



Governor's Honors Program

2026

Coordinator Handbook

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Program Overview

Purpose Statement - What is GHP?

The Governor's Honors Program (GHP) offers instruction that is significantly different from the typical high school classroom and that is designed to provide students with academic, cultural, and social enrichment necessary to become the next generation of global critical thinkers, innovators and leaders.

Program Overview:

The Georgia Governor's Honors Program (GHP) is a residential summer program for skilled, knowledgeable, and talented high school sophomores and juniors.

GHP is held in midsummer (June 14- July 11, 2026) as a premier residential educational experience at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. Students attend classes in the mornings in their major areas of study and afternoons in various other areas of elective study. They participate in a wide variety of instructional, leadership and social opportunities every evening. Meals and campus housing are provided by the program at no cost to participants or their families. The only expected costs to students will be travel to and from the Semifinalist Event and Summer Program campus, basic school supplies, and toiletries for their campus dorm room. Spending money during the program is not required, however GHP provides each finalist with \$25 on their GHP/Campus ID card to use at vending machines and stores on campus.

Coordinator's Role:

- Ensure the local selection process is aligned with GHP and any changes discussed during the coordinator workshops
- Guide the selection process at the local level ensuring fairness and equity
- Follow guidelines in *Coordinator's Handbook, Description and Criteria*
- Share information including relevant dates and changes to the program
- Provide support at the local level for administrators, counselors, teachers and students
- Submit nominees by deadline
- Provide guidance and support to semifinalists and finalists throughout the selection process

Qualities/Characteristics of a GHP Student

Who is a GHP Student?

A GHP caliber student is a current sophomore or junior that exhibits an undeniable level of passion in their preferred subject, and an appetite to learn on a deeper level that cannot always be fully satisfied in a high school classroom. GHP caliber students will find ways to study and explore their subjects independently from a classroom environment, at times despite a lack of resources.

The most important aspect of the selection process is identifying students who possess the characteristics to be successful in the summer program. Teachers are almost always the most knowledgeable, but do not always understand the qualities of a GHP student. To that end, please provide all individuals involved in the local selection process with the [GHP Student Site](#) to get a better understanding of the summer program from the student perspective.

The ideal candidate is not always the student with the best grades or the most outspoken. GHP students are passionate about their intellectual and/or artistic pursuits.

GHP students:

- Develop interests in activities that foster cooperation, collaboration and humility.
- Demonstrate a willingness to challenge preconceived notions and understandings.
- Explore their area of nomination outside the classroom environment, in most cases independently.
- Exhibit the social and emotional maturity necessary to thrive in a rigorous classroom environment, and residential settings.
- Can interact respectfully, cooperatively and appropriately with their peers, instructors, program staff and administrators.

These students share some common qualities that teachers do not always view as gifted/talented, or as a good fit for the program.

Common qualities of GHP students:

- Inquisitive and alert observers of others
- Unusual capacity for processing information
- Think and learn rapidly
- Reason and synthesize well
- Heightened capacity to analyze and/or think abstractly
- Voracious consumers of subject area text, literature and films, etc.
- Sometimes prefer conversations with adults over peers in the same age range
- Easily bored and/or disengaged outside preferred subject areas, or if not adequately challenged
- Often dislikes group work; prefers to work independently
- Prone to procrastination, and self-criticism due to a desire for perfection

GHP Selection Process

The student selection process has several steps, the first of which varies by public school districts, state charter schools, state schools and independent schools (hereinafter referred to as “local districts”). Each local district may create its own process for choosing nominees to GHP.

Attending GHP is a privilege and not a right. Local district nominees should demonstrate creativity, superior ability in area of nomination, and the social and emotional maturity required to thrive in an intensive, residential setting for the entire four weeks of the program. Use the previous year’s application required assignment, interview/audition preparation guides, and the most up to date information to support your local processes.

Once the nominees have been selected at the local level and submitted to [Trevor Cason](#) (**by email before deadline Nov. 11**), an email with details regarding the online application process will be sent to each nominee and their parent. (see GHP timeline for specific dates). Nominees will have between mid-November and early January to complete the online application.

