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PORTLAND WALDORF  
SCHOOL



Board of Trustees  
**TUITION ADJUSTMENT (TA) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**  
**for TA COMMITTEE**

Updated May 8, 2020

This work is to be completed by the TA Committee, a committee mandated by the Board of Trustees.

**TA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ANNUAL RENEWAL PROCESS**

Each year the Board of Trustees will review, modify as necessary, and renew the Policies and Procedures that govern the TA Committee.

**TA PROCESS AND DECISION-MAKING**

**TA Schedule:** After tuition rates and a TA Budget are set by the Board for the following school year, the TA Committee will set a TA Schedule to guide their activities for distributing TA for the following school year. The TA Committee should determine a percentage allocation of the Board-designated TA Budget to award at key TA Schedule milestone dates.

Key Dates: PWS Staff will set two key dates that will drive the TA Schedule:

1. Initial Due Date for TA Applications to be submitted
2. Re-enrollment Period: Time period when existing parents can re-enroll their students for the following year.

**Initial Awards:** The TA Committee will review all TA Applications submitted by the due date specified by Staff and determine initial TA award amounts. Each family will be reviewed independently and an award granted based on the school's sliding scale and the individual situation of each family. The Committee will strive to determine equitable benchmarks using a number of factors, including, but not limited to: Adjusted gross income, other sources of financial contribution via separate family members or friends, previous award and payment history, available assets, known debt, etc. These benchmarks will be further used to guide awards for late applicants.

Communication: PWS Staff will communicate initial awards in written form to each family. In some cases, families requesting TA may not be eligible for TA per the policies defined below. In such cases, PWS Staff will communicate that the family did not receive a TA Award. Note: The communication from PWS Staff will ask each family to respond to the TA award in one of the following ways:

1. Accept the award and complete their re-enrollment process for the following school year.
2. Appeal the award to the TA Committee for further consideration
  - a. Note: An explanation of the Appeal process will be included in the initial award letter, inclusive of the following simplified list and documents:
    - i. A letter of explanation of the extenuating circumstances, and why the family situation may be different from other families at a similar income level.
    - ii. A completed TA application/budget form (included as an attachment with the initial award letter).
    - iii. A request to make themselves available for an in-person conversation (all parents/legal guardians) with TA committee members. It is assumed that one PWS Staff member will be included in the conversation with the family and that each family will meet with at minimum two individuals.
3. Relinquish the award so that the allocated award amount can be considered for other families in need.

Note: The TA Award communication will specify due dates for when the respective family must respond. PWS Staff will make good faith efforts to explain the initial award and the family's obligations to respond. If a formal response from the family is not received, PWS Staff will make good faith effort to have had at least one one-on-one discussion regarding these requirements prior to relinquishing the award.

**Appeals Process and New TA Requests:** After the Initial Awards, the TA Committee will conduct Appeals Process Reviews with the following steps:

1. Family requests appeal in writing along with a completed Appeal packet to the Business office. TA Committee meets to review all submitted appeals and makes initial appeal recommendations equitably across families requesting appeals. These initial appeal recommendations are then brought to the appeal meetings with individual families. The TA Committee will also set aside a portion of the TA budget to be available for appeals that are higher than the initial appeal award to ensure that the TA Budget is managed to.
2. TA-committee members will meet with both parents (if applicable) to: present a current picture of PWS budget, challenges & goals, inspire increased tuition contribution for the current year, agree upon a final tuition-assistance award, and discuss a plan for increasing tuition in future years.

Note: During the appeal process, new TA applications may come from new families and/or existing families who did not initially apply for TA. The TA Committee will ensure that an appropriate amount of the TA Budget is set-aside for these new applicants.

Appeals: All appeals must be submitted per the dates specified by the TA Schedule. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy or email, addressed to the TA Committee.

Communication: Families should be informed of their final tuition assistance award during the Appeal conversation with TA members. Families will receive an email notification to confirm the final tuition assistance award and a request to complete their new tuition payment agreement. In the case that an agreement is not made during the conversation, PWS Finance staff will communicate with families to finalize the award. If an agreement is not made within two weeks of meeting, the family is responsible for signing the initial tuition payment agreement or the award is relinquished. Families appealing their initial TA Award may not receive an increase in the award. In such cases, if this is not communicated during the Appeal conversation, PWS Staff will communicate that the family did not receive a different TA Award from their initial grant.

Note: Appeal Award communications will similarly ask each family to respond to the new TA Appeal Award in the one of the following ways:

1. Accept the appeal award and complete their re-enrollment process for the following school year. Relinquish the award so that the allocated award amount can be considered for other families in need.
2. If the family believes that the award and/or appeal process was inequitable, unfair, or discriminatory, the final step would be an appeal to the PWS Board to consider the alleged circumstances. Any such appeal must be submitted in writing to the PWS Board Chair or Board Treasurer. All appeals of this type will be reviewed and responded to expeditiously through consensus by the PWS Board Executive Committee.

