

# Louisiana Believes

## LOUISIANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION GUIDE

You can use this guide to learn how to...

Apply for a Scholarship for the first time

Apply for your child to go to a different Scholarship school next year

**Want your child to stay at his or her current school? No problem!**

If your current school serves the grade your student will enter in 2023-24, you are guaranteed a seat if you wish to return.

To apply for a Scholarship, please complete an online application [here](#).

### Key Dates:

1. December 12, 2022: Application Opens  
Parents can apply for a Scholarship
2. January 27, 2023: Application Closes  
Deadline for parents to apply for a Scholarship
3. Late April/early May: Department sends award notification letters

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## Overview of the Louisiana Scholarship Program

The Louisiana Scholarship Program provides thousands of low-income families with the opportunity to send their child to the participating school of their choice. The program was launched in 2008 in New Orleans with approximately 600 students and was expanded statewide in 2012.

The Louisiana Legislature allocates funding for the Scholarship program. Participating schools receive a per-student award equal to the school's tuition, student fees, and associated state testing costs up to the amount allocated per-student to the local school system in which the student resides.

Staff at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) support the administration of the program and can be reached via email at [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov).

### Current Scholarship Students

Want your child to stay at his or her current school? No problem! If you wish for your child to return to his/her current school, no action is required on your part. If your current school serves the grade your student will enter in 2022-2023, you are guaranteed a seat if you wish to return.

Want to add siblings to the scholarship program? If you currently have a child/children receiving the Scholarship and would like to apply for their sibling(s), you will need to complete an application for the new sibling. To apply for a sibling, follow the instructions below. Eligibility documentation must be submitted for each additional sibling.

Want to switch your child to another school next year? To apply to another school other than your current school, follow the instructions below. Continuing Scholarship students do not need to submit eligibility documentation.

Is your child completing the final grade offered at their current scholarship school this year? Be sure to submit a new application for your child! Those students who are currently in the highest grade offered at their current school but do not submit a new application will lose their Scholarship award—no transfers will be allowed after the application deadline (January 23, 2022) has passed. Continuing Scholarship students do not need to submit eligibility documentation.

### NEW Scholarship Students

To Be Eligible for a Scholarship, your child must:

- Be a resident of Louisiana.
- Be entering grades 1-12 or entering kindergarten for the 1st time.
- Have attended a "C," "D," "F," or "T" school for the 2022-2023 school year or is entering kindergarten for the first time.
- Have a family household income that does not exceed the requirements below:

## SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY – 250% of Current Federal Poverty Guidelines

FAMILY HOUSEHOLD SIZE	YEARLY INCOME	MONTHLY INCOME	BI-WEEKLY INCOME	WEEKLY INCOME
2	\$45,775	\$3,815	\$1,761	\$880
3	\$57,575	\$4,798	\$2,214	\$1,107
4	\$69,375	\$5,781	\$2,668	\$1,334
5	\$81,175	\$6,765	\$3,122	\$1,561
6	\$92,975	\$7,748	\$3,576	\$1,788
7	\$104,775	\$8,731	\$4,030	\$2,015
8	\$116,575	\$9,715	\$4,484	\$2,242
Add the following for each additional family member.	\$11,800	\$983	\$453	\$227

### Current Year School Eligibility

- Eligible students entering grades 1-12 must have attended a school with a grade of C, D, F or T during both the October 1, 2022 **AND** February 1, 2023 public school count dates. Students who did not attend such school on those count dates will not be eligible for a Scholarship.
- Students applying to kindergarten must be entering kindergarten for the first time or coming from a C, D, F or T school and must be 5 on or before September 30, 2022.
- Because eligibility will be determined after the application window has closed, **we cannot guarantee your eligibility at the time of submission.**
- Being determined eligible does **NOT guarantee** a seat at a Scholarship school.

#### *For Orleans Parish residents:*

Applications submitted for the Louisiana Scholarship Program will not affect your application through NCAP for a public school placement. If a student is awarded a scholarship through the Louisiana Scholarship Program, families can choose to accept the scholarship or remain at the public school awarded through NCAP.

