

Private School Annual Giving: Not Optional

Description

We all know what this means: \$\$\$\$\$. It symbolizes an expensive restaurant. It could also be the symbol for private elementary school annual giving campaigns.

New parents at private elementary schools are often surprised that contributing to the school's annual giving campaign is expected. Yes, expected. Not optional. Private schools rely on the annual giving campaign to cover expenses that are not covered by tuition. You may get a letter or a call from another parent asking for your contribution. Subtle hints will follow. Banners around the school and articles in the school's newsletter announcing the kickoff of the annual giving campaign.

So, your first year at private school, even if you do a TON of volunteer work, chair a committee, serve as room parent, host a party, contribute to the fair or other events, you will still be expected to contribute to the annual giving campaign. The amount is totally up to you. Schools hope new families will be generous with their annual campaign gift. But, they know that you're still getting acquainted with the private school environment. If you have questions, ask the development director for guidance. When they tell you the "gap" between what tuition covers and what the school's expenses are, that's your clue as to the amount needed per family.

At The Willows School, the category with the most families in is up to \$1499.00. Next is the \$1,500-\$2,999 category. The smallest category of families is the \$25,000 and up. The chart would look like a triangle.

The most important thing (besides one hundred percent participation) is that you increase your giving every year. And, if your second child enrolls at the school, expect to be asked to give twice the "gap" amount, once for each child. The amount of the gap depends on the school and can range from \$2000 up.

What drives private schools crazy? Families who say that they are opposed to annual giving "on principle" because they pay tuition. In addition to building goodwill within the school community, schools can receive grant money based on the school's annual fund participation rates. Board members, teachers, staff, alumni, grandparents and corporations also participate in the annual campaign.

While it may seem like tuition should cover all expenses, it doesn't. And, all the wonderful things the school offers are only possible with a robust annual campaign. Yes, it's an additional expense, but the contribution from every family is appreciated, no matter the amount. It's not what you give, but whether you give.

Take a deep breath. Your contribution will be tax deductible.

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