

Frequently Asked Questions for Scholarship Sponsors

Thank you for choosing to sponsor a scholarship student! Thanks to your support, a student in Guatemala is one step closer to receiving the twelve years of education they need to break out of poverty. Please take a moment to read through our Frequently Asked Questions so you can make the most of your new sponsorship.

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Correspondence and Visits

Can I write to my student? Will they write back?

There are two main ways you can write to your student.

- **Online Portal:** Send a message at www.cooperativeforeducation.org/letters. Writing a note to your student is easy, economical, eco-friendly, and secure. Simply click “Send” when you are finished writing. CoEd will transmit your letter to Guatemala, where it will be translated and delivered to your student.
- **Email:** Write a letter through your personal email account and send it to letters@coeduc.org. We will translate the email and deliver it to your student.

Can I send my student a physical letter through the mail?

We discourage this option, since international postal mail to Guatemala can be unreliable, and CoEd is unable to guarantee that your letter will reach Guatemala or how long it will take. As of summer 2017, the Guatemalan postal system has been shut down indefinitely.

What should I write to my student? How often?

When writing to your student, we encourage you to include a photo of yourself and your family. Scholarship students really enjoy receiving photos of their sponsors. We suggest writing once or twice a year to offer encouragement and build a relationship with your scholarship student. You are welcome to write more often if you choose. Share information about your favorite hobbies, information about family traditions, and details about where you work or go to school. Please do not go into detail about your material possessions or ask your student if they have any specific financial needs. **CoEd reserves the right not to translate information that is not culturally appropriate or violates our policies.**

How long will it take for my student to hear from me?

It can take about six to eight weeks for your student to receive your letter from the time our office receives it. This time frame allows your letter to be sent to Guatemala, translated (if necessary), delivered to the field staff in students’ local communities, and passed along to them. We appreciate your patience as your message works its way to your student!

Will I hear back from my student? How often can I expect updates about my student?

Once your sponsorship begins, you will receive an annual update in the mail from the Scholarships Coordinator. The packet, usually sent in the fall, contains a photo and letter from your student. You can also expect to receive other updates throughout the year via email—updates about your student’s academic progress, the program workshops, etc. Using email ensures that donors receive updates on their students as quickly and effectively as possible. **Please ensure that CoEd has your email address so you can begin receiving these communications.**

If, outside of the scope of the updates we provide, you would like further information about your student, we ask you to send him or her a note through www.cooperativeforeducation.org/letters, which is a cost-effective and standardized way to communicate with your student. Answering



specific questions about specific students on demand can get surprisingly complicated and costly. Students are spread out geographically, and our program staff doesn't necessarily see every student every week, so this task ends up involving multiple staff members who are already busy serving the needs of the students in the program. Thanks for understanding the limitations of our resources.

Of course, major life events will be communicated to the sponsor as CoEd staff finds out about them—events such as a death in the family or a student's being in danger of dropping out.

[Why do all the cards from my student seem similar?](#)

Cards from your scholarship student may seem overly formal or too juvenile to someone not from Guatemala. Letter-writing is often a very new experience for these students since they learn to read and write at a later age. They also tend to live close to extended family and friends, so they have few opportunities to write letters. Teachers tend to guide students through the letter-writing process with suggested phrases, which is why the cards may seem overly formal. The glitter, stickers, and hearts are all a fun part of making the cards—even the older students enjoy getting creative with this part! Additionally, your student may not answer your questions directly as Guatemalans tend to be more private than people of other cultures. Do not let this discourage you—many sponsors learn more about their student with time as the relationship naturally progresses.

[Can I visit my student?](#)

Absolutely! Our students absolutely LOVE meeting their sponsors in person. Think about how special you feel when someone comes from far away to see you, and multiply that times a thousand. Join us on a [CoEd Project Tour](#) for the opportunity to meet your scholarship student. Not only is it incredibly special for your student, many sponsors find that meeting and spending time with their scholarship student is the highlight of their trip. It is a great way to not only foster a relationship with your student, but to see the impact of your sponsorship first-hand. Visit www.cooperativeforeducation.org/tours or contact us at tours@coeduc.org for more information about CoEd Project Tours.

