

GERMANTOWN  
FRIENDS SCHOOL



**FINANCIAL AID**  
**2020-21**





# AFFORDING GFS

## **Financial Aid Program Description**

As we seek to make a GFS education accessible and affordable, our financial aid program assists families with tuition costs and activity fees. A robust financial aid budget supports our commitment to a socioeconomically diverse school community. Approximately 33 percent of GFS families receive some form of financial aid. Applying for aid has no bearing on our admissions decisions; no student is denied admission because of financial need. Germantown Friends School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its financial aid program.

## **Funding an Independent School Education**

A GFS education is an important investment in your child's future. Tuition and activity fees cover the cost of tuition and most grade-wide activities. They do not cover the costs of lunch, non-grade-wide field trips and activities, books and reading materials, sports uniforms and some other small program fees that are particular to certain classes. Extended day programming, including ASpire and after-school clubs, private instrumental music lessons, and private transportation costs are optional and also not included.

We expect parents to give their children's GFS education very high priority in their financial planning and to consider seriously all family resources and assets (including possible help from such sources as stepparents and grandparents) before applying for financial aid.

## **Decision Process**

The Germantown Friends School Financial Aid Committee determines financial aid grants for current and newly accepted families who have applied for financial aid. Financial aid grants are determined equitably and consistently according to demonstrated need as there are no merit-based scholarships at GFS. The Financial Aid for School Tuition

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(FAST) program provides a need-based financial analysis for the Financial Aid Committee in addition to a recommended award amount that further informs the Committee's review. All information received from FAST is kept confidential.

Award decisions are based on family income, all family assets, including residence(s), retirement savings, other real estate holdings, stocks, bonds, equities, children's savings, 529s, etc., and family liabilities. Home equity and retirement savings are considered as assets, and capital gains are considered as income. Child support is considered an expense to the payer and income to the payee. If able, all parents of school-aged children are expected to work towards the cost of tuition. An income of \$25,000 may be imputed to a non-working, fully able adult with school-aged children. Education costs for adults or adult children are not allowed expenses, and we do not support a parent's voluntary reduction of income with financial aid.

Tuition costs increase at an average of four percent each. If a family's income does not change significantly from one year to the next, we attempt to maintain grant amounts for students as they move through the school, striving to award the same percentage of aid to tuition from one year to the next.

GFS offers over \$4 million of aid each year to students in grades K-12. However, we still are unable to meet the need of all of our qualified applicants. Therefore, we offer aid to current families first, and then review the applications of newly accepted families.

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## APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

### Deadline

The deadline for submitting a Financial Aid application in FAST is **January 6, 2020**.

### COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS

1. Please visit the *Financial Aid page* in the Admissions section of the GFS website, where you will find the link to FAST. Click on the FAST button to begin your application. The application process itself is self-guided. You may navigate in and out of the program, which allows you to partially complete an application and return to it later.

Before starting the FAST application, we recommend that you review the *Downloadable Worksheet* and *User Guide* provided by FAST in order to familiarize yourself with the program. A helpline is available 24 hours a day by calling 1-877-326-FAST (3278).

2. Since preliminary financial aid awards will be based on **2019 earnings** along with **2018 tax information**, families will need to explain their 2019 earnings in the *Letter to School* section of the FAST online application.

Please use this section to explain if **anticipated 2020 earnings** will be greater than, less than, or the same as **2019 earnings**, and any other unusual circumstances in your family's financial situation.

3. Pay the \$43 application fee

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4. Scan and upload final **2019 paycheck(s) and W-2s** for every financially responsible parent or guardian. Scan and upload copies of final **2019 paycheck(s) and W-2s\*** directly to FAST by **January 6, 2020**.

5. All awards offered are contingent upon receipt of finalized and submitted **2019 IRS tax and income information**. Please scan and upload digital files of **2019 Federal and State tax returns, W-2s and accompanying schedules to FAST by April 1, 2020**. GFS will confirm or possibly change your award, based on your 2019 final tax and income information.

All required parent tax and income documentation must be scanned and uploaded digitally, or mailed to the address below.

