The Governor's School @ Innovation Park
Student Application

Program Description

The Governor's School @ Innovation Park (GS@IP) offers selected juniors and seniors from Manassas City (MCPS), Manassas Park (MPCS), and Prince William County Schools (PWCS) an advanced and intensive program in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Students selected to for the two-year program attend classes at George Mason University (GMU) Science and Technology Campus each morning. On campus, students will follow a sequence of courses designed to integrate mathematics and research with specializations in biology, chemistry, engineering, or physics. During the application process, students indicate the preferred strand (biology, chemistry, engineering, or physics) they wish to pursue the two-year study. Along with specifically designed coursework in that strand, students will be provided an intensive study in mathematics that supports their scientific and research endeavors. Students will be placed initially in either Advanced Mathematics Models or Calculus I. Students return to their base high schools each afternoon to complete other requirements for graduation.

A unique feature of the program is its emphasis on research. All students collaborate in designated STEM electives to design and conduct original research. Students working across strands will integrate their knowledge and perspectives to design, conduct, and report their research exactly as scientists at major universities, such as GMU, do. To help students understand the importance of their research and the engineering applications of their learning, each student will complete a mentorship working with STEM professionals on specific projects.

As a continuously accelerated model, only rising juniors may enter this program. Applicants must be aware that participation in this program carries with it the expectation that registration for courses at their base high school will be restricted. It is strongly recommended that they take the following courses before applying for GS@IP:

Subject Area	Required	Recommended
Science*	• Biology • Chemistry	• Physics**
Mathematics	• Algebra I • Geometry • Algebra II	• Precalculus w/Trigonometry for AB** • Precalculus w/Trigonometry for BC** • AP Precalculus** • DE Precalculus w/Trigonometry**
Electives		• Economics and Personal Finance • Fine or Practical Art • World Languages ***

*Advanced/honors level recommended but not required
**Required for all students entering the engineering strand
***3 years of one language

GS@IP Website: https://governors.pwcs.edu

For more information contact:

Division	Office	Name/Email Address	Phone Number
Manassas City Public Schools	Gifted/Talented and Advanced Programs	Karima Wesselhoft KWesselhoft@mcpsva.org	571-377-7317
Manassas Park Schools	Office for Student Success	Natalie Teague Natalie.Teague@mpark.net	
Prince William County Schools	Advanced Academics and Specialty Programs	Laura Evans AASP@pwcs.edu	703-791-7923

Students, this packet is designed to help you understand the application process, timeline, requirements, and to plan your answers before accessing the online application portal through Avela. It is important to note that the committee will evaluate only information in the portal as of 11:59 p.m. on February 1. It is strongly encouraged that you submit your application early.

Application Overview

PWCS students will submit their entire application through the online application portal, Avela. The application must be completed by February 1, 2026.

Students' potential to succeed in the GS@IP program will be assessed through a variety of means, including, but not limited to portfolio components, GPA, and teacher recommendations. No single assessment disqualifies a student from review. Each school division makes its own decisions about eligibility, but all three school divisions use the same criteria and application process. Students found eligible by the school system must be accepted by GMU before final acceptance into the program.

The following information is collected and reviewed for each applicant.

- **Demographic Information**
- **Career Highlights** – Activities, participation in organizations, awards, and honors.
- **Portfolio**- The portfolio is used to demonstrate the applicant's interest and ability in STEM. The Portfolio is comprised of several parts:
    - Part 1: Research project- Paper and presentation
    - Part 2: Annotated Article
    - Part 3: Podcast/Video
    - Part 4: Timed Essay

- **Recommendations** – Each applicant must request recommendations from the current science teacher, current mathematics teacher, and one other adult (who should not be a family member). To request a recommendation, please input the recommender's name in the application portal. ***It is very important that you input the email address correctly.** Recommenders will receive the recommendation form in late January or early February. They will have until March 5, 2026, to complete the recommendation.
- **Grade Point Average** – Each applicant's Grade Point Average (GPA) will be calculated on an unweighted scale for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses only. Students are also required to have an **overall GPA of 3.4 or higher for entry into GMU.**
- **Official Transcript**- Your school division has access to this information and will submit this on your behalf.

