



THE  
**MERIDIAN**  
SCHOOL

# Tuition Assistance FAQ

At Meridian, we believe that an excellent education thrives in an increasingly diverse and inclusive school community. For this reason, we are committed to offering an accessible educational program for mission-appropriate students, regardless of a family's ability to pay the full cost of tuition. In order to make our program more accessible, Meridian grants tuition assistance awards to students based upon demonstrated need. Meridian uses School & Student Services (SSS), a needs analysis system utilized by over 2,000 schools nationwide to establish criteria for receiving tuition assistance. Actual award amounts are determined by Meridian and based upon need, available funds and number of applicants for tuition assistance.

The Meridian School maintains a philosophy that requires active participation of a student's entire family in funding this educational opportunity. However, we recognize that the cost of a Meridian education is a factor for every family regardless of income level, and that individual circumstances vary and affect a family's need. This document is intended to answer frequently asked questions regarding our tuition assistance decision-making and allocation process. **If you have specific questions that were not addressed**, please contact Chief Financial Officer and Tuition Assistance Committee Member, Pam Jones ([pjones@meridianschool.edu](mailto:pjones@meridianschool.edu)).

## **Q: What is the range of assistance that is awarded?**

**A:** For the 2018-2019 school year, awards ranged from 13%-96% of the cost of tuition. The average grant awarded was \$11,240. Consider reviewing the "Financing a Meridian Education" tab of our [Tuition Assistance webpage](#) to see the average award by income level for students enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year.

## **Q: Do I have to reapply each year for tuition assistance?**

**A:** Yes. Each student's need is reviewed annually and a family's award may be adjusted in recognition of changing financial circumstances from year-to-year. Therefore, parents are required to complete the application and upload the required documentation each year.

## **Q: Will applying for tuition assistance have an impact on the admissions decision?**

**A:** No. Admissions decisions are made first. The Tuition Assistance Committee reviews applications separately.

## **Q: Does tuition assistance cover school trips and other ancillary costs?**

**A:** Your family's award covers the cost of tuition and the cost of all field trips. Financial assistance for families utilizing Extended Day programming will be of an equal percentage to tuition assistance awards. Families receiving tuition assistance may enroll in two enrichment classes per year at a discounted rate (of an equal percentage to their family's tuition assistance award).

**Q: We are a dual parent, single-income household. How will that impact our tuition assistance award?**

**A:** The Meridian School assumes that all adult family members will contribute to the investment in a Meridian education. The Committee will impute an income of \$31,000 (\$15/hour x 40 hours/week x 50 weeks/year) for parents or guardians who do not hold an income producing job and adjust the estimated family contribution (EFC) accordingly. Parents unable to work due health-related limitations, or due to caring for non-school-aged children, aging or ill family members should make the Committee aware of their circumstances in the additional notes section of the Parent Financial Statement (PFS).

**Q: More than one of our family members attends a tuition-charging school. How will that impact our tuition assistance award?**

**A:** The SSS system takes this information into account when it determines the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) by dividing the EFC by the number of children attending tuition charging institutions. Meridian expects families to apply for tuition assistance at each school, as we are unable to subsidize tuition for other schools, including post-secondary education. If your family chooses to appeal Meridian's tuition assistance award, we will request that you submit documentation of your tuition assistance award from each, tuition-charging institution to be considered with your review.

**Q. Is the process different for families who are divorced or separated?**

**A:** Yes. When considering tuition assistance, The Meridian School maintains a philosophy that requires active participation of a student's entire family in funding this educational opportunity. These expectations are in effect regardless of any legal agreements between family members. We will consider the assets of each parent/guardian before making any award, and will not be bound by the assertion that one parent has disclaimed responsibility for education expenses. Tuition assistance is determined by a family's ability to meet educational expenses; it is based on need, not on a willingness or unwillingness to pay. In recognition of the fact that divorces and separations are difficult and complex, we reserve the right to make case-by-case decisions in the best interest of the child. Please note: if we determine that a parent is actively involved in a child's life after enrollment and their finances were not reviewed as a part of the tuition assistance application process, we will require that their financial documentation be submitted if re-applying for tuition assistance.

**Q. I am living with someone who is not my child's biological parent or I am remarried. How will the Tuition Assistance Committee review my child's file?**

**A:** If either parent has remarried or has a domestic partner, the school will expect that adult or stepparent to contribute to the cost of education. Legal parents/guardians and their partners will be asked to complete a tuition assistance application. During the review process, the Tuition Assistance Committee will consider financial obligations that stepparent or adult has to his/her biological children, if applicable.

**Q: Our family is financing a startup company. How will that impact our tuition assistance award?**

**A:** We will not provide assistance to offset investments, professional choices and resulting expenditures. Parents starting a business venture, or changing jobs as a personal choice, must realize that consequential changes in their family income will not be underwritten by Meridian.

**Q: How does our family's home equity impact our tuition assistance award?**

**A:** Home equity is factored into SSS's evaluation of a family's contribution, but it is not a major consideration. SSS makes adjustments to expected contributions based on the liquidity of specific family assets, so home equity is not typically a major part of the final analysis. In recognition of Seattle's highly competitive housing market and high cost of living, The Meridian School applies a home equity cap of three times the total household income, and makes regional cost of living adjustments (COLA) before calculating estimated family contribution.

**Q: Our family experienced income loss due to business/rental depreciation within the last year. How will that impact our tuition assistance award?**

**A:** We do not consider business or rental depreciation or loss in the calculation of financial need. Depreciation does not reflect an actual cash disbursement or loss. The Meridian School will not underwrite a parent's decision to finance a startup company, and in that same light, we cannot supplement income loss from a family-owned business.

**Q: The award amount that we received is not sufficient, is there an appeal process?**

**A:** Yes. Please submit your request for a second review in writing to Chief Financial Officer and Tuition Assistance Committee Member, Pam Jones ([pjones@meridianschool.edu](mailto:pjones@meridianschool.edu)), by the date noted in your family's award letter. Please note that you will be asked to provide information not previously submitted to substantiate your appeal.