**FAST PROCESSING**  
**ISM c/o GERMANTOWN FRIENDS SCHOOL**  
**1316 North Union Street**  
**Wilmington, DE 19806-2594**

If you mail them, FAST will upload the information to your aid application file, shred the hard copy and alert us that your documents have been submitted.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Since tuition billing for 2020-21 will begin in the spring of 2020, it is essential that you meet the April 1 deadline above in order to confirm and credit any aid awarded to your tuition bill. Our financial aid timeline and process cannot accommodate families who file their taxes with the IRS after April 15, 2020.*

## **Qualifications**

All GFS families who receive aid must reapply for financial aid and provide tax/income documentation each year to verify their financial need. All adults who play a significant parenting role in a student's life (including parents, stepparents, guardians, and others who pay tuition)

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are required to provide their tax information to FAST. Financial aid applications submitted after the January 6, 2020 deadline will be considered on a rolling basis as funds allow.

Financial aid applications for **newly accepted families** are reviewed only after the Admissions Committee has extended an accept decision to the child.

**Current families** must have received a Reenrollment Contract in January for the 2020-21 academic year in order to have their aid application reviewed. Reenrollment Contracts may be held for academic or financial reasons (i.e., tuition accounts must be in good standing). Because of our financial aid award timeline, families on “reenrollment hold” are in jeopardy of losing their aid for the following year.

## **Decision Timeline and Award Acceptance**

Financial aid award letters for new and current families are mailed shortly after **February 1, 2020**.

Acceptance of the award is indicated by return of the signed Reenrollment and/or Enrollment Contract(s), submission of non-refundable deposit(s) by **February 8, 2020** for current families (including those with a newly accepted sibling); and by **March 1, 2020**, for new families.

The non-refundable enrollment deposit(s) are credited to the upcoming year’s tuition balance.

## **Reconsiderations**

Reconsiderations of aid awards are available, but only if all tax documents have been submitted to FAST and you have new financial information that was not part of the Committee’s first review. To be considered, submit a Letter of Reconsideration that details the new financial information and address it to the GFS Financial Aid Committee. Send it to Chris Breña, Director of Financial Aid, [cbrena@germantownfriends.org](mailto:cbrena@germantownfriends.org).

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## **Financial Aid Waitlist**

The Financial Aid budget cannot meet all of the demands for aid, therefore some aid requests will be put into a Financial Aid Waitlist. In this case, do not submit the non-refundable enrollment deposit and Enrollment Contract. Offers of admission will be extended until your status on waitlist has been resolved. This could occur as late as the spring or early summer, when a current aid recipient declines an aid award or decides to withdraw from GFS, thus freeing those aid dollars for reallocation to someone on the Financial Aid Waitlist. We do not rank the Waitlist for aid, as reallocation of declined aid funds is dependent upon the specific grades where space is available or already offered for enrollment, and the specific amount of aid needed by those on the Financial Aid Waitlist.

## **Guideline of Need**

The Financial Aid Committee uses the “Affordability Ranges” from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) as a basic and general guideline for eligibility thresholds. Families whose income and assets place them above the determined threshold of need will receive a letter stating that they do not qualify for financial aid at GFS.

## **Confidentiality**

All applicants’ materials, records, and award amounts are confidential. Financial Aid applications are reviewed only by FAST, the members of the Financial Aid Committee, and the Director of Financial Aid. Families are expected to keep the amount of their aid award confidential.

## **Tuition Payment Plans**

GFS offers three tuition payment plans:

1. Single payment plan (100% due July 31, 2020);
2. Two payment plan (60% due July 31, 2020, and 40% due January 31, 2020);
3. Ten-month installment plan (May 2020 through February 2021).

All of the payment plans will be billed and administered by the FACTS Management Company. If you have questions regarding tuition billing



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or payments, please contact the Business Office at (267) 232-3301.

## **Extra Expenses**

**Lower School:** In general, materials for classroom use are provided by the school or are included in the activity fee. Teachers will inform parents if and when extra supplies may be needed, such as gym clothes and school supplies.

