

**Leon County Florida's Best and Brightest  
Scholarship Program Q & A  
10/12/2017**

The State of Florida created the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program to attract and retain high academic achievers in the teaching profession. The following questions and answers (Q & A) are provided in sequential order to best assist you in understanding the program's parameters and provisions. You are encouraged to read through all of the questions to facilitate your full understanding of the program.

Please note, as we receive further guidance from the State or the District seeks clarification on questions, this Q & A guidance will be updated accordingly. Please contact Human Resources with specific questions.

**1. What is the Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program?**

The State of Florida created the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program to attract and retain high academic achievers in the teaching profession. This is a State funded opportunity. **Leon County School District is not responsible for funding or program parameters.**

**2. What is the eligibility criteria for the 'Best and Brightest Scholarship' award?**

As of August 10, 2015, the Florida Department of Education clarified eligibility criteria such that teachers who may apply for the award are defined under F.S. 1012.01(2)(a): **Classroom teachers**. – Classroom teachers are staff members assigned the professional activity of instructing students in courses in classroom situations, including basic instruction, exceptional student education, career education, and adult education. The District will verify the professional activity of instructing students using classroom rosters, classes taught and the evaluation instrument. To be considered a classroom teacher, you must be evaluated using the Instructional Classroom Teachers Evaluation instrument.

To be eligible:

A classroom teacher must have achieved a composite score at or above the 80th percentile on either the SAT or the ACT based on the National Percentile Ranks in effect when the classroom teacher took the assessment,

**AND**

Must have been evaluated as Highly Effective pursuant to section F.S. 1012.34.

**OR**

If the classroom teacher is a first-year teacher who has not been evaluated pursuant to section 1012.34, s/he must have scored at or above the 80th percentile on either the SAT (including both critical reading and math scores composite) or the ACT (a composite score) based on the percentile rankings in effect at the time the classroom teacher took the assessment.

The following Instructional Personnel are not included in F.S. 1012.01(2)(a) unless verified as classroom teachers. To confirm classroom teaching status, the Confirmation of Classroom Teaching Responsibilities form must be completed, signed by the applicant and the school site administrator and rosters for 15/16 and 16/17 must be attached.

F.S. 1012.01(2)(b): **Student personnel services**. – Included in this classification are certified school counselors, social workers, career specialists, and school psychologists.

F.S. 1012.01(2)(c): **Librarians/media specialists**.

F.S. 1012.01(2)(d): **Other instructional staff**. – These are instructional staff that are not classified in the categories specified in F.S. paragraphs (a) – (c) above. Included in this classification are primary specialists, learning resource specialists, instructional trainers, adjunct educators, and similar positions.

**3. I am in my very first-year in the teaching profession so I have never received an evaluation. How may I qualify for the award?**

If you are a classroom teacher that is new to the teaching profession, then you are a first-year teacher who has not been evaluated pursuant to section 1012.34. To qualify for the award, you must have achieved a composite score at or above the 80th percentile on either the SAT or the ACT based on the National Percentile Ranks in effect when you took the assessment.

**4. What if I have a classroom teacher final evaluation from another public school district in Florida?**

If you worked at another School District or Charter School as a Classroom Teacher in Florida in the previous year, then you must provide LCS with an official evaluation document that shows your final rating as Highly Effective as a Classroom Teacher.

**5. I am a substitute teacher. Can I apply and qualify for the award?**

No. Substitute Teachers are not eligible to apply and cannot qualify.

**6. What do I need to do before I apply for the ‘Best and Brightest Scholarship’ award?**

You need to obtain an official record of your SAT or ACT scores from the testing agency. Official documentation of your SAT or ACT score(s) must be submitted as part of your qualification process. Qualification forms that are submitted without official scores will not be considered complete. Classroom teachers with incomplete qualification forms will not be eligible for the award.

If you do not have an official record of your score(s) from the testing agency, you may contact the testing administrator to obtain an official copy. For **SAT** test scores, go to the College Board website at: <https://sat.collegeboard.org/scores/send-old-sat-scores> or call 866-756-7346.