If you plan on being in Guatemala outside of a scheduled tour, we will do our best to arrange a visit between you and your student, but we need at least 60 days' notice. We'll be in communication with you if for some reason it would not be possible for you to visit with your student (timing, holidays, work schedules, etc.). For the sake of safety, all sponsors must be accompanied by CoEd staff when visiting with students, and any visits outside of those arranged by our staff are strictly forbidden.

[Can I send gifts to my student?](#)

Sponsoring your student's education is the best gift you can give. Your letters and photos are also wonderful ways to show your ongoing support and belief in the student's success. Sending other gifts is highly discouraged due to high customs fees, risk of theft, the unfairness it creates between students, and difficulty in delivering packages. For these reasons, we cannot accept gifts and ask that you not bring them on tours, either. For special occasions, consider donating to CoEd's Gift Fund through www.cooperativeforeducation.org/donate. Just make sure to tell us that's what your gift is for! Donations to CoEd's Gift Fund are divided among our various scholarship projects for the



benefit of all sponsored students, so no one is excluded. The CoEd Gift Fund is used to provide parties and small gifts for the students.

Please do not send money to your scholarship student or their family. Any money sent in letters will be donated to the CoEd Gift Fund. CoEd chooses not to give money directly to families since this contributes to a culture of paternalism and results in unequal support to families involved with the programs.

[How is the privacy of my student protected?](#)

CoEd's [Youth Protection Policy](#) is meant to protect both the sponsor and scholarship student. We do not share full names with donors or students, out of respect for the privacy of each. We also screen new scholarship sponsors through the National Sex Offender Registry.

A huge part of this program's success is the trust and rapport we are able to build between the students and our program staff. We promise our students confidentiality, so at times we may be unable to share specific information about your student. For example, if they are in danger of dropping out of the program, we will notify you with general information about what steps CoEd is taking and what you can do to help your student. The specifics of your student's situation, however, will not be shared with you. Thank you for understanding and helping us to protect your students.

All correspondence is monitored by the CoEd Scholarship Program staff for appropriateness of content and the privacy of both students and sponsors. We have a significant obligation to protect both our scholarship students and you, the sponsor. **To do that best, we do not allow the following forms of communication with your student: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, other social media, instant messaging, phone, or any other direct communication outside of supervised visits during CoEd trips and letters and emails overseen by CoEd.** We post updates on Scholarship Program activities frequently on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and our [blog](#), so feel free to follow us for more real-time updates.

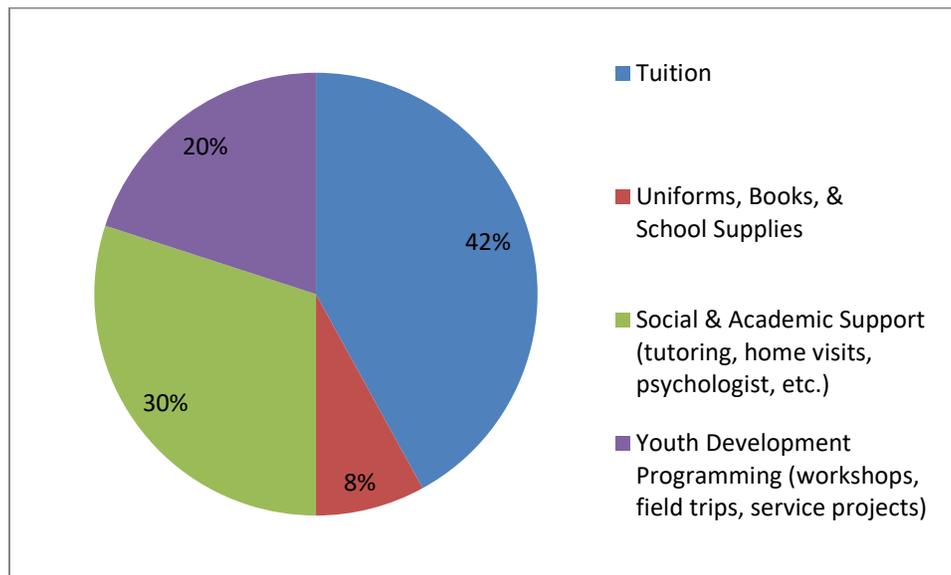
To protect your privacy and ensure that all communication with your student is appropriate, **correspondence must be routed through CoEd.** We also ask that you do not include any kind of contact information (address, phone number, email, etc.) in your correspondence.

