COLORADO
Department of Education

Purple Star Schools Award 2026-2027

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Introduction

Created in 2024 by House Bill 24-1076, the Purple Star Award Program designates public schools that provide exemplary services and supports to military-connected students and their families to mitigate academic and social-emotional challenges related to frequent moves, new schools, parental deployments, and different social circles and experiences.

April 2026 Awards Ceremony!

22 schools earned the Purple Star School designation at the April 7, 2026 ceremony.



2026-2027 Award Process Timeline

October 5, 2026: Application Opens in GAINS *(intent to apply is required)*

December 16, 2026: Application Closes

January-February 2027: Applications are reviewed

March 2027: Award Notifications are released

First Week of April 2027: Purple Star Schools Awards Ceremony

Eligible Applicants

Public schools of a:

1. School district,
2. A charter school authorized by a District,
3. A charter school authorized by the State Charter School Institute, or
4. Board of cooperative services (BOCES)

Private schools are not eligible for the award, based on requirements of House Bill 24-1076.

Program Guidelines

To qualify, the public school must meet all of the following requirements and submit supporting narratives and evidence (images, documents, etc) to demonstrate implementation.

Award is valid for 3 years.

Program Guidelines (6 Components)

1. A dedicated staff member as a military liaison, who performs the following duties:
    a. Identifies military connected students enrolled at the public school;
    b. Serves as the point of contact between the school and military-connected students and their families;
    c. Determines appropriate school services available to military-connected students and
    d. Determines whether military-connected students have access to the appropriate counseling services, mentorship services, volunteer opportunities and student support services
2. A accessible web page dedicated to military-family resources that includes the following information:
    a. How to relocate to, enroll in, register for and transfer records to the school;
    b. Academic planning, course sequences, and advanced courses available at the school;
    c. Counseling and other support services available for military-connected students enrolled at the public school; and
    d. The name of the designated military liaison for the public school and the liaison's duties
3. A student-led transition program that assists military-connected students who are relocating to the public school

Program Guidelines (6 Components)

4. Offer annual professional development for all educators and staff on issues specifically related to military-connected students
5. Offer at least one of the following initiatives:
    a. A public school resolution published on the the public schools' website showing support for military-connected students and their families;
    b. Celebrations in April **and** November to recognize military children and military families with associated events hosted by the public school;
    c. A partnership with a local military installation that facilitates opportunities for military members to volunteer on the public school's campus, speak at a public school assembly, or host a field trip; or
    d. Student-driven clubs and groups that show community-family engagement for military connected students and their families. (*un-related to the student-led transition program in section 3*)
6. One additional criteria that demonstrates commitment to supporting military-connected families, including:
    a. Hosting an **annual** military recognition event
    b. Partnering with a school liaison program manager from a military installation;
    c. Supporting projects that connect the public school to the military installation; and/or
    d. Providing outreach to military-connected students and their families.



GAINS

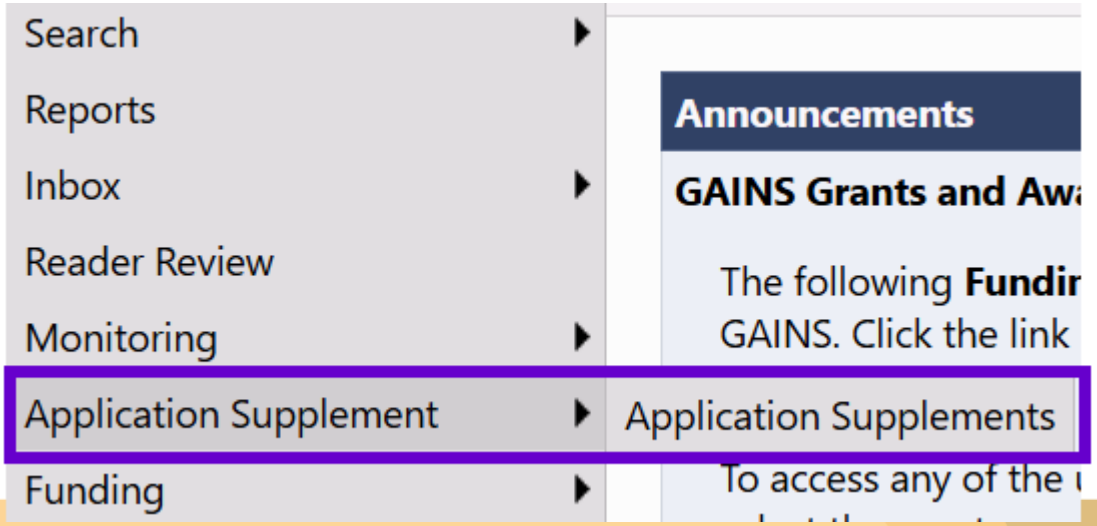
GAINS Access

You will need to complete the Intent to Apply prior to accessing GAINS.

- Based on the form, CDE will setup users within GAINS.
- Once CDE creates the users, each user will receive an email from GAINS to setup their password.
- Once the password is created, users will sign into GAINS through the Native Authentication.

