

How to Win a Scholarship from NASSP

Question: How can our school select a nominee who will win one of the scholarships available from the national office? We've been sending our nominees for years and we've never had a winner! [Please share the response below with your scholarship nominees or scholarship committee this year.]

Answer: There are many suggestions that we can make when submitting nominations for the two major scholarships administered by the NASSP, the Principal's Leadership Awards and the NHS National Scholarship.

First, be certain that you are using the most recent edition of the scholarship nomination forms. The forms are revised and updated annually and are posted on the Web for easy access (only advisers for NHS can access the NHS forms through the "Adviser Zone" on www.nhs.us). Do not use forms from previous years - it can lead to disqualification of your nominee. PLA is mailed to principals each October, and NHS is mailed to NHS advisers each November.

The NHS Scholarship and Principal's Leadership Award (PLA)* programs are designed to identify well-rounded nominees. This is achieved when mental, physical, social, and spiritual development are all present through a nominee's documented involvement in academics, the arts, athletics, and student activities.

- While it should go without saying: Follow the directions as noted on the nomination forms.
- Information provided by and about nominees on their nomination forms should clearly demonstrate their superlative qualities.
- When referencing activities, avoid using unknown abbreviations wherever possible - national organizations are widely known, but state-based or local groups are not.
- Be sure that the program administration fee (as identified on the form) is paid and included in the nomination packet along with all other requested materials, that the packet is sent on time, and sent to the correct company address found in the materials (SPA in Nashville, Tenn.). These programs are not designed as money-makers for either the sponsor or the administering association - the nomination fee simply covers existing administrative costs of the program and allows us to maximize the number of awards each year using the finite financial resources made available for these scholarships.
- Complete the nomination form thoroughly, paying special attention to obtaining all of the required signatures (student, adviser, principal).
- Provide effective recommendations, ones that don't merely restate information found elsewhere on the form, but do give insight to the character of the nominee. The scholarship committees are groups of secondary school principals and advisers who respect the recommendations provided by their peers.
- If your nominee has more activities than can fit in the space provided, those activities listed should be the best activities that support the nomination and reflect the well-rounded nature of the nominee.
- Encourage all potential nominees to perform significant service for the school or the community that speaks to an important local concern and creates visible results.
- Compose a well-written and effective response to the narrative assignment; always check for correct spelling and grammar - the readers are educators, after all.
- Overall, see that the form submitted is neat, organized and well thought out. Completing a rough draft and having it scrutinized by a staff member at the local level prior to

submission is perfectly acceptable and ensures accuracy as well as thoroughness of the nominee's presentation.

For additional insights, be sure to review the scholarship winner profiles found in the fall/winter editions of *Leadership for Student Activities magazine* (September through January).

Procedural note regarding the selection of winners: All nominees are judged against other nominees from their state and from schools of similar size within the state (small, medium, large, extra-large schools as defined in the nomination packet). This component of the selection process allows students to compete fairly against peers from similar educational circumstances.

These scholarships are merit-based and not based upon need.

Nomination packets are distributed each fall to all principals and NHS chapter advisers; deadline for submission is in early December for PLA, and in late January for NHS each year. Annual deadlines are printed on the nomination forms - please check the dates carefully so that your school's nominations are submitted in a timely manner. Selection is completed by April and winners are notified by letter in May each year. Lists of winners for both programs from the previous year are also posted on the Web site.

We hope this review of some suggestions for participating in these two prestigious scholarship programs is helpful. Good luck in the competition!

*NASSP has sponsored the NHS Scholarship program since 1946, and has administered the PLA program since 1988 on behalf of the program's sponsor, Herff Jones, Inc.

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