



School Choice Program for Students with Exceptionalities

School Participation Guide

Revised February 2023



**DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION**
Louisiana Believes

Revised March 7, 2023

OVERVIEW

The School Choice Program (SCP) for Students with Exceptionalities in Louisiana provides vouchers for students with exceptionalities, in eligible parishes, to attend a private school that will best address their needs. Each year, The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) conducts a lottery to award student participation, with a priority given to continuing students.

SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Nonpublic schools wishing to participate in the Scholarship program must annually be [Brumfield v. Dodd](#) compliant and approved by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to be considered eligible for participation and submit an annual Notice of Intent (NOI) to Participate via jotform.

Schools wishing to participate in the SCP program must take the following steps annually according to the timeline published by the Louisiana Department of Education.

1. **BESE Approval:** The nonpublic school approval process is intended to confirm that schools utilize “a curriculum of quality at least equal to that prescribed for similar public schools” as required by the Louisiana Constitution. For more information on the BESE Approval process, review the [Nonpublic School Approval Guidelines](#).
2. **Brumfield v. Dodd Compliance:** The Brumfield v. Dodd certification process verifies that BESE-approved nonpublic schools do not use racially discriminatory policies and practices. BESE-approved nonpublic schools must annually be certified as Brumfield v. Dodd compliant to be eligible to receive any state or federal funding. Additional information on Brumfield v. Dodd compliance can be found on the [Louisiana Believes](#) website.
 - a. Must be approved by United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) and BESE that all school policies comply with Brumfield, et al. v Dodd.
3. **Provisionally Accredited Approved:** A provisionally accredited approved school is defined as a school that is working toward meeting accreditation requirements and has met all other criteria for approval by the state board. A provisionally accredited approved school will be removed from the program if it does not receive accreditation within four years.
4. **Accredited:** Participating schools can only be accredited by the following entities: the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation organizations, the Cognia accreditation organizations, the National Association of Independent Schools accreditation organizations, the Louisiana Montessori Association, in addition to the diocese or archdiocese in which the school is located.
5. Have provided educational services to students with exceptionalities for at least two years prior to participation;
6. Employ teachers that hold appropriate certification in special education;
7. Operates in a parish with a recent census population greater than 190,000 persons. The current parishes include:
 - o Caddo
 - o Calcasieu
 - o East Baton Rouge
 - o Jefferson
 - o Lafayette
 - o Orleans
 - o St. Tammany

NOTICE OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

All schools that would like to participate in the program are required to submit an annual Notice of Intent (NOI) to Participate via jotform in October. Schools must submit the following documentation as part of the Notice of Intent to Participate:

- Your school's Special Education Policies and Procedures
- A redacted copy of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a district provided services plan that your school has provided accommodations for within the last two years; or, evidence that the school has provided educational services to students with exceptionalities for at least the last two years
- A copy of at least one teacher's certificate indicating your staff is certified to provide accommodations to the exceptionalities your school indicated in the Notice of Intent
- Tuition and Fees for the upcoming school year
- Number of requested seats for the upcoming school year
- Contact information and school address

The NOI process should be completed by administrators or school personnel who have the authority to make enrollment decisions.

Approval of each school's seat request is contingent upon results from the LDOE's capacity review process as well as the availability of state funding. The total number of new scholarships awarded depends on the amount of available funding after returning students have been awarded.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Students participating in the SCP must meet all of the following eligibility requirements:

- Student has been evaluated by a Louisiana public school district and determined to have any one of the following exceptionalities:
 - Autism
 - Developmental Delay
 - Mental Disability
 - Other Health Impairment
 - Specific Learning Disability
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
- The student has a current Individual Education Plan or district provided services plan
- The student is eligible to attend a Louisiana public school in grades K-12
 - Must be a resident of Louisiana
 - Must be 5 years of age by September 30 of the upcoming year

STUDENT APPLICATION

Families wishing for their student to participate in this program must complete the student application annually and upload required program documents by the deadline.

The application opens annually in early February and closes early March. To access the application, families should visit the SCP [website](#).

Once the application closes, all submissions are reviewed for eligibility. Continuing students are guaranteed placement, and the Department will conduct a lottery to determine which new students are awarded a scholarship. Scholarships are awarded contingent upon funding availability.

- Application Timeline:
 - February – Application opens
 - March – Applications due
 - Late April/Beginning of May – LDOE notifies families of award status

Both new and returning students must complete an application each year in order to be considered for a scholarship award.

New students must submit all required documentation in order to confirm eligibility.

Each participating school still has discretion in maintaining their own admissions criteria and may decide whether or not to admit and enroll the student. However, all admissions criteria must align with what is in the student handbook.