For **ACT** test scores, complete the PDF order form online via: <http://act.org/aap/pdf/asrform.pdf>, or call 319-337-1270 to place an archived score report request. You can also request your ACT score online at: [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

***Whether you access the SAT or ACT testing agency, you must SEND THE SCORES TO YOURSELF so that you can submit them with the application materials.***

## 7. I have my scores. How do I apply for the scholarship award?

In order to demonstrate eligibility for an award, a classroom teacher must submit the completed *2017-2018 Leon County Florida's Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Qualification Form* along an official record of his/her SAT or ACT score(s) indicating a composite score at or above the 80th percentile, based upon rankings in effect at the time the assessment was taken. You must attach your 2016-2017 evaluation rating of Highly Effective (if not a new teacher) and Confirmation of Classroom Teaching Responsibilities form. Qualification forms submitted without required documentation will be considered incomplete.

**All documentation is due to the LCS Human Resources Department by 5:00 p.m., December 1, 2017. All forms and additional guidance can be located via [www.leonschools.net/](http://www.leonschools.net/) under the Human Resource tab.**

## 8. What is the process for verification, notification and payment of eligible classroom teachers?

### PROCESS TIMELINE

Steps	Timeline	Teacher Category		
		A.	B.	C.
		New Classroom Teacher with LCS	Experienced Classroom Teacher and new to LCS	Current Classroom Teacher with LCS
1. Submission	Due to HR by December 1, 2017	Submit Official ACT or SAT score to Human Resources by December 1, 2017	Submit Official ACT or SAT score <b>AND</b> 2016-2017 final evaluation by December 1, 2017	Submit Official ACT or SAT score, Classroom Teacher Qualification Form <b>AND</b> 2016-17 final evaluation by December 1, 2017
2. Verification	Completed by December 15, 2017	Human Resources Department verifies 80+ percentile score	Human Resources Department verifies 80+ percentile score <b>AND</b> a rating of highly effective on 2016-2017 evaluation	Human Resources Department verifies 80+ percentile score <b>AND</b> a rating of highly effective on 2016-2017 evaluation
3. Notification	Completed by December 15, 2017	Human Resources Department notifies teacher of eligibility or ineligibility after review of documentation		
4. Transmission to FLDOE	Completed by January 2, 2018	LCS transmits data for eligible Classroom teachers to FLDOE		
5. Payment - Final check amount	TBD	FLDOE distributes funds to Districts by date TBD. Each District will distribute to eligible Classroom teachers. Districts must return funds to the FLDOE for		

determined by state.		any teacher no longer in a Florida public school classroom. If a teacher resigns to teach in a different public school classroom in Florida, the funds will be forwarded to the eligible teacher.
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**9. What if I was a classroom teacher when I was evaluated as Highly Effective and am no longer in a classroom teacher position?**

You must be in an active classroom teacher position at the time of the State’s submission deadline, which is December 1, 2017. If you were an active classroom teacher as of November 1, submitted the required documentation verifying eligibility by November 1, but subsequently went on extended leave you will be eligible.

**10. Must I be employed by the district at the time of payout?**

Yes. You must be an active classroom teacher with the Leon County School District at the time of the State submittal deadline (December 1) and continue through award distribution.

**11. If I qualify for the award, how will I know how much I will receive?**

The State has appropriated funds. When the final number of recipients is determined state-wide, we anticipate the State will announce the individual award amount. By date TBD, pending receipt of the funds from the State, you will receive your scholarship. All payments from this program will be subject to payroll and income tax withholdings.

**12. If I did not take or do not have SAT or ACT scores can I take the test now in order to qualify?**

Yes. According to the Florida Department of Education, classroom teachers rated Highly Effective may take the ACT or SAT in order to earn the scholarship. The official score(s) documentation, however, demonstrating the classroom teacher has met the current 80th percentile ranking or higher must be submitted by the State’s December 1, 2017 deadline.

**13. When does my qualification form need to be completed by?**

District classroom teachers need to submit their qualification form to the District, including required attachments, no later than the State’s December 1, 2017 deadline.

