



**FINANCIAL AID
AT
RYE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL
2020-2021**

A Handbook for Applicants

Revised September 2020

RCDS MISSION STATEMENT

Rye Country Day School is a coeducational, college preparatory school dedicated to providing students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 with an excellent education using both traditional and innovative approaches. In a nurturing and supportive environment, we offer a challenging program that stimulates individuals to achieve their maximum potential through academic, athletic, creative, and social endeavors. We are actively committed to diversity. We expect and promote moral responsibility, and strive to develop strength of character within a respectful school community. Our goal is to foster a lifelong passion for learning, understanding, and service in an ever-changing world.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM AT RCDS

Rye Country Day's financial aid program provides opportunities to qualified students who would otherwise be unable to attend the School. Our goal is to fund the demonstrated need of our admitted students and ensure that they can participate fully in all programs and activities offered by the School.

RCDS believes that parents/guardians have the primary responsibility in funding a secondary school education. Only after available parent/guardian resources have been examined and utilized will the School offer financial support. The goal of the financial aid application process is to garner the fullest understanding of all financial resources that may be available to a given applicant. At the same time, the School considers its program to be generous and supportive. The School acknowledges that cost of living factors are significant in our region, and the Financial Aid Committee also considers supplemental costs when considering and calculating our grants. The Financial Aid Committee believes it is crucial to recognize the additional school-related costs that families absorb beyond tuition when they decide to attend RCDS.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Rye Country Day School seeks diversity in all aspects of school life. Accordingly, in admissions, financial aid, extracurricular activities, and educational programs, Rye Country Day School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is financial aid available at RCDS?

A: Rye Country Day School (RCDS) offers financial aid to qualifying families with students entering Kindergarten through Grade 12. Our financial aid program is need-based, which means the School does not offer academic, athletic, or merit-based scholarships of any kind. Financial aid is granted to families of qualified admissions candidates who demonstrate financial need. Please note that there is no financial aid offered for Pre-Kindergarten students.

Q: How much financial aid is available at RCDS?

A: This year, our financial aid budget is approximately \$6.1 million. Currently, 16 percent of the student body receives financial assistance.

Q: Will I have to pay back my financial aid grant?

A: No. The RCDS financial aid program is entirely comprised of grants. There are no loans in our financial aid grants.

Q: Does financial aid only cover tuition?

A: No. Financial aid grants consider the entire expense of attending RCDS. This factors in "extra" costs such as lunch, books, and other expenses. Furthermore, all students who receive financial aid in Grades 7-12 (regardless of the grant amount) receive a new loaner laptop computer from the School as part of their financial aid grant. Although the computer is technically owned by RCDS, the student has use of this computer at home and during all vacations. Families will be billed \$60 annually for insurance on the laptop. Finally, RCDS is also pleased to support school-related trips for students who receive financial aid. The School will support approved trips for students who receive financial aid at the same percentage as their financial aid grant (e.g., a family who pays 50 percent of our tuition would be asked to pay 50 percent of any school-related trip).

Q: Who are the students that receive financial aid at RCDS?

A: The School looks to support qualified students who will be able to contribute to school life in many ways. RCDS has students who receive financial aid in all divisions of the School (Lower, Middle, and Upper). Historically, the School has had a larger concentration of students who receive financial aid in the Middle and Upper divisions, but all families are encouraged to apply. There are limited funds for Lower School students and no financial funds available for Pre-Kindergarten. Currently, our students who receive financial aid come from approximately twenty different communities in Westchester and Fairfield Counties, as well as Manhattan and the Bronx. Our families also come from a range of incomes and qualify for varying amounts of financial support.

Q: How does one apply for financial aid at RCDS?

A: The first step in applying for financial aid is to indicate your interest in financial aid on the Online Application for Admissions. Please note, our admissions literature addresses the financial aid process in general, but it can be helpful to speak with our Financial Aid Officer, Courtney Doucette, by phone or in person if you would like to complete a financial aid application (PFS).

Q: How does Rye Country Day assess a family's financial need?

A: RCDS uses School and Student Services (SSS) to establish financial need. For more information about SSS, call the family help line at (800) 344-8328 or visit their website at www.solutionsbysss.com. Financial aid applicants need to complete the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS), which must be done online. SSS will notify the Financial Aid Officer when the PFS is completed. The School also requires that applicants submit a copy of all federal IRS forms submitted in the previous year, as well as the most recent W2 forms. All of these documents combined give RCDS an informed sense of a family's financial need. It is important to note that although RCDS uses SSS as a guide in this process, actual grants are always recalculated locally and distributed by the Financial Aid Office at RCDS.

