BEZOS SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Application Guide



Welcome!

The Bezos Scholars Program is committed to equal opportunity and honoring each individual. We prohibit discrimination against any current or prospective applicant or selected Bezos Scholar who meets program eligibility requirements. Each year, we intentionally build a cohort that reflects the cultural, racial, socioeconomic, geographic, and gender diversity of the United States.

This guide serves as a resource for students applying to the program, as well as for anyone assisting students with their applications. It provides detailed information on:

- What makes a strong student applicant
- Our selection criteria
- A step-by-step guide to completing the application

What Makes a Strong Applicant

Scholars reflect the creativity, talent, and leadership potential found in every community.

Bezos Scholars are passionate, intellectually curious young people who are emerging leaders in their schools and communities. They take initiative, communicate clearly, practice reflection, and pursue their passions in meaningful ways that serve others.

Competitive applicants show a strong commitment to learning and improving their communities. They demonstrate how the program will advance their goals and how they will contribute to the Scholar community. Educator nominees reinforce these qualities through thoughtful recommendations.

Selection Criteria

We use a holistic approach to evaluate each candidate on three main criteria:

1. **Intellectual Curiosity and Commitment to Education.** Scholars are committed students. They have taken classes and participated in opportunities that challenge them. They strive to push the boundaries of their learning in and out of the classroom. If they have faced academic challenges while in high school, applicants are encouraged to share how they persevered, what they learned, and how those experiences shaped them in one of their application essays.

2. **Demonstrated Leadership and Community Engagement.** Scholars are passionate young people who are rising leaders in their schools and communities. They inspire and motivate others through their actions and commitment. They enjoy converting ideas into action and lead with humility, compassion and a sense of purpose to help others and the world around them.

3. **Readiness and Capacity to Engage in the Program.** Scholars can balance academics, extracurriculars, family, and community commitments. They communicate authentically, thrive in collaboration, and embrace challenges that push them beyond their comfort zone. They are poised to take on the challenge of designing and implementing a student-led Community Change Project.

Our volunteer Selection Committee members are leaders in education, youth leadership and development, science and the arts. We aim for committee members to reflect the identities of those who apply, 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.

Step-By-Step Application Guide

Our application is hosted on the **Kaleidoscope** platform. We review each application holistically to gain a full understanding of every applicant. To be considered, **all components must be completed and submitted by 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time (PT) on January 12, 2027.**

STEP 1: Confirm Eligibility

Before beginning your application, you must confirm that you and your school meet the eligibility requirements below.

Students must be enrolled in and attend an eligible* U.S. public high school that meets ONE or more of the following criteria:

- At least 30% of the school's students qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- The school is designated as a Title I school.
- Title I schools receive extra federal funding because they serve a high percentage of students from low-income families.
- The state has identified the school as economically underserved; it meets the threshold for a state or district "high need" or meets the equity index used to allocate additional funding.

- This means the state identified a school as needing additional financial support because a large portion of its students come from low-income families or face other significant challenges that can hinder their learning.

***Students currently attending a school from which a Scholar was selected in the last two years are not eligible to apply.** This policy promotes fairness of opportunity, enabling us to extend the Scholar experience and the projects Scholars create to more schools and geographic locations.

If unsure whether your school qualifies, applicants are encouraged to ask someone at their school for help verifying eligibility using the most appropriate measure available in their state.

Additionally, students must:

- Be a **junior** at the time they apply to the program.
- Have a minimum unweighted GPA of 3.0.
- **Be enrolled in or have taken at least one advanced course** (Honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or College Level).
- Be available to **fully participate in the year-long program** and attend all dates for the all-expenses-paid trip to Aspen, Colorado, June 23 through June 29, 2027.
- **Nominate an educator**, a willing and supportive adult from their school, to serve as a mentor. This mentor will fully participate in the program and accompany the student on the trip to Aspen.