Violation of this policy could jeopardize your scholarship student's eligibility for sponsorship and your eligibility to be a sponsor.

Payment Information

What does my scholarship pay for?

A typical student's participation in the Scholarship and Youth Development Program costs, on average, \$840 per year. Each student incurs a different level of expense, based on a number of factors such as the location of their community, tuition and school supply costs at their school, their grade level, the frequency with which you and they communicate, and the amount of social work and academic support needed to help them reach their full potential. So, while we work with averages to make the program as cost-efficient as possible, in actuality, your student's costs could be higher or lower than this. The relative cost of a typical student's participation in the program is broken out below.



Your scholarship payment helps pay for your student's participation in the program, which we consider as beginning one year before they begin middle or high school classes. Although the tuition portion of the sponsorship may not kick in immediately, a significant amount of work is done before each student enrolls. Our staff confirms their fit within the program, their financial need, and their family's commitment to their continuing in school. Each month you pay for your student's participation is another month they are not forced to drop out of school.

How much does my sponsorship cost?

CoEd offers two sponsorship options:

1. Diploma Sponsorship - \$70 USD (\$90 CAD) per month. A Diploma Sponsor is the sole sponsor for a student.
2. Honor Roll Sponsorship - \$35 USD (\$45 CAD) per month. A student has two Honor Roll Sponsors. If you want to become an Honor Roll Sponsor, we encourage you to find the other Honor Roll Sponsor by asking family or friends. This is a great way to ensure that we don't

end up with students only partially sponsored, and it's an easy way to spread the word to those in your network about the meaningful opportunity to change a child's life.

Can I get a group to sponsor a student?

Yes! If you want to split the cost of a scholarship with one other person, you may both become Honor Roll Sponsors. If there will be more than two sponsors for a student, one person will need to be the designated point person for the group of sponsors, including organizing all payments and communications with CoEd and student.

What are my payment options?

Automatic Payments from your Checking Account or Credit Card

CoEd encourages sponsors to make automatic payments, especially via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your checking account, since this results in the lowest processing and administrative costs. You can enroll in automatic payments online (www.coeduc.org) or by phone (513-661-7000), and your bank account or credit card will be charged automatically each month. You may cancel your automatic payments at any time by contacting CoEd. If you pay for your scholarship automatically online, you will receive an automatic email receipt after the first payment is processed. You will also receive an annual contribution summary each January for tax purposes. Please note that if you set up a recurring payment online, you will not receive notice each time that the payment is about to be processed, so you may want to mark your calendar as a reminder.

Check

Please make checks payable to "Cooperative for Education."

If you pay annually by check, you will receive a tax acknowledgement letter at the time of your payment, and you will receive an invoice for the following year's payment in November. Since the school year in Guatemala runs from January to October, we ask that you let us know by December 31 of each year if you plan to continue sponsorship of your student in the following year. Payments are due by the following March 31.

If you pay monthly by check, you will receive an annual contribution summary each January. In order to keep our administrative costs low, we will not send a separate letter for each monthly payment.

If you would like to change your payment method, please contact CoEd at (513) 661-7000 or info@coeduc.org.

