



WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

Guide to Financial Aid at Westridge

Westridge School is committed to enrolling a strong, diverse student body that reflects the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the Greater Los Angeles area. Over \$3 million in financial aid has been allocated to one in five Westridge students this year, providing access to a Westridge education to girls who would otherwise not be able to attend.

Need-based Financial Aid

All of Westridge's tuition assistance is need-based and in the form of awards that do not need to be repaid. Westridge offers financial assistance to families who meet both of the following criteria:

- 1) An academically strong student applicant who will make a significant contribution to the Westridge school community through her talents and personal attributes as determined by the Admission Committee, and
- 2) A demonstrated financial need as evaluated by the third-party system Financial Aid and School Tuition (FAST) and the Westridge School Financial Aid Committee. The responsibility of evaluating financial need is taken very seriously, and an enormous amount of time and effort is devoted to this process each year.

Westridge does not offer merit-based scholarships for academics, athletics, or other endeavors. All awards are based on the demonstrated financial need of the families.

Admission & Financial Aid

Admission and Financial Aid are two separate, but interdependent, processes that run concurrently. The Admission Committee evaluates candidates on the basis of their admission application without information regarding the financial need of families. Members of the Financial Aid Committee then determine, within the constraints of the financial aid budget, the allocation of financial awards to those students considered admissible by the Admission Committee.

Westridge does have finite resources and is unable to offer financial aid to all applicants who meet our admissions criteria and qualify for need-based aid. Decisions in these circumstances are based on the relative strength of the applicant and the school's enrollment goals. If it is determined that Westridge cannot meet a family's demonstrated need, the Admission Committee will not offer admission to that applicant.

Financial Responsibility

The School understands the sacrifices that parents make to pay for an Independent School education. Factors such as family size, number of children in tuition-charging schools, and cost of living expenses are all taken into consideration when determining a family's level of need. The School uses consistent guidelines to evaluate financial aid requests and reviews the income, expense, asset, and liability data presented by each family. Awards are based on a family's ability to pay and their access to financial resources.

Expectations of Financial Aid Applicant Families

It is the School's expectation that parents have prioritized the financial responsibility of an independent school education over non-essential lifestyle choices and pay the educational costs for their children to the extent they are financially able.

The School expects that all parents who are able to work will do so. The School will impute a minimum income for each non-working parent, unless there is a child under the age of six living in the home who is not enrolled in school full-time or if the parent is the primary caregiver of a child or parent that requires constant care.

The School will not subsidize voluntary reductions in income, such as retirement, going back to school, changing careers, choosing to start a business, and other personal choices that affect the family's financial circumstances. It is assumed that the parent has considered the impact such a choice would have on their child's ability to enroll or remain enrolled at Westridge.

The School requires families to apply for financial aid at all tuition-charging schools where other children in the family may be enrolled. Westridge will not give financial aid to offset the educational costs of siblings enrolled at another school.

Two Household and Single Parent Families

Financial aid applications must be submitted by both custodial and non-custodial parents. The Financial Aid Committee will consider the income and assets of all parents before making an award. If one parent does not complete the financial aid application, the file is incomplete and will not be considered for aid. An exception to this would be if one parent has no contact with the family. In that case, the custodial parent should submit documentation from a third-party verifying this to be the case, such as a court decree, a letter from a school administrator, clergy, or other credible individual with knowledge of the situation.

If either parent is remarried, the income and assets of the stepparent are considered. Marriage or remarriage to, or cohabitation with, another adult by either parent creates a new family unit with new relationships. In such cases, the financial resources and responsibilities of the entire family unit, including stepparents and stepchildren, are viewed as relevant for purposes of calculating a family's level of need. The School considers the obligations of each parent and their individual need in determining the aid award, but the School will not allocate the award on a proportional basis among the families involved.

Calculating Awards

While FAST is our data gathering automated system that computes a base award, the School audits each financial aid application and makes financial aid decisions based on the information provided and other personal information shared by the families. Once a preliminary award is calculated, the School considers individual circumstances in determining the final award.

