



Exceptional Education

November 2024-

As a parent of a student who receives special education in the DeKalb County School District, this letter serves to inform you about your options to exercise public and private school choice. Under a state law passed by the Georgia State Legislature in 2007 (SB10) and a revision passed in 2021 (SB47), parents of students who receive special education and students who receive services under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may apply, if eligibility criteria are met, to transfer their child to another public school within their district of residence, another public school outside their district of residence, one of the state schools for deaf or blind operated by the state board of education, or a private school authorized to participate in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS).

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program (**also known as Senate Bill 10 on the District's School Choice website**) is a school choice program available for special needs students attending Georgia public schools who are served under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. **It is important to note that the application process is online, and selection is via lottery and based upon seat availability only.**

Parents are encouraged to review the many documents available on the Georgia Department of Education website (<https://gadoe.org/parent-family-resources/georgia-special-needs-scholarship>) for more information about GSNS. Scholarship amounts for the 2025-2026 school year will be available on the Georgia Department of Education web page by mid-July 2025.

To qualify for the Georgia Special Scholarship award with an IEP for the 2025-2026 school year the student must meet the following requirements:

- 1) The student's parent currently resides within Georgia and has been a Georgia resident for at least one calendar year however, that the one-year requirement shall not apply if the student's parent is an active-duty

military service member stationed in Georgia within the previous year; AND

2) The student had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in effect during the 2024-2025 school year; AND

3) The student spent the prior school year in attendance* at a Georgia public school.

***Prior school year in attendance** - the student was enrolled and reported by a public school system or school systems for funding purposes at the /me of both FTE program counts, conducted each school year in October and March. See OCGA 20-2-2112 (5)

Prior school year in attendance shall not apply if:

- The student's parent is an active-duty military service member stationed in Georgia within the previous year, OR
- The student has been adopted or placed in a permanent guardianship from foster care pursuant to an order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction within the previous year, OR the student previously qualified for a scholarship as provided in state law.
 - Please note that previously qualified only waives the prior school year in attendance provision, all other requirements including having an IEP in the previous school year and enrollment in a public school are still in effect.

The GSNS application can also be accessed through the DeKalb County School District website at www.dekalbschoolsga.org/school-choice/.

Parents are encouraged to contact the Department of Exceptional Education at 678-676-1809 to determine if the appropriate program is available at the schools being considered for a transfer within the District.