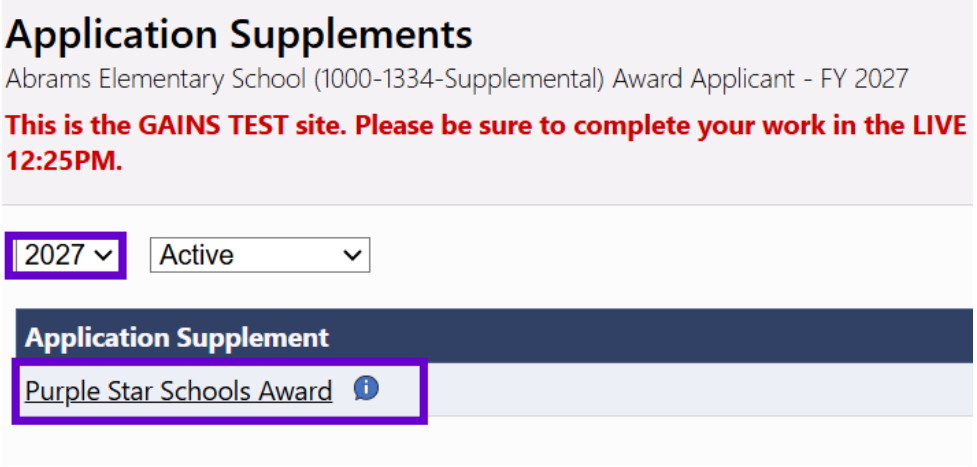
Locate the Application Supplements in GAINS

- Once logged in, hover over **Application Supplement** in the left navigation menu and select, **Application Supplements**.



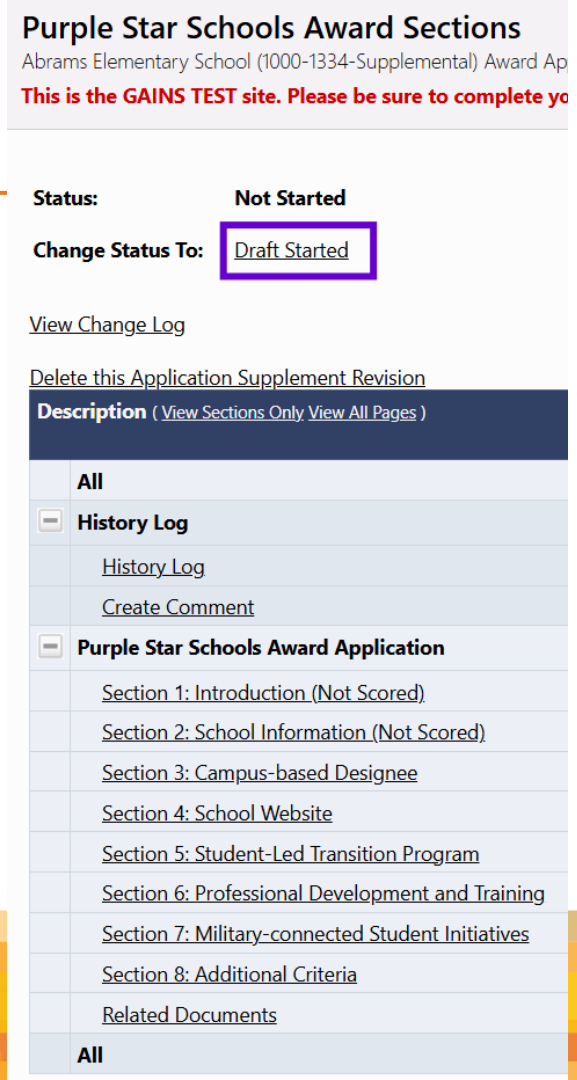
Find the Purple Star Schools Award

- Ensure you are in the **2027** Fiscal Year.
- Select the **Purple Star Schools Award**.



Start the Purple Star Schools Award

- Be sure to change the status to **Draft Started**.



Complete the Purple Star Schools Award

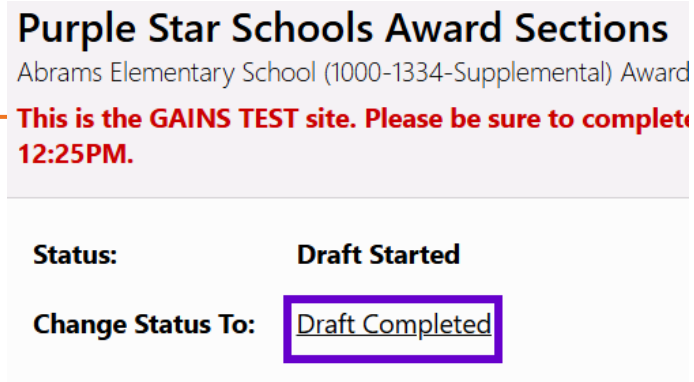
- Go through and complete each page within the GAINS platform.
- Every item with an asterisk (*) is required and will prevent submission of the application until the asterisk has been fill out.
- Any validation messages found on the sections page will need to be addressed.

