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Dear Parent/Guardian:

As the parent of a student who receives special education in our school system, we wanted to let you know about your option to exercise public and private school choice. Under a state law passed by the Georgia State Legislature in 2007, parents of students who receive special education may choose to transfer their child to another public school or private school in Georgia.

A student must meet the following criteria outlined in law to be eligible for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program. The following applies if a child participates in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program during the 2015-2016 school year for the first time. There are no exceptions to the eligibility criteria.

Student Eligibility Criteria 1-A student must have a parent/guardian who currently lives in Georgia and has been a resident for at least one calendar year.

Student Eligibility Criteria 2-A student was enrolled and attended a Georgia public school (grades K- 12) the entire 2015-2016 school year. Pre-school special education students do not qualify. A student must complete a full school year in kindergarten before he/she can be eligible.

Student Eligibility Criteria 3-A student was reported by a school district(s) during student counts conducted by public schools in October 2015 and March 2016.

Student Eligibility Criteria 4-A student does not need to have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the entire school year to qualify for the GSNS Program. A student must have received special education services at some point during the 2015-2016 school year under an IEP. A student must be reported by a school district(s) in either the October 2015 or March 2016 student counts OR in the student record as a student receiving special education services by the end of the school year.

If a student meets the eligibility criteria for the GSNS Program; parent(s) has the right to request a transfer from a student's current public school to:

1. Another public school within their district of residence; or
2. Another public school district outside their district of residence; or
3. One of the three state schools for the blind or deaf; or
4. A private school authorized to participate in the GSNS Program.

Public School Choice Options

A parent can request a transfer to another public within their school system as long as there is available space at that school and the school has a program with the services agreed to in the student's existing individualized education program. If the parent chooses this option, then the parent shall be responsible for transportation to the school. In Lamar County, there is only one school at each level, so this option is not applicable to the residents of Lamar County.

A parent may request a transfer to a school in another school system if there is available space and the system and school has a program with the services agreed to in the student's existing individualized education program. A school system must agree to accept the student however. If the parent chooses this option and the school system accepts the child, then the parent shall be responsible for transportation to a school in that system.


A parent may also request a transfer to one of the state schools for the deaf and/or blind operated by the State Board of Education. Acceptance into the state school will depend if that setting is appropriate for the student's needs. If the parent chooses this option, then the parent shall be responsible for transportation to the state school. Please contact the Georgia Department of Education for more information about transferring to a State School.

Private School Choice Option

If you are interested in transferring your child to a private school in Georgia, you may be able to take advantage of a Georgia Special Needs Scholarship. These scholarships provide funding that can be used to offset tuition costs at participating private schools in the state of Georgia.

For more information on the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship and the parent application process, please visit the Georgia Department of Education's website at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-andPolicy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx>.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these options, please don't hesitate to contact me at 770358-5891.

Dr. Crystal D. Roberts

Special Education Director

"Learning TODAY to succeed TOMORROW."

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