

Application Guide



Thanks for your interest in the Bezos Scholars Program.

This guide is a resource for students applying to the program, or for anyone helping a student apply. Our application is hosted on a platform created and managed by [Kaleidoscope](#). To be considered for the upcoming cohort, all components of the application must be complete and submitted no later than 8 pm, in the time zone you reside in, on **January 21, 2025**.

All parts of a student's application are viewed holistically to provide us with as much of a complete understanding of an applicant as possible. This guide provides detailed information on:

- What makes a strong student applicant
- Our selection criteria
- How U.S. Scholars are selected
- A step-by-step summary of the entire application that includes instructions, resources and recommendations and details on the educator nominee component

The Bezos Scholars Program firmly believes in equal opportunity and values the importance of each person as an individual. To that end, we prohibit discrimination against any current or prospective applicant or selected Bezos Scholar who meets the program's eligibility requirements on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, citizenship, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, political ideology, the presence of any physical, sensory, or mental disabilities or any legally protected status. We expect each selected Scholar to value diversity, equity and inclusion and strongly commit to our anti-discrimination practices.

If you believe that you need an accommodation to allow you to either apply to or participate in the program, please contact us. Although we cannot guarantee them, we are committed to providing reasonable accommodations that are necessary to effectively enable you to apply to and/or participate in the program.

If, after reviewing this guide and our website, you have any questions about the program, please reach out to scholars@bezosfamilyfoundation.org. If you have any questions or need support with the online application, please reach out to help@mykaleidoscope.com.

Good luck—and you got this!

What makes a strong student applicant?

Successful Bezos Scholars are passionate, intellectually curious young people who are rising leaders in their schools and communities. They are interested in personal and intellectual growth, practice reflection, demonstrate a strong work ethic and communicate clearly. We favor students who engage with their communities, pursue their passions in substantive ways and are interested in serving others. Competitive applicants show us their commitment to both learning and equity. Standout candidates articulate how our program would help them achieve their personal and professional goals while benefiting their community.

We also value diversity among scholars, including cultural, racial, socioeconomic, geographic and gender diversity. We aim each year to build a cohort of Scholars that reflects the diversity of the United States.

Our selection criteria

Using a holistic selection process that considers multiple aspects of a candidate, our selection committee evaluates and scores candidates based on three main criteria:

1

Intellectual curiosity and commitment to education. Bezos Scholars are strong students. They have taken challenging classes and have performed exceptionally well. Scholars are also intellectually curious. They strive to push the boundaries of their learning in and out of the classroom. We recognize that many factors affect a student's success. If you've had academic challenges while in high school, share more about them in your application, and tell us about how you persevered in spite of them.

2

Demonstrated leadership and community engagement. We seek passionate young people who are rising leaders in their schools and communities and who inspire and motivate others through their actions and commitment. Bezos Scholars are independent, creative thinkers. They enjoy converting ideas into action. They lead with humility, compassion and sense of purpose to help others and the world around them.

3

Readiness and capacity to engage in the program. Bezos Scholars are excited to take their skills and community involvement to the next level. They can balance community engagement, academics, extracurricular activities and family commitments. Scholars employ strong presentation and public speaking skills; they can summarize thoughts and ideas while being authentically themselves, even if speaking in front of others is not in their immediate comfort zone. They thrive in collaborative settings; they enjoy working with and learning from others. And they enjoy trying new things and challenging pre-conceived notions of what youth can do and what they personally can do to make a difference.

How we choose Scholars

Our volunteer Selection Committee members are leaders in the fields of education, youth leadership and development, science and the arts. We aim for committee members to reflect the identities of who applies, and members share a strong commitment to supporting and championing young leaders. Members are trained to score applications using our rubric which is focused on the selection criteria described above.

