

GPGC Parent Handbook 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction.....page 2

FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM.....page 3

Dormitory Life.....page 5

Money and the Token Economy.....page 6

Laundry.....page 6

Weekend Activities and Going Home.....page 6

Medical Issues.....page 8

CONTACT INFORMATION.....page 8

Tentative Daily Schedule.....page 9

Tentative Student Regulations.....page 10

GPGC Parent Handbook 2026

Introduction

The Governor's Program for Gifted Children is the oldest and most comprehensive enrichment program for gifted students in the state of Louisiana. It began in 1959 as the McNeese Summer Enrichment Program in an attempt to serve the needs of gifted students in and around Lake Charles. With success, the Program grew and began to attract students from around the state. In 1965, Senator Jesse Knowles and Governor John McKeithen, seeing the success the Program was achieving and realizing that gifted children have special needs, fought successfully to provide state funding for the McNeese program, prompting the name change to the Governor's Program for Gifted Children.

Held for seven weeks each summer on the campus of McNeese State University, the Governor's Program enrolls both academically and musically gifted students from across the state. The GPGC is a residential program and offers gifted children both instruction in a wide variety of courses and a stimulating social environment supervised by an adult counseling staff. The Program is designed to develop the capacities of gifted children, supplying them with educational experiences that correspond to their intellectual abilities and helping them grow as individuals.

THE FOUNDER - Dr. George Middleton, Ph.D.

Dr. George Middleton, a native of Houston, Texas, received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Pennsylvania State University in January 1958. He earned his M.A. from the University of Alabama after completing his undergraduate degree at Birmingham Southern College. Dr. Middleton was the Director of the Governor's Program from its inception in 1959 until he passed away in April of 2008.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE GPGC

The philosophy that underlies everything at the Governor's Program for Gifted Children is, on the surface, very simple: the object of education should be to develop the mind. But the practice is more complex because the GPGC tries to develop the whole mind of its students--academic and intellectual, artistic and creative, social and interpersonal. The Program gives gifted children opportunities to develop in all these areas in the belief that such development can help each student become more fulfilled both as an individual and an effective and functioning member of society.

Working on the assumption that "art and science have their meeting point in methods," the Governor's Program attempts to integrate the fundamental academic disciplines--science, mathematics, and the humanities. In each area, students are encouraged to think and act independently. Their original insights are supported and structured by their teachers; their skills in defining problems and formulating systematic solutions are developed and guided. In this way, the Program attempts to embody the idea put forward by Shakespeare, "It is the mind that makes the body rich."

The GPGC also acknowledges the significance of the arts, for as Proust said, "Thanks to art, instead of seeing a single world, our own, we see it multiply until we have before us as many worlds as there are original artists." The students are given the opportunity to explore their talents and stretch their creative abilities in such areas as the visual arts, vocal and instrumental music, and drama. The fine arts classes culminate in public performances attended by parents, family, alumni, and area residents.

The third aspect of the Governor's Program philosophy is the recognition of the importance of our students' social and emotional development. During the seven weeks the students spend in the dormitory they learn independence and responsibility, they develop a true sense of community, and they make friendships that will last a lifetime. Many come to realize for the first time that they are not alone in their gifts, that there truly are others out there who think like they do and who have experienced the things that

they have experienced. Central to the philosophy of the GPGC is the connection emphasized among these three areas--intellectual, creative, and social. The interweaving of these different spheres creates the unique community that is the Governor's Program, a community designed to educate and develop the whole mind, the whole child.

The Governor's Program for Gifted Children strives to provide our community with the tools to embrace a changing and challenging world. To that end, we will engage all communities and under-represented populations. The GPGC will be inclusive of all—regardless of age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, marital status, military status, national origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation—in admission of qualified students, employment, and participation in its educational programs, services, and activities.

FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM

The Junior Division

Selection and Progress of Students

Students who are currently enrolled in the sixth, seventh or eighth grades are eligible for admission to the Junior Division of the Governor's Program. Students enrolling as seventh graders will remain in the Junior Division diploma track while eighth graders will be enrolled in the Senior Division diploma track. All students applying for admission must receive a recommendation from their school and demonstrate their intellectual abilities through both academic achievement and performance on standardized intelligence tests. If a student is admitted to the GPGC and the student's work is satisfactory, that student will be invited back for the following summer. Students who enroll as sixth or seventh graders, in their first three years at the GPGC are designated as members of the Junior Division. All students who move successfully through the Junior Division of the Governor's Program are eligible for graduation and will be recognized in ceremonies conducted at the end of their third summer of enrollment. Please see the Senior Division section for information about the Senior Division diploma track for students that enroll as eighth graders.

Selection of Instructors

Teachers are chosen from middle schools, high schools, and colleges. They must come highly recommended and all have demonstrated superior ability in teaching gifted children. The Director of the Program is responsible for the selection of instructors.

Daily Work Schedule

In the morning, students receive academic instruction on the campus of McNeese State University. The faculty works with students both individually and in groups for the balance of the academic session. Most classes in the afternoon involve the fine arts. Students may be involved in such activities as mixed ensemble, chorus, and musical production. Student publications, *The Thinker* (the student newspaper) and *Miles to Go* (the literary journal) have sessions in the afternoon. Physical education is also provided in the McNeese recreation complex. In the evenings students have time to socialize, practice, or complete any work that may be assigned to them. Meals are provided by the McNeese cafeteria or by dormitory staff.

Curriculum

The three areas of academic study in the Junior Division are science, composition, and humanities. The curriculum at the Governor's Program emphasizes a grasp of concepts, principles, and relationships rather than the mastery of a body of facts and techniques. Students are provided learning opportunities both in group settings and through individual work with their teachers, with instruction culminating in a major

research project to be presented at the end of the third year.

The science curriculum is designed to help the students grow in their attitudes toward science, their appreciation of science, and their knowledge of scientific methods. One of the basic elements of the curriculum is an emphasis on understanding the scientific approach to solving problems: learning how to ask questions that can be answered by scientific inquiry, restating those questions as hypotheses, and devising ways to test those hypotheses. This approach should not only help the students in science, it should enhance their overall ability to think and discover the world around them.

The composition curriculum teaches students basic writing skills and concepts and how to use these skills to better express themselves.

The humanities curriculum introduces the students to some of the important philosophical questions that human beings have asked through the ages. What does it mean to be human? How can we tell good from evil? Where can we find truth and beauty, freedom and understanding? How do we balance freedom and responsibility? Through the study of selected literary works, the students will look at such questions as these and others under the themes of Truth, Justice, Freedom, Virtue, Wisdom, and Beauty.

The Senior Division

Selection and Progress of Students

Students currently enrolled in the ninth grade are eligible for the Senior Division, also known as the Graduate Program. Students who have not previously participated in the Governor's Program, but who are currently enrolled in the ninth grade, may apply for admission. All applicants must receive a recommendation from their schools and demonstrate their intellectual abilities through both academic achievement and performance on standardized intelligence tests. Students who have successfully completed the Junior Division of the Governor's Program or have enrolled as eighth graders under the Senior Division diploma track may be invited to participate in the Senior Division. If a student is admitted to the GPGC and does satisfactory work, that student will be invited back for the following summer. An eighth grader who successfully completes one summer in the Junior Division and two in the Senior Division will be awarded a diploma at the commencement ceremony.

Selection of Instructors

Instructors in the Senior Division must be qualified to teach at the college or university level. Generally, Senior Division teachers are members of the faculty of McNeese State University.

Daily Work Schedule

The Senior Division schedule is similar to that of the Junior Division. In the morning, students attend academic classes on the campus of McNeese State University. Senior Division students also participate in the afternoon fine arts classes. They may be involved in such activities as large ensemble, chorus, drama, and musical productions. Physical education is also provided in the McNeese recreation complex.

Curriculum

Senior Division classes are taught on the college level. Unlike the Junior Division, the curriculum is not set from year to year. Rather, the Governor's Program offers two to three classes to Senior Division students based on the availability of McNeese faculty. The courses are selected from the following areas: humanities, mathematics, psychology, chemistry, biology, and political science. The ideals and philosophy that shape the approach to the curriculum of the Senior Division are the same as those that

shape the curriculum of the Junior Division. The idea is to help the students learn to think more clearly and precisely and learn more about the world in which they live. Before one can get answers, one must learn what questions to ask and how to ask them.

