



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Diocese of Salt Lake City

Financing Our Catholic Schools: Rationale for Cost-Based Tuition / Need-Based Tuition Assistance

One of the greatest challenges facing Catholic schools is how to keep the schools affordable and available to all Catholics who want to attend, no matter what their economic status.

What are the expenses and why are they increasing so much? Just 20 years ago we had 41 priests and religious men and women who were teachers and principals in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Salt Lake City. For the school year 2007-2008 we have only four religious and clergy in our schools. Religious received diocesan approved stipends rather than salaries for their services. Today our lay teachers receive much less than public school teachers in Utah. Nationally, Utah ranks among the lowest in teacher compensation. In an effort to strive for a just compensation package for teachers, the Catholic schools have increased teacher salaries each year even though their compensation continues to be low. Catholic schools must continue this effort if they are to be successful in recruiting quality teachers and retaining the excellent teachers they already have.

Besides offering more just salaries, Catholic schools are faced with increased expenses for older buildings and the need to plan for depreciation and capital improvements; rising costs of employee benefits, more programs which are needed to meet individual learning needs, more staff who are needed to meet the state accreditation standards, and the cost of regular office and class supplies which increase annually.

Each school is autonomous and is financed independently. Each school has an advancement / development office to seek other sources of income. Endowments have grown over the last several years but not enough to meet increasing expenses. These efforts will always be needed. Fund raising efforts will always be needed. Schools cannot be supported by tuition alone and still serve the needs of every family regardless of their economic status.

Across the nation Catholic schools are beginning to address increased costs by charging a tuition that covers the cost of educating the child. In the past model of subsidized tuition, the parish and the school had to bear the burden of making up the difference between actual cost and tuition revenue. In this system, every parent, regardless of financial ability to pay, was subsidized. Many parents who were paying less than cost had the ability to pay the full cost and were willing to do so.

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Salt Lake City agreed to implement the “Cost-Based Tuition / Need-Based Tuition Assistance” model. Pastors, principals, board members, strategic planning committee members, advancement directors and other interested friends voted to accept this initiative in November 2002. Since then we have implemented this concept.

As this system of “Cost-Based Tuition / Need-Based Tuition Assistance” is implemented, the tuition for each Catholic student will be the full cost of a basic quality education for each child. Non-Catholic tuition will be 25% higher than cost to off set the amount of support given from a parish to the Catholic school. Fees will only be charged for those special programs that are not included in the “basic” program.

In order for a family to qualify for the Catholic rate of tuition, they must be approved by their pastor based on the following criteria:

- The child must be baptized in the Catholic faith;

- The family must be registered in the parish;

- The family must attend Mass regularly;

- The family must support their parish financially and/or in giving service.

Parishes support each approved Catholic student from their parish \$200-250 per year.

Every Catholic family who wishes to have a Catholic education for their child should be able to do so. We must not forget the second half of this policy, namely, “Need-Based Tuition Assistance.” Any family that cannot pay the full cost of the tuition can apply for tuition assistance. An outside company will use objective criteria to calculate the amount of tuition a family should be able to pay. This information will be used by the school to determine the amount of tuition assistance it can award to each family.

Tuition is an investment in a child’s education and future. The parish and school partner with the parents in this investment. Likewise, the whole Catholic community supports Catholic schools by providing time, treasure and talent. The Catholic community must take full ownership for the education of children if the value of a quality faith-based education is to be realized. Jesus called the Church to make disciples of every nation. The evangelization effort of the Church is a call to every mature practicing Catholic.

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