

Tuition Scholarship Program Policy

Policy Statement

The Henry-Stark Counties Special Education District (HSCSED) recognizes the ongoing need to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals to serve students with disabilities. The HSCSED Tuition Scholarship Program is designed to assist individuals pursuing degrees or certifications in high-need educational and related service fields in exchange for a commitment to employment with the District following program completion.

Scholarship awards are contingent upon available funding and approval by the HSCSED Governing Board.

Purpose

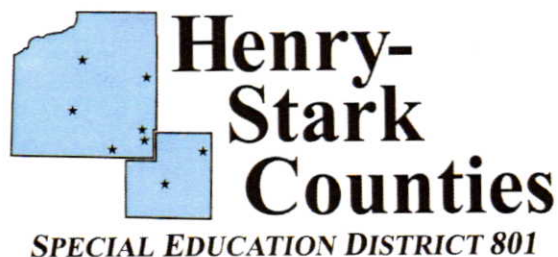
The purpose of the Tuition Scholarship Program is to:

- 1) Recruit qualified professionals into high-need positions.
- 2) Develop a sustainable workforce for HSCSED.
- 3) Reduce staffing shortages in specialized educational services.
- 4) Invest in future employees who demonstrate commitment to serving students with disabilities.

Eligible Programs

Scholarships may be awarded to individuals pursuing degrees or certifications leading to employment in positions including, but not limited to:

- Special Education Teacher
- School Psychologist
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- School Social Worker
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
- Other shortage areas approved by the Executive Director



Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must:

1. Be admitted to or enrolled in an accredited college or university.
2. Be pursuing licensure or certification in an approved program.
3. Maintain satisfactory academic progress with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or equivalent.
4. Demonstrate professional conduct and ethical behavior.
5. Be eligible for employment in Illinois.
6. Agree to execute an Employment Service Agreement with HSCSED.

Application Process

Applications shall include:

- Completed scholarship application
- Current résumé
- College transcripts
- Proof of admission or enrollment
- Degree completion plan
- Two professional or academic letters of recommendation
- Personal essay

Applications must be submitted by the published annual deadline.

Selection Committee

The Executive Director shall appoint a Scholarship Review Committee consisting of three to five members, which may include:

- Director of Special Education
- Assistant Director of Special Education
- Human Resources Manager
- Program Coordinator
- Related Services Administrator
- School/Building Administrator

Committee members shall evaluate applicants using a standardized scoring rubric.



Selection Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated based upon:

Criteria	Points
Academic Achievement	20
Personal Essay	25
Letters of Recommendation	15
Interview	30
Commitment to HSCSED Mission	10
Total	100

Scholarship Awards

The Governing Board shall annually determine:

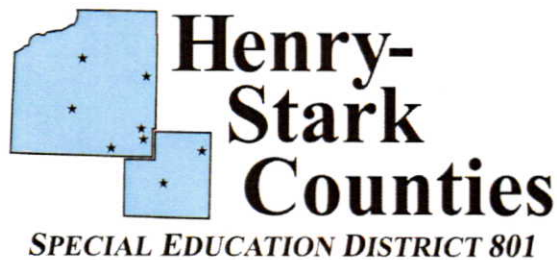
- Number of scholarships available
- Maximum scholarship amount
- Eligible educational expenses
- Funding source

Scholarships may be used for:

- Tuition
- Mandatory university fees
- Required textbooks
- Required educational materials

Payments will be made directly to the educational institution whenever possible.

Awards are contingent upon available funding.



Renewal

Recipients seeking continued funding beyond one academic year must:

- Submit updated transcripts
- Maintain minimum GPA requirements
- Remain enrolled in an approved program
- Demonstrate satisfactory academic progress

Renewal is **not automatic**.

Employment Service Agreement

Recipients shall enter into a written Employment Service Agreement prior to receiving scholarship funds.