The Fine Arts

The fine arts program encompasses the visual arts, drama, vocal and instrumental music, and creative writing. A selection of these courses is offered every summer at the Governor's Program in an attempt to give students the opportunity to experience and to excel in a variety of artistic disciplines. The fine arts program is the public face of the GPGC. At the end of each summer, the students put on a series of performances attended by parents, alumni, and local residents. In seven short weeks, the students rehearse and perform a musical, ensemble music, and a choral concert. Traditionally, the chorus ends the summer with the singing of the semi-official GPGC theme song, "The Impossible Dream."

The Musically Gifted Section

Aimed at musically gifted middle and high school students, this part of the GPGC offers young musicians the chance to study music theory and music literature. An outstanding faculty of experienced artist-teachers provides private lessons in string, wind, and keyboard instruments, as well as in vocal music. Students applying for acceptance as a Musically Gifted student must have written recommendations and must audition either live or on tape. Students in this project are part of the Governor's Program and take courses with the other GPGC students, in addition to their own specialized classes. The typical MG (Musically Gifted student) will take one academic class in the morning and a music theory/appreciation class. MGs are also required to take Chorus in the afternoon, as well as Orchestra or Band if they are instrumental students.

Student Publications

Miles to Go is a bound volume of the best writing done each summer by students at the Governor's Program. The drawings in the journal are entirely the work of the students, as is the cover design. The journal also contains photographs that attempt to portray all phases of the Program. Students submit their work to the journal advisor, who, with a team of student editors, selects the best work for publication. The journal's computer staff types the work into the computer and does the layout for publication. The appearance of *Miles to Go* at the end of each session is a highlight of the summer. *The Thinker* is the official student newspaper of the GPGC. Under the supervision of a staff advisor, students do the interviewing, the writing, the editing, the computer layout, and the printing. Those who participate on *The Thinker* staff learn a variety of writing and computer skills.

Final Performances

The last few days of the Program are devoted to the Final Performances. The main events include the musical, the drama, and the orchestra and chorus concert. All students are required to attend each performance and will not be dismissed from the Program early. A final schedule of the performances will be sent home over the Fourth of July Break.

Dormitory Life

Introduction

The Governor's Program is a seven week residential summer program, and the residential part is extremely significant. Children working and living together day and night can have a much broader and

more intensive learning experience than is possible in a day-school program. Thus, dormitory life is one of the most important aspects of the GPGC experience and is, in fact, where the community of the Governor's Program truly comes together. The students develop friendships that last a lifetime and acquire skills essential for getting along with others. Many alumni of the Program now in their thirties and forties credit the GPGC with giving them the opportunity to develop responsibility and independence and to grow both socially and emotionally. In short, the dormitory experience is essential.

The counseling staff who supervise life in the dorm are generally selected from GPGC alumni. All counselors are responsible adults with at least one year of college. The counselors are responsible for enforcing dorm regulations and for organizing weekend activities, but they are also available to listen to the students' problems and to be there for the students whenever they are needed.

The students are awakened by the counselors every school morning in time to get cleaned and dressed and eat breakfast before the first morning class. After supper in the evening, all students are expected to report back to the dorm. No student is allowed to leave the dormitory alone. Students going anywhere, on or off campus, even to class, must go in groups.

Generally Junior Division (Epsilon, Delta, and Gamma) students must be in the dormitory by 8:00 p.m., and Senior Division (Alpha and Beta) students must return by 8:30. Rooms are checked to make sure everyone has returned, and dorm quiet hours begin at this time. In-room and lights-out times vary according to class. Younger students have earlier lights out times than older ones.

Students are responsible for doing their own laundry and for keeping their rooms clean. Formal room inspections are held by the counselors at least once each week.

Student IDs and room keys are issued to all students. Students must carry their IDs at all times. A fee is charged by McNeese State University for all lost IDs (\$10), dorm and room entry cards (\$50), and meal plan cards (\$50) (if provided).