If they meet the program eligibility requirements, **students with disabilities are fully encouraged to apply**. BSP is committed to ensuring reasonable accommodations so that every Scholar can fully participate — this may include sign language interpreters, accessible materials, lodging adaptations while in Aspen and/or following what is in a student's IEP or section 504 Plan. We aim to ensure all eligible students can engage in the program, grow as leaders, and create meaningful change in their communities.

If you believe you need an accommodation to apply, or you have questions after reviewing this guide and our website, please contact us at **scholars@bezosfamilyfoundation.org**. If you have any questions or need support with the online application, please email **help@mykaleidoscope.com**.

STEP 2: Personal Information

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

STEP 3: School Information

This section asks you to complete some basic information about your high school, as well as the following:

Unweighted GPA: You will have to confirm that your current, unweighted cumulative GPA is at least 3.0.

- If you only have a weighted GPA, please use the online conversion tool linked in the

application.

- Please note that your educator nominee will also need to confirm that your current, unweighted cumulative GPA is at least a 3.0 in their recommendation form.

Classes that Challenged You and Advanced Course Requirement: Using classes you are currently enrolled in and/or have taken during high school, you will need to enter information on **four** classes that challenged you and highlight your commitment to education.

- **One of these four** classes must be an advanced course. Honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or College-level classes taken through dual enrollment all apply.
- For each class, you will need to share the class name/subject, if it was advanced, if you are enrolled or have already taken it, and when you took it. Also, why you took the class, how it challenged you and how the class highlights your commitment to education.

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** extracurricular activities, prioritizing those that demonstrate their leadership.

Extracurricular Activities: These can include community involvement, family responsibilities, tutoring, clubs, athletics, internships, volunteer work, faith-based groups, etc.

Employment: It is optional to add any employment you have had for more than one month **during the school year.** Please do not add any employment held over the summer.

- This can be a formal job or an informal paid position.
- Your application will still receive full consideration if you have not been employed during the school year.

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 as we learn more about your "why" for applying. Be creative, vulnerable, and honest. Be YOU!

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?

- Only submit one video, keeping your recording to a minimum of 30 seconds and 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 smartphone 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.

If you encounter any issues with uploading your video, please email **help@mykaleidoscope.com.**

STEP 6: Written Responses

We want to get to know who you are, what you value, how you see the world, and how you hope to grow as a leader. In your essay responses, highlight your character, strengths, leadership skills, lived experiences, and areas for growth. Show us your integrity, compassion, and creativity.

Write in your authentic voice. Don't just tell us what you've done or what matters to you—show us with examples and tangible details. Be descriptive and specific so your story comes through clearly.

The application platform detects both **plagiarism and AI-generated writing**. While AI tools may be used to help you brainstorm or polish drafts, your essays must be your own work. Submissions flagged as plagiarized or largely AI-written will negatively affect your application.

We encourage you to draft, revise, and seek feedback outside the application platform, so when you submit, you're confident it's your best work. You will be asked to respond to **three essay prompts**:

1. **Thinking back on your experiences since starting high school, 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 things you learned because of the challenge.150-word count
2. **Describe a positive and impactful community contribution you have made while in high school.**
    - Describe your community — this can be a group of people in the same place, who have a particular characteristic in common or share a feeling of fellowship as a result of common attitudes, interests, needs and/or goals. 150-word count
    - How did you contribute to your community? 200-word count
    - Name three skills you used and one skill you were able to develop further that helped you to make this contribution. 150-word count
    - Reflecting on this experience, what impact did your contribution have on your leadership? Be sure to include two areas you want to improve as a leader in your reflection. *150-word count*
3. **Bezos Scholars ignite action in their communities by developing and launching a Community Change Project. Answer the following, thinking about what your Scholar project might be.**
    - WHAT community issue are you most passionate about changing right now, and HOW is it currently impacting your community? 150-word count
    - Share one well-thought-out and innovative idea for how you could make an impact on the issue. 200-word count

- How would you engage other youth in your community to help you with your above idea? 100-word count

STEP 7: Educator Nominee

Applicants must identify and nominate a trusted adult from their school to serve as their educator nominee. Educators cannot apply on their own; they must be nominated by a student.

