

# Journeys School

## Financial Aid Program and Procedures 2009-10 Academic Year (Grades K-12)

Journeys School strives to maintain a diverse student body. Our admissions decisions are always made need-blind, that is without regard to a family's financial situation. However, some families may find the need to apply for financial aid to assist them with funding an education once a student has been accepted to Journeys School.

Journeys School has a need-based Financial Aid Policy and for a school our size, we award a substantial amount of financial aid each year. However, it is important to remember that an independent school education is a *choice* for families. Both the school and the families make significant financial sacrifices to support this choice. Our policies and philosophy attempt to ensure that each family is subject to the same guidelines as we evaluate the needs of your family relative to the needs of other families in our school.

**What are the expectations of students awarded financial aid?** There are no specific criteria for financial aid recipients. However, they are held to the same standards as all students and are expected to be responsible members of the school community and make significant contributions to the school, as well as benefit from our educational program. Financial aid recipient families are encouraged to write a thank-you note to support the raising of financial aid money.

**Who is awarded aid?** Approximately 35% of Journeys School students receive some form of financial assistance. For the 2008-09 school year, \$500,000 in financial aid funds were distributed among approximately 60 students. All financial aid awards are kept confidential and the Financial Aid Committee guards applications in strict confidence. Please note that a family's assets are considered when awarding financial aid. Consequently, it is possible for a family with a modest income to qualify for little or no aid if they have significant savings, investments or home equity. Conversely, a family with few assets may qualify for more aid than a family with a similar (or lesser) income who has more assets. The school allocates awards based on demonstrated need. Financial aid is currently not available for Pre-Kindergarten students.

**Must both parents be employed to receive financial aid?** In general, yes, if all children in the family are beyond preschool age. The expectation is that parents with no child care obligations at home (i.e. children five and under) will be employed full time (40 hours per week). For many of our families (those who receive aid and those who do not), both parents are employed so that they can provide an independent school education for their children. We also realize that in some families circumstances may make this impossible. Explaining the circumstances in your financial aid application and describing the non-working parent's plans for eventual employment are important. In order to prevent penalizing dual-income families, we may input a salary amount for non-working parents as an equalizer, unless extenuating circumstances are presented to and approved by the Financial Aid Committee.

**Is financial aid available for extended journeys (trips)?** Beginning in 2009-10, the \$250 extended journeys fee is rolled into K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade tuition so extended journeys are automatically considered with the financial aid process. The additional 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> Capstone trips fees are not determined until the start of the year and will be assessed at that time. Some financial aid is available for Capstone trips—requests should be sent early in the year after the fee has been assessed.

**Do parents apply for financial aid just once?** Parents are required to apply for aid annually because tuition increases and changes in family resources may affect the amount of awards. To be considered, parents must submit all forms and documentation on time. Please see the chart on the last page of this document for deadlines.

**What if I my child is admitted to the school after the academic year begins?**

A family entering Journeys School mid-year may apply for financial aid. However, it should be understood that little or no financial aid may be available by the time a late applicant is accepted. If you require financial assistance to attend Journeys School, it is imperative that you supply all documents and receive notice of the award, if any, before your student is enrolled and begins attending classes.

How is a family's need determined? Journeys School subscribes to the *School and Student Service for Financial Aid (SSS)*, a division of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Families submit the Journeys School financial aid documentation as well as the SSS *Parent Financial Statement (PFS)*, one for each parent in the case of separated or divorced parents, providing detailed financial information. SSS evaluates information based on a formula nationally accepted by independent schools. Online PFS is available at <https://sss.ets.org>; online applications are recommended. PFS forms may also be obtained from the Journeys School office or by calling (307) 734-3710.

The result of the PFS evaluation is printed on a *Report of Family Contribution (RFC)* and sent to Journeys School. The family should request to receive a copy of their report from SSS. In processing applications, SSS takes many factors into account, such as:

- Income (taxable and nontaxable)
- Monetary gifts from grandparents, etc.
- Assets (home equity, rental and vacation property, savings, stocks, bonds, etc.)
- Unusual Expenses (medical, etc.)
- Indebtedness (consumer indebtedness and current business debts are generally not allowable, while debts from a dissolved business are often allowable)
- Family size
- Age of parents (allows for retirement savings)
- Number of children attending tuition-charging schools

SSS considers these factors and provides every family with a living allowance based on family size. This allowance protects a certain amount of income after a variety of expenses are already subtracted from a family's income. SSS also caps home equity at three times the total income. This process helps determine a family's discretionary income. A portion of discretionary income is then suggested as the family contribution for education. The more discretionary income a family has, the higher the family's expected contribution for education.