Money and the Token Economy

The GPGC has a student bank that is open on Monday and Friday evenings for deposits and withdrawals. Due to the token economy, an account is established in this bank for each student. **The funds for this account are paid as part of the fees for the program. It is vital for parents not to give their child any spending money in addition to their bank accounts, nor supply them with consumables (such as snack food) for the dormitory.** This will jeopardize the economy and give the child little or no incentive to perform well during the course of the summer. For more information about the token economy, please see the letter sent in an earlier packet or contact the office.

Laundry

The dormitory at McNeese is equipped with suitable facilities for students to do their own laundry. Regular use of the machines is included in the room rental rate. Laundry detergent is provided by the Program. Students will be instructed by their counselors on how to do laundry if necessary.

Weekend Activities and Going Home

The counseling staff plans all weekend activities, including weekend meals, beginning Friday evening. Weekend activities include movies, dances, skating, bowling, swimming, games, and outings around town. There are also a number of traditional GPGC activities that take place on the weekends, such as the Bilbo Baggins Birthday Party celebration, costume dances, and the formal dance on the last weekend, just

to name a few. Students are not required to stay for the weekend (except freshmen on their first weekend at the Program), but all students are encouraged to stay, participate in the activities, and have fun. Additionally, the GPGC provides transportation for each student to attend the church or religious activity of their choice.

Students may go home with their parents on any weekend they choose (note the freshman first weekend rule above), and must leave during the Fourth of July Holiday weekend, **NO LATER THAN 7 P. M., WEDNESDAY JULY 1st**. Students may return from the holiday starting at **2 PM on SUNDAY, JULY 5TH**.

Students should know if they are going home for the weekend by Wednesday evening, when they should inform the counselors. This aids planning for weekend meals and activities. Students need written parental permission in advance if they plan to go home with anyone other than their parents for the weekend. This permission can be granted through the online registration portal or, during the summer, by emailing the office or speaking with the staff at the dorm.

Transportation to and from the bus station and the airport will be provided by the GPGC. Please confirm (times, arrangements for tickets, etc.) with your student's counselor or the office staff if a student will be leaving/arriving in this manner.

Students who plan to eat supper with the group should be back by 5:30 p.m. Sunday, and all students must return by 8:00 p.m.

Students going home for the weekend should pack Thursday evening, and are not excused from Friday afternoon classes to leave for home. Any questions on this matter should be referred to the GPGC Office and not the counseling staff. Also, students are not permitted to accept transportation from anyone but parents and members of the GPGC staff, unless the Program has received prior written permission from the parents.

Students should not leave with their parents during the weekday schedule, except in cases of emergency or unless prior arrangements have been made with the GPGC Office. Students should not miss class, except in cases of illness or emergency. Parents should try to schedule all dental and orthodontic appointments outside the GPGC's summer session.

Parents are discouraged from visiting their children at the dormitory or at the cafeteria, and instead are encouraged to pick their children up and take them somewhere, provided the children are back to the dorm by their curfew.

While waiting for their child, parents are requested to remain in the lobby area, and a student or a member of the counseling staff will get their child for them.

Keeping in Touch

As most students have cell phones now and the dormitory does not have public phones, please alert the staff at check in if you will need to be contacting your student by phone (if they do not have a cell phone). The staff will make arrangements for you to speak to your student. You may always call the dorm desk phone to leave a message and we will have your student call you back as soon as we can.

Medical Issues

Students have an opportunity to visit with a nurse each weekday if they are not feeling well. The nurse will determine what treatment is indicated. On occasion, a student will require a visit to the doctor. Generally the GPGC sends students to the Children's Clinic of Lake Charles. The staff will make every effort to contact a parent if their student requires medical attention. After hours care for critical incidents or illness will be provided by the emergency room at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital.

If a student takes prescription medication it will be dispensed by the counselors at the appropriate time each day. **The counselors must follow the orders given on the prescription therefore if your student requests any variation to their medication schedule (such as doesn't take it on weekends) we must have this change in writing from the prescribing physician.**

Parents are responsible for any and all medical costs incurred by their student while at the Program. Parents are also responsible for informing the GPGC Office if there is any change in their child's medical condition or prescriptions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail is distributed once daily by the counselors and should be addressed to:

Student's name

THE GOVERNOR'S PROGRAM FOR
GIFTED CHILDREN (or GPGC)
MSU BOX 91490
LAKE CHARLES LA 70609

The dormitory lobby phone, (TBA) should be used for emergency calls only, or to talk to a counselor about any concerns you may have.

