

2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars – Career and Technical Education

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. Outstanding students who demonstrate excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE) were included for recognition for the first time in 2016. 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 CTE component. Students are nominated based on outstanding scholarship and demonstrated ability and accomplishment in Career and Technical Education.

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

- Participates in a CTE 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.

CSSO Nomination Process:

1. Schools will self-nominate students and submit applications to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
2. All student eligibility requirements must be met; **schools may nominate up to five CTE 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 CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

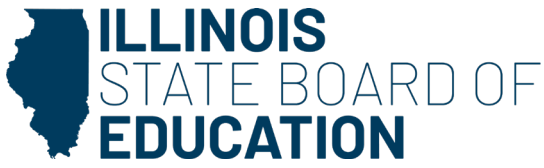
PRINCIPAL / COUNSELOR / TEACHER
NOMINATION FORM

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 CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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 by no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2026, and submitted to presidentialscholars@isbe.net.**

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 technical skill in Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Nominated by School District Teacher or Administrator

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.)
 - b. CTE Course GPA: _____ (GPA of all CTE Courses only.)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Coursework

Instructions: Please list all CTE courses received credit/currently enrolled.

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 Guidance Counselor

Digital or Original Signature of Guidance Counselor

Date

2. Technical Competence

- a. Placing in State and/or National Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO*) skills competition in his/her career area. **an extracurricular student organization/group for students in CTE pathways to further their knowledge and skills by participating in activities, events, and competitions. Organizations include BPA, DCEA, FCCLA, FBLA-PBL, HOSA, FFA, Skills USA, and TSA.*

CTSO	STATE OR NATIONAL	COMPETITION	PLACING

- b. Earning an industry-recognized certification/credential. (i.e. National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), CISCO.) The term 'Certification' means a certificate from industry and awarded by a certification body based on an individual's demonstration, through an examination process, that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job.

CERTIFICATE/CREDENTIAL	COMPLETED OR IN PROGRESS (Mark C or P)

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

3. Employability Skills

a. Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO's)

Instructions: Please indicate your level of involvement in leadership positions in CTSO's (see list below).

LOCAL/STATE/NATIONAL	CTSO	LEADERSHIP ROLE	YEARS

State Recognized CTSOs:

- BPA - Business Professionals of America
- DECA - Marketing Management and Entrepreneurship
- FBLA - Future Business Leaders of America
- FCCLA - Family, Career and Community Leaders of America
- HOSA - Future Health Professionals
- FFA - Agricultural Education
- Skills USA - Technical, Skilled, and Service Occupations
- TSA - Technology Student Association

3. Employability Skills (continued)

b. Community Service

Instructions: Please list and explain in detail any community service you have completed where CTE skills in your career area have been utilized. *Limit to 500 words or less.*

4. Ingenuity–Creativity–Problem Solving

Instructions: Through the application of technical skills developed in your career area, describe any solutions to a real-world problem or development of a new product/good or service you have demonstrated in the classroom, CTSO, workplace or community.

Limit to 500 words or less.