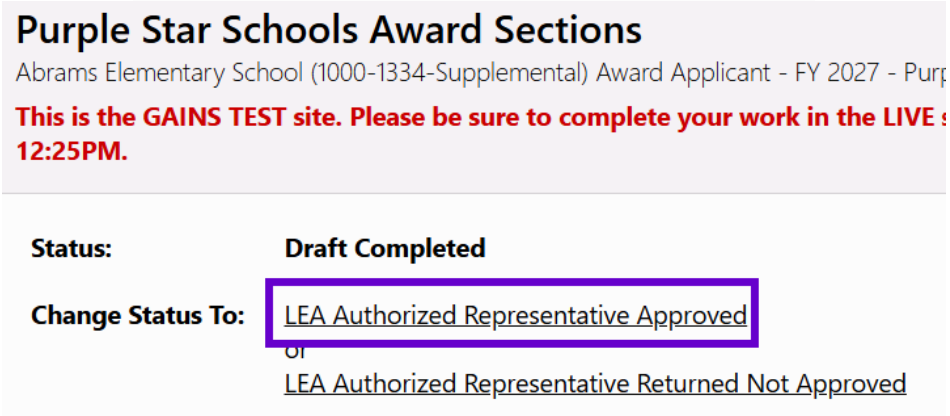
Description (View Sections Only View All Pages)	Validation
All	Messages
History Log	
History Log	
Create Comment	
Purple Star Schools Award Application	Messages
Section 1: Introduction (Not Scored)	
Section 2: School Information (Not Scored)	Messages
Section 3: Campus-based Designee	Messages
Section 4: School Website	Messages

Submit the Purple Star Schools Award

- Once the validation messages are addressed and you are ready to submit, change the status to **Draft Completed.**

- Once in Draft Completed, the LEA Authorized Representative will be notified that they need to approve the application. The LEA Authorized Representative will then need to login to GAINS and approve the application if there are no changes.





The application is officially submitted to CDE once in, **LEA Authorized Representative Approved** status.



Common Questions and Assistance

Common Questions

Can private schools apply?

a. No

What if we meet most but not all of the criteria?

a. Applicants must meet all requirements to be considered for the award

What if the school's military families support web page has links to the district pages for enrollment or other district info?

a. That's fine! Please make sure that the school has an easily accessible page dedicated to military family resources hosted on the school's domain, and on the page there are links that take visitors to other pages that meet the requirements for the award. **There must be specific school-based resources for military families on the web page included to qualify for the award.**

Common Questions

What is a student-led transition program?

a. Any peer or student led program that welcomes and supports students at the school.
b. Activities throughout the school year are required.

What kind of professional development and/or training is the school required to provide?

a. Training that has occurred within the past 12 calendar months (prior to Dec 2026) - future trainings will not qualify.
b. Demonstration that the school **offers at least 1 PD to all staff per school year** is required in your application. Your installation school liaisons are required to do this as part of their role so please consult with them for support!
c. Idea: Invite your installation liaison to provide training, seek MCEC and/or MFLC support, MIC3 offers training or check out the other resources we have here.

What is a public school resolution?

a. A resolution is a formal statement adopted by a **school board** that expresses the board's position on a particular issue. It typically includes two sections. One section describes facts and values, and the second describes the district's plan of action. Resolutions are typically used to address specific topics or issues that are of concern to the school district or community and are approved by the school district's school board of education.

Clarification

Let's talk about celebrations and events for Sections 7 and 8:

Section 7: Student initiatives (only need to choose 1)	Section 8: Additional Criteria (only need to choose 1)
If using an event, must have **both**: In April and November	Can have **one** celebration, In April or November
If you don't have celebrations in both, choose another option instead, like a resolution, or a partnership or club!	*Can't have been mentioned in application in any previous sections.*

Important Recommendations

1. School Websites - must be hosted on the school's domain, and shows how your school supports military connected students and their families (not on the district's domain!)

1. "Initiatives" for Sections 7 & 8 that include events must describe how the school specifically hosted and/or participated in the event, not just attended.

1. Schools can't use the same event, initiative or program twice across sections of the application.

1. Once awarded, do schools have to reapply? Yes, every three years
    a. When you reapply, you have to demonstrate that all the criteria was met for EACH YEAR individually.
    b. Important Note: For the PD Component, PD must be provided each school year to all staff.

Resources and Examples

Websites:

1. Otero Elementary School
2. Harmony Ridge P-8
3. Grand Peak Academy
4. Colorado Military Academy
5. MIC3 Example

Student-Led Transition Program Examples*:

1. Anchored4Life
2. Student 2 Student (MCEC)

**Schools may choose their own student-led transition programs outside of these as well.*

PD and Training:

1. Your Liaisons!
2. CDE Website

Resolutions

1. James Irwin Charter Schools
2. D49
3. Sample Template for Boards

Contacts

Program Questions:
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Questions?



Thank you!