Selecting Students at the Local Level:

While local districts may devise their own processes and procedures to select nominees, all applicants must meet the requirements outlined here and in the GHP Course Description and Selection Criteria document. Students should **not** be selected based on attributes outside of their control (ex. race/ethnicity, gender, school, district or geographic area). The state selection process does not have a bias for juniors over sophomores, although local districts may choose to consider the students’ grade levels in their own selection processes.

The GHP [webpage](#) contains useful information to support the selection and nomination processes, some of which will provide information specifically for the nominees and their parents. Content will be updated throughout the year.

Requirements for Participation:

- Students shall be nominated to the state in only one area of nomination with the approval of the student and parent/legal guardian following the local district nomination process. Qualified students may be nominated in consultation with their private teachers in subject areas the school does not offer (dance, piano, strings, etc.). Students nominated at the school level in more than one subject should be allowed to choose the area in which they prefer to be nominated. Parents/legal guardians of home school students may serve as the nominating teacher.
- Students nominated for the 2025 program as sophomores who did not participate in the summer program may be nominated to the 2026 program. This includes students who were selected as finalists in 2025 but voluntarily declined the opportunity to participate before the summer program began. Local coordinators should indicate this information on their nomination form.

- Students may only attend the summer program once.
- Coordinators have **two additional allotments in each of the following areas** that will not count against their total allotments:
 - Computer Science
 - Music: Jazz
 - Dance: Male Nominees
 - (Example. Nomination allotment total of 10. With 2 additional students in each of the above areas a coordinator could ultimately submit a total of 16 nominees.)
- Standardized test scores (PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.) are not required, nor requested.

Students nominated to GHP must:

- Be a current sophomore or junior in a school that is located within the state of Georgia.
- Have demonstrated high aptitude, social and emotional maturity, giftedness/talent, and sincere passion for their area of nomination.
- If selected as a state semifinalist students must commit to participation in the state level interviews and auditions.
 - The Semifinalist Event for all areas (except music) will be held on **(February 28, 2026, at Georgia Southern University)**.
 - The Semifinalist Event for music will be held on **(March 14, 2026, at Kennesaw State University)**.
- Commit to participation in the program for **the entire four weeks of the program (June 14- July 11)** if selected as a state finalist, **including opening and closing days**. Students are not permitted to arrive late or leave GHP early. Inability to meet the attendance requirement will result in disqualification for consideration, and, if selected for participation, **can result in dismissal** from the program. Exceptions to the attendance requirement will be rare, limited to true emergencies, and will require approval by the Governor’s Honors Program Director.

Program Limitations and Allotments:

Coordinators should be aware that each area has its own numerical limitations based on the specific components of its discipline. Music, for example, must limit its finalists to the specific size of each performance group. Therefore, nominators should carefully consider their internal selection processes.

Nomination Allotment:

Each public school district, independent school, state charter or state school receives an allotment of nominations that may be used for any area of nomination. There is no limit placed on the number of students nominated in a specific subject area. Allotments are based on the population of 10th and 11th graders reported to the Georgia Department of Education (public school districts, state charters, and state schools) or to GHP via the Coordinator Information Form (independent schools). Nomination allotments can change from year to year based on this information.

Each coordinator will receive an updated nomination allotment via email in September, typically during the time coordinator workshops are taking place.

Home School Students:

Homeschooled students are encouraged to participate. Each public school district is provided with a separate nomination allotment to be used solely for home school students seeking nomination. Coordinators may request a copy of a student's Declaration of Intent to Home School (DOI) to verify that the home school student is compliant with Georgia's home study law O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690. Upon verification, the student will be eligible for selection and nomination to the Governor's Honors Program. Coordinators may not use the home school allotment for other students in the event no homeschooled students seek nomination.

- **NOTE:** If the home school parent does not have a copy of their Declaration of Intent (DOI), they may contact the Georgia Department of Education. <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Pages/Home-Schools.aspx>

IMPORTANT!

Coordinators, please do not notify students and their parents, or publicly release the names of nominees until your nominations have been submitted to and confirmed by GHP.

GHP will notify all students and parents of next steps via email after the nomination deadline has passed, but before the online application opens.

Online Application System

The online system uses the student applicant's email address to create a student application account. Students **must** provide coordinators with **valid** email addresses to access the state-level application, and they must notify the GHP office if changes occur in their email addresses. Students **must** use an email account (such as free accounts from Google, Yahoo, etc.) that **belongs to the student**. Coordinators are encouraged to provide the [GHP White List](#) to IT professionals for students that use a school/district provided email address.