Note: The TA Appeal Award communication will specify the dates by which each family must respond. PWS Staff will make good faith efforts to explain the appeal award and the family's obligations to respond. If a formal response from the family is not received, PWS Staff will make good faith efforts to have had at least one one-on-one in person meeting regarding these requirements prior to withdrawing the reward for lack of response from the family.

Further New Requests Post-June: The TA Schedule assumes that the majority of awards will be provided and the bulk of the TA budget exhausted by the end of June. The TA Committee will reserve a small percentage of the TA budget for further new requests that will be considered by PWS Staff at the direction of the School Chair, guided by the sliding-scale benchmarks defined during the initial application review, and in adherence to the TA policies, defined below.

**Consensus:** All decisions made by the TA Committee are made via consensus. Given the small size of the committee, consensus decisions may be made with any two members present. All decisions will be shared with other TA members at subsequent committee meetings.

## **TA POLICIES**

**Required TA Award Consideration:** The TA Committee is required to consider the following data points prior to making any initial TA award for an individual student:

1. Family financial information collected, analyzed, and verified by third party (or other PWS Staff-approved process for parents submitting financial information)
2. Previous TA award history for the student
3. All information/data provided by the family regarding the specific financial contribution they believe they can support
4. Net Tuition cost obligations for the student in the next school year taking into consideration any Tuition discounts that may apply (i.e. Sibling Discount, High School Discount, etc.)

**Required Appeal Consideration:** The TA Committee is required to receive a hard copy or email appeal for each Student, or Family in the case of families with multiple students. The TA Committee will review the initial appeal grant in contrast with the requested appeal amount.

**Fair and Equitable Decisions:** The TA Committee will make best efforts to ensure that every decision is fair and equitable to all families that apply for TA. Special consideration creating unfairness or inequity will not be allowed.

**Families with Multiple Children Applying for TA:** During the TA review process, the TA Committee will review each family as a whole vs. reviewing each child as a separate application.

**Families in Arrears:** Only families in good standing with PWS will be eligible for awards in the upcoming school year. PWS Staff will provide information to the TA Committee to indicate if a particular family is not in good standing. All families who apply for TA in the following year who are not in good standing with the school are required to work with the Business Office to rectify this situation prior to being able to be considered for a subsequent year award. PWS Staff will communicate to such families that they are ineligible to be considered for TA until they are considered in good standing. Such consideration may include having zero past due payments and/or a mutually agreed payment plan with PWS.

**Maximum Award Amounts:** In years past, the TA Committee has operated with different maximum award amount limitations. While these award limitations were initially created to help manage budget balancing considerations and an individual family's ability to sustain a long-term financial commitment to the school; it is recognized that in certain extenuating situations or circumstances these limitations may be arbitrary in nature and perhaps harmful to the respective

student's class or school. For example, a recent job loss or medical issue might require increased family support for a limited period of time that should be considered during the award process. In these cases it is critically important that the TA Committee weigh the duration of the family's need, the overall need of all TA applicants, and the limited TA Budget. These considerations are critical prior to providing higher percentage awards.

Ultimately, the 'maximum award amount' that the TA Committee can allocate is the defined TA Budget provided by the PWS Board. It is the TA Committee's responsibility to fairly review and equitably provide awards to families of varying means who wish to attend the school. The process by which the TA Committee defines award benchmarks tied to a variety of factors previously described is critical in adhering to the TA Budget.

Additionally and historically, approximately 35% of the students in the school have required some form of tuition assistance. It is important that in the overall management of the TA Budget that this level of family participation (35%) be used as a guideline.

Further, in discussions with family members about higher percentage awards, TA Committee members and PWS Staff shall explain to each family that the award granted is for one year only and not a guarantee of a similar level of support in succeeding years.

Eligibility: Existing and new families must fully complete re-enrollment forms with PWS Staff by the designated dates in the TA Schedule. Families who fail to re-enroll by specified dates may have their financial award re-assigned for use by other families.

Communication with Applicants: The TA Committee will not directly communicate with any families except during the Appeal conversation. All other necessary communication will occur by PWS Staff. Note: The reason for this restriction is tied to the above policy regarding fairness and equity. If the TA Committee were to directly communicate with one family outside of the appeal process, subsequent communications would need to occur with all other families to ensure a fair and equitable decision making process.

Communication and Reporting: The TA Committee will keep a written record of all decisions made, including as much narrative and detail as possible to aid future committee members in understanding the decisions made during the TA process.

As the Admissions / Outreach / Enrollment Coordinator often needs to know about families in the enrollment process, they may attend the first ten minutes of each meeting to hear a status report for incoming families.

The TA Committee will prepare a written report to the Board and College to include number of applicants, number of grants, comparisons of previous years, amount granted to date, etc.

Reports will be presented as requested but at minimum bi-annually; once in December or January as a summary of the committee's work the prior year and once in May or June as a summary of the committee's work for the upcoming year.