

**FINANCIAL AID POLICY
AND PROCEDURES MANUAL****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to assist the staff of the Three Cedars Waldorf School, from here on referred to as the school or TCWS, in carrying out the tasks associated with the yearly financial aid process. Additionally, it is to clearly state the guiding policies and procedures, approved by the Executive Director, in the management of this vital program.

The school aims to provide a consistent message to parents, students, teaching and administrative staff, and board members regarding financial aid. As such, the School endorses the NAIS Principles of Good Practice for Financial Aid Administration as outlined in Appendix A.

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

II. PHILOSOPHY

The school is committed to serving a diverse socioeconomic student body, reflective of the community in the greater Seattle area. Thus, financial aid is granted to further the goals of the school, ensuring that students represent the broadest possible range of socioeconomic income levels.

III. FUNDING PRIVATE SCHOOL EDUCATION

TCWS recognizes that the primary responsibility for financing a student's independent school education rests with his or her family. The school has a history of making tuition adjustments to aid those families in affording their choice to send their student to an independent school.

Each family applying for aid is asked to make an estimated, reasonable offer to pay some portion of the student's tuition. It is important to the school that the family makes a good faith offer, thus acknowledging the value of the education to the family.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout the financial aid process the information provided by families is of such a personal nature that it is imperative to adhere to the highest standards of confidentiality. The school ensures limited access to individual family records. Records are reviewed only by the Financial Aid Team which includes the Executive Director, the Business Manager, and other staff members as needed. Students are not identified, in any context other than the Financial Aid process, as financial aid recipients by the school.

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 except in cases where failure to make timely payments and inability to work with the school to resolve the nonpayment issues, results in the risk of the student's enrollment being jeopardized.

V. POLICY

Admissions & Acceptance

Once an enrollment process has begun families who request financial aid are referred to the Financial Aid application process which determines the financial aid grant. If financial aid requests exceed the school's financial aid budget for the year, late applications may be placed in the Financial Aid wait pool.

Financial Aid Wait Pool

As funds become available, applications placed in the financial aid waiting pool are considered for aid. The financial aid wait pool is designed to serve the School's enrollment needs (boys, girls, class size, etc.) Funds may become available anytime between the Financial Aid acceptance deadline and the start of school in September. Additionally, funds may be made available during an ongoing school year as per decision of the Executive Director.

Financial aid awards are contingent upon payment in full of the prior year's tuition assessment.

Applications for financial aid are awarded in this order:

- a. Existing families
- b. New applicants

Marital Status

Financial aid is determined by a family's ability to meet educational expenses and it is solely based on need. It is the policy of the school that divorced or separated parents both retain the obligation to contribute to the education of their children whether or not there is legal agreement between them to do so. Divorce settlements may stipulate the exact amount each parent is responsible for contributing toward educational costs, or which parent is responsible for costs and for how long. The school does not abide by these guidelines and instead require each parent to contribute as much as our determination shows they can afford. The school's Financial Aid process considers the income, expenses, assets, and debts of both living parents before making any award, and is not held by the assertion that one parent disclaims responsibility for educational expenses. The school retains the right, at the discretion of the Executive Director, to depart from this policy on a case-by-case, individual basis.

If either parent has remarried we also consider the financial position of the stepparent

The above policy applies equally for same sex or unmarried domestic partners.

Need Based Financial Aid

Financial aid is awarded based on a family's demonstrated financial need only, determined on an annual basis.

Discrimination of Financial Aid Applicants

Recipients of financial aid are not subject to special standards or other requirements. Teaching faculty and staff members who are not members of the Financial Aid team receive no information of any kind regarding financial aid applications, awards or denial of awards.

Non-working Parents

TCWS considers private education as a choice. In families with children above grade 1, if one of the parents chooses to remain unemployed or underemployed, a minimum income based on full time employment (2000 hours per year, includes 2 work weeks off) at Washington State's current minimum wage is imputed in calculating the family's gross income figure for the year. The Financial Aid Team, at its sole discretion, may decide to impute a higher level of income based on factors such as prior employment, training, and education degrees. The Financial Aid Team may waive this imputation if there is disability of either the non-working parent or of a household member that requires the non-working parent to take a custodial role.

VI. PROCEDURES

Financial Aid Award and Computation

Computation of financial need is a complex process which involves analysis and decision making regarding income, expenses, assets and liabilities. The School has established a computation method for calculating financial aid as set forth in the following procedures. The need of each family is calculated utilizing that method. No family is granted more aid than the outcome of the method indicates.

In addition to the family's taxable and non-taxable income the following is considered in calculating a financial aid grant.

A. Estimates - Income and expenses are evaluated based on information provided for the most recent tax year closed. If a family estimates a significantly different financial position for the current tax year; the Financial Aid Team uses the estimated figures. In this case the family is required to provide follow up documentation verifying the estimated figures.

B. Asset Strength - Home equity, other real estate equity, business assets and investments are used to determine financial need

C. Student Assets - student assets are used to determine financial need.

D. Indebtedness - Certain debts are allowed in offsetting the above assets.

E. College Savings and 529 Accounts - based on the individual fund instructions and established computation methods, funds may be used as either income or assets in the determination of financial need.

F. Retirement - retirement funds in excess of \$250,000 are considered as an asset

Process and Documentation

The Financial Aid Team requires each applicant to submit both a TCWS financial aid application and an online application with SSS.nais.org. In addition to the above, various forms of documentation are required. All families are required to submit all necessary documents for their application to be processed.