#### *For Homeschool and Nonpublic School families:*

Homeschool students and students in grades K-12 who currently attend nonpublic schools are not eligible.

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## How to Apply

Families applying for a Scholarship for a student *not currently enrolled as a Scholarship student in grades K-12*, **MUST** confirm their eligibility (see step 2 below).

### Step 1: Complete Online Application

- 1) Visit <https://webapps.doe.louisiana.gov/publicapps/scholarshipsonlineapp/offline.aspx>
- 2) Complete the application:
  - Enter basic information about the student and the parent/guardian.
  - Enter basic information about this student's siblings (if applicable). Having a sibling that is a current Scholar student enrolled at a participating school will give this student priority enrollment to that school (only).
  - Provide information required to verify income.
  - Provide information required to verify residency.
  - Select up to five (5) participating schools, in order of preference.
  - Agree to required disclosures, then submit the application.

### Step 2: Confirm Eligibility

Families applying for a Scholarship for a student *not currently enrolled as a Scholarship student in grades K-12*, **MUST** confirm their eligibility. Also: being determined eligible does NOT guarantee a seat at a Scholarship school.

Families must present proof of income and proof of residency in person at any school site currently participating in the Scholarship program. See below for more information.

## How to Confirm Eligibility

### Proving Income Eligibility

In order to be eligible to receive a Scholarship, families must submit **proof of income** by bringing one of the following documents to the first choice school site listed on their application.

The following documents are accepted for INCOME verification:
• 2021 Federal Tax Return, total income*
• Last 4 check stubs
• Most recent unemployment compensation statement
• DCFS placement form, in the case of foster children
• Most recent pension statements
• Most recent Social Security benefits statement
• SNAP Benefits
• Any income verification, benefits statement, or award letter from a government entity or tax-reporting business
• Louisiana Purchase Card Budget Sheet or Benefits Statement

*\*If awarded a Scholarship, a household must provide a 2022 tax return at time of registration in the Spring.*

### Residency Verification

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In order to be eligible to receive a Scholarship, families must submit **proof of residency** by bringing one of the following documents to one of the schools listed on their application.

<b>The following documents are accepted for RESIDENCY verification:</b>
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| • Rental lease agreement or mortgage  |
| • Electricity/Gas Bill  |
| • Telephone Bill (Must be a landline - cellular phone bills will not suffice) |
| • Cable/Internet Service Bill   |
| • Sewerage/Water Bill   |
| • Current Official Letter from a Government Agency (DSS, DHH)                 |
| • Homestead Exemption Notice  |
| • Property Tax Notice   |

If a family does not own or rent the home they live in (i.e. temporarily staying with relatives during a housing search) the owner/renter of the residence must submit a notarized letter confirming that the applicant family lives there and must provide their own proof of residency via one of the documents above.

### **Step 3: Wait for Award Notification**

Submitting an application does not guarantee that a student will receive an award for the Louisiana Scholarship Program. Award decisions are made according to the number of seats available, the applicant priorities outlined in Bulletin 133, and the availability of funding from the Legislature.

Parents will be notified if their student(s) received an award in the Spring at the contact information provided on the application when it was submitted.

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## Understanding the Matching and Lottery Process

1. We honor family choice first.
  - a. Families rank their choices in order of preference
  - b. The LDOE will try to match students to their top choice or one of their top choices
2. Some schools have more applications than seats.
  - a. When that happens, LDOE will conduct a random lottery utilizing the following priority groups, in order, to determine which students get seats first:
    1. Students transferring from a closing Scholarship school,
    2. Current NSECD students applying to same kindergarten site, if applicable,
    3. Siblings of current Scholarship students who apply to the same school their sibling currently attends,
    4. Current Scholarship student applicants that are in a transition grade,
    5. Applicants attending a D or F school or students transferring from a sanctioned Scholarship school,
    6. Applicants attending a C school,
    7. Applicants residing in the same parish as the school, if school offers a geographic preference,
    8. Applicants seeking to transfer from one Scholarship school to another.