**Middle and Upper School:** Students are responsible for the purchase of books, athletic equipment, non-grade-wide field trips, and optional private music lessons. Juniors and seniors have an additional fee for Senior Prom (optional). Spring Break and January term trips are an additional cost per family; the total cost may be offset by student fundraising. Depending upon an Upper School student's course selection, there may be additional fees.

## **Non-Tuition Financial Aid (NTFA) for Programs, Travel, and Activities**

Tuition and activity fees cover the costs of tuition and most grade-wide, annual activities. They do not cover the cost of lunch, transportation, non-grade-wide field trips and activities, books and reading materials, and some other small program fees that are particular to certain classes. Optional programs, including after-school programming (ASPire), after-school clubs, private instrumental music lessons, tutoring, Crew/Rowing, summer camps, and Middle/Upper School trips abroad, are also not included in the cost of tuition and activity.

GFS is fortunate to have the Joseph Rubenstone '40 Fund, founded in the 1960's, to provide Non-Tuition Financial Aid (NTFA) for non-tuition expenses for students currently in the Community Scholars Program (CSP). GFS is also fortunate to have the Stokes Memorial Fund, founded in 2018, to provide additional NTFA support for students not in the CSP program, but currently receive financial aid. GFS also provides NTFA from our general funds in order to accommodate as many families as is reasonable based on our total annual budget.

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Families must apply for NTFA by submitting the Non-Tuition Financial Aid Application 2019-20. The Financial Aid Committee will review all applications submitted and attempt to provide financial assistance within the capabilities of the limited financial aid budget. All awards are at the discretion of the Financial Aid Committee and GFS can not ensure funding all requests for assistance.

The intention of the NTFA review and awarding process is to allow students “to develop their capacities to the fullest extent possible” and generate the greatest opportunity for student involvement at GFS inside and outside the classroom.

Families who apply for NTFA and have not completed the online FAST financial aid application for tuition have to complete this to determine demonstrated need and aid eligibility.

The Financial Aid Committee strives to award NTFA at a similar percentage a family was awarded financial aid towards their tuition costs. Awards are offered per child, per activity, and therefore an award cannot be transferred within a family to other children, or for other activities.

Newly enrolled students may apply for NTFA in the Fall of their first year once they have begun attending classes, with the exception of ASPire after school care.

## **ASP, after school clubs and activities**

If you are applying for assistance for ASPire, after school clubs, and activities, the NTFA application has to be submitted two weeks prior to the required sign-up deadline. Each application is reviewed on a case by case basis, with awarding priority going to ASPire over clubs and activities. Middle school-aged children will not be considered for ASPire after school care funding.

## **Student Services**

If the school recommends tutoring, counseling, or additional assistance for a student outside of school, these will be considered for NTFA assistance.

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## **School Trips and International School Trips**

Submission deadlines for School Trip Forms must be met in order to qualify for NTFA. NTFA is available for international school trips limited to the fee charged by GFS for the trip. Priority in awarding for international trips will be given to students that have not participated in an international trip during that school year.

If you are a member of a school team or club that qualifies for an event requiring travel (Head of the Charles, ACDA National Honors Choir, etc.), these will be considered for NTFA assistance.

## **Music Lessons**

Music lessons that are required by a GFS program are eligible for NTFA assistance. Awards will be limited to one instrument per semester.

## **School-sponsored events**

For school-sponsored events (dances, etc.), NTFA may apply solely to the fee charged by GFS for the event for the GFS student.

Please contact Chris Breña, Director of Financial Aid (cbrena@germantownfriends.org) with any questions that may arise.

# **FINANCIAL AID FAQs**

## ***What is FAST?***

FAST (Financial Aid for School Tuition) is a need-based financial aid analysis service provided by Independent School Management, which helps to ensure that our review to establish financial need adheres to national standards. FAST is designed to be responsive to families. It is flexible in terms of the information it accommodates and allows families to represent their own particular circumstances accurately. To ease the online application process, FAST provides 24/7 help desk support.