George Mason University Admission Process

Students selected to attend The Governor's School @ Innovation Park must be eligible for admission as a special Guest Matriculate Student at GMU. The university reviews each student's official high school transcript.

- Students need to have taken or be taking all pre-requisite mathematics and science courses with successful mastery of course content.
- Students should have an overall GPA of 3.4 or higher as a Special Guest Matriculate Student.
- Students should rank in the top quarter of the class.

Application

This section will provide a space needed to gather the information needed to submit the online application. Paper applications will not be accepted for PWCS students.

Demographic Information:

Name (First, MI, Last)		Date of Birth	Student Number
Mailing Address (Number, City, State, Zip Code			
Student Email		Student Cell Phone	Preferred Strand (circle one) Biology Chemistry Engineering Physics
Parent/Guardian 1 Name	Parent/Guardian 1 Email		Parent/Guardian 1 Cell Phone
Parent/Guardian 2 Name	Parent/Guardian 2 Email		Parent/Guardian 2 Cell Phone

Reference Information:

Current Math Teacher		Current Math Teacher Email
Current Science Teacher		Current Science Teacher Email
Additional Teacher/Adult Reference	Position of Additional Reference	Additional Reference Email

Activities/Programs: Activities/Programs: List the three most significant activities/programs in which you have participated during the past three years that relate to STEM. Include the name of the organization, sponsoring agency, or group. Describe the time involved and any leadership position you have held. Under "Year" indicate the calendar year of the training or activity. Please explain any acronyms that you use.

Activity 1	Position Held	Time Involved (hours per week/year)	Year
Activity 2	Position Held	Time Involved (hours per week/year)	Year
Activity 3	Position Held	Time Involved (hours per week/year)	Year

Honors/Recognitions: List the three most significant honors/recognitions you have received in your area of interest, during the past three years. Please explain any acronyms that you use.

Honors/Recognitions 1	Level of Competition (regional, state, national, etc.)	Year
Honors/Recognitions 2	Level of Competition (regional, state, national, etc.)	Year

Honors/Recognitions 3	Level of Competition (regional, state, national, etc.)	Year

Acknowledgments

To be considered for entrance into GS@IP, applicants must agree to the following acknowledgments, which will be marked in the online application.

Student Initials	Parent/Guardian Initials	Acknowledgement Statements
		I understand that the programs require concerted academic focus, preparation, and motivation from all participants and that participants are expected to demonstrate the emotional maturity and self-discipline to participate in the activities and to demonstrate respect for themself, others, the program, and the school
		I certify that I am a resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia and eligible for a free, public education in a public school in Prince William County, Manassas City, and Manassas Park City Schools.
		I understand that acceptance letters are communicated through the online portal only and will only be released on the date indicated in the "Important Dates" list in this packet.
		I understand that, if accepted, I will submit an electronic application to George Mason University by the date indicated in the "Important Dates" list in this packet.
		I understand that, if accepted, I will be considered a Guest Matriculate Student at George Mason University. I understand that I am responsible for abiding by university procedures regarding course registration, academic studies, and conduct.
		I understand that the GS@IP calendar could be different from my home school calendar. GS@IP students are required to attend school on all scheduled days.
		I understand that the cost of participation per student is paid by the participating school division. I take this commitment seriously and recognize that my family may be required to reimburse the school division for the cost if I choose to leave the program before graduation.
		I understand that tuition costs for optional dual enrollment courses in which I choose to enroll are not covered by my school division, I agree to pay the balance in full and abide by George Mason University's registrar calendar for add/drop and payment due dates.
		I have discussed graduation requirements with my parents and my school Point of contact; I am aware of the coursework/credits I must successfully complete for the diploma I wish to pursue.
		I certify that these are my truthful responses to these expectations.
		The decision to apply to the GS@IP is my own, and I want to participate fully in the program. The responses contained in this application are my own work. I have read in its entirety the application procedures, including the application forms, and program expectations, and am aware of my school division's appeals process.
		GS@IP is a highly competitive program with a strong belief in trust and integrity. All applicants are expected to present themselves in the best possible light. All information must be complete, accurate, and their own work. Any incident of academic dishonesty or cheating, may result in removal from the application process or immediate removal from the program, regardless of when the infraction was committed. I, affirm that this submission represents my own work, without the use of any unpermitted aids or resources. I understand that there will be no tolerance towards academic dishonesty and that cheating can and will lead to removal from the application process or removal from the GS@IP.

