

2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars – General

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 10 female students who demonstrate outstanding scholarship and might not otherwise be nominated through the current SAT/ACT, Arts, or CTE recognition process.

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

- 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 male and five female 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 GENERAL COMPONENT

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 via electronic email. **Nomination form and application must be emailed to presidentialscholars@isbe.net 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)
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NOMINATED BY (Last, First, Middle)	TITLE
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NAME OF INSTITUTION	TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	CEEB CODE (Six digits)
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INSTITUTION ADDRESS (Street, City, State, ZIP Code)	EMAIL (PREFERRED)
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Recommendation of Student.

Instructions: To be completed by principal or guidance counselor. Please indicate how student demonstrates outstanding scholarship. The response should address the following:

1) What about the student makes him or her stand out as having outstanding scholarship?

2) Were there special challenges or hurdles this student has overcome while still achieving high academic success?

Digital or Original Signature of Person Nominating Student

Date



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ILLINOIS NOMINATION FOR
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STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: Please submit the application form along with completed student application. Application must be completed by the nominee and principal, teacher or guidance counselor with original signatures and submitted via electronic email. **The nomination form and application form must be emailed to presidentialscholars@isbe.net by 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
- 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

Cumulative GPA: _____ (Please use unweighted GPAs)

2. Involvement and Service

Please describe specifically with detail in 500 words or less your involvement and service in your school and community.

3. Leadership and Character

Please explain in 500 words or less how you demonstrate leadership and character.

4. Extraordinary Achievement and Overcoming Obstacle

Please describe in 500 words any extraordinary achievement, heavy workload, family responsibilities, or obstacles overcome that demonstrate your scholarship, character, and service.

Printed Name of Guidance Counselor

Digital or Original Signature of Guidance Counselor

Date