

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID FOR THE 2019-20 ACADEMIC YEAR

We partner with School and Student Services (SSS) in our financial aid process. To begin your financial aid application, you will complete the SSS Parents' Financial Statement (PFS).

The PFS is a comprehensive application that will take some time to complete. Give yourself the time you need by not waiting until our deadline approaches. You'll need your most recent tax return before beginning the PFS. We also recommend that you review the wide range of materials that SSS has put together to help families with the financial aid process. They are found at solutionsbysss.com/parents.

We will communicate our financial aid decision to you. To make our decision, we use the information from the PFS as a starting point and consider our school policies, practices, and available budget.



HOW TO COMPLETE THE PARENTS' FINANCIAL STATEMENT (PFS) ONLINE

- Beginning October 2, 2018, go to the SSS Family Portal at <https://sss.secure.force.com/familyportal>.
- Create your Family Portal account with your email address and a password. If you applied for financial aid last year, login to the Family Portal as a Returning Family using the same email address and password.
- Complete a PFS for Academic Year 2019-20. You can log out of the portal at any time and return later to finish it.
- Once all PFS sections are complete with green checks, the "Submit & Pay" button activates. Follow the prompts to the payment screen. The fee of \$51 is nonrefundable. Once your PFS is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn from the SSS system. If this fee presents a financial hardship for your family, please contact Carol at Explorer West.
- After you pay for and submit your PFS, you have access to the Family Portal's "My Documents" tab to upload required documents by their deadlines as part of your application process.

Need help completing the PFS?

Contact the SSS Parent Support Team at
(800) 344-8328 or sss@communitybrands.com.



HOW TO SUBMIT REQUIRED DOCUMENTS ONLINE

- Prepare your documents to be uploaded. Make sure the documents are on your computer and each specific form is saved as a separate file. Remove any security or password protection from your document files.
- Return to the Family Portal and log into your account.
- Select the Academic Year 2019-20 button.
- Open the "My Documents" tab on the Dashboard.
- On "My Documents," use the Upload button or hyperlink associated with the specific document name in the "Required Documents" section. Clicking the Upload button or hyperlink leads you through the steps to locate, select, and confirm your file to upload.
- Click "Submit" to complete your file upload. After you do, the date will appear in the "Date Uploaded" column within minutes of the upload. Repeat this process until all required documents are submitted by their deadlines.
- **Mailing in Documents:** If you prefer to submit required documents by mail, you must print your Cover Sheet from the "My Documents" tab and send it with your documents to the address provided at least 10 days before their deadlines.

KEY INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR SCHOOL AS YOU COMPLETE THE 2019-20 PFS:

Our school's full name: **EXPLORER WEST MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Our school's SSS code: **3095**

Contact information for our financial aid office: **CAROL LAMOTTE, BUSINESS MANAGER 206-935-0495 carol@explorer-west.org**

Deadline for completing the PFS: **FEBRUARY 7, 2019** Deadline for required documents (marked below): **FEBRUARY 7, 2019**

Documents we require you to submit (with your PFS):

× **1040 with all schedules and worksheets***

× **W2 Form(s) (for all people on tax return)**

1099 Form

Tax Year: × **2018** 2017 2016

Tax Year: × **2018** 2017 2016

Tax Year: 2018 2017 2016

***Self-Employed Parents:** Include all related business forms with your 1040 (Schedule C, Schedule E, 1120, 1065, and K-1).

If your 2018 tax information is not available, please provide 2017 documents by the deadline, and provide 2018 once filed.

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The Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) is the cornerstone of our financial aid application process. By submitting a PFS, you're granting SSS permission to analyze your financial information. Using their unique methodology, they estimate the amount you can contribute to school expenses and forward that estimate to the appropriate schools. It's one form, for one fee, for any number of applicants, for any number of schools.

Top 10 Tips for Completing Your Financial Aid Application

- 1. Complete only one PFS per household.** You can apply for aid to any number of schools for any number of children using just one PFS for the same flat fee. Know your deadlines for submission.
- 2. Use your legal name.** Make sure your name on your Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) appears exactly the way your name appears on your tax documents.
- 3. Enter whole numbers.** When entering numbers, do not enter decimals or cents—simply round to the nearest whole number. Understand that all monetary values must be in US Dollars.
- 4. Differentiate applicants from dependents.** Questions about “student applicants” refer to your children who are applying for financial aid via the PFS. Questions about “other dependents” refer to the children (or adults) for whom you provide support but ARE NOT applying for financial aid.
- 5. Separate salary from profit.** If you are a business or farm owner, you will be asked about your salary in the Family Income section. Enter only the amount you actually draw as salary (reported on your W-2). You will provide information about profit/loss elsewhere in the PFS.
- 6. Estimate your taxes.** We realize most tax forms are not available until late January. If you don't have your current year's taxes available, it's okay to estimate your answers based on your prior year's tax return.
- 7. Upload or mail your required documents.** You're strongly encouraged to upload tax documents via the Family Portal. If you prefer to submit documents by mail, you must print your Cover Sheet from the “My Documents” tab and send it with your documents to the address provided at least 10 days before your school's deadline.
- 8. Tell your story.** Offer explanations when requested, so your story or situation is clear and understandable to those reviewing your application.
- 9. Calculate debt and unusual expenses.** When asked to report your credit card debt, enter your total outstanding balances and use the Notes section to specify the types of purchases you used these cards for. When asked to total your “unusual expenses,” you'll find a list of the types of expenses you should and should not include.
- 10. Be honest.** Take time to carefully consider how much you think you can pay towards tuition on your own. Make a budget of income and expenses and see how much you can include for school costs.