We divide our selection process into two rounds:

- **Round One** – each application is reviewed three times by three different selection committee members, working independently from one another. Our process also considers the opportunities and resources each applicant has had access to, that we know about, their high school resume (including cumulative GPA, advanced courses and extracurricular activities) and their educator nominee's recommendation.
- **Round Two** – a sub-committee made up of program staff and alum review semi-finalists' applications and conduct interviews with them. This process helps us select our finalists, who we invite to become Bezos Scholars. Student acceptance into the program is contingent on our interview and acceptance of their educator nominee.

Step-By-Step Application Guide

STEP 1: Confirm Eligibility

To create a profile on our application and start your application, you need to confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements:

- Current high school junior, on track to become a senior the following academic year.
- Attend an eligible public high school in the United States that currently has a 30% or greater overall free and reduced lunch rate.

We are asking for your school's **overall free and reduced lunch rate percentage**, not if the student applicant personally qualifies for free and reduced lunch. If you are unsure of your school's free and reduced lunch rate, DO NOT make it up or guess. DO ask a school staff person for help. Usually someone in the attendance/main office or in the cafeteria can help.

On the apply page of the website, please check the **current list of ineligible schools**. A school is temporarily ineligible if a student from that high school has been selected as a Scholar selected in the last two active cohort years.

These requirements are so we can engage more students and educators, and help launch more community change projects, from various and different schools and locations. The program not only supports and serves individual students and educators, but also brings opportunities and resources to the school ecosystem they are part of.

- Legal resident or citizen of the United States or have received DACA status.
- Enrolled in or have taken during your high school career, one or more Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or college-level course.
- Committed to nominating an Educator, a willing and supportive adult from your school, who will partner and fully participate in the program with me.
- Have read and fully understand and agree to the **program commitments**, including full participation on the trip to Aspen, CO slated for late June (exact dates listed on website).

STEP 2: Personal Information

This section asks you to complete basic demographic information about yourself, your background, location and how you learned about the program.

STEP 3: School Information and Advanced Courses

This section asks you to complete basic information about your high school, your grades, and advanced courses offered and that you have taken or are currently enrolled in.

GPA: The application asks for your current, unweighted cumulative GPA which cannot be entered in over a 4.0. If you only have a weighted GPA, please use the online conversion tool linked in the application.

Advanced courses: The application asks how many Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or College Level Courses your high school offers. Do not include any classes obtained through dual enrollment.

It also asks how many Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or College Level Courses you have taken during high school. Please DO include any classes you are currently enrolled in, and any classes obtained through dual enrollment. If you do not know how many your high school offers, DO NOT make the number up, ask a school staff person for help.

To be eligible to apply, students must be enrolled in or have taken during their high school career at least one Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or college-level course. If they have taken more than one, the application allows and we recommend that students enter up to four additional classes, prioritizing the commitments most meaningful to them.

STEP 4: Extracurricular Activities and Employment

To help us better understand a student's life outside of the classroom, applicants are required to share two current extra-curricular activities, prioritizing the commitments that are most meaningful by briefly sharing why the activity is important to them.

Extra-curricular activities include community involvement, family responsibilities, tutoring, clubs, athletics, internships, volunteer work, religious groups, etc.

Employment: It is optional to add any employment held for more than a month's time during a student's high school career. This can be a formal job or an informal paid position. Applicants can enter up to two jobs, prioritizing employment most meaningful. If an applicant has held employment, we recommend that they share that in their application. If an applicant has not held employment or chooses not to submit it, the application will still receive full consideration.



STEP 5: Video Recording

Consider yourself the director and star of a self-recorded short video you'll submit as part of your application. We want your personality to shine while learning more about your "why" for applying. In your video, make sure to clearly answer the following prompt: **"What personal experiences or values inspired you to want to become a Bezos Scholar?"** Be creative, vulnerable, and honest. Be YOU!

- Keep your recording to a maximum of one minute.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit place, ideally with a light source facing you.
- Minimize background noise, speak slowly and clearly from start to finish.
- Practice and record as many times as you need to – send us your best single take. Using a smart phone works just fine. If you don't have access to a recording device, ask a supporter for help accessing one.
- DO NOT use video editing software; if you do, this will be counted against your application during review.
- Please only submit one video. If you have any challenges with uploading your video, please click the "Help" button or send an email to help@mykaleidoscope.com.

