

Tuition Increase FAQ

November 2016

1. **Why a tuition increase?** Despite our need to fund programming for our growing population of children, our current tuition (preschool and elementary) is 32% below the average cost for similar independent educational experiences in both preschool and elementary levels in our market area. This tuition increase will demonstrate our commitment to full funding of our unique brand of progressive education, and that we now have a school that can and will compete with others on the Peninsula and in the greater Bay Area. We are here to stay.
2. **Why such a big jump this year?** The 2017-18 tuition increase will help to lessen the characteristic 15% gap between current revenues and current operating expenses. Historically, we have relied on substantial donations from the Ventana community to fund this gap. This tuition increase builds fiscal stability and lessens reliance on unpredictable sources of funding.
3. **Will there be more big jumps in the future?** All independent schools raise tuition by 5 – 7% every year. The decision to raise tuition at Ventana, and by how much, is deferred until next autumn. However, we are currently developing long-term fiscal policy, and there is a strong likelihood that tuition will increase once again so that we can 1.) build reserves to cover unanticipated emergencies, 2.) cover the costs of planned renovation, and 3.) manage expansion into a middle school. The tuition increase this 2017-18 school year positions our school at a rate that is still 20% below average of other independent schools in our market area.
4. **Why are operating expenses so high?** In a word, *people*; salaries and benefits for people. Great schools are labor intensive organizations. Ventana has become one of these great schools. In the elementary grades it enables teachers really get to know your child's academic and social-emotional needs and to differentiate learning. Our school maintains a <10 – 1 student to teacher ratio at all grades. This ratio in preschool provides a "high-standard" of child care, proportionally exceeding NAYC guidelines. In addition, Ventana now employs a full complement of on-staff specialist teachers for art, music, science/technology, Spanish, Physical Education (PE) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The addition of a consulting child psychologist for the 2017-18 is anticipated.
5. **How will my increase in tuition be spent?** Our preliminary budget reflects the following:
 - Substantially increasing salary/wages for all faculty and staff to market rates
 - Enhancement of integrated Reggio programming and professional development around implementation of this complex learning strategy
 - Maintaining small class size in elementary grades; <1:10

- Necessary refurbishing and expansion of certain existing spaces (e.g. playgrounds, classrooms, exterior spaces)
 - Retention of our strong commitment to STEM instruction, technology infrastructure improvements, and technology used as a classroom tool
 - Addition of on-staff 'special needs' teacher, or retention of a consultant school/child psychologist
 - Funding feasibility studies for renovation projects supporting growth of Ventana from preschool through 8th grade
6. **What about other expenses?** Although the church leases its facility to us at a reasonable rate, this agreement is currently undergoing re-negotiation. We anticipate the very real possibility of a substantial increase in our monthly rent payout. The school is also responsible for the costs of repair, maintenance, and beautification of classroom and campus areas. To better serve parents and children, we have streamlined and digitized our business practices, making them accessible 24x7. This added convenience has increased business expenses and educational service costs. Expenditures for consumable teaching supplies as well as capital outlay necessary for each increase in population (e.g. tables, chairs, etc.) has also added to our organizational costs. Additional outlays for Emergency Preparation planning and implementation are anticipated.
7. **Will there be financial aid?** Yes. We anticipate the need to provide additional financial aid. Our Financial Aid policy can be found in the *2016 Parent Handbook* (p. 15) that is available online. Application for financial aid may be made through our website. Visit [this link](#). Requests for financial aid must be received on or before January 13, 2017. Our Financial Services Manager, Andrea Campanella, can assist with this process. Reach her at andreac@ventanaschool.org or 650-948-2121 EXT. 206
8. **Can I arrange for some kind of payment plan?** Yes. We are committed to having all of our families remain with us. On a case-by-case basis, our Financial Services Manager will review your situation and work with you to achieve a plan that will accommodate your family. Our Financial Services Manager, Andrea Campanella, can assist with this process. Reach her at andreac@ventanaschool.org or 650-948-2121 EXT. 206
9. **Will the sibling discount policy be reinstated?** No. Not at this time. Reversal of this policy involves research, discussion, and a consensus vote by the Ventana Board of Trustees.
10. **Will there be a push for Annual Giving, too?** Ventana School reflects its warm and generous community. Our school promotes a *culture of giving*, and welcomes donations at any time. Our *Annual Giving* campaign occurs in the autumn of every year and is one of these times when families can choose to share their abundance. *Annual Giving* donations can target a particular project or event, or they can be channeled toward the general operations budget. Because this tuition increase will not affect the current

school year, it is important that the Ventana community helps to close the existing funding gap through *Annual Giving* contributions. *Annual Giving* funds are often matched by local employers and they are completely tax deductible.

- 11. Will we be expected to donate toward the spring auction?** The spring social and auction is a time for us to build community and have a lot of fun. Donations made through this annual silent and live auction event are made completely at the discretion of the bidder/family.

- 12. Will Extended Day and Enrichment session costs go up, too?** There may be minimal adjustments to the cost of Extended Day. This has yet to be determined. As enrollment for this after school program increases, there is, by necessity, need for increased staffing. Because we cannot determine this far in advance the number of families participating in Extended Day in 2017-18, it is difficult to answer this question with any certainty.

- 13. To whom might I direct further questions?** Marcy Barton, Head of School, has scheduled "office hours" from 8:40 until 10:00 AM and from 2:00 until 3:00 PM every school day from November 28th through December 16th. A special *Coffee and Conversation* event to hear from the Ventana parent community regarding this tuition increase is scheduled on Thursday, January 5th, 2017 at 8:45 AM.

Members of the school's Board of Trustees can be reached at this email address: board@ventanaschool.org. All parent members of the current Board of Trustees (i.e. Catriona Cairns, Jeremy Anderson, Molly Anderson, Julie Stanford, Annette Munkeby-Lee, and Evita Twerdahl) stand ready to answer your questions.