting the program, returning to public school, or moving out of GA

2. Siblings

- Siblings of current participating students

3. New applicants under 400% FPL

- Students who have never participated in the program and whose family income does not exceed 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level

4. Previously participating students

- Students who formerly participated in the program, exited, and are now reapplying

5. New students over 400% FPL

- Students who have never participated in the program and whose family income exceeds 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level