Q: What if our family is separated or I am a single parent/guardian?

A: Our students who receive financial aid come from a wide variety of family structures, and ultimately every family's situation is considered on a case-by-case basis. However, RCDS does have a clear policy for considering aid in separated/divorced situations. The Financial Aid Committee does consider financial resources that are available to the applicants from all parents/guardians (non-custodial and step-parents included).

Q: How does the timing of the financial aid application work?

A: The School distributes financial aid grants simultaneously with admissions offers. Since most of our admissions decisions are communicated in early February, our financial aid application process must commence well in advance of this date. The SSS portal (in order to start your PFS) opens in early October. The due date for a completed financial aid application (PFS) for prospective students is December 15.

Q: Will my application for financial aid (PFS) impact my admissions decision?

A: If your financial aid application (PFS) is completed by the aforementioned deadline, then the answer is almost always "no." Financial aid and admissions are two separate processes at RCDS; our Admissions Committees do not consider, and are unaware of the financial need when evaluating the qualifications of an admissions applicant. While the financial aid budget is generous, it is limited. Applications for financial aid (PFS) that are submitted after the December deadline can only be considered subject to the availability of funds. Sometimes RCDS is unable to offer grants to all qualified students based on budgetary constraints.

Q: Will I continue to receive financial aid for the duration of my student's tenure at the School?

A: Generally, yes. As long as a family's financial situation remains relatively unchanged, families should anticipate that their percentage of tuition support will remain relatively constant throughout their experience at RCDS. Grants can change in either direction depending on significant changes in a family's financial circumstances. Families must complete the PFS and submit supporting documents each year.

Q: While attending RCDS, who will know that my student is receiving financial aid?

A: No. The identity of students who receive financial aid is kept in confidence at RCDS. Beyond the Financial Aid Committee, only Senior Administrators have access to financial aid status. No one has access to any financial documents except for the Financial Aid Committee.

CORE VALUES OF RCDS' FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM

Confidentiality

All documents and records that are forwarded to RCDS are kept confidential within the Financial Aid Committee. Records are not accessible by other family members, RCDS faculty/staff, or organizations. Confidential documents are securely stored and shredded on a regular basis as necessary. Furthermore, the identities of our students who receive financial aid are held in the strictest confidence on campus. Beyond the Financial Aid Committee and Director of Admissions, only the Head of School, Assistant Head of School, Director of Finance, Division Principals, select members of the Business Office (Student Billing), and Senior Administrators are made aware of student financial aid status. In some situations, certain faculty members will be made aware of financial aid status as necessary to administer trips and activities.

Starting in 2020-21, families may grant permission to allow their Upper School students to receive direct communication from the Financial Aid Office (in addition to parents/guardians). Furthermore, families of students in all divisions may also provide permission to allow for select employees (advisor, teachers, coaches, etc.) to know that they receive financial aid in order to further assist with needs that may arise. While these permissions are optional, we believe that this access will improve the student experience, lead to better communication, and offer students a valuable education in self-advocacy. For many students, the financial aid process will also need to be navigated in college, and being an active participant in the process during the high school years can serve as a helpful experience.

Efficiency

Another core value of our financial aid program is efficiency. The School sees real value in keeping the financial aid application and renewal processes as efficient and clear as possible. RCDS only requires steps that are truly needed for the process and strives for the program's literature to be concise and accessible. The School acknowledges that applying for financial aid can be intimidating and time-consuming. The Financial Aid Officer and Dean of Financial Aid are available as key resources for families to help them navigate through the process.

Need-Based Financial Aid

RCDS has a strictly need-based financial aid program. The School does not engage in merit, athletic, or academic scholarships of any kind. Grants are made only to address a demonstrated financial need.

Types of Grants

RCDS financial aid packages are exclusively grants; RCDS does not expect families to pay back any portion of their financial aid grants. Sometimes the terms "grants" and "scholarships" are used interchangeably. RCDS only uses grants to describe support offered by the School. Scholarship often implies a merit component, which we do not offer. RCDS offers need-based financial aid only. The School makes grants at varying percentages. The Financial Aid Committee carefully considers the extra expenses associated with attending the School (books, lunch, trips, etc.) and makes grants that address these needs accordingly.