Donations are tax-deductible in the US and Canada. CoEd is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the USA and Canadian Friends of Cooperative for Education is a registered charity in Canada.

I'm Canadian. Can I get a tax credit for sponsoring a student?

Yes! \$45 CAD or \$90 CAD per month will provide a half or full scholarship to a deserving student. Canadians may give online through our [CanadaHelps](#) page. For instructions on how to donate by cheque, please email canadianfriends@coeduc.org.



Can I pay upfront for the rest of my student's education all the way up to graduation?

Yes.

If for some reason your student ends up not continuing in school, we will assign you a new student and notify you of the change.

Academics

What is the grading system in Guatemala?

0-60% = Fail

In Guatemala, it is very common for students to fail one of their courses. In fact, 70% of students fail at least one course.

60%+ = Pass

Passing at a 60% is very much the norm in Guatemala. Most students achieve around a 60%.

75% = CoEd Standard

A 75% is CoEd's aim for students. Because we want our scholarship students to thrive (not just pass) academically, we set the bar at 75% and do all we can to help our students succeed.

How does the grading system in Guatemala differ from the United States?

The grading system in Guatemala is very different from grades in the United States and other developed countries.

Although Guatemalan students' classroom performance is graded on a 1-100% scale, the expectation for "passing" is much lower. Students must achieve a 60% to pass. Without any grade inflators, it is very common for students to fail a course. In fact, in some schools, 70% of students fail at least one course. The very top students typically have averages somewhere around 80%-85%, and it is almost unheard of for them to score in the 90's. This is much different from the American grading scale, where students aim for an "A" at 90%.

How does CoEd monitor grades?

Twice a year, students' grade cards are submitted to CoEd's facilitators for review. Throughout each quarter we collect more frequent monitoring sheets, which reflect students' attendance and whether they're turning in their homework assignments.

Using the below color codes, CoEd internally identifies at-risk students and then takes the necessary steps to ensure that they're given the resources they need to get back on track.

Green: Passing all of their classes

Orange: Failing one class

Red: Failing more than one class

The Local Facilitators on staff also meet regularly with teachers to communicate about any academic challenges and identify at-risk students early in the quarter, so we can reach out before it's too late for them to bring up their grades.

How does CoEd work with parents to ensure student success?

We are careful not to undercut the role of the parent in a student's academic success. Instead, we encourage parents to become engaged with their child's education, setting up times when teachers are available to meet with parents and offering tips about how they can be supportive at home, even if they themselves did not achieve a high level of formal education.



What does CoEd do when a student is at risk academically?

In many cases, the poor grades are indicative of another problem at home or at school, and we work with both students and parents to understand their specific challenges and come to solutions, offering additional financial or psychological support in special cases. The higher the risk level, the more frequent contact we have with the students—typically weekly for a student in at-risk status.

We also meet with the student individually to further investigate causes of their poor grades and to help the student come up with a plan for improvement. Sometimes we also test for learning disabilities to be able to best target our assistance.

When a student moves out of at-risk status, we often write a congratulatory letter to students and their parents recognizing their effort, and provide a small gift.

What happens if a student fails their classes?

If for some reason a student achieves lower than the 60% passing rate, they have the option to take a recuperation exam at the end of each year. If they pass that exam, they can graduate to the next grade along with the rest of their peers. In order to make sure students are best equipped to take their recuperation exams, CoEd provides additional resources like tutors and mentors for students.

When a Sponsorship Ends

What happens when my student graduates?

During your student's final year, you will be invited to attend a [CoEd Graduation Tour](#) in order to celebrate your student's graduation in person. If you have a recurring payment set up, we will match you with a new incoming student after your current student graduates. Your recurring payment will continue unless we hear otherwise from you.

Why do students drop out of the program? What happens if my student drops out?

