

Dear Parents,

Sycamore School is committed to enrolling students from many different backgrounds and has established a program of need-based financial assistance for families of full-day students who would otherwise be unable to consider Sycamore's outstanding education for their children. Financial aid is intended to address direct tuition and major field trip needs only and is not available for part-time preschool programs or before and after-school programs.

Financial Aid for School Tuition (FAST) provides a need-based financial aid analysis system for families and schools. FAST is operated by Independent School Management (ISM). ISM was founded in 1975 and has been committed to meeting the specific concerns of elementary, middle, and secondary independent schools in areas such as management, finances, publications, insurance, workshops, and consulting.

The difficult job of Sycamore's financial assistance committee is to determine financial assistance awards while considering the relative need of all families, both new and returning to Sycamore. FAST helps Sycamore determine the amount of money a family can contribute toward education based on the FAST methodology. The financial assistance committee compares the need of an individual student with the need of the entire financial assistance applicant pool and Sycamore's budget, using the FAST calculations and award recommendation.

It is important to know that the admissions and financial assistance processes are not related. Although they occur at the same time, the admissions committee makes placement decisions first without considering financial need. The financial assistance committee makes awards to students who have been admitted based on proven financial need relative to the need of all applicants for financial assistance, and in the context of the school's financial assistance budget.

APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE

To apply for assistance, follow these steps:

1. All applications are completed on-line. This program is easy to navigate and work with and will provide a much quicker response than other paper-type processes. You may apply for financial assistance for all of your children on the same form twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The FAST Helpline phone number, which you may find helpful, is 1-877-326-FAST. To begin the process, you may go to Sycamore's web site, www.sycamoreschool.org/admiss/finance.asp, and click on the secure FAST link.
2. All forms must be **received** in the business office (not postmarked) on or before **February 28** or the following Monday if the date falls on a weekend or school holiday. The FAST application must also be completed on-line by **February 28**.
3. Please send to Sycamore **and** Independent School Management, Attention Fast Processing, 1316 North Union Street, Wilmington, DE 19806 a photocopy of your signed 2009 State Income Tax Return, 2009 Federal Income Tax Return, including the 1040, all W-2 forms, all schedules, and other related forms on or before **February 28, 2010**. **Please make sure to put the school name on the outside of the envelope** (under your return address is a good spot) so that your application and the necessary tax forms are processed quickly. Completing one's tax return can make filling out the FAST application much easier; however, do not delay submission of the on-line application because your tax return is not finished. Proceed with the application, using the best available information and some estimates. Much of the application can be completed using a year-end paycheck stub and your 2008 tax return for estimates. If you submit an estimated on-line application, you will still need to submit a complete photocopy of your original tax return before an award can be made.
4. Please fill out lines one through seven, sign, but do not date the IRS form 4506. If you are viewing this from our website, you can download form 4506 from the IRS website. Please return the form 4506 to Sycamore School, not to ISM. You do not need to include the \$57 IRS fee.
5. Please fill out the enclosed Financial Assistance Supplementary Information form. Do not return it to FAST; send it directly to Sycamore School.
6. A copy of your most recent bank/investment statements should be attached to the supplemental form.

7. For students whose parents are not married, each parent is required to file his/her own on-line application. Both the non-custodial parent and the custodial parent should complete the FAST application during the same time period as listed above. All information from divorced or estranged spouses is kept strictly confidential and is unavailable to the other spouse. Should there be a problem with this requirement, please explain in writing to the financial assistance committee (via Patrick Juday) prior to the **February 28th** deadline.
8. Students to whom financial assistance is awarded are expected to accept or decline the award within one week of notification. In the event the family fails to comply with this and other reasonable requirements, the financial assistance committee reserves the right to award the assistance to an alternate candidate.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS

The financial assistance committee will make grants beginning March 1 until budgeted dollars are depleted utilizing the FAST computations. Applications **will not be reviewed until a student's financial assistance file is complete**, including the receipt of the 2009 Federal & State Income Tax Return(s), Sycamore's Supplementary Information form, a signed IRS form 4506, and any other forms requested by the Financial Aid Committee. **Because missing deadlines can jeopardize a student's grant, please complete these requirements as early as possible and in all cases by the deadlines stated.** If your child(ren) is(are) admitted to Sycamore School, a letter indicating the financial assistance award will follow shortly after his/her enrollment.

HELPFUL HINTS

The following is a list of policies, procedures, and guidelines that may answer some questions.

1. All applications must be filed on-line. If you do not have a computer most local libraries have internet access available for use or you may use a computer in the Sycamore School library. Before you start the application, you will need an e-mail address. Both Yahoo and Hotmail offer free e-mail service. You can get to Yahoo at www.yahoo.com. Hotmail's web address is www.hotmail.com. Follow the directions for setting up a new e-mail account.
2. The processing fee must be paid online by Visa or MasterCard. If this is an undue hardship, please contact Patrick Juday in the Sycamore School Business Office.
3. You may write a letter if there are special circumstances that should be considered.
4. Please complete all questions. Incomplete applications can delay awards.
5. The Sycamore School Supplemental form asks for the amount that you believe you can pay. Sycamore is not able to meet 100% need, and the School expects all families to make the most serious contribution possible. Do not put a zero in this space. This may be easier to answer if you begin with your monthly budget and then calculate the annual amount which you feel you can pay.

ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT PLANS

Sycamore has partnered with the Tuition Management Service (TMS) to provide parents a convenient monthly payment plan. The TMS plan can be used to cover the balance of the tuition installments due in July and January plus any major field trips. Information about this plan will be sent to parents with enrollment contracts.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding the financial assistance process.

Sincerely,

Patrick Juday
Chief Financial Officer
E-mail: pjuday@sycamoreschool.org
Direct Phone Line: 205-2509