**14. I work at a Charter school. How do I apply for the scholarship award?**

The language in the State Appropriations Bill that speaks to this scholarship notes that “Charter School Governing Boards” must submit data for their Charter School to the State for the Best and Brightest Scholarship Program by the State’s deadline of December 1, 2017. Therefore, please contact your Charter School Administration for further information.

## 15. Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Please email your question to [LCSBestandBrightest@leonschools.net](mailto:LCSBestandBrightest@leonschools.net). We expect a high volume of inquiries regarding this program so we appreciate your patience as we respond to information requests.

## 16. I took the ACT and received my official score documentation. Why do I not see my percentile score?

In light of the recent Florida legislation related to Florida classroom teacher scores on the ACT, in order to determine whether a Florida classroom teacher scored “at or above the 80th percentile on the ACT based upon the percentile ranks in effect when the teacher took the assessment”, ACT, Inc. has provided the following guidance based upon the best available historical norm information from the testing administrator’s archives.

1. The best evidence is the original score report received by the classroom teacher.
2. If a classroom teacher needs a replacement score report,
  - a. These can be ordered either by contacting ACT Student Services at 319.337.1270 or via the ACT Additional Score Report (ASR) at: <http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/asrform.pdf> A fee will be charged for these reports.
  - b. The percentile ranks provided on ASRs reflect current year norms, **NOT** the norms in effect at the time the classroom teacher took the test.
  - c. The following are the minimum composite scores that were “at or above the 80th percentile” **at the time of testing**. Find your testing date range below to view the minimum composite score you need to be at or above the 80th percentile is:
    - September, 2011 through August, 2017 : 26
    - September, 1993 through August, 2011 : 25
    - September, 1991 through August, 1993 : 24
    - September, 1990 through August, 1991 : 25
    - September, 1989 through August, 1990 : 24
    - September, 1985 through August, 1989 : 25
    - September, 1976 through August, 1985 : 24
    - September, 1973 through August, 1976 : 25
    - September, 1971 through August, 1973 : 24
    - September, 1970 through August, 1971 : 25
    - September, 1969 through August, 1970 : 24
    - September, 1968 through August, 1969 : \*
    - September, 1966 through August, 1968 : 25

\* ACT, Inc. cannot verify the composite score which corresponds to the 80th percentile for this period from archive materials. If a three-year norm were used for 1968 – 1969 an ACT composite score of 24 could be applied.

### **17. How can I obtain additional information related to SAT?**

Teachers can order archived score reports by calling (866) 756-7346 or by filling out and mailing the form found at <https://sat.collegeboard.org/scores/send-old-sat-scores> Archived score reports cost \$31.

Teachers who took the SAT more than once will receive all of the available score reports as part of their order.

Archived score report requests take up to 5 weeks to process. Rush orders may be placed for additional fees.

Questions? Call (866) 756-7346 Monday - Friday from 8am to 9pm EST, or visit <https://sat.collegeboard.org/> contact to send an email.

### **18. How do I submit my documentation?**

All documentation must be **hand delivered** to Human Resources by 5:00 p.m., December 1, 2017:

**Attn: Mary Nicholson, Director of Human Resources  
Leon County Schools District Service Office  
2757 West Pensacola Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32304**

**Documentation sent via email, common carrier or fax will not be accepted.**

### **19. Will I be taxed on this bonus?**

All payments to teachers from this program are subject to payroll and income tax withholdings.

### **20. Can I defer this bonus?**

If you already have a percentage of your paycheck withheld as an LCS deferred deduction, that deduction will not change as this payment does not impact regular salary.

If you have established 403(b) or 457(b) account(s) and you want to increase the amount contributed due to receiving the bonus, you need to contact your account representative. This process must be completed at least two weeks before receipt of payment.

### **21. What is the definition of an “official” record of the teacher’s ACT or SAT score?**

An official record is the score report received from ACT and SAT testing agencies.

### **21. What if I received the scholarship award in the past?**

Even if you received the award in the past, you must submit the 2017-2018 application and all required documentation.

**For additional information regarding the Program please visit:**

<http://fldoe.org/about-us/best-brightest.shtml>

<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>