



Frequently Asked Financial Aid Questions for 2017-2018 Admission Season

Explorer West Middle School is committed to socio-economic diversity. We believe that the financial aid program benefits all students and families – whether or not they are financial aid recipients since we are able to enroll outstanding students from a variety of backgrounds who otherwise would not be able to afford the full cost of tuition.

Explorer West also believes that the obligation for financing a child's education rests primarily with the family, including parents and extended family when appropriate. We expect that a family will be willing to make significant adjustments in the use of its discretionary resources—and access supplementary resources where appropriate. The financial aid committee seeks evidence that a family's commitment to their child's education is at least as strong as the school's.

During the 2016-2017 school year, 32% of our families received some form of financial aid, with financial awards of up to nearly the full cost of tuition. Although we cannot afford to give financial aid to all who apply, we encourage all families who feel the need for assistance to apply.

Should I apply for financial aid?

The most helpful guideline comes from personal knowledge of your family's finances. If your family can pay roughly between \$1,650 (for 6th grade) and \$1,850 (for 8th grade) each month for 11 months, you are probably not a good candidate for financial aid. If, after reviewing your situation, you feel you will need aid but are uncertain whether you will qualify, it is generally best to apply.

Must both parents be employed to receive financial aid?

The assumption is that both parents of school-age children have the ability to contribute to the family's income and aid awards are adjusted accordingly. We do realize that there are special circumstances that may make it very difficult for both parents to be employed. Explaining such circumstances on your application better enables us to understand your unique situation.

What if I am divorced or no longer with my child's other parent?

Generally we feel that both parents are equally responsible for their children regardless of marital status. Therefore each parent will need to complete the application to provide a realistic picture of total family resources. We recognize that there are unique family situations and urge you to contact the school's Business Office if you have questions.

How is financial aid determined?

Applications for financial aid are submitted to School and Student Services (SSS), an outside service, along with a copy of your tax return and other tax documents. We receive an analysis back from SSS that helps us determine your family contribution towards educational expenses. We then use those results as a guide in allocating financial aid. Please know that the more information or explanation you can provide regarding your individual circumstances, the better we will be able to assist you.

Are decisions regarding admission and financial aid related?

Please be assured that the admissions committee does not know which families are applying for financial aid. Once admission decisions have been made, the Director of Admissions and the Financial Aid Committee will work together to determine how many and which new students requiring financial aid can be accepted within the limits of our financial aid budget.

How do I apply for Financial Aid?

Families are encouraged to apply online for financial aid at www.sssbynais.org. You will need to create a password and will be given a PIN when you apply online. When applying for financial aid, you will need Explorer West's school code. **Our school code is 3095.** Please keep the PIN and password so that you can access this information at a later date, if necessary.

If you are unable to apply for financial aid online, you may request assistance from Carol LaMotte at Explorer West. Please call: 206-935-0495.

What deadlines do I need to be aware of?

Sibling Early financial aid applications are due Thursday, December 8, 2016.

All new student regular financial aid applications are due Thursday, February 9, 2017.

In addition to completing the financial aid application, the following documents need to be uploaded directly to to SSS website – **also by the due date listed above:**

- A copy of your completed 2016 tax return and all supporting forms sent to the IRS with your return
- A copy of all W-2's reported on the tax return

Requests for financial aid may exceed our financial aid funds available. Submitting your information after the deadline will place your application at the end of the financial aid wait pool. Applications submitted after the financial aid deadline will be considered if funds are still available after all on-time applications are reviewed.

What if I have not completed my tax return?

Many families have not yet completed their tax returns by the financial aid deadline. We recommend that you use your best estimates in completing the application. If your 2016 tax return is not complete, we ask that you include the 2015 return and your 2016 W-2's. Once you have completed your tax return, you will need to remit a copy to SSS. **All aid awards will not be considered final until SSS receives a copy of your completed 2016 tax return.** Unless your estimates vary considerably from the completed tax return, you can expect your aid award to remain unchanged.

Must I apply for aid again the following year?

Yes, you must apply for financial aid every year, even if you have received aid in the past. Families who qualify for aid generally continue to receive it throughout their child's enrollment at Explorer West. However, awards may fluctuate to reflect changes in a family's financial circumstance, available funds, and community need.

When will I be notified if I have been awarded financial aid?

Financial aid award awards – for new and returning families applying for financial aid for the first time – will be mailed on **Thursday, March 16, 2017**. For new families, awards are included with your admissions notification. **Note:** If you are submitting a financial aid application during the sibling early decision process, financial aid awards will be mailed with your new student's admission decision on **Thursday, December 15, 2016**.

Where can I get more information?

Contact Carol LaMotte, Business Manager, at carol@explorer-west.org or at 206-935-0495.

Explorer West Middle School does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, national or ethnic origin, race religion, sex or sexual orientation. This policy applies to all areas of student concerns (admissions, athletics, educational policies, financial aid, and other school-administered programs).