If selected, the nominated educator will be required to travel to Aspen, participate in the year-long program, and collaborate with Scholars and their teams to design and launch community change projects. Choosing the right person is essential.

Who is Eligible to Be Nominated?

Educator nominees must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a current school staff member (in any role) at your school.
- Principals and vice principals are eligible for nomination. However, please note that the time commitment for this program may be challenging for them due to the scope of their responsibilities.
- Plan to return to work at your school for the following academic year.
- Be someone you connect and work well with, who supports student-led projects, and who understands and can commit to the program requirements.

Educators can only be a nominee for up to three students from the same school applying in the same year. Educators who previously participated as Scholars are eligible to serve again five years after their Scholar cohort. Educator nominees CANNOT also be an applicant's parent, guardian, relative or their paid private tutor or counselor.

Strong Educator Nominee Characteristics

- Positive reputation and commitment to their school and community.
- Have built a trusting, supportive relationship with the student who nominated them, ideally having already witnessed and encouraged their leadership.
- Advocates for students and is supportive of student-led projects.
- Employs the ability to know when to step up and back, ensuring students feel supported while retaining ownership of their ideas and work.
- They are invested in their own learning and growth. Recognizes their strengths and growth areas.

How to Nominate the Right Person

1. **Seek advice.** Ask trusted sources for input on who would be a strong and eligible candidate.
2. **Have a conversation.** Meet with viable options. Share details about the program, review the website together, and explain the commitment involved. See what questions they have and learn why they would want to participate alongside you.
3. **Choose wisely.** Identify a first and second choice nominee. Invite your first choice by explaining why

you want to be a Bezos Scholar and why you'd like them as your educator partner. If they decline, ask your second choice.

Next Steps Once Your Educator Nominee Accepts

Once someone agrees, enter their contact details into the educator nominee section of your application. They will receive an email invitation to complete a confidential online form that links to your application. While it is the student's responsibility to ensure the full application is submitted by the deadline, nominees are encouraged to complete their form as early as possible to support the process.

The Educator Recommendation Form

Once an educator accepts a nomination and accesses the form on Kaleidoscope that is tied to the student's application, they will be asked to:

- Verify where they are employed, their position, their relationship with the student and how long they have known them.
- Verify the school's program eligibility and that the student meets the current unweighted GPA requirement of a 3.0 or higher.
- Provide evidence of their support for the student, highlighting achievements, academic commitment, perseverance, resilience, and leadership in the community.
- Provide specific examples that demonstrate the student's readiness to become a Bezos Scholar.
- Show understanding of the program and its commitments, and express enthusiasm for the opportunity.
- Confirm they have evaluated their own capacity to commit to the program fully.

It is the applicant's responsibility to allow enough time for their educator nominee to complete their recommendation form by the application deadline. The educator's completed form will remain confidential, and once it's submitted, both of you will receive confirmation.

If you are selected as a finalist, your educator nominee will be invited to join an informal interview with program staff. Final acceptance into the program depends on the outcome of this interview.

STEPS 8 & 9: Final Review and Submission

Before submitting, carefully review your application. Click on each section to double-check copy and content. Correct any errors and confirm all sections are complete. Once everything appears accurate, click 'Submit' at the bottom of the application before the deadline. Once all components are received (including the Educator Recommendation Form), you'll receive a confirmation email indicating that your application is complete.

Editing After Submission: If it is before the deadline, you may edit your application even after submitting. To do so:

1. Log in at apply.mykaleidoscope.com/login

2. Click the Applications tab on the left-hand side.
3. Scroll to Completed—Current Applications.
4. Click the arrow next to Review.
5. Select the section you'd like to edit, then click Edit.

STEP 10: Celebrate

Once your application for the Bezos Scholars Program is officially complete, take a moment to celebrate—and to thank your support system, especially your educator nominee, for their encouragement and help along the way. The selection committee will begin reviewing applications in February, and all applicants will be notified of their status by early March.

Thank you for dedicating time and energy to this application and for your commitment to making a positive difference in your community. We would be honored to consider you as a Bezos Scholar!