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT

Families participating in this program receive an educational certificate, which is paid directly to the school on behalf of the family. The certificate is worth either approximately 50% of the per-pupil allocation of state funds to the student’s local school district, or the school’s tuition and fees, whichever is less. This amount averages to \$2,300 across the state. If the school’s tuition and fees exceed the certificate amount, the parents are responsible for paying the difference.

ANNUAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Schools report Scholarship enrollment in SEE, the Scholarships for Educational Excellence system found in the LEADS Portal, quarterly throughout the year. During each quarterly count, schools are required to mark whether or not a student is enrolled at the school as of the count date.

- Q1 Student Count- September
- Q2 Student Count- November
- Q3 Student Count- February
- Q4 Student Count- May

A student with excessive absences (>10) should not be marked as enrolled for that quarter.

However, a student may be marked as enrolled in remaining quarters if they meet attendance requirements (<10 absences) for subsequent quarters .

All Scholarship schools are required to keep daily paper or electronic attendance records. Schools must maintain up-to-date enrollment records in order to substantiate which students were actually enrolled on each of the four count dates, and are required to update contact information, verify grade levels, and enter accurate exit codes for students.

If schools do not properly mark enrollment for a student, they may not receive payment for that student or may have payment rescinded at a later date as a result of a formal audit.

PARTICIPATION COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

Monitoring

The Department is accountable for implementing a rigorous and fair monitoring process that respects the autonomy of participating Scholarship schools. This monitoring process includes comprehensive

reviews of available student and programmatic data, responding to parent concerns when necessary, and may include on-site school visits.

School Visits

The Department may at any point send personnel on school visits to monitor the health, safety, and welfare of students. Site visits give the LDOE the opportunity to connect with school leaders, provide context for previous accountability results, and ensure the safety of school facilities. These visits may include classroom visits and a checklist to ensure that schools are meeting the minimum requirements set forth by state law and BESE [Bulletins 133](#) and [741 \(Nonpublic\)](#).

Parent Concerns

The Louisiana Department of Education respects the autonomy of Scholarship schools and attempts to resolve as many concerns as possible at the school level. If a parent has a concern, they should first reach out to the school. If after contacting the school the parent's concern is not resolved, they should then reach out to the Office of School Choice for assistance.

If the parent has already communicated with their child's school, LDOE staff may reach out to school leaders to obtain additional context related to the parent concern and seek a resolution. In some particular instances that may jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of students, the Louisiana Department of Education reserves the right to conduct an investigation into the parent's allegations.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF STUDENTS

Participating schools must be in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the health, safety, and welfare of students for public or nonpublic schools. The LDOE may conduct an investigation of participating schools if the Department has reason to believe that schools are not in compliance with existing law or policy.

The following actions related to health, safety, and welfare of students are required of all Scholarship schools according to state law and BESE policy:

- Implement a curriculum of similar quality to a local public school ([B133, section 1305](#))
- Pass a yearly safety inspection from the Office of the State Fire Marshall ([B741 Nonpublic, section 3001](#))
- Have fire extinguishers present and stamped with a service date within the past 12 months
- Draft an Emergency Operations Plan and have it available for review ([B741 Nonpublic, section 3011](#))
- Conduct Louisiana Bureau of Criminal Investigation background checks on all employees who have regular interaction with children ([La R.S. 17:15](#))
- Complete required training and obtaining permission from parents before administering medication ([B133, section 3107](#))
- Ensure that facility is clean and free of debris, and that all means of entry and exit are free from blockage

Potential Health, Safety, and Welfare Sanctions

The documents required by law and policy outlined in this section may be requested by LDOE personnel at any time and must be presented by the school upon request. Schools that fail to produce these items or have operated without documents in a way that endangered the safety of students on campus may be removed from the Scholarship program. The state superintendent may immediately declare a school ineligible to participate if the school's continued participation endangers the academic welfare, health,

or safety of children.

PROGRAMMATIC COMPLIANCE

The Louisiana Department of Education relies on cooperation with participating schools to ensure that the Scholarship program runs efficiently and in a way that benefits all students and families. As part of this cooperation, schools are expected to meet required deadlines for submission of critical items related to enrollment, finances, or any other action requested by the LDOE.

Schools should reach out directly to studentscholarships@la.gov if they need assistance or clarification in completing programmatic requirements.

Potential Programmatic Compliance Sanctions

Schools that repeatedly fail to meet required deadlines related to general program management, enrollment, or finances may face consequences outlined in the intervention ladder up to and including enrollment sanctions or total removal from the program.

