CONNECTICUT Education

U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Reminders

Nomination year	2027
Student graduation	Spring 2027
District nomination deadline	December 01, 2026
Expected state submission to USED	January 08, 2027
Maximum district nominations	4
Maximum recommendation letter length	1,500 words
Parental/guardian consent	Required before submission

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About the Program

1. What is the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program?

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is a national recognition program that honors outstanding high school seniors for their achievements. Students are recognized in three components:

- **General Component**: Recognizes students for high academic achievement.
- **Arts Component**: Recognizes students for excellence and achievement in the arts.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Component**: Recognizes students for achievement in career and technical education.

2. Why is the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) requesting nominations?

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has requested nominations from states for the 2027 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. In response, the CSDE is seeking nominations from Connecticut school districts to identify outstanding students for statewide consideration. The Commissioner of Education will review district recommendations and select students to nominate to the USED.

3. What is the deadline for submitting district nominations?

Districts must submit their recommendations to the CSDE by: **December 01,**

4. How many students may each district nominate?

Each district may submit up to four student nominations:

Component	Number of Nominations
General Component – Male	1
General Component – Female	1
Arts Component – Male or Female	1
CTE Component – Male or Female	1
Total	**Up to 4**

5. Which students are eligible for nomination?

Districts may recommend any student who meets the following requirements:

- Will graduate in spring 2027.
- Intends to pursue postsecondary education.
- Attends a public or non-public school or is homeschooled.

Students from all high schools within the district may be considered.

6. How many students will the Commissioner nominate?

Based on recommendations received from districts, the Commissioner may nominate:

- **General Component:** Up to 20 students (10 males and 10 females).
- **Arts Component:** Up to 5 students.
- **CTE Component:** Up to 5 students.

The Commissioner will submit the selected nominations to the USED.

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General Component

7. What are the selection criteria for the General Component?

Students may qualify for consideration through one of two pathways:

Pathway 1: Automatic Qualification (No District Nomination Required)

- The 30 students with the highest SAT or ACT scores in the state automatically qualify.
- Students who earn a score equal to the lowest qualifying score among the top 30 students also qualify.
- Qualifying students are identified and notified directly by the U.S. Department of Education. No school district action or notification is required.

Pathway 2: Commissioner Nominations (Based on District Nominations)

In addition to the automatic qualifiers, the Commissioner may nominate up to 20 additional students (10 males and 10 females) based on nominations submitted by school districts. These students must demonstrate high academic achievement and have distinguished themselves in other ways, for example:

- Overcoming significant hardships or personal challenges.
- Making a remarkable personal or academic turnaround.
- Accomplishing something unique or extraordinary.
- Demonstrating exceptional personal characteristics and scholastic effort.

8. What should districts consider when selecting General Component nominees?

Districts should identify one male and one female student who demonstrate high academic achievement and have compelling personal stories or experiences that distinguish them. Consideration should be given to students whose accomplishments reflect perseverance, resilience, leadership, character, and dedication to their education.

Arts Component

9. What are the selection criteria for the Arts Component?

Districts may recommend one student (male or female) who demonstrates excellence in an artistic discipline. Candidates should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Artistic Excellence:** Demonstrates exceptional skill, creativity, and mastery in a chosen discipline, including visual arts, fine arts, performing arts, or creative writing.
- **Long-Term Engagement and Growth:** Demonstrates sustained involvement and progressive growth, development, and sophistication in their artistic work over multiple courses and years.
- **Leadership and Community Contributions:** Makes meaningful contributions to the arts community through leadership, peer mentoring, organizing arts events, advocating for arts programs, or using artistic talents to benefit the school or broader community.
- **Connection to Academic Achievement:** Demonstrates how artistic pursuits complement or contribute to broader educational experiences, intellectual development, and academic achievement.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Demonstrates creative risk-taking, original thinking, innovation, or distinctive artistic perspectives.

10. What supporting materials should districts consider when selecting an Arts Component nominee?

District representatives may wish to review supporting materials that demonstrate the student's artistic abilities and accomplishments, such as:

- Examples or portfolios of the student's artwork.
- Recordings of performances or artistic presentations.
- Recommendation letters from arts professionals.
- Documentation of artistic achievements and recognition.

