

**Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen
Scholarship Program**

REGULATIONS – 5200.

2014 - 2015 Award Year



Effective Date – July 1, 2014



2082 East Exchange Place
Tucker, Georgia 30084

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5202. Program Overview.

Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) Program, launched as a pilot program during the 2011-2012 Academic Year, is a need-based youth development and scholarship program with specific financial, academic, and behavior eligibility requirements. The purpose of the REACH Program is to increase academic persistence and achievement of Georgia's middle and high school students and to increase college access and success for Georgia's low-income and underserved populations. Private and public donations fund the scholarships.

Participating School Systems nominate and select 7th grade students to participate in the program. The program encourages increased parental involvement and offers students the academic and social support of an Academic Coach and mentor. Upon graduation from high school, an eligible student attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution may receive REACH scholarship funds to use toward any component of the Cost of Attendance.

The program is administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), in accordance with these regulations.

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5203. Definitions. (Electronic Link)

5204. School System Requirements.

5204.1. Application Procedures.

1. For Fiscal Years 2012 (FY12) (2011-2012 Academic Year), 2013 (FY13) (2012-2013 Academic Year), and 2014 (FY14) (2013-2014 Academic Year), the Participating School Systems will be selected and notified by GSFC.
2. For Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) (2014-2015 Academic Year), GSFC will select school systems for participation based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:
 - a. Geographic region;
 - b. School system size;
 - c. Percentage of students on the Free or Reduced Lunch Program;
 - d. Partnerships in the community;
 - e. The school system's ability to grow, scale, and sustain the program;
 - f. The presence of a mentoring program and an Academic Coach in the school system;
 - g. The willingness of a Coordinating Partner to work with the school system to support the REACH Program;
 - h. Available funding; and
 - i. School system leadership.
3. During Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15), GSFC will develop a 2015-2016 Academic Year application process for school system selection and will communicate this process to all school systems in Georgia.

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5204.2. School System Application Categories.

1. School systems may apply to participate in REACH in one or more of the following categories:
 - a. A school system with five or more high schools;
 - b. A school system with fewer than five high schools;

- c. A school system with a Coordinating Partner.

5204.3. School System Selection.

1. GSFC will select school systems to participate in REACH based on the quality of the application submitted and GSFC's ability to fund the first year of REACH scholarships in the school systems applying to participate.

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5204.4. Number of REACH Scholars for Each Participating School System.

1. School Systems selected to participate in the REACH Program are designated a number of REACH Scholars for the first year of participation as follows:
 - a. Up to eight REACH Scholars for a Participating School System with five or more high schools; and
 - b. Up to five REACH Scholars for a Participating School System with fewer than five high schools.
2. For subsequent years, the number of REACH Scholars for each Participating School System will be based on the Participating School System's ability to provide funding for REACH Scholars as provided in 5204.5, not to exceed the maximum number of REACH scholars in 5204.4.1.

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5204.5. Participating School System Financial Commitment.

1. GSFC will provide funding for each REACH scholarship (\$10,000 for each REACH Scholar) for the first year of the Participating School System's participation in REACH. Each year thereafter, the Participating School System will be responsible for a proportionate share of the scholarship and GSFC will fund the remainder subject to available funds. The Participating School System's proportionate share will be no less than its county's Georgia Department of Community Affairs current Job Tax Credit designation (Tiers 1-4) as follows:
 - a. Tier 1 school systems must provide \$1,500 per REACH Scholar;
 - b. Tier 2 school systems must provide \$2,500 per REACH Scholar;
 - c. Tier 3 school systems must provide \$3,500 per REACH Scholar;
 - d. Tier 4 school systems must provide \$5,000 per REACH Scholar.