Once nominees have accessed the online application for the first time, they will be able to immediately complete the three request tasks. These tasks should be completed immediately to give each third party the requisite time to submit forms/documents.

- **Parent/Legal Guardian Permission.** A permission form will be emailed and must be completed by the parent/legal guardian of the nominee. If permission is not granted, the student will be unable to complete and submit the online application. *Students and parents will **not** be able to use the same email address. Students are encouraged to use an email address that they actively use.*
- **Recommendation Request.** Nominees should select an individual that can speak to their ability in the chosen area of nomination. The recommendation request can be completed by a former/current teacher, professor, private tutor, mentor, etc. *It is important that nominees actively discuss this responsibility with recommenders so that they are aware and anticipate the request when sent from the online application.*
- **Student Record Request.** GHP requires that a school counselor or administrator submit a transcript which covers all years of high school/secondary school education. The transcript must include an explanation of the school's grading system and include grades from the most recent school term. *It is important that nominees actively discuss the student record request with their counselor/admin so that they are aware of and anticipate the request when sent from the online application.*
- Nominees are responsible for completing and submitting the online application. Nominees must also hold themselves accountable in communicating with **parents/legal guardians, counselors, and recommenders** to complete any requested forms/documents.

Student Responsibilities:

- Students track the status of their applications and acceptance as a semifinalist, alternate, or finalist via their online application account.
- Nominees are responsible for monitoring their accounts and contacting the GHP office if the process seems to be delayed, or if there are questions about specific application requirements.
- GHP does not use or rely on social media as the primary avenue to share updates. Any questions about the application and GHP should be directed to the GHP Office. While we do have an [official GHP Facebook page](#) there are several groups/pages created by alum that are not linked to the

program. There will be no exceptions or special considerations to any part of the process due to misinformation students may receive through social media.

Application Process

- All application tasks will be submitted in the online application system, WizeHive.
- The first tasks in the student application are providing contact information for their parent/legal guardian, recommender, and counselor/administrative designee.
- Students will then be prompted to complete their “Nominee Profile” and the Short Response Section.
- The final task, Required Assignment, is separate and specific to each subject area. For example, students nominated in social studies will provide a written response to one or more current issues, while a dance nominee will submit a short video of their dancing technique.
- Once the student applications have been completed and verified by the GHP office, they will be submitted to content area experts for review. Reviewers for each content area will use a scoring rubric to rate each application. Once all applications have been reviewed, the scores will be tabulated, and this process will generate a list of semifinalists to be invited to the Semifinalist Event for interviews and auditions.
- All students who submit an application in the online system should be recognized and congratulated for their achievements as a GHP state-level nominee. Semifinalists will receive notice of an invitation to the state-level interview via their online application account. (see timeline for details) GHP is not responsible for missed deadlines, or failure to respond within required timelines for students who do not adequately monitor their emails and online portal.

Semifinalists Level

Notification:

Semifinalists are those students who have been selected to attend the state-level interviews and auditions. These students have been nominated by their local district, have successfully completed the application process, have had their online applications scored, and have obtained an application score that moves them to semifinalist status.

- Applications will be reviewed by college faculty, high school teachers, retired subject educators, Georgia Department of Education and Regional Educational Service Agency staff, industry professionals, and current/former GHP staff members from all over Georgia, under the direction of GHP. All decisions (invitation to interview, acceptance, etc.) are communicated via the student's online application account portal which is accessed directly by the nominee. GHP coordinators will be notified as well via email ahead of the semifinalist announcement. *The provided list of students will be embargoed until the announcement of semifinalists has been made.*
- Parents/legal guardians of semifinalists will select their interview/audition time on February 13, 2026. GHP's goal is to ensure that families are provided with the ability to make the most appropriate plans for their individual situations and to allow students the time and rest needed to prepare for the Semifinalist Event. It is the responsibility of the semifinalist and their parents/legal guardians to be aware of their selected interview/audition time.

Preparing Students for Interviews/Auditions:

Make sure that every semifinalist is aware of the GHP [webpage](#), where information will be posted as appropriate.