The GPGC Office is open during the summer Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. The office has voicemail after hours. The office number is: 337-475-5446.

Important Email addresses:

Joshua Brown, Director: director@gpgc.org
Coordinator of Housing: coho@gpgc.org
Office: office@gpgc.org

LATE NIGHT EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Please call Joshua Brown (cell: 337-540-7280) or Kathleen Barrios (cell: 985-790-2184) if you need emergency assistance.

Tentative Daily Schedule

7:00	Wake-up Call
7:30	Breakfast Begins
8:25	1st Morning Class
9:30	2nd Morning Class
10:35	3rd Morning Class
11:35	Lunch
1:00	1st Afternoon Class
2:00	2nd Afternoon Class
3:00	3rd Afternoon Class
4:00	4th Afternoon Class
5:15	Dinner
5:30	Student Free Time Begins
8:00	Dorm Curfew for younger students
8:30	Dorm Curfew for older students
9:00	Room Check
9:30	Phone Curfew for all students
10:00	Lights-Out for Epsilons (generally new 6th and 7th graders)
10:30	Lights-Out for Deltas
11:00	Lights-Out for Gammas
11:30	Lights-Out for Alphas and Betas

For your information the Student Regulations have been printed in their entirety on the following pages. Minor changes may be made later.

Student Regulations

Students are expected to comply with these regulations. Weekly marks given by counselors will be based in large part on how well students follow dorm policies.

Dismissible Offenses

Students violating these rules will be sent home immediately.

Entering the opposite gender's hall, suite, or room.

Leaving the dormitory without permission.

Exiting through emergency doors (or doors designated as such by the staff) at any non-emergency or non-designated time.

Possessing or using alcohol, tobacco, illegal substances, or weapons.

General Regulations

1. Keep your room neat and clean at all times; there will be nightly room checks during the summer.
2. Lock your rooms when you leave. If a counselor finds a vacant room unlocked, you may be fined. The GPGC is not responsible for missing items.
3. You must sign out in the appropriate manner when leaving the dormitory after afternoon classes.
4. There will be quiet time after 9 p.m. for all students Sunday - Thursday. Please respect the rights of others by being as quiet as possible.
5. Curfew for Epsilons, Deltas, and Gammas is 8 p.m. Alpha and Beta is 8:30 p.m. All students must be in the building by their curfew. Breaking curfew will be treated as a very serious offense. All students must report to their room at 9:00 p.m. and remain there until checked in by a counselor. This should take no longer than 15 minutes.
6. Epsilons must be in their own rooms by 9:30 p.m., with lights out no later than 10 p.m. Sunday - Thursday.
7. Deltas must be in their own rooms by 10 p.m., with lights out no later than 10:30 p.m. Sunday - Thursday.
8. Gammas must be in their own rooms by 10:30 p.m., with lights out no later than 11 p.m. Sunday - Thursday.

9. Alphas and Betas must be in their own rooms by 11 p.m., with lights out no later than 11:30 p.m. Sunday - Thursday.

10. During the weekends, schedules will be adjusted appropriately.

11. Dormitory rooms are shared by two students from the same class. After the first week, students may choose to change rooms / roommates if approved by their counselor. This will be allowed only once. If roommates are from different classes, both will follow the in-room and lights out schedule of the student with the lower classification.

12. New students are required to stay at the Program for the first weekend.

13. TVs and video games are NOT allowed in the dormitory. A TV **may be** provided for students in the lobby. Parents must realize that, within reason, counselors are unable to monitor programs being viewed. Students will have a variety of GPGC assignments, projects, and activities that will demand very large parts of their time, leaving little time for other activities. This rule will be STRICTLY enforced. Counselors reserve the right to confiscate and store in the GPGC office any TVs and video games found in a student's possession until parents are able to pick them up.