Please note, wherever possible, we try to ensure that siblings stay in the same school. Siblings are defined as sharing the same parent/guardian and/or home address. Please indicate on the application the names of siblings in the appropriate area in order to receive priority. Priority is only assigned if a sibling is a current Scholarship student enrolled in the Scholarship school to which you are applying.

### Students with Disabilities

The Louisiana Department of Education does not consider a student's disability when matching students to schools. Some Scholarship schools may offer additional education services for students with disabilities, but all schools must enroll all students awarded, regardless of disability. Please check with the school(s) of your choice before listing it on your child's application to ensure it is able to meet your child's needs.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### General Questions

#### What is the Louisiana Scholarship Program?

The Louisiana Scholarship Program is a program designed to provide students with additional opportunities to attend the school of their choice. Applicants are eligible to receive state-funded Scholarships to enroll in participating nonpublic schools or high performing public schools.

#### Who is eligible for the Scholarship Program?

Students must:

- Be a current Louisiana resident,
- Have a Household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, and
- Be either entering kindergarten or enrolled in a public school with a C, D, or F grade on both October 1 and February 1 of the current school year, or be a continuing Scholarship student.

Homeschool students and students in grades K-12 who currently attend nonpublic schools are not eligible.

#### How do I know which schools are participating in the program?

To find participating schools in your area, please view our participating schools [list here](#).

#### Do I need to verify eligibility at each school I rank on my application?

No. You only need to verify eligibility once. You may rank up to five schools on your application, and our matching program will determine which school your child matches with. You only need to submit one application, no matter how many schools you rank.

#### What will the program cost me?

The program is free to all qualifying students. For nonpublic schools, the Scholarship will cover the full amount of a school's tuition and required fees, up to the maximum state allocation per student. However, we encourage you to reach out to schools of interest to see what services are included.

Public schools will receive the full value of the maximum state allocation.

Funds will be paid directly to the school on behalf of the student. Uniforms and any optional fees, including field trips and lunch (if school does not participate in the free and reduced-price lunch program) will be the parent/guardian responsibility.

#### Where can I find a list of C, D, or F schools?

Performance scores for 2022 are located [here](#).

#### Will participating schools provide transportation?

Providing transportation for all Scholarship students is not a requirement of this program. Please check with the participating school of your choice to determine if transportation services are available.

#### How does this program serve students with disabilities?

The Louisiana Department of Education does not consider a student's disability when matching students to schools. Some Scholarship schools may offer additional education services for students with disabilities, but all

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schools must enroll all students awarded, regardless of disability. Please check with the school(s) of your choice before listing it on your child's application to ensure it is able to meet your child's needs.

Schools are not allowed to implement admissions criteria for Scholarship applicants and may not discriminate against any students – such as students with special needs – during the application and registration processes. Schools must accept the student if the family still chooses to enroll their child despite the school's lack of available special education services.

### **Application Questions**

#### **Does it matter how quickly I apply?**

No. There is no preference for early applications. All qualified applicants who meet the deadline will have an equal chance of selection, regardless of whether they are the first or the last to submit an application.

#### **Do all students who apply to the program receive Scholarships?**

Submitting an application does not guarantee that a student will receive an award for the Louisiana Scholarship Program. Award decisions are made according to the number of seats available, the applicant priorities outlined in Bulletin 133, and the availability of funding from the Legislature.

The Louisiana Department of Education will attempt to place as many applicants as possible in their preferred school choice; if the number of applicants exceeds the number of seats available at a specific school and grade level, then those Scholarship seats will be awarded through an unbiased lottery process.

#### **What if my child is entering a grade their current school does not serve?**

You must submit a new application and list choices that serve the appropriate grade, but you are not required to re-submit eligibility documentation. Students in transition grades receive preference in the lottery but are not guaranteed a placement. **If you do not submit an application, your child will not receive a scholarship for next year.**

#### **How do I add my child's siblings to the scholarship program?**

If you currently have a child/children receiving the scholarship and would like to apply for their sibling(s), you will need to complete an application for the new sibling. It is important that you indicate on the application that your child currently has a sibling participating in the program. [Eligibility documentation must be submitted for each additional sibling.](#)

### **Scholarship Awards and Enrollment Questions**

#### **How will I be notified of my student's Scholarship award?**

Scholarship awards are made by LDOE and will be communicated directly to families via email in late April, 2023. Schools cannot inform families that they have been accepted to their school as a Scholarship student prior to awards being made. Families that have questions about this policy should reach out to [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov).