5204.6. Program Participation Requirements.

1. School systems selected to participate in the REACH Program must agree to:

- a. Establish a nomination and application process to identify and select REACH Scholars;
- b. Establish a mentoring program, including but not limited to, recruiting and training mentors, conducting mentor background checks, and developing or identifying mentoring curriculum;
- c. Identify an Academic Coach who will monitor Scholars' academic performance, behavior, and attendance on a weekly basis and meet with each Scholar a minimum of one time per month to develop and discuss education and career plans;
- d. Establish guidelines for Scholars failing to maintain eligibility requirements;
- e. Plan and hold one signing ceremony for selected Scholars per school year and a minimum of two activity nights per Academic Year for Scholars and their Parents;
- f. Involve Scholars in extracurricular school events, as appropriate (e.g., open house tours, graduation ceremonies, future signing ceremonies, meetings);
- g. Raise funds for scholarships in year two and beyond;
- h. Submit quarterly reports to GSFC providing academic, attendance, and behavior data about each Scholar as permitted by the Scholar's release of information form (refer to *Section 5205.7*);
- i. Prepare an annual program progress report, to be submitted to GSFC. Details of the information that must be included in the program progress report will be provided to Participating School Systems;
- j. Transfer to GSFC, or its designee, all funds raised for scholarships in accordance with procedures set forth by GSFC within 10 days of receipt of such funds; and
- k. Execute a Program Participation Agreement between the Participating School System and GSFC, or its designee, pursuant to which the Participating School System agrees to abide by the REACH Programs financial and program requirements.

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5204.7. Affiliate Program School System.

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1. Subject to the approval of GSFC and as set forth in the applicable Program Participation Agreement, Affiliate Program School Systems may be permitted to allow students to enter the program as 8th, 9th or 10th graders.

5205. Student Eligibility Requirements.

5205.1. Citizenship.

1. A student must be a United States Citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen for twelve (12) consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the Spring term of the REACH Scholar's 7th grade school year.

5205.2. Enrollment.

1. A student must be enrolled at an Eligible Middle School.

5205.3. Financial Requirements.

1. A student must qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program.

5205.4. Academic Achievement.

1. School systems should nominate and select students who have exhibited persistence and interest in learning. Preference should be given to those students who have the ability to earn A and B grades in Core courses with the assistance of an Academic Coach and a mentor, but who may not earn these grades without additional support.

5205.5. Attendance.

1. A student's attendance record must demonstrate the student's adherence to the established policies and procedures of the local board of education and adherence to mandatory state school attendance policies (O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.1) over the previous two semesters or four quarters.
2. Any student deemed Truant is ineligible for the REACH Program.
3. Participating School Systems may establish and require REACH Scholars to adhere to more rigorous attendance requirements for the purpose of REACH Program eligibility.

5205.6. Discipline and Behavior Requirements.

1. A student must not have more than two total combined Level I and/or Level II disciplinary infractions or one Level III disciplinary infraction and no out-of-school suspensions, as defined by Georgia's Progressive Discipline Model (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-735), during the two semesters or four quarters immediately preceding the Spring term of the student's 7th grade year.

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2. Participating School Systems may establish and require REACH Scholars to adhere to more rigorous discipline eligibility requirements for the purpose of REACH Program eligibility.

5205.7. Authorization for Release of Information.

1. A student's Parent must complete and submit a release of information form, as part of the application process, authorizing the school to provide to GSFC information related to the student's participation in the program.

5205.8. Preferences.

1. Participating School Systems will give preference during the selection of REACH Scholars to:

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- a. Students who have the potential to succeed at the postsecondary level;
- b. Students who are Future First-Generation College Students;
- c. Students who have fewer than three excused absences and one unexcused absence during the two semesters or four quarters immediately preceding the Spring term of the student's 7th grade year; and
- d. Students who have no disciplinary infractions during the two semesters or four quarters immediately preceding the Spring term of the student's 7th grade year.

5206. Continuing Eligibility During Middle School and High School.

5206.1. Enrollment Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must be enrolled as a full-time student at an Eligible Middle School or an Eligible High School.
2. If a REACH Scholar transfers out of a Participating School System in 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade Academic Years, he or she will no longer be eligible for participation in the REACH Program and will not be eligible to receive the scholarship upon high school graduation. A REACH Scholar who transfers out of a Participating School System into another Participating School System will be eligible to continue participation in the REACH Program.

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5206.2. Financial Requirements.