These materials may help districts evaluate candidates when making their selection. However, additional supporting documents should not be submitted with the official nomination letter, as they will not be reviewed by the state selection committee.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Component

11. What are the selection criteria for the CTE Component?

Districts may recommend one student (male or female) who demonstrates achievement in career and technical education. Candidates must meet the following requirements:

- **CTE Coursework**
  Students must have successfully completed two courses in one of the pathways within Connecticut's CTE Career Clusters.
- **Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Participation**
  Students must be CTE concentrators and demonstrate active membership and participation in one of the following nationally recognized, CSDE-approved Career and Technical Student Organizations, examples include:

  - DECA
  - Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)
  - Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)
  - National FFA Organization (FFA)
  - HOSA – Future Health Professionals (HOSA)
  - SkillsUSA
  - Technology Student Association (TSA)

- **Personal Accomplishments and Perseverance**
  In addition to meeting the coursework and CTSO participation requirements, candidates may distinguish themselves by:

  - Overcoming significant hardships.
  - Making a remarkable personal or academic turnaround.
  - Accomplishing something unique or extraordinary.
  - Demonstrating exceptional personal characteristics and scholastic effort.

12. What should districts consider when selecting a CTE Component nominee?

Districts should identify a student who has demonstrated commitment to their CTE pathway, meaningful participation in a recognized CTSO, and personal accomplishments that distinguish them from their peers. The student's experiences, leadership, perseverance, and contributions should be highlighted in the nomination letter.

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Recommendation Letters

13. How many recommendation letters should each district submit?

Districts may submit up to four recommendation letters:

- One letter for a male student nominated for the General Component.
- One letter for a female student nominated for the General Component.
- One letter for a student nominated for the Arts Component.
- One letter for a student nominated for the CTE Component.

14. What information must be included in each recommendation letter?

Each recommendation letter must:

- Identify the student's name.
- Explain the rationale for selecting the student.
- Describe what makes the student stand out.
- Highlight challenges, obstacles, or hardships the student has overcome.
- Provide compelling details about the student's personal story and the context surrounding their achievements.

Districts may also wish to address:

- The student's character and integrity.
- Leadership qualities and experiences.
- Involvement in school and community service.
- Unique accomplishments and contributions.

The recommendation should provide a compelling picture of the student beyond academic achievement.

15. Is there a word limit for recommendation letters?

Yes. Each recommendation letter must not exceed **1,500 words**.

16. Do districts need to provide evidence of students' academic achievement?

No. By virtue of the nomination, students will be assumed to possess high academic achievement. Districts do not need to provide additional evidence, documentation, or attestations of academic achievement.

17. Should districts submit additional supporting documents?

No. Additional documents are not necessary and will not be reviewed by the state selection committees. The recommendation letter should contain the information necessary to support the nomination. Districts may review supporting materials when evaluating candidates internally, particularly for the Arts Component, but should submit only the recommendation letter.

18. Is parental or guardian consent required?

Yes. Before submitting a recommendation letter, districts must ensure they have obtained evidence of parental or guardian consent for the student's nomination.

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Selection Process

19. Who will review the district nominations?

The Commissioner will establish three selection committees:

- **General Component Committee:** Will review the first male and first female nominations received from each district by the deadline and select up to 20 students (10 males and 10 females).
- **Arts Component Committee:** Will review submitted Arts Component recommendation letters and select up to five students.
- **CTE Component Committee:** Will review submitted CTE Component recommendation letters and select up to five students.

20. What criteria will the state selection committees use to evaluate nominees?

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate nominees based on the following:

- Details of the student's personal context and experiences.
- Evidence of respectable character.
- Description of the student's leadership qualities.
- Involvement in community service.

The committees will consider the compelling personal stories and experiences that provide context for each student's accomplishments.

21. What happens if the Commissioner selects a student for nomination?

Students selected by the Commissioner and nominated to the USED will be invited by the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program to complete an application.

22. Are nominated students required to complete an application?

No. Completing the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program application is voluntary. Although a student's nomination may be publicly acknowledged, the student is not required to complete the application.

23. What information will the national selection committee review?

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program selection committees will review only the application materials developed by the national program. The application evaluation will consider:

- **Involvement and Service:** Participation and contributions in school and the community.
- **Leadership and Character:** Demonstrated leadership abilities and personal qualities.
- **Writing Samples:** The student's written responses and submissions.
- **Academic Achievements:** The student's academic accomplishments.
- **Discretionary Points:** Extraordinary achievements, significant workload, family responsibilities, and obstacles or hardships overcome.

SAT and ACT scores will not be included in the materials provided to the national selection committees during this stage of the selection process.

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