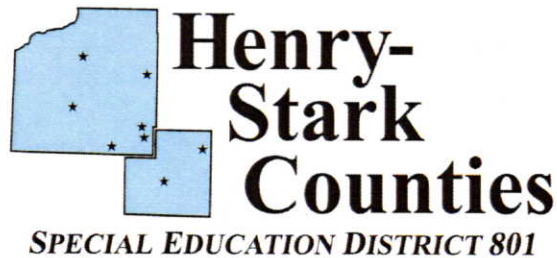
The agreement shall require recipients to:

- Accept employment with HSCSED upon graduation and licensure if an appropriate vacancy exists.
- Successfully obtain all required professional licenses and endorsements.
- Complete one year of employment for each year of scholarship assistance received, with a minimum service obligation of three (3) years and a maximum of five (5) years unless otherwise approved by the Governing Board.

Termination

The tuition scholarship can be terminated in the following scenarios:

- Poor academic performance
 - If the recipient is placed on probation and is unable to remediate the unsatisfactory issues, HSCSED will drop them from the program and repayment provisions will begin.
- Recipient quits program
 - If the recipient quits the program for whatever reason, the HSCSED will institute repayment provisions; however, if the recipient demonstrates the reason for quitting is due to undue hardship, the Governing Board has the right to waive repayment in those circumstances.



- Other employment
 - If the recipient obtains employment with another employer during the term of this agreement, HSCSED will declare breach of this agreement and institute repayment provisions.
- Mutual consent
 - HSCSED and the recipient may come to a mutual decision, for whatever reason, that the recipient should not continue the program. The District will institute repayment provisions; however, the Governing Board maintains the right to waive repayments in certain circumstances.
- Terminated by HSCSED
 - If HSCSED determines that it will not recommend the recipient for employment for the next school year and the Governing Board will not renew their contract, repayment provisions will be instituted.
 - If HSCSED dismisses the recipient from their position for any reason, repayment provisions will be instituted.
 - If HSCSED determines that it must institute a reduction in force which results in the recipient's honorable dismissal, the Governing Board will waive repayment.

Repayment

Recipients who voluntarily fail to satisfy the employment obligation shall repay scholarship funds according to the terms of the signed agreement.

Repayment may be waived or modified under extraordinary circumstances including:

- Permanent disability
- Serious medical hardship
- Military deployment
- Elimination of the recipient's position
- Failure of HSCSED to offer appropriate employment

The Executive Director may recommend repayment modifications to the Governing Board.

Recipient Responsibilities

Recipients shall:

- Maintain communication with HSCSED during their educational program.
- Provide annual academic updates.
- Notify HSCSED of anticipated graduation dates.



SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT 801

- Participate in employment interviews prior to graduation.
- Apply for available HSCSED positions for which they are qualified.

Program Administration

The Director of Special Education and the Assistant to the Director shall administer the Tuition Scholarship Program and shall:

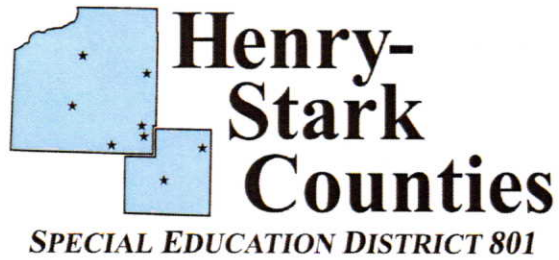
- Publish annual application timelines
- Maintain scholarship records
- Monitor recipient progress
- Coordinate employment agreements
- Report annually to the Governing Board regarding program participation and outcomes

Non-Discrimination

Scholarship awards shall be made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, age, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as defined by applicable federal and state law.

Annual Timeline

Date	Activity
January 5th	Application window opens
February 5th	Application window closes
February 6th-12th	Committee reviews applications
February 15th-March 15th	Applicant Interviews
March 16th-25th	Committee chooses recipients
April board meeting	Board Approval/Total budgeted to Assistant to Director
July	Scholarship Distribution



Effective Date

This policy shall become effective upon adoption by the HSCSED Governing Board and shall remain in effect until amended or repealed.

Signatures

Director of Special Education

Governing Board President

Date adopted
