

Weekly Eagle News – Head of Schools

My Favorite Parents:

From time to time some people will ask me, “Why in the world do we give out financial aid? Wouldn’t our school be better off financially if everyone paid the full fare?” In general, this comes with them suggesting alternative items on which to spend that money (pay for teachers, athletics, etc.).

Here are four reasons why I love what we do with our financial aid program:

1. There are many good people who would not be able to afford to have their children at our school without financial aid. The mission of Redlands Christian is special. The opportunity for a Christ-centered education is relatively unique in our region. There are children’s lives forever impacted by the quality of what we do here at Redlands Christian. Taking reasonable steps to ensure accessibility for more of those students seems to be wise from both stewardship and missional perspectives.
2. In my time here, the percentage of students receiving financial aid has stayed relatively flat fluctuating between the high 30s to mid-40s percent. Let’s presume that most of these students would not be able to be at our school without some tuition assistance. Being 40% smaller than we are today would make a vast difference in what we were able to offer. There would be 40% fewer athletic opportunities. Things like AP courses at the high school may be even more impacted than that. Music, theater and art would all be more limited. All of our specials would be curtailed. Fewer electives would be available. We would be more limited in terms of clubs. Fewer social relationships would be possible. It would be profound. The great thing is that every child benefits from the expanded opportunities made possible by the sheer size of our school.
3. While I recognize that this may be debatable, a good case can be made that there are social benefits from economic diversity. As someone who had more modest means than many in our community, I loved the opportunities my wife and I had to communicate with our own children about differences in wealth. Learning to do so without devolving into “woe is us” kind of thinking or provoking jealousy or covetousness is really important. The reality is that we were doing what God called us to do and there is a joy in that that cannot be replaced with money. Our wealthier students benefit from learning that not everyone lives like they do.
4. There are many generous people who give because they want others to have the benefits of a Christian education. The reality is that a significant portion of our financial aid program has associated funding streams which means that nearly every tuition dollar is a real dollar. In effect we are receiving full tuition from every student. While some of this money may come in as some other form of gift income were we to eliminate our financial aid program, most of it might not. People give because of a desire to help others. The fact that they do then benefits everyone by allowing us to operate with full tuition revenues that then allow us to pay for all the aspects that make our school outstanding.

We make decisions to be good stewards of limited resources. We cap our financial aid program at 50% of tuition (that is a max and most families are well under that). We use an external and objective application process as a determining factor for making financial aid awards. We do not give automatic discounts (for multiple children, teachers’ children, pastors’ children, etc. – all things that some other schools do). The idea is that if you have a financial need, we want to help meet that need. If you are a teacher but your spouse makes as much money as Bill Gates, we want you to pay the tuition.

Funding our financial aid program is a gift that brings great rewards – individuals who receive the aid benefit, all children benefit, and all the programs at our school benefit. I love that!

Enjoy your week!

Brian