Student Portfolio

The student portfolio is a collection of work produced that will demonstrate your commitment and experience in STEM. All applicants will submit a portfolio which includes these pieces:

- Research project (written and oral presentation)
- Timed Essay- this will be completed after the application deadline and will not be uploaded.
- Annotated Article
- Podcast/Video

The portfolio is rated by STEM teachers, who will determine its strength holistically. A rubric is included at the end of the packet.

Research Project

Students must submit a detailed project that incorporates all aspects of scientific research or engineering design. For reference, students should review the information at the following websites:

- https://student.societyforscience.org/international-rules-pre-college-science-research
- https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/2021-resources/

Students should submit the complete written component of the research project in addition to the oral component. The oral component is usually the PowerPoint or other application that is used to present your research. You may place notes in the slides.

Option 1:
Students who have participated in the local, regional, or state Virginia Junior Academy of Science (VJAS) or any level of the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) competitions may submit their work for those competitions. **Such research must have been completed after the beginning of grade 9 to be eligible for review.** Such products must include both the written documentation of design as well as the display represented for judging. All forms submitted to the initial competition must be included in this submission for review.

Option 2:
Students may design a new project which incorporates all aspects of scientific research or engineering design. Students must complete and submit the written and oral presentation components of their design. Students may design their experiments and collect and evaluate authentic data if time permits. If the data cannot be collected within the timeframe available, students may create data that are probable within the existing conditions and present summaries and conclusions around those data. **Students choosing option 2 should limit their experiments to questions that do not require the use of human subjects, recombinant DNA, tissue, pathogenic agents, or controlled substances.**

Research Project Rubric

Criteria	Expert- 3	Proficient- 2	Apprentice- 1	Novice- 0
Content	Explains and applies relative and accurate content.	Explains or otherwise applies relevant and accurate content.	Identifies or otherwise applied relevant content with minor errors or omissions.	Identifies or makes connections to irrelevant content OR relevant with major errors or omissions.
Hypothesis	Makes hypothesis that indicates the relationship between variables and is supported through scientific understanding and/or the use mathematical relationships.	Makes hypothesis that specify what happens to a dependent variable when an independent variable is manipulated.	Makes hypothesis that is directly related to the question; however the dependent and independent variable is not explicitly indicated.	Makes hypothesis that is indirectly related to the question.
Interpret, Analyze and Evaluate Data	Accurately analyzes or interprets information using a graph and/or table, identifies patterns in the data, and recognizes unusual or unexpected data.	Constructs, analyzes, and interprets graphical displays of data	Analyzes or interprets information using a graph and/or table but makes minor mistakes.	Analyzes or interprets information using a graph and/or table but makes major mistakes.
Evaluate and Synthesize	Constructs or evaluates an explanation based on observations or laboratory evidence, relates it to scientific ideas or principles, and applies explanation to new contexts. Makes quantitative and/or qualitative claims regarding the relationship between dependent and independent variables and is able to apply these claims to new contexts.	Constructs or evaluates an explanation based on observations or laboratory evidence and relates it to scientific ideas or principles. Makes quantitative and/or qualitative claims regarding the relationship between dependent and independent variables.	Explanation or evaluation of evidence is supported by laboratory evidence. Makes claims about the relationship between dependent and independent variables that are not supported with evidence.	Constructs or evaluates an explanation that includes an irrelevant claim. Claims are not based on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables
Clarity	Communicates accurate, clear, and complete scientific information. Uses scientific terms and concepts accurately to support explanations.	Communicates scientific information that is accurate and clear. Uses scientific terms and concepts accurately to support explanations.	Communicates partially accurate and/or minimal information in explanations. Use of scientific terms in explanations is limited or partially accurate.	Communicates information that reflects inaccurate concepts. Use of scientific terms is inaccurate or absent.