Duration of Commitment

When RCDS offers admission to a student, the School anticipates supporting that student at the same percentage of tuition throughout the duration of their time at RCDS. The only exception to this is if the financial situation of the family changes dramatically over this time period. Families must inform the Financial Aid Officer if there is a large change in income (greater than 10%) or change in job status as soon as possible. The School makes every effort to help fund students who are returning to RCDS.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM BENEFITS AND SUPPORT

All Students		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Academic books required for classes ◇ Required summer reading books ◇ Lunch ◇ The cost of curricular trips (overnight or day) ◇ Academic tutoring assistance (at the approval of the respective Principal) ◇ Additional support services (at the approval of the Director of Student Support Services) ◇ Voice and music lessons (*\$45 instrument maintenance fee for 5th grade <u>only</u>) ◇ RCDS mini camp <u>or</u> sports camp in June (one) ◇ RCDS sports clinic (one per season) ◇ Credit for book purchases at the Book Fair(s) (*\$35; does <u>not</u> include special vendor items or food) ◇ Spirit wear credit to use online or in the Wildcat Den (*\$50) ◇ School photography package (*one at discounted rate) 		
Lower School Students	Middle School Students	Upper School Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Extended Day program ◇ After school clubs (one per season) ◇ Photo book (*one at discounted rate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Loaner laptop computer for students in Grades 7 & 8 (*\$60 insurance cost per year) ◇ Physical Education clothing set ◇ Physical Education dance clothing and items ◇ After school clubs (one per season) ◇ Classes in the RCDS Summer School (academic <u>only</u>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Loaner laptop computer for students in Grades 9-12 (*\$60 insurance cost per year) ◇ Spring athletic training trips ◇ Global Studies trip (one) ◇ Physical Education clothing set ◇ Physical Education dance clothing and items ◇ Athletic team items ◇ Standardized testing preparation courses for students in Grades 11 or 12 ◇ Graphing calculator (one) ◇ AP Exam fee ◇ Yearbook for Grade 12 students (*\$40; advertisements <u>not</u> included) ◇ Senior portrait sitting fee ◇ Prom tickets ◇ Classes in the RCDS Summer School (academic <u>only</u>)
Parents/Guardians		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Two tickets for the Fall Parents Association Luncheon (*complimentary) ◇ Parents Association dues (*waived) ◇ Two tickets for the play and musical (MS & US) (*complimentary) ◇ Two tickets to the Spring Benefit (alternating years) (*complimentary) 		

All items above are billed at the same percentage as the family's financial aid grant for tuition unless noted. In order to preserve confidentiality, billing is sent from the Student Billing Manager through SmartTuition through the RCDS Business Office.*

Trips

RCDS is committed to ensuring that students who receive financial aid can participate in school trips and activities. Trips can relate directly to the academic curriculum of the School, but they can also include extra-curricular trips (athletics, choir, etc.). The School funds all trips at the same percentage that it supports the student's financial aid grant for tuition.

Academic Tutoring

The financial aid budget will also help to support any tutoring needs that arise for students who receive financial aid. This need is identified by the School's divisional Child Study Team (CST), and arrangements are made for an RCDS faculty tutor. The financial aid budget will cover the cost of tutoring at the same percentage that the School supports the student's financial aid grant for tuition at the hourly rate the School has set for paying RCDS faculty tutors. If a family decides to use a tutor without RCDS approval, regardless of rate, the parent/guardian will be responsible for paying the cost in full.

Evaluations and Counseling

When the School, including members of the CST, determines that additional psychological or educational support is necessary for a student who receives financial aid, the School will support the family by providing recommendations and funding the evaluation at the same rate as the family's financial aid grant for tuition. Evaluations include, but are not limited to: neuropsychological, psychological, speech and language, occupational, and audiological. The decision to fund such an evaluation occurs through a thoughtful analysis by the Director of Support Services, the Division Learning Specialist, and the Division Principal. If additional counseling or support from an outside therapist or organization is recommended, the divisional counselor/psychologist will provide the family with a list of recommended therapists and counseling services. Families should submit bills to their own insurance and should provide the Financial Aid Office with a copy of an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) form within 60 days from the date of service.

Extended Day Program

The Extended Day Program is open to dual full-time working parents/guardians, single full-time working parents/guardians, and employees. The cost of this program will be covered at the same percentage as the School supports the student's financial aid grant for tuition.

Laptop Computers

The School will provide a laptop computer for each student (Grades 7-12) who receives financial aid. While the computer remains the property of the School, the student will have full use of and responsibility for the computer throughout the school year. The School requires that the parents/guardians buy loss and damage insurance for the computer through the School. Each family will be responsible for this non-refundable \$60 laptop insurance fee annually regardless of financial aid grant percentage. Information regarding computer orders is sent to enrolled students in June.