- Schools are encouraged to support semifinalists by conducting mock interviews to give students experience before they participate in the actual GHP state-level interviews.
- Local district coordinators are advised to assist students in preparing for the state-level interviews by reviewing the preparation guides.
- Coordinators are strongly advised to contact the GHP Office with any questions or concerns regarding how to prepare students for the Semifinalist Event.

Finalists and Alternates

Finalists:

Finalists are those students who have been selected to attend GHP. Finalists will be notified through their student account in the online application system on March 20, 2026, and will be provided with instructions to complete the acceptance process. The deadline for acceptance (via the online application system) is April 3, 2026. Finalists who fail to complete the acceptance process by the deadline will forfeit their invitation to attend GHP. Students who decline their invitation (or miss the deadline) will be removed as a finalist, and the alternate with the highest score in that subject will be invited instead.

Coordinators will receive a list of their finalists and alternates, prior to the announcement of finalists. *The provided list of students will be embargoed until the announcement of finalists/alternates has been made.*

Alternates:

Alternates will be alerted of their status on March 20, 2026. If a finalist does not accept or is unable to attend, the GHP Office will contact the selected alternate on a rolling basis. No alternates will be invited after April 30, 2026.

Accepted Finalists:

- GHP will communicate directly with all finalists that have accepted their offer to attend and their primary parent/legal guardian.
- All deadlines must be met by students and parents/legal guardians.
- Students must have a **current** physical and **GHP medical form** completed.
- The legal agreement must be signed by **both the student and a parent/legal guardian**, and it **must** be notarized.
- Students must adhere to all rules while attending the summer program.

GHP cannot be successful without the efforts of coordinators across the state, and we are extremely grateful to all coordinators, teachers, counselors, and administrators for their hard work and dedication to GHP. Do not hesitate to contact us if questions arise.

GHP Administration

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Appendix A: GHP 2026 Timeline

August 19, 2025	Information email to superintendents, independent heads of school, and GHP coordinators.
August – November, 2025	Local selection processes occur during this time. Nominee selection at the local level will include internal deadlines that are not listed here. Please contact your local school admin for specific dates and deadlines.
September 2, 2025	Central Georgia Coordinator Workshop
September 4, 2025	Tifton Coordinator Workshop
September 11, 2025	Atlanta Coordinator Workshop
September 19, 2025	Pioneer RESA Coordinator Workshop
November 11, 2025	Deadline for submission of 2025 GHP student nominations by independent schools, state charter schools, and public school districts.
November 14, 2025	Online application opens for student nominees.
December 4, 2025	Online Information Session: GHP Application
January 9, 2026	Deadline for completed online applications, including recommendations and records.
February 6, 2026	Notification of 2026 Semifinalists.
February 13, 2026	Semifinalist Event interview/audition time selection by parents.
February 28, 2026 March 14, 2026	<u>All Areas (except music) Semifinalist Event at Georgia Southern University.</u> <u>Music Semifinalist Event at Kennesaw State University.</u>
March 20, 2026	Notification of 2026 Finalists and Alternates.
April 3, 2026	Deadline for Finalists' acceptance.
April 13, 2026	Parents/legal guardians emailed link to required online student forms.
April 30, 2026	Last day for GHP to invite alternates.
May 8, 2026	Deadline for parent/legal guardian completion of required online student forms.
June 14 – July 11, 2026	2026 Governor's Honors Program at Georgia Southern University.

Appendix B: GHP 2026 Areas of Nomination

Agricultural Research, Biotechnology & Science
Communicative Arts
Computer Science**
Dance**
Engineering*
Mathematics

Music*
Science*
Social Studies
Theatre Performance
Visual Arts
World Languages*

**These areas of nomination have subcategories provided below.*

*** District coordinators may submit 2 male dance nominees without impacting allotment number.*

*** District coordinators may also submit 2 computer science nominees without impacting allotment number.*

*** District coordinators may also submit 2 music jazz nominees without impacting allotment number.*

Engineering:

- Mechanical & Aerospace
- Electrical & Computational
- Civil

Music:

- Brass: Euphonium, French Horn, Trombone, Trumpet, Tuba
- Jazz: Electric or Acoustic Bass, Drums, Guitar, Piano, Saxophone, Trombone, Trumpet, Vibraphone
- Percussion
- Piano
- Strings: Cello, String Bass, Viola, Violin
- Voice: Alto, Bass, Soprano, Tenor
- Woodwind: Bassoon, Clarinet, Flute, Oboe, Saxophone

Science:

- Biology/Environmental Science
- Chemistry
- Physics

World Languages:

- Chinese
- French
- German
- Latin
- Spanish

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What are some qualities of GHP Students?