1. A student must qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program.
2. If a Scholar's family experiences a change in financial circumstances and/or if the Scholar is adopted or placed with a foster family and no longer qualifies for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program, he or she will remain an eligible REACH Scholar as long as other program requirements are met.


5206.3. Academic Achievement Requirements.

1. A middle school REACH Scholar must maintain a Secondary Cumulative Grade Point Average of at least 2.5 or better in all Core courses, including foreign language courses.
2. A high school REACH Scholar must maintain a Secondary Cumulative Grade Point Average of at least 2.5 or better in all Core courses, including foreign language courses.
3. Grade eligibility will be officially assessed through a Grade Eligibility Review at the end of each grading period.


5206.4. Attendance Requirements.

1. REACH Scholars must adhere to the Participating School System's stated attendance policy and attend classes regularly. Scholars with more than one unexcused and/or more than three excused absences in one year may be subject to review and risk losing their place in the REACH Program.

5206.5. Discipline and Behavior Requirements.

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1. A REACH Scholar must have no more than two total combined Level I and/or Level II infractions and no out-of-school suspensions per Academic Year, as defined by Georgia's Progressive Discipline Model (O.C.G.A. §20-2-735).
 2. A REACH Scholar convicted of committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, and/or dangerous drugs, is immediately ineligible for further participation in the REACH Program.
 3. A REACH Scholar must meet the Participating School System's drug and alcohol use policies.
 - a. A REACH Scholar who fails to comply with the Participating School System's drug and alcohol policies will be immediately ineligible for further participation in the REACH Program.

5206.6. Mentoring and Academic Coaching Requirements.

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1. A REACH Scholar is expected to meet with his or her assigned mentor once every two weeks during the Academic Year. A REACH Scholar is expected to meet with his or her assigned Academic Coach once every month during the Academic Year.

5206.7. Program Event Participation Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar, and his or her Parent, must attend all scheduled REACH Program events, activities, programs, and meetings. A written notice will be required from the REACH Scholar's Parent to excuse the REACH Scholar from attendance at a specific event.

5206.8. Graduation Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must meet all State of Georgia and Georgia Department of Education requirements to graduate from high school and receive a high school diploma.

5206.9. Failure to Meet Eligibility Requirements.

1. Unless specifically stated otherwise in these regulations, REACH Scholars are subject to adverse consequences up to, and including, termination from program participation, as determined appropriate by the Participating School System for failure to maintain the eligibility requirements of the REACH Program.

5207. Postsecondary Requirements.

5207.1. Citizenship Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must continue to meet United States Citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen requirements while Enrolled at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

5207.2. Selective Service.

1. A REACH Scholar must be in compliance with United States Selective Service System requirements, if such requirements are applicable, prior to receiving REACH scholarship award funds.

5207.3. Default and Refund Due.

1. A student must not be in default on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia educational loan, or owe a refund due to an over-award on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, or in any other way be in violation of Federal Title IV Programs Regulations or State of Georgia student financial aid program regulations. A student must meet the requirements of this section at the time funds are disbursed by GSFC on behalf of the student.
2. A student's default status can be resolved in one of four ways:
 - a. Completing an acceptable rehabilitation plan;
 - b. Having the loan repurchased by the original lender and the default status reversed;
 - c. Consolidating the loan out of a default status; or
 - d. Receiving an approved Title IV debt settlement, to include a compromised settlement.
3. A student's State of Georgia refund due status can be resolved by:
 - a. Paying the refund due to the institution at which the over-award occurred. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution will then forward the payment to GSFC.
4. If such student has repaid the defaulted loan or refund due in full, or resolved the default status, then he or she may be eligible to receive state scholarship or grant funds beginning with the school term in which repayment was made in full, but not retroactively for previous school terms.

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5207.4. Enrollment Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must be Enrolled at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in a Matriculated status leading to a Certificate, Diploma, or Degree.
2. A REACH Scholar must be Enrolled Full-Time through the last day of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution's drop/add period to be eligible to receive REACH scholarship funds.

5207.5. Academic Achievement Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as defined and certified by his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
2. A REACH Scholar must maintain a minimum Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average of 2.00.