Citations	Cites all sources data obtained from other sources. Citation style is used in both text and bibliography.	Cites most data obtained from other sources. Citation style is used in both text and bibliography.	Cites some data obtained from other sources. Citation style is either inconsistent or incorrect.	Does not cite sources, this is an academic integrity violation.

Timed Essay

Applicants are required to complete a timed essay. The essay will be completed after the application deadline and does not need to be submitted with the portfolio. In the essay, the committee is looking to see how you think and problem-solve. All students will have 90 minutes to complete the essay.

The timed-writing portion will be administered during two sessions; applicants may choose one session to attend.

Rubric for Timed Essay: Applicants should review the rubric below and consider each of the areas carefully as they begin thinking about the writing process for their essay.

Timed Essay Rubric

Criteria	Expert- 3	Proficient- 2	Apprentice- 1	Novice- 0
Focus/Main Point	The essay is focused, purposeful, and reflects clear insight and ideas	The essay is focused on the topic and includes relevant ideas	The essay is focused on topic and includes few loosely related ideas	The essay poorly addresses topic and includes irrelevant ideas
Support	Persuasively supports main point with well-developed reasons and/or examples	Supports main point with developed reasons and/or examples	Supports main point with some underdeveloped reasons and/or examples	Provides little or no support for the main point
Organization & Format	Effectively organizes ideas to build a logical, coherent argument	Organizes ideas to build an argument	Some organization of ideas to build an argument	Little or no organization of ideas to build an argument
Language Use, Style & Conventions (Sentence structure, word choice, grammar, spelling, punctuation)	Effective and creative use of elements of style to enhance meaning Uses correct grammar, spelling, punctuation throughout with very few errors	Appropriate use of elements of style Uses correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation with few errors	Some use of elements of style Contains frequent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation	Little or no use of elements of style Many errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, makes reader's comprehension difficult

Annotated Article

Students must choose a STEM article that interests them. Annotate the article to make it accessible to someone who may not understand the technical language used in the article. Please include the original article and the bibliographical information for the article.

Please see the URL pasted below to provide you with guidance on how to annotate an article:
https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/annotating-texts/

Annotated Article Rubric

Criteria	Expert- 3	Proficient- 2	Apprentice- 1
Summary	The summary clearly outlines the main research question, methods, results, and implications in the student's own words.	Most of the article is summarized, but the student may not clearly cover all aspects (i.e., the main research question, methods, results, and implications).	The student does not clearly summarize the main points of the article (i.e., the main research question, methods, results, and implications) and/or includes inaccurate information.
Analysis	The student provides an insightful analysis of the article. The student articulates novel ideas that clearly go beyond what is in the article itself. The analysis is clear and rational.	The student provides an analysis of the article, but the ideas presented are mostly novel, going beyond what is in the article itself.	The student does not clearly move beyond a summary of the article to provide an analysis. No new ideas are contributed beyond what is in the article itself, or the analysis is overly confusing.
Writing	Overall, the student's communication of their analysis is clear and evidences a general, overarching understanding of the issues involved in the article.	Overall, the student's communication of their analysis is somewhat clear and/or suggests some understanding of the issues involved in the article.	Overall, the student's communication of their analysis is confusing, unclear, and/or suggests limited understanding of the issues involved in the article.
Format	Paper has consistent formatting and accurately cites the article in.	Paper has mostly consistent formatting guidelines and accurately cites the article.	Paper does not have consistent formatting and either fails to cite the article or cites in inaccurately.
Mechanics	Grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors are rare and do not detract from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure is good (e.g., avoids run-on sentences, sentence structure is solid).	There may be a few grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors, but overall, they do not detract too much from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure is good (e.g., avoids run-on sentences, sentence structure is solid).	Grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors significantly detract from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure often includes poor structure (e.g., run-on sentences).