CoEd makes every effort to ensure that, with your support, all of the students in our program are set up for success all the way to high school graduation. However, situations outside of our control can occasionally force an end to a student's participation in the program. The top four reasons a student may not continue in the program are:

- a) The student fails the school year academically and hasn't shown sufficient effort/interest in getting back on track.
- b) The student loses interest in school and no amount of convincing can change their mind. Often this is coupled with lack of support from parents.
- c) The (typically female) student gets married and she and/or her spouse decide she won't continue studying.
- d) There's a serious change at home and the student decides to take on more responsibilities like working or taking care of younger siblings (e.g. a parent dies or moves to work somewhere else). We try to help them think through other options in these situations and offer additional temporary financial support if necessary, but sometimes their minds are made up or they have no other choice.

CoEd purposefully selects scholarship students with the greatest need—if 100 percent of students graduated from the program, this would indicate that we were not choosing the students with the greatest need. Read on to learn more about what our students are up against.

We will notify you promptly when we know your student is in danger of dropping out, but due to confidentiality, we may not be able to disclose specific details as to why. If your student does drop out, we will automatically assign you another student in need of a sponsor and pass that information along to you.

What are the barriers to student success in Guatemala?

We often make the assumption that if students have the tuition money to continue in school, they should easily graduate high school. However, the reality facing Guatemalan families paints a more nuanced picture of how truly remarkable it is when *any* student graduates successfully. Our students are facing such issues as generational poverty, a pressure to get married young or to contribute to the family's income by working, social ills such as alcoholism and domestic violence, low expectations, and a lack of medical care. You can read more about each of these issues [here](#).



How can I end my sponsorship?

We understand that financial and personal situations change. You are free to end your sponsorship at any time with our gratitude for your generosity. Please contact us at (513) 661-7000 x. 117 or at scholarships@coeduc.org as soon as possible so we can try to find a new sponsor for your student. Until a new sponsor is found, CoEd will support the costs associated with keeping your student in school.

Spreading the Word

How can I tell others about my sponsorship?

Letting your friends know that you support a CoEd student and inviting them to do the same is one of the most effective ways you can help even more kids in Guatemala break out of poverty—at no additional cost to you. If you love your sponsorship experience, we want you to tell the world! We encourage you to promote your sponsorship experience on your Facebook page, Twitter, blogs and other social media, including our CoEd blog. We also invite you to connect with CoEd on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and our CoEd blog at www.cooperativeforeducation.org/blog.

About Guatemala

What's it like in Guatemala?

Guatemala is a beautiful Central American country with rich history and cultural traditions. It also has also one of the most extreme combinations of systemic poverty, illiteracy, and inequality in the hemisphere. Below are some quick facts about Guatemala:

The Country

- **Nickname:** The land of eternal spring
- **Area:** 42,042 square miles (about the size of Ohio)
- **Main Exports:** Coffee, sugar, bananas
- **Topography:** Tropical rainforests, beaches, volcanoes (one of the most volcanically active countries in the world)

The People

- **Population:** 14.9 million, the most populous country in Central America
- **Ethnicity:** About 41% indigenous Maya, 59% Ladino (those of mixed or European descent)
- **Languages:** Spanish, 21 Mayan languages, and two languages spoken by non-Mayan tribes on the coast

Education

- **1 out of 4:** Number of Guatemalans who are illiterate
- **24%:** High school enrollment rate in Guatemala
- **4.1 years:** The average educational level of a Guatemalan adult
- **125 out of 133:** Guatemala's ranking in quality of the educational system

Economy

- **76%:** Percentage of indigenous children and youth living below Guatemala's poverty line
- **\$4 a day:** The average daily earnings of a rural Guatemalan family
- **Inequality:** Guatemala has one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the world

How Scholarships Help

- **9% more earned** for each additional year of study
- **\$2.82 earned** by a high school graduate for every dollar earned by a Guatemalan with no education
- **90%** of CoEd scholarship students who complete middle school will go on to graduate from high school

Sources: UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP Human Development Report, UNESCO, PREAL, World Economic Forum, Guatemala Ministry of Education, UN Millennium Development Goals 2010