Summer School

RCDS offers both enrichment and remedial courses during its Summer School. Students who receive financial aid are welcome to attend academic Summer School courses at the same percentage as the student's financial aid grant for tuition.

Train and Metro Cards

All RCDS students are eligible to receive Metro-North train passes at a discounted rate. These cards are available through the MTA website. In addition, many of our students qualify for a free Metro Card that can assist with their subway or bus transportation (who live in the five boroughs of New York City).

Transportation

The School does not provide or assume any responsibility for transportation of students to or from school. Parents/guardians who use buses, taxis, trains, or carpools for the transportation of their student to or from school are responsible for all arrangements and should exercise supervision of the details as is necessary. In special circumstances, after all other resources are exhausted, the School will help to arrange and fund for a student to get to or from school. Parents/guardians must request this in advance by contacting the Division Principal.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN MAKING GRANTS

Expectation of Two Working Parents/Guardians

RCDS expects all parents/guardians applying for financial aid to be working if they are physically able to do so. One possible exception to this would be a stay-at-home parent/guardian who is providing childcare for a young child who does not yet attend school. Exceptions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Separated/Divorced Families

RCDS considers the financial means and personal relationship of all parents/guardians (custodial and non-custodial) who are involved in the life of the student in any way. Non-custodial parents/guardians are required to complete their own Parents Financial Statement (PFS) form (one per household). Separated/divorced parents/guardians often elect to fill out separate PFS forms. Each PFS is kept confidential from one another but is merged on the backend of the School and Student Services (SSS) system. If a situation occurs where the non-custodial parent/guardian shows no contact or involvement with the student, then the School requires some form of written documentation to substantiate this circumstance. Generally, the School asks that this letter come from a third party (school administrator, religious official, program coordinator, etc.). Occasionally, the School receives further legal documentation about custody scenarios. The Financial Aid Committee works hard to consider all parents/guardians involved and to make grants accordingly.

Business/Farm Owners

Business and farm owners must submit all tax schedules and forms that they are required to submit to the Internal Revenue Services (IRS).

Loss or Changes of Employment

RCDS is sympathetic to the reality that parents/guardians may find themselves unemployed. These situations are considered carefully and may require further discussions with the family before making or adjusting an appropriate grant. Such situations do require notification of the Financial Aid Office, formal documentation, and ongoing conversations.

Parents/Guardians Returning to School

Although RCDS recognizes a decision of a parent/guardian to return to school for professional reasons, the School also believes that it is a choice that a family makes. Based on our budgetary constraints, RCDS cannot subsidize this decision for new or current families. The School still expects both parents/guardians to be working whenever physically possible.

Child Support

RCDS considers all child support dollars from all sources when calculating its financial aid grants.

Home Equity

RCDS will consider home equity when calculating financial aid grants. In general, the School subscribes to the SSS formula for considering these assets. If there are doubts about the market value of a given property, the Financial Aid Committee will generally subscribe to the SSS housing multiplier factor to guide thinking.

Investment Income

The School needs to understand fully the asset situation of a family before making a grant. This includes understanding the assets of the student, as well as parents/guardians in the family.

Student Assets

Generally, RCDS believes that students are not in a position to contribute significantly to tuition if they are going to participate fully in our school's life and culture. RCDS is wary of depleting student savings for college. Although the School will consider student assets in making a grant, it will not automatically assume that any assets in the student's name should be equally distributed between his/her/their years at RCDS and his/her/their years in college.

Understanding Other Sources of Income

Although RCDS does not expect other sources to contribute to a student's tuition (grandparents, relatives, foundations, etc.), if the School does know of such funding, then it feels comfortable accounting for it in our grant calculations. The School also expects that other siblings will be applying for and receiving financial aid from other educational institutions. In addition, the Financial Aid Committee needs to know what types of financial aid an applicant has received in the past and what types of financial aid siblings expect to receive for the upcoming year. This information helps the Committee fully understand the family's ability to contribute to education and protects RCDS from subsidizing the education expenses of other members of the same family.

Additional/Unusual Expenses & Debt

The Financial Aid Committee carefully reviews all unusual expenses and debts listed by a family in a given year. Often expenses and debts may require substantiation follow-up contact or paperwork. The School tries to be reasonable and always wants to understand the context of a family's situation, but uses professional judgment in addressing what the School will and will not consider as valid forms of expense, debt, or expenditure. The School may request paperwork to support figures that are listed on the PFS.