A: A GHP student is a rising junior or senior that exhibits an undeniable level of passion in their preferred subject, and an appetite to learn on a deeper level that cannot always be fully satisfied in a high school classroom. GHP caliber students will find ways to study and explore their subjects independently from a classroom environment, at times despite a lack of resources.

While there is no set list of qualities, most gifted students tend to exhibit one or more of the following attributes:

- Inquisitive
- High level of language ability
- Unusual capacity for processing information
- Think and learn rapidly
- Reason and synthesize well
- Heightened capacity to analyze and/or think abstractly
- Alert observer of others and texts (literature, film, etc.)
- Sometimes prefers adults' company to peers'
- Sometimes easily bored and/or disengaged
- Sometimes dislikes group work; prefers to work independently
- Sometimes prone to procrastination and self-criticism

Q: How will home school students know who to contact for assistance?

A: All interested students and parents/legal guardians (regardless of public/home school) are directed to contact their local school district GHP coordinators for assistance. Home school parents/students/legal guardians should contact the public school which they would attend for nomination information.

Q: Are local district GHP coordinators responsible for recruiting home school students?

A: No. GOSA notifies home school community groups. That stated, once a home school student or parent/legal guardian contacts the local district GHP coordinator, it becomes the coordinator's responsibility to assist the student in the same manner that would be provided to public school students.

Q: Does the number of homeschooled students affect my nomination allotment?

A: No, homeschooled students have their own allotments for the program

Q: Who is the “Nominating Teacher” for a homeschooled student?

A: The nominating teacher is the individual who serves as the student’s primary instructor for the subject area of nomination. This may be the nominee’s parent(s)/legal guardian, or someone involved in a home school consortium.

Q: Can we request the student’s application scores if they are not chosen as a semifinalist?

A: Applications are scored and evaluated by GHP content area educators/experts according to a predetermined rubric. This process is not designed to provide individual student feedback.

Q: Can a local district send an alternate if the original nominee declines to participate in the state-level interview?

A: No, local districts are not allowed to substitute students once the online application opens.

Q: If a student is selected to attend GHP, does he or she have to pay tuition?

A: No, there is no charge for tuition, room, board or classroom materials. Participants will be responsible only for transportation to and from GHP and for any personal expenses, such as snacks, laundry detergent, general school supplies, etc. There is no charge for use of any of the recreational facilities, libraries, washers/dryers, or attendance at special events held during the summer program. Every student is given \$25 by GHP to use on campus via their flex/ID card.

Q: Are students provided grades or academic credit for attending GHP?

A: No, students are provided with an intensive academic environment without the pressure of grades. Students are encouraged to become increasingly self-motivated throughout the program, and instructors provide constructive feedback that is designed to guide future studies and development. All students who successfully complete the program receive a certificate of merit. Students deemed GHP nominees, GHP semifinalists, and GHP finalists should be proud to use such language on future higher education applications.

Q: Can students with disabilities be nominated?

A: Yes, any student who meets the criteria for the subject area is qualified as a nominee. GHP requires that the local selection process be fair, equitable, and comply with any state or federal requirements for those with disabilities.

Q: Since GHP may conflict with other summer activities, what should a student who is selected do if there is a conflict?

A: Students will need to make a choice regarding the summer activities they wish to pursue. GHP requires commitment to participate in the program for **the entire four weeks of the program (June 14- July 11)** if selected as a state finalist, **including opening and closing days**. Students are not permitted to arrive late or leave GHP early.

Q: What qualities or criteria should we stress for our school/district-level GHP nomination process?

A: Schools and districts will need to make their decisions based on what they deem best for their students. Due to the intensive academic and collaborative nature of the program, students who are most successful tend to display intellectual curiosity, significant academic or artistic talent, comfort in small and large group settings, and the emotional maturity to participate in a residential setting. Students who possess all these characteristics are typically students who matriculate through the four-week program successfully.