



Understanding Financial Aid

Westridge understands the sacrifices that parents make to pay for an Independent School education and offers financial assistance to as many families as possible that demonstrate financial need. The purpose of this communication is to provide you with information on how awards are determined and the challenges inherent in allocating limited resources to ever-growing requests for assistance.

All of Westridge's tuition assistance is need-based. Our goal is to ensure that any qualified girl who desires a Westridge education will be able to attend regardless of her family's financial situation. As you can imagine, this is much easier said than done and, while we strive to reach that goal each year, it is currently not fully achievable and tough decisions need to be made. Each family's story is different and requires a full evaluation based on the unique set of circumstances presented. We take this responsibility very seriously and we devote an enormous amount of time and effort to this process.

It is important to understand that the concept of 'need' is relative and highly complex. However, the School must set guidelines and answer difficult questions around what demonstrates need and what does not for the purpose of financial aid. As we consider financial aid requests and awards, we review the income, expense, asset and liability data presented; we review tax information; and, we read and consider every letter and all family information submitted. We place this in the context of housing and living allowances designed to represent a realistic lifestyle for a family living in and around Pasadena. While FAST is our data gathering automated system, the School makes every financial aid decision based on the information provided and our personal knowledge and experience with our families. Once an award is calculated from the School's basic model, individual circumstances are considered in determining the final award.

The kinds of situations considered to adjust a base award include, but are not limited to:

- Multiple siblings at Westridge
- Tuition paid for siblings who are receiving assistance from other Independent Schools
- Job loss or significant reductions in income
- Medical conditions requiring significant uncovered care or treatment
- Care of an aging and/or disabled parent or other family member
- Temporary but severe financial difficulties

The kinds of situations not considered to adjust a base award include, but are not limited to:

- Parent student loans
- Accumulation of debt unless related to items outside of the family's control (as noted above)
- Lifestyle choices that utilize resources that could be used for educational costs (expensive cars, homes, vacations, etc.)
- Voluntary reductions in income (retirement, going back to school, etc.)

Westridge continues to lead our peer schools in the amount of assistance provided and to demonstrate that educational access is a fundamental principal in our admissions and financial aid policies. We always strive to balance the cost of providing the extraordinary education that is at the heart of our mission with the net tuition revenue (tuition less financial aid awards) needed to cover these costs. In the upcoming year, we will continue to carefully evaluate each application to ensure that financial aid dollars help the greatest number of families and those with the greatest demonstrated need.

Please feel free to contact Kendis Heffley, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, at 626-799-1053, ext. 216 or email kheffley@westridge.org with any questions or further discussion about our Financial Aid policies.