5207.6. Length of Eligibility.

1. A REACH Scholar must Enroll in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution and begin receiving REACH scholarship funds within two years of the date of his or her high school graduation.
2. A REACH Scholar's eligibility to receive the award expires five years from the date the student began receiving REACH scholarship funds.
3. A REACH Scholar may have his or her length of eligibility extended if he or she serves on active duty in the military during the two years immediately following the date of his or her high school graduation or if the student is called to and serves on active duty in the military during the five year period following the first date that REACH scholarship funds were received. The length of such extension will be based on the amount of time served on active duty, rounded up to the nearest whole year.

5207.7. Drug Free Act.

1. A REACH Scholar convicted of committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs, is ineligible for REACH Scholarship award funds starting on the day of conviction, in accordance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990, O.C.G.A. § 20-1-24. REACH Scholars will not be allowed to regain eligibility for the REACH scholarship.

5207.8. Incarceration.

1. A REACH Scholar is ineligible to participate in or receive funding from the REACH Program if Incarcerated. REACH funding will cease at the time a REACH Scholar

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is incarcerated and the REACH Scholar is immediately ineligible to further participate in the REACH Program. Any unused funds will be returned to GSFC or its designee.

5207.9. Eligible Coursework.

1. A REACH Scholar who Enrolls in Learning Support (remedial) coursework is eligible for REACH payment.
2. A REACH Scholar participating in Distance Learning coursework is eligible to receive REACH payment. The institution offering the Distance Learning coursework must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
3. A REACH Scholar is eligible to receive payment as a Transient student. Both the Home Institution and the Host Institution must be Eligible Postsecondary Institutions.
 - a. The Host Institution awards REACH funds to the Transient student based on certification of eligibility from the Home Institution.
 - b. The Home Institution is responsible for verifying the eligibility of its Transient students.
 - c. Upon the Scholar's return to the Home Institution, the Host Institution must provide information necessary for the Home Institution to determine continued REACH eligibility.
 - d. The Home Institution is liable for the return of funds the Scholar receives at the Host Institution, if the Home Institution erroneously certifies the Scholar's eligibility to the Host Institution.
4. A REACH Scholar Enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution may qualify for REACH payment while participating in a Study Away program.
 - a. The Scholar's Home Institution must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution and must approve the Study Away program for credit toward the Scholar's program of study requirements prior to the Scholar's departure.
 - b. The REACH payment must take place through the Home Institution, unless the Scholar is participating in a Study Away program via another Eligible Postsecondary Institution. Then the process for Transient students is used (refer to *section 5207.9.3*).
 - c. The Home Institution may coordinate the Study Away program through institutions that are not eligible to participate in the REACH Program. For example, the Scholar's Home Institution may have an arrangement with an out-of-state institution's Study Away program.

- i. In such cases, the REACH scholarship payment must take place through the Home Institution, which must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, and the Scholar must be considered to be in a Matriculated status by his or her Home Institution.
5. A REACH Scholar is ineligible to use REACH payment for coursework classified by his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution as Continuing Education or Audit Coursework.

5207.10. College Student Application Requirements.

1. A REACH Scholar must complete a REACH Scholar Enrollment Verification Form to be submitted to GSFC on a semester or quarterly basis.
 - a. The Enrollment Verification Form must be submitted no later than the last day of the term for which REACH scholarship funds are sought.

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5208. Award Requirements.

1. REACH scholarship awards may be applied towards the REACH Scholar's Cost of Attendance as determined by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which the student is enrolled.

5208.1. Award Amounts.

1. The REACH scholarship award amount is a maximum of \$2,500 per Academic Year for up to four years of Enrollment at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution. Scholars are eligible for a maximum amount of \$1,250 per semester or \$833 per quarter.
2. Scholars awarded the maximum amount per semester or quarter are limited to receiving payment during two semesters or three quarters; however, Scholars awarded less than the maximum amount per semester or quarter may receive funding for three semesters or four quarters per year, not to exceed the yearly award amount of \$2,500.
3. Upon receipt of a REACH scholarship payment from GSFC, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall credit the funds to the eligible student's account and deliver any remaining funds directly to the eligible student, not to exceed the student's Cost of Attendance.