#### **How do I accept my student's Scholarship award?**

Families must complete registration, including resubmitting eligibility documentation, to the awarded school before the deadline stated in the award notification letter. A Scholarship is not confirmed until registration is



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complete. If families fail to register by the deadline, the student will lose their Scholarship award.

Families are required to sign three additional forms in order to participate in the Scholarship program. These forms (Parent Waiver for Special Education Services, Parent Acknowledgement Regarding Scholarship Funds, and Receipt of Rules and Regulations Form) must be re-signed every year to retain eligibility.

### **Why was my student's application marked ineligible?**

There are two reasons an application is typically marked ineligible:

- Income Ineligible – Household income was reported to exceed 250% of the federal poverty limit.
- Ineligible Prior School – Student was not reported as enrolled in the Louisiana Public School that received a letter grade of “C”, “D”, or “F” on both October 1st and February 1st of the current school year. Students must be enrolled in a school that meets these requirements on both count dates. Students that are homeschooled are not eligible to receive a Scholarship.

### **What should I do if I am not happy with my student's award?**

Once the transfer window opens in the summer, the student may then apply for a transfer to another Scholarship school. The transfer form would be completed at the new school and submitted to LDOE for approval.

## **Current Scholarship Students Questions**

### **What if my child is entering a grade their current school does not serve?**

A current Scholarship student who is completing the final grade offered at their current scholarship school must submit a new application and list choices that serve the upcoming grade in order to be matched. Current Scholarship students in this situation do have priority in any lotteries.

Students in terminal grades receive preference in the lottery but are not guaranteed a placement. Those students who are in a terminal grade, who fail to reapply, will lose their Scholarship award—no transfers will be allowed after the application deadline has passed.

### **Can students transfer to other participating Scholarship schools?**

Current Scholarship students who wish to transfer from one participating Scholarship school to another during the school year are required to submit a formal Hardship Transfer Request to LDOE signed by both the parent/guardian and a representative of the receiving school. Transfers are only allowed to schools that meet accountability standards and who have not exceeded their new student caps

A student is not permitted to enroll at a different participating Scholarship school until LDOE has notified the participating school that the transfer has been approved. If a student transfers without a completed transfer form and approval from LDOE, he/she may lose their Scholarship. It is the school's responsibility to inform the family when the transfer has been approved.

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Transfers will be approved on a case-by-case basis for hardships including but not limited to sibling unification, family relocation, student expulsion, or to accommodate a student's special needs.

### **How do families withdraw from the Scholarship Program?**

If a family wishes to withdraw their student(s) from the Scholarship Program, they should notify the Scholarship school and take the steps to enroll in the school option of their choice.

Students who withdraw from a Scholarship school without transferring to another Scholarship school will lose their Scholarship award for the remainder of the year.

If the student would like to apply for a Scholarship seat the following year, the family will need to re-verify income and residential eligibility, and the student must again meet all other eligibility requirements including attendance at a public school.

Students with documented medical leave may request a hold on their Scholarship by contacting [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov).

### **What do families do if their student is expelled from their Scholarship school?**

All schools must adhere to the policies outlined in their handbook when implementing expulsions. Families should receive and sign for these policies at the beginning of each school year. In addition, families should request written notification if their child is expelled or asked not to return.

If a student is officially expelled from their current Scholarship school for the remainder of the school year, Families may seek a transfer by submitting a Hardship Transfer Request to LDOE.

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### **Additional Resources**

For more information about the Scholarship Program, please visit the program's website at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program>, email [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov), or call LDOE's Help Center at 1.877.453.2721. The Help Center is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Current scholarship families are encouraged to communicate directly with their child's school. The school is the best source of information about school requirements and the Scholarship program.

If you have any additional questions regarding the application process, please contact our office at [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov) for assistance.