



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education *MAC*

DATE: October 22, 2020

SUBJECT: Nominations for the 2021 U.S. Presidential Scholar Program

Annually, the U.S. Department of Education (USED), U.S. Presidential Scholars Program committee (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/psp/index.html>) selects students in each state for recognition in each of the following three components:

1. the General Component (selection based on high academic achievement);
2. the Arts Component (selected from among the participants in the YoungArts™ program www.youngarts.org); and
3. the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Component (selection based on the merits of CTE scholarship).

I need your recommendations to identify statewide candidates for the 20 (10 boys, 10 girls) Commissioner's nominations for the General Component and the five (5) nominations for the CTE Component. Please send me up to three nominations for your district – one boy and one girl for the General Component, and one student (boy or girl) for the CTE Component. You may recommend any student in your district (public, non-public, homeschooled) who will graduate in the spring of 2021 and who intends to engage in post-secondary education. Please note that candidates for the Arts Component are selected via the YoungArts™ program.

Recommendations – one (1) girl and one (1) boy from each district – for the General Component

Candidates for the General Component are selected in one of two ways:

1. Automatic qualifiers are those among the students obtaining the highest SAT or ACT scores in their state. The top 30 students qualify as do all other students who obtain the score equal to the lowest of the qualifying scores of the top 30 students.
2. In addition to the high scorers, each state's Commissioner may nominate up to 20 additional candidates (10 male and 10 female) who, though high achieving, were not among the top SAT/ACT scorers in the state but have additionally overcome hardships, made a remarkable turnaround, accomplished something unique, or are otherwise, distinguished by their personal characteristics and scholastic efforts.

Recommendation – one (1) student from each district – for the CTE Component

Candidates for the CTE Component are selected by the following criteria:

1. Candidates must have successfully completed two courses in one of the pathways in Connecticut's CTE Career Clusters.
2. Concentrators must also have demonstrated active membership and participation in a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO).

3. In addition to concentrator status and CTSO involvement, candidates may have overcome a hardship, made a remarkable turnaround, accomplished something unique, or are otherwise distinguished by their personal characteristics and scholastic efforts.

Request for Recommendation Letters

For the General Component, write to me about one boy and one girl. For the Career and Technical Education Component, write to me about one student. For these three students from your district, include details about the compelling stories that provide a powerful backdrop to their achievements. Please make your selection from the students in all of the high schools in your district. Prior to submitting a letter of recommendation, ensure that you have secured evidence of parental/guardian consent for the nomination. Following are the submission procedures and specifications for nomination letters and the necessary related information.

Submission Requirements and Procedures

Your letter of recommendation should not exceed 1,500 words. It should include the student's name and your rationale for selecting this student (e.g., what makes him/her stand out and what challenges or hurdles this student has overcome). Your letters of recommendation will be reviewed by a selection committee. Additional documents are not necessary and will not be reviewed. By virtue of your nomination, the students will be assumed to possess high-academic achievements. No further evidence or attestation to that effect is needed. Along with your nominee's compelling back story, you may wish to include some details speaking to the student's character, leadership qualities, and involvement in community service – these are among the same criteria that the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program reviewers will be using.

On a separate sheet of paper, accompany your letters with the following information:

- Student's Name;
- SASID;
- Component (General or CTE);
- Home mailing address;
- High school name and mailing address;
- High School CEEB (College Entrance Examination Board) code; and
- Male or Female

Do not include the student's SASID or home mailing address on the recommendation letter.

Your letters **must be received** in our office by **November 6, 2020**.

Mailing Address:

Dr. Gilbert N. Andrada, State Consultant Gifted and Talented Education, Performance Office P.O. Box 2219 Hartford, CT 06145-2219 ATTN: SY 2020-2021 U.S. Presidential Scholarship Nomination

Selection of Commissioner's Nominees

A selection committee for the General Component will evaluate the first boy and first girl nominations for each district that was received by the deadline date and select up to 20 students for me to nominate to the USED. Another selection committee tasked with reviewing the letters

for the Career and Technical Education Component will select five students from among the letters submitted for this component.

Reviewers will be asked to rate your nominees on:

- the details of their personal contexts;
- evidence of respectable character;
- the description of their leadership qualities; and
- their involvement in community service.

Invitations to Apply for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

All students nominated by the Commissioner through this process will be invited by the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program to complete an application. While a student's nomination may be noted publicly, the student's completion of an application for the Scholars Program is voluntary. Please note that during the selection process, only the application materials developed by the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program will be made available to their selection committees. SAT/ACT scores, for instance, will not be included. Reviewers for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program will be considering the following elements from their application materials when evaluating the nominees:

- Involvement and Service (in school and community);
- Leadership and Character;
- Writing samples;
- Academic achievements; and
- Discretionary points for extraordinary achievement, heavy workload, family responsibilities, or obstacles overcome.

I sincerely look forward to hearing about your extraordinary students. If you have any questions about this process, please contact Dr. Andrada by phone at 860-713-6883 or via e-mail at gilbert.andrada@ct.gov. For specific questions pertaining to the Career and Technical Education Component, please contact Suzanne Vita Loud by phone at 203-577-9693 or via e-mail at suzanne.loud@ct.gov.