STEP 6: Written Responses

We want to get a sense of who you are and what you value, to better understand how you see the world and want to explore your leadership within it. Your essay responses should highlight your character, strengths and leadership skills, lived experience and areas for growth while showcasing your integrity, compassion and creativity. Your responses should demonstrate your thoughts, knowledge and skills as well as your authentic voice and writing style. Be descriptive, showing and not just telling us what you want to convey using tangible details. We advise you to solicit feedback, edit and revise your essay responses outside of the online application so that when ready, you submit your best work. We are excited to learn more about you and your community!

The application platform employs a tool that detects plagiarism and AI usage. We recognize some students may want to use generative AI tools, like ChatGPT, to help them with their essay responses. It is okay to use an AI tool for idea generation and light essay revision assistance and these tools should not be used to entirely replace your own writing. If your essays are detected for plagiarism or high AI usage, this will negatively impact your application during review. Consider using gptzero.me, a free plagiarism and AI detection tool if desired.

1. The way we respond to challenges helps us learn, develop skills, solve problems, and grow. Tell us about a time you were challenged.

- What was the challenge? *50-word count*
- How did you respond? *150-word count*
- Provide two specific lessons you learned as a result. *150-word count*

2. Describe a time when you contributed to your community in a way that made a positive impact.

- Please define and describe your community—this can be a group of people living/being in the same place, having a particular characteristic in common, or sharing a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals, etc. *200-word count*
- How did you contribute to your community? *200-word count*
- What skills and/or traits did you employ that enabled you to make these contributions? *100-word count*
- What positive impact did your contribution have on yourself, and other community members involved? *100-word count*

3. Bezos Scholars ignite action in their schools, communities and beyond by developing and executing their own self-designed Community Change Project.

- What are you most passionate about changing for the better in your community right now and why it is important and relevant to you AND your community? *150-word count*
- Explain how you would make an impact on the issue, focusing on one approach you might take that is different from what you have seen/experienced being done about the issue so far. *200-word count*
- Collaboration with community members is key to Community Change Projects—how would you engage others to get involved with your project? *100-word count*

4. We also recognize that this application may not invite you to share special circumstances or information. Do you have any additional information you want to add? *200-word count*

- This is optional and could include any academic challenges you have faced in high school, lack of advanced course options offered at your high school, English language competency, pandemic related challenges, or any other context that would explain certain components of your application that you would like the selection committee to be aware of.
- Please do not use this option to expand on your accomplishments or resume.

STEP 7: Educator Nominee

Student applicants are required to identify and nominate a trusted adult from their school to become their educator nominee. Educators cannot apply to the program without the nomination of a student. Nominated educators of selected students will be required to travel to Aspen, participate in the year-long program, and collaborate with Scholars and the teams they build to help develop and launch community change projects.

Choosing the right person as your educator is imperative. Applicants will need to be ready to enter their educator nominee's name, email, the educator's relationship to them, their role/position at the applicant's school, three key reasons this person was selected, and add a personalized message to the nominee to be included with the email invitation sent to them, asking them to complete the form.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they have enough time to do so by the application deadline. The completed form will be kept confidential.

Who is eligible to be nominated?

Educator nominees must

- Be a current school staff member, in any position, OR staff member of a community organization that partners with and offers programming and/or resources to your school.
- Also plan to return to work at your school/for the organization partnering with your school for the following academic year.
- Is someone the student connects and works well with, who is supportive of student-led projects, and understands and can commit to program requirements.

Principals and vice principals can be nominated. Please keep in mind that our program commitment may be challenging for principals and vice principals due to their roles and responsibilities within their school/district.

An Educator nominee CANNOT also be an applicant's parent/guardian, relative and/or paid private tutor/counselor.

