

SPRUCE STREET SCHOOL

FINANCIAL AID MANUAL

Adopted
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to clearly state the guiding policy and procedures approved by the Board and the administration of the school in the management of this vital program. Additionally, it is to assist the Financial Aid Committee and other staff in carrying out the tasks associated with the yearly financial aid process.

It is the goal of the school to provide a consistent message to parents, students, faculty, board members and administration regarding financial aid. As such, the School endorses the Principles of Good Practice for Financial Aid Administration as outlined in Appendix A.

As policies and procedures change from year to year this manual will reflect those changes and provide guidance for the awarding of financial aid.

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

Spruce Street School's Financial Aid Program has a two-fold purpose: to strive to provide mission-appropriate students an opportunity for a high-quality education which might otherwise be unobtainable for them and to strive to provide to the school a student body reflecting a broad social and economic mix. We believe that all children regardless of their family's ability to pay full tuition should be considered for admissions and the Board dedicates specific funds in each year's budget to support this belief.

FINANCIAL AID COMMITTEE

The Financial Aid Committee consists of the Director, Assistant Director and Business Manager. In addition the Director at his/her discretion may appoint other committee members.

FUNDING PRIVATE SCHOOL EDUCATION

Spruce Street School recognizes that the primary responsibility for financing a student's independent school education rests with his or her family. All families are asked to contribute financially to their child's education in a meaningful way. Intended as a supplement to family resources, Financial Aid awards are made not only to families whose ability to pay school costs is extremely limited, but also to those of somewhat more substantial means who may need only minor subsidy to meet our tuition requirements. Financial Aid at Spruce Street School is awarded based on a family's demonstrated financial need. In no case would a student who does not qualify be awarded aid, nor would a student ever be awarded aid in excess of her or his computed need.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout the financial aid process family-provided information is of such a personal nature that it is imperative that the highest standards of confidentiality be adhered to. Limited access to individual family records will be ensured. Ideally, records are reviewed only by the Director and with names removed, the Financial Aid Committee. Students are not identified by the School as being financial aid recipients.

In the case of separated and/or divorced parents, no information is given by the School to either parent regarding the other parent's finances.

POLICY

Admissions & Acceptance

Without considering the financial needs of students, teachers create a pool of mission-appropriate students and tier students into groups based on many criterion (for example, boys, girls, learning styles). In a separate meeting the Financial Aid Committee determines the aid award for every student who has applied for aid.

From the pool of students the teachers have chosen as mission appropriate, candidates for financial aid are given their full aid award, up to the budgeted allocation, in the order in which they were grouped by the teachers.

The admissions process is focused on identifying mission-appropriate students while financial aid awards are made based on a family's financial need and the school's ability to support that family. We do not see a benefit to accepting students who need aid without also having appropriate aid to support their need.

Waiting List

Any student who is on the admissions waiting list and also requires financial aid is also put on the financial aid waiting list. As spaces and/or funds become available, all of the students who have been placed on the financial aid waiting list are considered for aid. The financial aid list is made according to the School's enrollment need (boys, girls, ranking, etc.) Consideration is also given to the current distribution of financial aid by grade level.

Returning Students Receiving Financial Aid

Spruce Street School attempts to offer the same percentage of aid to tuition to all returning students as long as the need continues. If the family's ability to contribute to the student's education increases, the level of aid awarded decreases accordingly. If the family's ability to pay decreases, the school makes every effort to raise the level of aid awarded.

Returning Students Requesting Aid for the First Time

The financial aid office will accept applications from returning students who have not received financial aid in the past. However, we cannot guarantee that the School will be able to meet the financial need of these families. It is our expectation that families who begin at the School paying full tuition will continue to do so. If we are unable to meet the family's request we will place the student on the financial aid waiting list.

Unmarried, Separated and Divorced Parents

Financial Aid at Spruce Street School is determined by a family's ability to meet educational expenses; it is based on need, not on a willingness or unwillingness to pay. It is the position of the School that divorced and separated parents retain the obligation to contribute to the education of their children whether or not there is legal agreement between them to do so. Many divorce settlements stipulate the exact amount each parent must contribute toward educational costs, or which parent is responsible for costs and for how long. We do not follow such guidelines when determining aid and instead require each parent to contribute as much as our calculations show they can afford. In some instances this amount is less than the court's decision, in others, more. The Financial Aid Committee considers the assets of both parents, if living, before making any award, and cannot be held by the assertion that one parent has disclaimed responsibility for educational expenses. If either parent has remarried, we consider also the assets of the stepparent, always bearing in mind the obligation of that stepparent to his or her own children.

Same sex families and parents who have never been married are treated the same as all other families when considering the family's request for financial aid. Assets of both parents whether married, living together or separated, will be used to determine the family's need for aid.