Room, Hallway, and Lobby Behavior

1. No running or jumping or skipping or walking fast, etc.
2. Do not slam or close hard any door, including your closet doors.
3. Do not stand or climb on, or otherwise mistreat any furniture anywhere in the dorm, whether in the hall, in student rooms, or in the lobby. No furniture, including room and lobby furniture, is to be damaged during the course of the summer. Do not place your feet on the couches and chairs in the lobby. Lobby furniture is not to be moved unless a counselor gives specific permission.
4. Do not slide furniture across the floor in the halls, in rooms, or in the lobby. This can damage the floor and, if you are on the second or third floor, disturb those below you.
5. Keep windows and blinds closed at all times.
6. No sports are to be played in the dormitory.

Bathroom Hygiene

1. Clean up your own mess. Remember that other people must use the same bath area and don't want to clean up your mess.
2. Do not leave anything in the shower (i.e. soap, shampoo, towels, etc.)
3. After exiting the shower, wipe up any standing water on the floor with a towel or bath mat. This will easily prevent accidental slips and falls.
4. Do not leave anything on the counter such as toothbrush, toothpaste, contact lens solution, etc.
5. Do not leave anything on the floor (i.e. towels, clothes, etc.).

Classes

1. All students are expected to be in class on time. Tardiness will be handled first by the teachers. If a pattern is observed, the appropriate actions will follow to correct the problem.
2. All students are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and responsible manner.
3. All students are expected to respect the rights and property of others.
4. All students will take a full schedule until 5:15 p.m.
5. Absences will be reported daily in all classes.
6. All students are expected to complete and turn in all class work on time.
7. Students are allowed to take only one P. E. class
8. Any student who does not feel well enough to attend class must report to sick call. Morning sick call is at 8:00 a.m. Afternoon sick call is at 12:30 p.m.

Meals

1. Weekday meals are served in the MSU Cafeteria. Meal times will be posted the first day.
2. All students should be courteous to cafeteria personnel. Students are also responsible for putting away their own meal trays.
3. Noise levels in the cafeteria should be kept to a reasonable level. Show consideration to other diners.
4. All students must stay on campus during the lunch hour. Students should be in one of the following areas: the Old Ranch, the library, the dorm, or the GPGC office unless specific permission has been granted in advance.
5. Students may return to the dorm during lunch no earlier than 12:10 p.m. and must leave for classes by 12:30 p.m. Students should NOT be in the dorm during the lunch hour before 12:10 p.m.
6. Weekend meals are arranged by the counselors.
7. Students who leave for the weekend and wish to have dinner with the group on Sunday evening must return to the dorm by 5 p.m.

Leaving the Dorm and Campus

1. No student is to leave campus unless accompanied by at least two other students, or with an adult.
2. All students must follow sign-out procedures described by the counselors.
3. Parents should inform both the office and counseling staff as soon as possible of all dental, orthodontic, and doctor's appointments that will cause their child to miss any class time during the summer. We would prefer this information at the beginning of the Program or at the time the appointment is made, if that time is after the start of the summer session. The office will inform teachers when students will be gone for such appointments.
4. Parents picking their children up during the day for medical appointments should come to the dormitory. Teachers will be informed, and students will be dismissed from class to return to the dorm in time to meet their ride.
5. Students should return to campus from appointments as soon as possible in order to minimize the amount of class time missed.
6. Parents should inform both the office and the counseling staff as far in advance as possible (at least 24 hours) if they are going to take their child away from campus on a weekday after classes. Students are to leave from the dormitory, follow normal sign-out procedures, and return by curfew (8:00 p.m. for Epsilons, Deltas, and Gammas; 8:30 for Alphas and Betas) unless prior arrangements have been made.
7. Parents whose children participate in sports outside the GPGC should provide the office and the counseling staff with a game schedule so that the staff will know in advance when that student will be away from the dorm.
8. Parents should not remove their students from the Program for any extended period of time unless prior arrangements have been made with the GPGC office.
9. Students should know by Wednesday if they are going to go home for the weekend. Counselors need this information to plan weekend activities and purchase supplies for weekend meals.
10. Students leaving for the weekend should be picked up from the dorm no earlier than 5:30 p.m. Friday. No students will be excused to pack, so packing should be done Thursday night.
11. Students should return to the dorm by curfew on Sunday unless prior arrangement have been made. Students wanting to have dinner with the group should return by 5:00 p.m. Sunday.
12. Students must follow normal sign-out procedures when leaving for the weekend.