There can be some variation between the SSS estimation of a family's financial need and what Journeys School actually awards. While SSS merely keys in the data provided on the PFS, Journeys School staff reviews and recalculates the family's financial profile based on information gleaned from taxes and other documentation provided by the family. In addition, a cost of living adjustment is made given the high cost of living in this area. The Financial Aid Committee then meets to discuss each family's situation and allocates awards accordingly.

How much does it cost to apply for aid? SSS charges \$24 to process the *Parents Financial Statement* which can have up to three students listed (online version is only \$22). The fee for additional reports for families applying for aid at more than one school is \$13.00 per additional report. The family can receive a copy of the PFS at no cost. Journeys School charges no fee for processing a Financial Aid Application once information is received from SSS.

What about separated or divorced parents? Journeys School endorses the recommended policy of the *School and Student Service for Financial Aid* stating that parents have the obligation to pay for the educational expenses of their children to the extent they are able, and that obligation takes precedence over the school's responsibility to provide financial assistance. We believe the primary responsibility for a child's education rests with both natural parents. We cannot be bound by the assertion that one parent has disclaimed responsibility for educational expenses. Financial aid is based on ability to pay, not willingness to pay. Therefore, both parents must complete the application process. The income of stepparents or domestic partners will also be included in the calculations, always bearing in mind the obligation of that partner to his or her own natural children. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to request additional forms for the non-custodial parent if they have not been mailed with the financial aid packet. We will waive the requirement for the non-custodial parent to complete the PFS and other forms if the location of the non-custodial parent is unknown or we have documented information that the non-custodial parent provides no support and is not in contact with the child. If extenuating circumstances might warrant waiving this requirement, written requests should be sent with the application.

Should our family apply for financial aid? Few families find it "easy" to pay independent school tuition. Most families adjust their spending priorities, maximize both parents' earnings, and carefully manage assets to do so. We would like to provide firm guidelines to help you decide whether to apply for aid, but we have found that each family's combination of circumstances is unique. The most helpful guideline comes from our knowledge of your family's finances. A good rule of thumb is, if in doubt, apply. The cost is minimal, and there is no specific income level at which a family no longer qualifies for financial aid. Every situation is unique.

How do I get all the forms? What are the deadlines? Financial Aid Application packets can be accessed on the website, Basecamp News, mailed, emailed, or picked up at the Journeys School office (during business hours). To be considered for an award for the 2009-10 school year, parents / guardians must submit ALL documents/forms as reflected in the following chart by the respective deadlines. Late or incomplete files will delay processing of your application and will likely cause you to receive less or no financial aid.

Reminder: For separated or divorced parents, each parent (custodial and non-custodial) must submit ALL required documents/forms on behalf of his or her household, unless the custodial parent requests and receives a waiver from the Financial Aid Committee. This request must be in writing and explain the extenuating circumstances that prevent the non-custodial parent from completing documents/forms. The request may be mailed or dropped off at the Journeys School office. In certain cases, we may request that grandparents or other individuals who pay for most or all of a student's tuition submit an application in lieu of or in addition to a parent(s)' application.

What	Where	When
Parents' Financial Statement (PFS), <u>with \$24 processing fee for mail application or \$22 for online application</u> Note: <u>DO NOT</u> send income tax returns to SSS; <u>DO</u> send copies of tax returns to Journeys School	SSS, Princeton, New Jersey  Please make a copy of the PFS for your records	Mail to SSS no later than March 13, 2009
The Journeys School Financial Aid Documentation, with a copy of 2008 income tax return, to include these IRS forms:  1040 with all schedules, W-2s, 1099's, 4506 (if requested), 4568 (if tax return incomplete)	Journeys School Mail or deliver to the Journeys School office  Please make a copy of the Financial Aid Documentation for your records	Due to Journeys School no later than March 20, 2009
(if you own a business or farm)  Business/Farm Statement, with a copy of these IRS Forms:  Schedule C (1040), 1120 if incorporated), 1120SH, if Subchapter S Corp, K-1, if partner/shareholder	Journeys School  Mail or deliver to the Journeys School office	Due to Journeys School no later than March 20, 2009