Strong educator nominee candidates also have the following characteristics:

- Love their school and community and are invested in stepping into their leadership to help students take action to make change for the greater good.
- Have built trust and a good relationship with their student nominee. Ideally, they have already witnessed and/or supported the student's leadership.
- Are strong student advocates, allies, and mentors by being open, enthusiastic and supportive of student-led projects; are passionate about fostering student leadership.
- Can efficiently balance when to step up and back to ensure students feel supported while being given the opportunity to lead.
- Are invested in their own growth as an educator and recognize they already know a lot—and still have a lot to learn.
- Understand program expectations and have the capacity to take on additional commitments.

How to ask and nominate the right person:

1. Solicit input from trusted students, school staff, your family, and people close to you on who to ask and select as your educator nominee.
2. Set up time to meet with people you identified that meet our eligibility criteria and might make a great nominee. Explain the program to them, review our website, and discuss the commitment.
3. Identify a first and second choice nominee. Ask your first choice to be your educator nominee, explaining why you want to be a Bezos Scholar, and why you would like them to be your educator partner throughout the program. If they decline your invitation, move on to ask your second choice.
4. Once someone agrees to be your educator nominee, enter their contact information into the educator nominee section of your application. They will then receive an email invitation to complete an online form on your behalf that ties to your application.

5. Check in and make sure they meet the deadline, the sooner the better! Once they have completed it, both of you will receive an email confirming it has been submitted and was received on our end.
6. Thank them and keep them updated on your application status, informing them that if you are selected as a finalist, they will be invited to participate in an informal interview with program staff. Student scholars' acceptance is contingent upon the outcome of their interview and acceptance to joining the program.

Once someone agrees to be your educator nominee, enter their contact information into the educator nominee section of your application to send them an email invitation to complete the online form. Give them enough time to complete their form and check in periodically to make sure they meet the deadline, the sooner the better! Once they have completed it, both of you will receive an email confirming it has been submitted and was received on our end

Thank them for completing the form. Keep them updated as you learn your application status during the selection process.

What should an Educator Nominee be sure to include on their form to support their student's application?

We look for evidence of educator support for their student applicant, including insight into the student's achievements, academic commitment and perseverance, resilience, and community leadership. We appreciate when educators provide a glowing recommendation, including specific examples of their student's readiness to become a Scholar. Successful nominees will show an understanding of the program and its commitments, are enthusiastic about the opportunity and have evaluated their capacity to commit.

Though it is the student applicant's responsibility to ensure their entire application is complete and submitted by the deadline, anything a nominee can do to complete the form early is helpful.

STEPS 8 & 9: Review and SUBMIT

Please review everything entered in the application, clicking on each section to review copy and content, checking for errors and completion. Edit as needed and once everything looks correct, make sure to click submit at the bottom before the deadline! As a reminder, it is your responsibility to ensure that educator nominee and recommender submit their forms by the application deadline. Once this is done, you will receive a completion email letting you know your entire application is complete.

An applicant can make edits to their application after it is submitted, as long as it is before the deadline. To do so they need to:

- Log back into: apply.mykaleidoscope.com/login
- Click the "Applications" tab on the left-hand side of the screen,
- Scroll down to "Completed—Current Applications"
- Click the arrow next to "Review"
- Click one of the drop-down numbers and click "Edit"

STEP 10: Celebrate

CONGRATULATIONS! Your application for the Bezos Scholars Program is officially complete. If you haven't already, don't forget to celebrate! Take a moment to thank your support system, including your educator nominee who submitted a form on your behalf, for their encouragement and help. And thank YOU for dedicating time and energy to applying for this opportunity and for your commitment to making a positive contribution to your community.

The selection committee will begin reviewing applications in February and all applicants will be notified of their status by early March.

Remember, we're here to help! Contact scholars@bezosfamilyfoundation.org for any questions. We are proud of you for completing the application and are honored to consider you as a Bezos Scholar.