The following forms are required in addition to the family's SSS online file:

- Individual Federal Income Tax Returns – Form 1040 for the two tax years most recently ended, including all schedules and attachments.
- Corporate or Partnership Federal Income Tax Returns – Form 1065 and 1120, if applicable, including all schedules and attachments.
- Copies of all W-2's and/or 1099's and Schedule K-1's.
- Copies of paystubs for two months immediately preceding the application.
- A current property value assessment statement for all properties owned.
- IRS Form 4506T, authorization to release tax information, may be required under certain circumstances
- A completed Business/ Farm Statement for Business owners may be required.

All forms must be submitted by the published due date to be guaranteed consideration. We do not process an application until all of the requested forms are received.

Use of School and Student Services Website

TCWS contracts with SSS to use the guidelines and aid computation program software in order to establish a baseline for determining an award. In addition, TCWS incorporates internally established financial aid criteria.

Appeal Process

Once a financial aid award has been granted, families may appeal their awards by contacting the Business Manager. The appeal must be received by the Business Manager within 10 calendar days of receiving the notice of award amount, by phone or in writing. The Business Manager presents the appeal to the Financial Aid Team. If applicable, the Financial Aid Team assesses the appeal, makes further determination, and communicates its decision to the applicant in a timely manner, in writing.

Changes to financial aid awards are made only when new financial information is provided by the applicant who was not previously available to the Team. Computation of a new award must meet all financial aid policies.

Role of the Executive Director - If, after going through the appeal process with the Team as outlined above, the family wishes to engage in a further appeal, they must contact the Business Manager within 48 hours of receiving the results of their appeal. The Business Manager will then schedule an appointment for the family with the Executive Director, or his/her designee, and one member of the Team. As with the initial appeal, changes in financial aid awards are only made on the basis of new financial information supplied to the school. The Business Manager will inform the family of the results of this appeal within three business days. The Executive Director's decision is final.

In exceptional circumstances such as illness, sudden loss of employment, or other unexpected hardship, the Executive Director may make a financial aid decision based on considerations other than those outlined above. Such determinations are exceptional in nature and valid for one school year, or one partial school year, only. Additionally, the Executive Director may choose to grant a scholarship in lieu of financial aid, as outlined in the Tuition Scholarship Protocol below.

TCWS - Tuition Scholarship Protocol

Purpose

TCWS occasionally grants a full tuition scholarship to families in need of financial aid, who without this scholarship may not be able to attend Three Cedars Waldorf School and benefit from Waldorf Education.

Criteria

Criteria for the attribution of the tuition scholarship are not defined in financial terms only. A combination of factors including the number of students in the family who attend or wish to attend TCWS, ethnic and cultural diversity, initial willingness to allocate a significant proportion of yearly income to private education, and a genuine desire to experience Waldorf Education are taken into consideration.

The sole defined criteria is that families who receive a full tuition scholarship have applied to Financial Aid and determination has been made through the financial aid process that their yearly income limits their ability to pay to the level of the school's tuition minimum.

Attribution

TCWS tuition scholarships are attributed at the discretion of the Executive Director, at his or her initiative or following a recommendation from the Financial Aid office.

Limits

No more than an amount equivalent to four (4) full tuitions shall be attributed in a given school year.

Minimum Contribution

Families may be asked to contribute a minimum of \$500 per school year. This minimum contribution may be waived at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Terms

Full tuition scholarships are attributed on a yearly basis, for one year only, renewable indefinitely on a yearly basis at the discretion of the Executive Director. Full tuition scholarships may be attributed for half a school year, provided that the terms are communicated to the family in an unequivocal manner so as not to raise unfounded expectations.

Limitations

Full tuition scholarships may not be attributed to families who are associated to the Executive Director either by family ties or by publicly known bounds of friendship or other relationships which may present a conflict of interest.

Review Process

Full tuition scholarships are reviewed on a yearly basis at the time of financial aid attributions, by the Business Manager. S/he presents scholarships for review to the Executive Director who makes attribution decisions yearly.

VII. 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 Team each year to be presented to the Executive Director. The aim of these statistics is to review the level of need of the school community and to evaluate the continuing ability of the school to meet those needs.

Appendix A. NAIS Principles of Good Practice

The NAIS Principles of Good Practice support member schools in defining high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of independent school operations. The impetus for creating and publishing the Principles can be found in the NAIS mission statement, which commits the association to articulating and promoting high standards of educational quality and ethical behavior for its membership. Each set of principles is drafted by an NAIS committee of practitioners in that professional area, submitted to the NAIS board of directors for approval, then distributed to every member school. The collected NAIS Principles of Good Practice for member schools reflect the overall dedication to quality education that has always characterized independent schools.

The SSS Knowledge Center is here to help guide schools' financial aid decisions whether or not they are NAIS members.

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.*

Appendix B . Timetable

A year specific timetable is established by the Business Manager for use in each specific school year, and made available to the Executive Director, the Director of Admissions, and the Financial Aid team. Relevant dates are posted on the school website and published in the school's newsletter and other means of communication to parents.

- a. February 1st – begin reviewing FA applications to SSS
- b. February – 1st week – deadline for FA applications to SSS.
- c. Mid-February- 1st scheduled FA meeting to review and assess applications.
- d. March – 1st week – award cover letters to Director of Admissions for contracts.
- e. Mid-March – FA award letters due for completed applications.
- f. Ten days following point e. above – acceptance of financial aid offer or appeal deadline
- g. End of March – second round of award letters due for applications accepted late
- h. 8 days following point g. above – acceptance of financial aid offer for second round or appeals deadline
- i. Mid-April – final round of award letters due for applications accepted late
- j. 5 days following point i. above – acceptance of financial aid offer for final round or appeals deadline