

ST. MARK CATHOLIC SCHOOL – TUITION ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

Guiding Principles - from the statement on Catholic schools by the USCCB

Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium

Wherever possible, Catholic schools should remain available and accessible in all areas of a diocese for children who are from poor and middle-class families who face major economic challenges. In addition, Catholic schools should be available to students who are not Catholic and who wish to attend them. This has been a proud part of the history of Catholic schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We must continue this outreach in the new millennium.

St. Mark Catholic Church Application of Guiding Principles

St. Mark's goal is that no family be turned away from a Catholic education due to financial constraints. Tuition assistance is available for St. Mark students and is awarded, as funds are available, to those families with demonstrated need.

Tuition Assistance Process

All tuition assistance is given on the basis of demonstrated need. In order to provide impartiality and fairness to our families, need is assessed by a third party provider, FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment. Only families who complete the FACTS evaluation process are eligible for tuition assistance. Awards are not renewable - families must re-apply every year.

All applications are strictly confidential. Applications are reviewed by a Tuition Assistance Committee. The committee is a small group of individuals organized for the purpose of reviewing funding requests for tuition assistance. The group itself is anonymous and all information it reviews, financial or otherwise, is held in the strictest confidence. No information will be released to any other person unless required by law.

Applications for financial aid are accepted from November 1 to March 1. For 2010-2011, applicants are asked to submit their applications by February 15, and provide all required documentation by March 1. Award determinations are announced by April 12. Since there are usually more families requesting assistance than there are available resources, submitting a late or incomplete application will negatively affect the likelihood and/or amount of an award.

The committee will only consider families whose financials has been verified by FACTS. Submitting an application does not mean that the application has been verified. FACTS will require copies of financial documents in order to verify an application. Families should work directly with FACTS to provide information in a timely fashion. If a family's situation makes it impossible for FACTS verification to occur, the committee reserves the right to grant a one-time exception as long as the situation merits the exception.

Note: If a family does not have a current year tax return, they should submit the application with the prior year's tax returns. Families should then submit the current year tax return to FACTS by April 17. Awards may be granted on a contingent basis pending receipt of the current year tax return.

If a child's parents are divorced or separated, or do not reside in the same household, complete applications are still required for each parent. This requirement may be waived by the Tuition Assistance committee in special circumstances, including when the whereabouts of a second parent is unknown, or a non-custodial parent is not supportive of Catholic education.

The Tuition Assistance Committee will provide the family an opportunity (via confidential email or letter) to further clarify their tuition assistance needs for the coming year, including any unique circumstances or details that provide clarity to the numbers in FACTS.

Who May Apply

- Any current Saint Mark Catholic School (SMCS) family in good standing with the school.
- Any new family that has applied for admission at St. Mark. Saint Mark maintains an “aid-blind” admission process.

A family in good standing with the school is one who:

- Abides by the St. Mark School Handbook ‘Parents as Partners’ guidelines, including (but not limited to):
 - Supporting and cooperating with the discipline policy of the school.
 - Treating teachers, administrators and staff with respect and courtesy in discussing school issues.
 - Refraining from divisive behaviors and propagating rumors.
 - Supporting the religious and educational goals of the school.
- Pays their share of tuition costs in a timely manner, and addresses any payment issues promptly with St. Mark’s business manager.
- Has students who follow the St. Mark Catholic School Code of Conduct and who demonstrate consistent academic effort.

A family with significant issues in any of the above areas may have students attending St. Mark, but will not be eligible for the tuition assistance program. The Principal and the Pastor will review the situation and make a final determination in this matter.

Amount of Assistance Awarded

St. Mark has a limited amount of tuition assistance funds available each year. Tuition assistance award allocations are based on need as calculated by FACTS, additional financial clarifications provided by the family, and tuition assistance fund availability. Families must commit to paying a minimum of \$500 in total tuition.

Emergency Tuition Assistance

Emergency tuition assistance subsidies may be awarded to families that experience unexpected hardship during a school year. The family needs to follow the regular FACTS tuition assistance application process. Emergency tuition assistance subsidies can be applied for at any time between March 1 and October 31. Awards are based on available tuition assistance funding.

Final Confirmation of Tuition Assistance Award

In order to finalize the tuition assistance award amount, a family must complete the school’s registration process, including payment of a registration fee (a portion of the fee may be waived by the tuition assistance committee), and submit a complete Tuition Agreement Form by the deadlines noted in St. Mark’s registration materials. Funds allocated to students who do not register on time will be awarded to other needy students.

Tuition Assistance Questions

Questions regarding the tuition assistance process should be referred to St. Mark Catholic School’s principal, or to the confidential tuition assistance email: tuition@stmarkcatholicsschool.org