Tax Extensions

The Head of School must approve a financial aid grant if parents/guardians have filed with the IRS for a tax extension to October 15. Then, in lieu of the tax return, Form 4868 (Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return) must be submitted by the spring deadline to the Financial Aid Office. Families must then submit their actual tax return by October 15 and promptly provide a complete copy of this tax return to the Financial Aid Office.

Disqualification

Families may be requested by the Financial Aid Committee to supply additional documentation and/or have personal meetings as needed. Failure to comply with such requests, as well as any falsification of documentation, can lead to a disqualification or adjustment of a financial aid grant.

An Important Note

Financial aid grants are contingent upon the School receiving all required paperwork, and grants are not finalized until all documents are received. Please note, the process by which grants are calculated is unique and based on a family's personal financial information. Therefore, details of financial aid grants should not be discussed with other school families.

ACCEPTING FINANCIAL AID

Enrollment Agreement for New Students

Students who receive financial aid receive a modified Enrollment Agreement, as well as a projection of expected supplemental costs for a given year. This Enrollment Agreement does not require an enrollment deposit. To ensure the reservation of a place for a newly accepted student, and to officially accept financial aid from the School, the signed Enrollment Agreement must be received by the Admissions Office by the date specified in the letter of acceptance.

Tuition Refund Insurance

Tuition refund insurance is optional for each student, but the School strongly recommends that a family choose to be covered. The rate is 0.85% of the annual tuition (less amount of tuition aid granted). To elect or decline this coverage, please mark the appropriate box accordingly on the Enrollment Agreement. Please note that except for withdrawal for medical reasons, the plan requires student attendance for more than 14 consecutive school days beginning with the first day of classes to be eligible for tuition refund claim.

Tuition and Fee Payments

Smart Tuition provides tuition management services for Rye Country Day School, including online account access, tuition and fee invoicing, payment processing, and customer care. Payment of tuition and lunch fees will be made on a 10-installment basis (with no installment fee), June 1 through March 1, directly to the School. Fees for supplementary costs will be charged as incurred and are due when charged, subject to normal finance charges.

Appeal Process

Families who wish to appeal their financial aid grant must do so in writing. In most cases, re-evaluation of grant decisions and amounts will only be considered in the context of new information. Thus, the Financial Aid Office will be more likely to review and/or alter a grant if the family can provide documentation explaining why the change in grant is required. Families are always welcome to call and discuss their applications, but should know that the School has a specific approach to financial aid and does not engage in excessive negotiation and/or lobbying efforts. Barring extenuating circumstances, **families have two weeks (14 days) from the dated grant letter to submit an appeal.**

At any time during the financial aid process, please do not hesitate to contact:

Courtney R. Doucette, Financial Aid Officer
(914) 925-4542

Courtney_Doucette@ryecountryday.org

or

Dion Reid, Dean of Financial Aid
(914) 925-4632

Dion_Reid@ryecountryday.org

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID AT RCDS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Inquiring about Financial Aid

RCDS believes it is fundamentally the responsibility of prospective families to inquire about financial aid. All of our applicant families have access to the School's literature about the existence of our program (on our website) and are encouraged to apply if necessary.

Required Components of the Application

New applicants for financial aid must complete the following steps:

1. Complete the PFS online through the SSS website by **December 15, 2020**. Because of the early timing, families need to estimate **both** years of income (2020 & 2021) that are requested on this form.
2. Families must also upload copies of the most recent federal IRS tax forms (2019) and W-2s (2019) to the SSS website by **December 15, 2020**. Applicants are required to submit all forms and schedules that they file in a given year, including returns for individual students.
3. Grants are made by RCDS with the stipulation that all numbers will be verified with tax material from the current year as the information becomes available. Families are also required to upload their 2020 W2's (no later than 2/15/21) and 2020 Form 1040's (no later than 4/15/21)* to the SSS website.
4. Families may be requested by the Financial Aid Committee to supply additional documentation and/or have personal meetings as needed. The Financial Aid Officer will print necessary copies of documents for the applicant's file.
5. The School distributes financial aid grants simultaneously with admissions offers. Families will receive notifications in early February.

*The Head of School must approve financial aid grants if there is an IRS tax filing extension until October 15th in any given year.

Withholding Agreements and Grants

Enrollment agreements and financial aid grants may be withheld from returning students for the following reasons:

1. Academic probation/serious academic concerns
2. Disciplinary issues
3. Significant outstanding account balances
4. Missing paperwork for our process
5. Outdated tax forms

These situations are always resolved on an individual basis. Once a student's enrollment issues have been resolved, the Financial Aid Officer will mail grant letters individually.