Podcast/Video

Create a 5–10-minute podcast or video. In the podcast or video, please address all items below:
- Start the video by stating your name and preferred strand.
- Why do you want to attend Governor's School?
- Why did you choose your preferred strand?
- What will you bring to Governor's School?
- What do you expect from Governor's School?
- How do you plan to apply your experiences to your future plans?
- What challenges might arise from being a student at two schools?
- Where do you see yourself in the next five years and ten years? What will you be doing?

Please see the URL pasted below which will provide you with suggestions on how to create a podcast.
https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students

Podcast/Video Rubric

Criteria	Expert- 3	Proficient- 2	Apprentice- 1
Timing	Podcast/video was 7-10 minutes.	Podcast/video was 5-7 minutes.	Podcast was less than 5 minutes or over 10 minutes
Content	The student answered all questions and provided in-depth explanations.	The student answered most questions and/or provided vague explanations.	The student answered few or no questions and/or provided little or no explanations.

Governor's School Application Score Page

Portfolio Requirements- 75% of total score

Research Project Indicate the score given by each evaluator:
Reader 1 score: _____ + Reader 2 score: _____ = Total Score/2 (18 max) _____

Timed Essay Indicate the score given by each evaluator:
Reader 1 score: _____ + Reader 2 score: _____ = Total Score/2 (12 max) _____

Article Annotation Indicate the score given by each evaluator:
Reader 1 score: _____ + Reader 2 score: _____ = Total Score/2 (15 max) _____

Podcast/Video Indicate the score given by each evaluator:
Reader 1 score: _____ + Reader 2 score: _____ = Total Score/2 (6 max) _____

Recommendations and Achievements- 25% of total score

Teacher Recommendations:
Math teacher: _____ + Science Teacher _____ + Other Teacher/Adult _____ = Average/2 (max 12)

Career Highlights:
Activities, Research, and Honors Activity/Program _____ + Honor/Recognition _____ = _____ (max 12)

Unweighted GPA in STEM Coursework only _____ x2 (max 18)

Grade Point Average	Points
4.0	9
3.9	8
3.8	7
3.7	6
3.6	5
3.5	4
3.4	3
3.3	2
3.2	1

Portfolio Requirements x .75 _____ + Recommendations and Achievements x .25 _____ = _____

Important Dates

Application Timeline for the 2025-26 School Year

GS@IP Informational Meeting	October 4, 2025 @ 8:30 a.m. December 6, 2025 @ 8:30 a.m.	GMU SciTech Campus
Application Help Sessions	November, December, January	Virtual
Governor's School Application Available on PWCS website	November 3, 2025	PWCS Website
10th grade tours	November 18, 20 and 21st, 2025	GMU SciTech Campus
GS@IP Applications Due	February 1, 2026	Avela
GS@IP Timed Writing	To be determined	Virtual
Acceptance Decisions Released	March 27, 2026	
Student Deadline to respond to admission	April 6, 2026	
GMU Application Portal opens	April 24, 2026	
Welcome Meeting #1 -orientation, GMU instructions, scheduling information, course requests and forms	April 25, 2026	GMU SciTech Campus, TBD
Deadline to apply to GMU	May 8, 2026	
Welcome Meeting #2	May 30, 2026	GMU SciTech Campus, TBD
Mandatory New Student Orientation	August 14, 2026	GMU SciTech Campus, TBD
First Day of GS@IP Classes	August 17, 2026	GMU SciTech Campus