Intervention Ladder

Occasionally, the routine monitoring processes outlined in this document will result in adverse findings. Scholarship schools may fall out of compliance with regard to important legal or policy requirements. Academic standards may come into question or financial soundness may become an issue. When these situations occur, schools may enter into the intervention process. The Louisiana Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all participating schools are aware of monitoring activities that may impact their school's participation in the program.

- Good Standing
 - All schools begin outside of the intervention ladder and are considered to be in good standing. Schools in good standing receive non-invasive regular oversight and submissions tracking. Schools must meet performance targets and maintain open communication with the Department in exchange for this level of non-invasive oversight.
- Notice of Violation
 - Schools may receive a formal Notice of Violation if the Department determines that the school violated law or policy, if the school failed to complete required action items in a timely manner, or if regular oversight generates significant questions or concerns. Before any Notices of Violation are given, the LDOE will communicate with school leaders, parents, and any other necessary stakeholders to verify complaints and ensure that the Department is acting on truthful information. When issuing a Notice of Violation, the Department will contact the school leader directly.
 - The Notice of Violation may contain specific actions and due dates required to remedy the violation. Upon remedying the concern, the school will return to good standing. If the concern is not remedied in the time allotted, the school may receive limits to enrollment for the subsequent school year or be removed from the program entirely. Repeated Notices of Violation may lead to increased oversight or removal from the program.
- Accountability Actions
 - Failure to meet the requirements specified in a Notice of Violation, uphold the health, safety and welfare of students, or to complete basic requirements of the Scholarship Program will result in the Department taking accountability actions against a particular school. These actions are outlined throughout this document, and may include complete and immediate removal from the Scholarship Program.

If your school has additional questions or is interested in participating in the School Program Program, please reach out to the Office of School Choice at studentscholarships@la.gov or visit our [website](#).

APPENDIX A: LIST OF 2023-2024 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

2023–2024 Participating Schools			
Parish	School	Site Code	Contact Phone #
Calcasieu	Immaculate Conception Cathedral School	505002	337.433.3497
Calcasieu	Our Lady Queen of Heaven	505005	337.477.7349
Calcasieu	Our Lady’s School	505006	337.527.7828
Calcasieu	St. Louis Catholic High School	505009	337.436.7275
Calcasieu	St. Margaret Catholic School	505010	337.436.7959
East Baton Rouge	Diocese of Baton Rouge Special Education Program	502048	225.336.8735
East Baton Rouge	Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy	705001	225.293.0141
East Baton Rouge	St. Lillian Academy	9B3001	225.767.7097
East Baton Rouge	The Brighton School	694001	225.291.2524
East Baton Rouge	The Dunham School	692003	225.767.7097
Jefferson	Archbishop Rummel Jr. High School	506127	504.834.5592
Jefferson	Archbishop Rummel Sr. High School	506005	504.834.5592
Jefferson	Ecole Classique	560001	504.887.3507
Jefferson	St. Benilde School	506062	504.833.9894
Jefferson	St. Christopher School	506067	504.837.6871
Jefferson	St. Therese Academy	506161	504.513.4400
Orleans	Raphael Academy	711001	504.524.5955
Orleans	St. Michael Special School	506099	504.524.7285
St. Tammany	Our Lady of the Lake School	506034	985.626.5678
St. Tammany	St. Paul's School	506101	985.892.3200
St. Tammany	St. Peter Catholic School	506103	985.892.1831

APPENDIX B: SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES OFFERED AT EACH PARTICIPATING SCHOOL for the 2023-2024 school year

2023-2024 Participating Schools							
School	Autism	Developmental Delay	Emotional Disturbance	Mental Disability	Other Health Impairment	Specific Learning Disability	Traumatic Brain Injury
Archbishop Rummel Jr. High School	X	X		X	X	X	X
Archbishop Rummel Sr. High School	X	X		X	X	X	X
Diocese of Baton Rouge Special Education Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ecole Classique	X	X			X	X	X
Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Immaculate Conception Cathedral School	X	X			X	X	
Our Lady of the Lake School	X	X			X	X	
Our Lady Queen of Heaven	X	X			X	X	
Our Lady's School	X				X		
Raphael Academy	X	X			X	X	
St. Benilde School	X	X			X	X	

St. Christopher School	X	X			X	X	
St. Lillian Academy	X	X		X	X	X	
St. Louis Catholic High School	X	X			X	X	
St. Margaret Catholic School	X	X			X	X	
St. Michael Special School	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
St. Paul's School	X	X			X	X	
St. Peter Catholic School	X	X			X	X	X
St. Therese Academy	X	X		X	X	X	
The Brighton School	X	X			X	X	X
The Dunham School	X	X			X	X	