

2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars – Arts

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964 by executive order of President Lyndon Johnson to recognize and honor some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating high school seniors. The program was extended in 1979 to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts. Since 2013, chief state school officers (CSSO) have been invited to nominate candidates from their states for the program. This allows the nomination of up to 10 male and ten female students for the general component of the program **AND** up to five additional students for the arts component. Students are nominated based on outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in the visual and performing arts or creative writing.

All high school seniors who meet the following requirements are eligible:

- Participates in a visual and performing arts or creative writing program.
- Attends a public, parochial, or independent school. Home-schooled students are also eligible.
- Is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident.
- Graduates between January and August of 2026.

The Commission on Presidential Scholars will select all 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars. Scholars will be announced in summer 2026 and will receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion.

Arts Nomination Process:

1. Schools and creative arts organizations will self-nominate students and submit applications to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
2. All student eligibility requirements must be met; **schools and creative arts organizations may nominate up to five art students.**
3. Complete the attached Nomination Form for each student to be nominated.
4. All nominations, including the forms and supplemental documentation must be submitted to presidentialscholars@isbe.net **no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2026.**
5. ISBE will review the submitted nominations and select the top 10 male and top 10 female nominees from Illinois to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education ED.
6. In February 2026, selected nominees and their respective schools will receive an invitation and an additional application from ED. The application must be filled out and submitted by the student as specified by ED.
7. ED will announce the finalists in summer 2026.

Visit the [ED U.S. Presidential Scholars Program webpage](#) to learn more about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program and the Commission on Presidential Scholars. Please contact presidentialscholars@isbe.net or 217-782-5270 if you have questions about the CSSO nomination process.



100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

2026 ILLINOIS NOMINATION FOR
THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS
IN ARTS

SCHOOL / CREATIVE ARTS ORGANIZATION
NOMINATION FORM

Instructions: Please submit this nomination form along with completed student application. Application must be completed by the nominee and principal/counselor/teacher with original signatures and submitted to via email to presidentialscholars@isbe.net. **Nomination form and application must be emailed by no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2026.**

NAME OF STUDENT (Last, First, Middle)	HOME ADDRESS (Street, City, State, ZIP Code)	
NOMINATED BY (Last, First, Middle)	TITLE	
NAME OF INSTITUTION	TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	CEEB CODE (Six digits)
INSTITUTION ADDRESS (Street, City, State, ZIP Code)	EMAIL (PREFERRED)	

Digital or Original Signature of Person Nominating Student

Date



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Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

2026 ILLINOIS NOMINATION FOR
THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS
IN ARTS

STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: Please submit this application form along with the completed nomination form. Electronic submissions will only be accepted. Application must contain original signatures. **Applications and nomination forms must be emailed to presidentialscholars@isbe.net no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2026.**

NAME OF STUDENT (Last, First, Middle)	TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	
HOME ADDRESS (Street, City, State, ZIP Code)	EMAIL ADDRESS OF STUDENT	
NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL	NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL	
SCHOOL ADDRESS (Street, City, State, ZIP Code)	SCHOOL TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	EMAIL ADDRESS OF PRINCIPAL
NAME OF PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN	PARENT TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	

Confirmation of Eligibility:

Instructions: Please check boxes to confirm that you have met all eligibility requirements

- U. S. Citizen or Legal Permanent U. S. Resident by the application deadline
- Graduate or receive a diploma between January and August 2026; the current program year
- Demonstrate academic achievement and accomplishment in visual and performing arts or creative writing program
- Nominated by School District Teacher, Administrator, or Creative Arts Organization

Printed Name of Student Nominee

Digital or Original Signature of Student Nominee

Date

Selection Criteria:

1. **Academic Rigor – Please indicate GPA scale used** 4.0 5.0

Please use unweighted GPA's for the following:

a. Cumulative GPA: _____ (Overall GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale (**unweighted**) must be met.)

Visual and Performing Arts or Creative Writing Coursework

Instructions: Please list all Arts courses received credit/currently

SCHOOL YEAR	COURSE	LENGTH OF COURSE (List by semester(s))	CREDIT (C) OR ENROLLED (E)

(Note: Please attach an additional sheet if space does not permit.)

Printed Name of School Counselor

Digital or Original Signature of School Counselor

Date

2. Participation in Arts Programs

a. Please list any involvement in arts programs (both in school and outside of school).

INSTITUTION (e.g. high school name or organization name)	TYPE OF MEDIUM (e.g. play, photography, dance, etc.)	YEAR

b. Please list any awards, certificates, publications, or any accomplishments in visual and performing arts or creative writing.

AWARDS	YEAR