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## ***How is my family's need determined?***

FAST processes aid applications and suggests to GFS a recommended financial aid amount based on a calculation of a family's income, assets, debts and obligations, size of family, tuitions paid elsewhere, and any other financial information shown on the applicant's federal and state tax returns, W-2s and accompanying schedules, as well as final paychecks from employers. The GFS Financial Aid Committee will use the suggested award calculation from FAST as a guideline in its consideration of a family's demonstrated financial need.

## ***How do I explain a special circumstance that influences my financial situation?***

There is an opportunity to write a brief letter or explanation of any extenuating circumstances on the FAST application in the *Letter to School* section.

## ***After I submit a financial aid application, what are the possible outcomes?***

The GFS Financial Aid Committee will meet in mid-January to review all aid applications for families who are currently enrolled and new families who have been accepted for admission. If eligible for aid, you will receive an award letter shortly after February 1, 2019. If you qualify for aid but the aid budget is insufficient for an award to be offered, you will be placed on the Financial Aid Waitlist. In this case, do not submit the non-refundable deposit or the Enrollment Contract. Offers of admission will be extended until your waitlisted status has been resolved. If you do not qualify for aid at GFS, you will receive a letter stating that you do not qualify.

## ***If I qualify for aid and receive an award, will I receive a similar amount for each year my child is offered reenrollment at GFS?***

Each year, families must reapply for financial aid through FAST because a family's income and situation may vary from year to year. If your financial situation does not change, we will make every effort to continue to provide the same amount of aid from one year to the

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next, striving to offer the same percent of aid to tuition. It is generally expected that a family's capacity to pay will increase over the years.

### ***What are the qualifications for aid at GFS?***

To have your application for aid reviewed, you must have a Reenrollment or New Enrollment Contract extended to you for your child. Current families must be current with their tuition accounts. (Reenrollment Contracts may be held for academic or financial reasons.) You must have a completed aid application on file with FAST by the deadline. Current families on "reenrollment hold", or those who apply late for admission, are in jeopardy of not receiving aid.

### ***Does GFS have an income cut-off to qualify for aid?***

Few families find it easy to pay for independent school tuitions. Most adjust their spending priorities, maximize earnings, and carefully manage assets to do so. All families have specific and different circumstances, and therefore quantifying a specific income level of eligibility is difficult. Award amounts range between very small awards (\$1,500 range) to almost full tuition (\$34,000 range). All GFS families pay something towards GFS tuition. Our financial aid program is designed to allow greater access to a GFS education, so we encourage families to apply for financial aid if they feel they need it.

### ***Are there other costs beyond tuition at GFS?***

Yes. Tuition and activity fees cover the cost of tuition and most grade-wide activities, but do not cover the costs of lunch, non-grade-wide field trips, books and reading materials, sports uniforms, and some other small program fees that are particular to certain classes. Extended Day programming and transportation costs (optional) are also not included. (See "Extra Expenses" section of brochure.)

Families already enrolled and experiencing hardship with non-tuition program or activity costs are encouraged to contact Chris Breña, Director of Financial Aid, [cbrena@germantownfriends.org](mailto:cbrena@germantownfriends.org) for assistance.

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## ***What about divorced, separated, never married and/or single parents?***

GFS considers the income and assets of any adult who plays a significant parenting role in a student's life. All adults (parents, step parents, guardians, and others who pay tuition) are required to provide their tax information to FAST as part of the financial aid application.

## ***What if there is a change in my income between the time the award is given in February and April, when I file taxes?***

Awards given in February are contingent upon receipt of the final taxes, which are to be sent to FAST no later than April 1, 2020. GFS may change or adjust the preliminary award amount depending upon any new information.

## ***Still have questions?***

Please contact Chris Breña, Director of Financial Aid, in the Admissions Office, [cbrena@germantownfriends.org](mailto:cbrena@germantownfriends.org).

## **GERMANTOWN FRIENDS SCHOOL**

**Financial Aid Office**

**31 West Coulter Street**

**Philadelphia, PA 19144**

**phone: 215.475.3039**

**email: [cbrena@germantownfriends.org](mailto:cbrena@germantownfriends.org)**





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