The committee may waive the requirement of financial information from the non-custodial parent and his or her spouse when the non custodial parent's whereabouts are unknown or when the non-custodial parent has given no financial support to the student for more than two years and has made no contact with him or her during this time.

Discrimination of Financial Aid Applicants

Recipients of financial aid are not subject to special standards or other requirements that would treat them unequally or stigmatize them. They are expected to meet the same standards of performance that all other students are expected to meet. To be eligible for financial aid, and to continue to receive aid, students must demonstrate financial need and meet all of the requirements of continued enrollment.

Spruce Street School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, marital status, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation or use of trained dog guide or service animal by a person with disability.

Non-Working Parents

Spruce Street School believes private education is a family choice that may require sacrifices from the family. In the case of a parent who chooses not to work when all children in the household are in grade levels at or above kindergarten, a minimum of an income based on full time employment (2,080 hours per year) at Washington State's current minimum wage is imputed in calculating the family's gross income figure for the year. The Financial Aid Committee may decide to impute a higher level of income to calculate gross income. Factors such as prior employment, training, and education degrees may be used to evaluate the imputation of income. The Financial Aid Committee can waive this imputation if there is disability of either the non-working parent or a household member that requires the non-working parent to take a custodial role.

FACTORS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN CALCULATING NEED

Computation of financial need is an extremely complex issue and involves many decisions regarding income, expenses, assets and liabilities. Each year the School will establish a computation method for calculating financial aid and each family's need will be calculated utilizing that method and the Award Committee's best judgment. No family is given more aid than the calculation demonstrates.

Income

Includes: salary(s), dividends, interest, alimony, child support, student income, trust fund income, cash/gifts from relatives and other income

Expenses

Includes: rent/mortgage, household expenses, auto/transportation, medical, child-care, education, insurance, taxes and other expenses

Assets

Includes: current checking/savings account balances, home value, real estate, business ownership, investments, retirement funds, trust fund assets, vehicles, boats and other assets

Liabilities

Includes: mortgage, equity loans, consumer debt and other liabilities

DOCUMENTATION

The Financial Aid Committee requires an application and various forms of documentation from families applying for financial aid. All families are required to conform to the same documentation and application procedures.

An application, the family's or families' 1040 and other income tax forms and schedules are required. Additionally, verification of home equity and business assets and income are verified through documentation.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Statistical information regarding financial aid applicants, award amounts, percentage of students on financial aid and other relevant data are reviewed by the Financial Aid Committee each year. These statistics are also presented to the Board. The goal of these statistics is to review the level of need of the school community and evaluate the continuing ability of the institution to meet those needs.

ADOPTION AND REVISION

Any revisions to this policy requires Board approval.

The Board of Trustees approved the original version of this policy on May 20, 2009.

Appendix A

Principles of Good Practice: Financial Aid Administration

Revised and approved by the NAIS board in 2003.

Recognizing that each family bears the primary responsibility for financing a student's education costs, NAIS's Principles of Good Practice for Financial Aid Administration are designed to serve as guideposts in the development of professional policies and orderly procedures among schools. Through these principles, NAIS affirms its belief that the purpose of a financial aid program is to provide monetary assistance to those students who cannot afford the cost of attending an independent school. Furthermore, these principles reflect the standards of equity and fairness NAIS embraces and reassert NAIS's ongoing commitment to access and diversity.

1. The school adheres to local, state, and federal laws and regulations that require non-discriminatory practice in the administration of its financial aid policies.
2. The school operates within the context of both short- and long-range financial aid budget and policy goals.
3. The school uses objective research to measure the effectiveness of its progress towards its goals, and communicates the outcomes as appropriate.
4. The school provides outreach, education, and guidance to students and families on all aspects of its financial aid process and options.
5. The school determines eligibility for admission without regard to a student's application for financial aid.
6. The school commits to providing financial aid dollars to applicants who demonstrate that their family resources are insufficient to meet all or part of the total educational costs.
7. The school continues to provide support to students as long as financial need is demonstrated.
8. The school maintains the same standards of behavior and academic performance for recipients of financial aid as it does for non-recipients.
9. The school enacts documented procedures that ensure a fair, consistent, and equitable assessment of each family's ability to contribute toward educational expenses.
10. The school makes and communicates financial aid decisions in a manner that allows families to make timely, careful, and fully-informed enrollment decisions.
11. The school establishes administrative and accounting procedures that distinguish the school's need-based financial aid program from tuition assistance programs that are not based on financial need.
12. The school safeguards the confidentiality of financial aid applications, records, and decisions.
13. The school supports collaboration between the financial aid office and other offices within the school.

The NAIS Principles of Good Practice for member schools define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school operations to guide schools in becoming the best education communities they can be. Accordingly, membership in NAIS is contingent upon agreement to abide by "the spirit" of the PGPs. Principles are precepts grounded in an ethic and ethos of "doing the right thing." Practices are common activities.