Examples of circumstances where the School may make accommodations and adjust the base award include, but are not limited to:

- Multiple siblings at Westridge
- Tuition paid for siblings who are receiving assistance from other independent schools

- Involuntary job loss or significant reductions in income
- Medical conditions requiring significant uncovered care or treatment
- Care of an aging and/or disabled parent or other family member
- Temporary but severe financial difficulties

The School will not consider adjusting a base award for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- Parent student loans
- Accumulation of debt unless related to items outside of the family's control (as noted above)
- Lifestyle choices that utilize resources that could be used for educational costs (expensive cars, homes, vacations, etc.)
- Voluntary reductions in income, such as retirement, going back to school, changing careers, choosing to start a business, and other personal choices

Annual Process and Timing for Financial Aid

New families apply for financial aid at the same time as they apply for admission and must meet all published deadlines. Families will be given their financial aid award when they receive their offer of acceptance to the school. In general, the financial aid budget is fully awarded at the time admission offers are made in March, and it is unlikely that new applicant requests for financial aid arriving after the February 1 deadline will be accommodated due to budget restrictions.

Returning families must re-apply for financial aid each year so the school may determine if there is continued need. Current families receive priority in the financial aid allocation process, but they must meet the early January deadline to do so. As long as a family's financial circumstances remain fairly consistent, all deadlines are met, and the student remains in good academic and behavioral standing each year, families can expect continuing assistance through their time at Westridge at generally the same percent of tuition as originally awarded. Awards may adjust year to year if a family experiences an increase in income or an involuntary reduction in income.

The School highly encourages families who believe they may need financial assistance to apply at their child's initial point of entry to the school. The allocation of financial aid is a thoughtful and strategic process that has budget implications across all grades in the school. In general, if a family does not apply for financial aid the year they apply for admission, unless there has been an unexpected and significant, documented change in their financial status from when they first applied, they will not be awarded financial assistance in future years.

The School understands that submitting tax information early in the calendar year can be challenging for some families. Our financial aid budget is limited, however, and those who meet the deadline have a distinct advantage. If the current year's taxes are unavailable, you should estimate to the best of your ability and submit that estimate with tax information from the previous year. A conditional financial aid award will be offered but will not be finalized until the current tax information is received and can be verified.

Student/Parent Behavior

As stated in the Student/Parent Handbook, Westridge is a community built on trust, and the School cultivates and depends upon the sound judgment and good intentions of the students and the support and cooperation of parents. To provide and preserve an environment in which genuine learning and productive work can occur, it is important that each member of the community takes personal responsibility for his/her behavior and acts in a manner that is consistent with Westridge's Core Values: integrity, respect, responsibility, and inclusion.

Just as a family is investing in their child's future and committing to the school, so is the School investing in that child and committing to the family when awarding financial assistance. The School expects the student to remain in good behavioral and academic standing and expects the parents to maintain a respectful and productive relationship with the School.

Confidentiality

Families can trust that all information provided through the financial aid process will be kept in confidence. In return, the School requires families to keep details of financial aid awards confidential. Each family has a unique set of circumstances and allowances that led to their final award which cannot be equally compared to the circumstances of other families. The giving and receiving of a financial award is a contract based on mutual trust and respect, which is essential to a positive relationship between the school and family. If a family chooses to make an award public, the School reserves the right to rescind the award in violation of this trust.

Supplemental Fees and Costs Above Tuition

Westridge aims to ensure all students can fully participate and engage in the Westridge experience. To this end, financial assistance may be allocated for costs above tuition for families receiving financial aid. Westridge seeks to partner with families and have an open dialogue about any areas of financial concern. Areas which are generally considered for additional assistance may be the New Student fee, academic and student life events, computer/laptop technology, bus service, and student travel opportunities (Discovery Week and class trips). Aid is generally not given for uniforms or books (Upper School only – books are provided for Lower and Middle School).

Discovery Week and Class Trips

All Upper School students (grades 9-12) participate each year in Discovery Week, a student experiential learning week. Ninth and 10th grade students participate in day trips and experiences around Los Angeles, while 11th grade students travel within the United States, and 12th grade students travel internationally. Middle School students (grades 7-8) participate in one class trip each year to various in-state locations. Financial assistance may be requested for Discovery Week and class trips.

Questions? Please feel free to contact Kim Cota, Controller, at 626-799-1053, ext. 266 or email kcota@westridge.org with any questions or further discussion about our financial aid policies or procedures.