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5208.2. Adjustments to Award Amounts.

1. A REACH Scholar's award amount must be reduced if the Scholar is receiving any other student financial aid from federal, state, institutional or private sources which, in combination with the REACH scholarship award amount, would exceed the Scholar's Cost of Attendance. The Scholar's REACH scholarship award, plus any other student financial aid, must not exceed the Scholar's Cost of Attendance.

5208.3. Disbursement of Funds.

1. GSFC will process Enrollment Verification forms and initiate payments to Eligible Postsecondary Institutions on behalf of Eligible REACH Scholars.

5208.4. Calculation of Refunds.

1. If a Scholar officially withdraws, drops out, drops hours, is expelled, or otherwise fails to complete a period of Enrollment, and is entitled to a refund, a portion of such refund may need to be returned to GSFC.
2. If applicable, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must first apply the Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy for any federal aid the Scholar may have received. To determine the refund to GSFC, the institution must apply the institution's

refund policy, if different from Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy, to the Scholar's REACH scholarship award.

3. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must determine the amount of the refund due back to GSFC and notify GSFC. The amount of the REACH award not determined to be owed back to GSFC is retained by the institution and/or the REACH Scholar.

5208.5. Collection of Refunds.

1. A Scholar who owes a refund to GSFC should pay the Eligible Postsecondary Institution and the Eligible Postsecondary Institution should pay GSFC or, at its sole discretion, GSFC may require the Scholar to pay the refund directly to GSFC.
2. Nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit GSFC or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution from using all available legal and equitable remedies to collect the refund due, including, but not limited to, garnishment of pay, loss of professional license, offset of lottery winnings, or offset of state tax refund.

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5209. Reconciliation Requirements.

5209.1. Term-Reconciliation.

1. Eligible Postsecondary Institutions must conduct a Term-Reconciliation by the end of each term.
 - a. A Term-Reconciliation consists of an official acknowledgement by an authorized school official that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution, and the number of students awarded and amount issued by GSFC, according to the SURFER system, is accurate on that date.
 - b. GSFC will not issue any state scholarship or grant funds for the following term until the Term-Reconciliation is complete.
 - c. Funds are not returned to GSFC as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.

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5209.2. Fiscal Year End Reconciliation.

1. In addition to the Term-Reconciliations, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must conduct the Fiscal Year End Reconciliation.
 - a. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must conduct a complete student-by-student Fiscal Year End Reconciliation with GSFC that includes:
 - i. Submission of a Reconciliation Certification by July 15, immediately following the completion of the Fiscal Year for each state program; and
 - ii. Return any funds not utilized according to the Fiscal Year End Reconciliation by August 15 after the beginning of the new Fiscal Year.
 - b. GSFC will not issue any state scholarship or grant funds for the Fall term following the Fiscal Year until the previous Fiscal Year Reconciliation process is complete.
 - c. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the state scholarship and grant funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e., state, postsecondary institution).

5210. Administrative Reviews and Exceptions.

5210.1. Administrative Reviews.

1. The REACH Program Regulations are applied to each student considered for REACH scholarship funds by appropriate officials.
2. If a middle school or high school Scholar believes a REACH Program rule or regulation was incorrectly applied in his or her case, the Scholar must seek resolution from the Participating School System. The middle school or high school student may request an Administrative Review of the Participating School System's decision.
3. If a REACH Scholar enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution believes a REACH Program rule or regulation was incorrectly applied in his or her case, the REACH Scholar may request that GSFC conduct an Administrative Review.
4. In order for an Administrative Review to be considered, the REACH Scholar must submit a written request for an Administrative Review to GSFC office **within 45 days of receiving notice** of a decision of the Participating School System or Eligible Postsecondary Institution. If additional information is requested from the Scholar, it must be provided within the time frame specified by GSFC. GSFC decides a case based only on documentation provided rather than a personal presentation.

5210.2. Exceptions.

1. Requests for Exceptions to the REACH Program Regulations cannot be considered, reviewed, or granted under any circumstances.

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