



Dear 2018-2019 Financial Aid Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in The Common School. We offer financial assistance to over 35% of our families, which allows us to further our objectives of maintaining an economically diverse community in our school and of making the school accessible to as many people as possible. It is therefore necessary to collect considerable financial and personal information from you. Please answer the questions in the application as carefully and completely as you are able. You can always feel free to call our business office for assistance. Thank you for your cooperation and interest.

Families seeking financial aid must file an application through the FAST (Independent School Management Financial Aid for School Tuition) Program. FAST provides The Common School a need-based analysis service which ensures that our process is fair and equitable. All Financial Aid information is kept confidential.

The FAST application process itself is self-guided. You may navigate in and out of the program, allowing you to make entries and go back to it at another time. Online e-mail support and a 24/7 helpline are provided. The fee for the application is \$43.00, payable by credit card at the end of the input session. These fees are charged by FAST for their services, not by The Common School.

After completing the online application, you will be required to submit your 2017 Federal and State Tax returns with all schedules and W-2's. You will be offered the option either to upload, scan or mail them. We **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE YOU NOT TO MAIL** them as that will unnecessarily delay completion of your application. The **preferred option is to upload as a PDF**. If you have a compatible system and a document feeder you can also scan them directly into their system. If neither of those will work for you please let me know and I have some other options to suggest. If all else fails you can still mail them to:

FAST Processing (Including the School's name on the outside of the envelope will ensure faster processing)
ISM
1316 North Union Street
Wilmington DE 19806-2594

To start the FAST process, just hit ctrl and click [here](#) now if viewing electronically, access the FAST link on our website under the Admissions tab, or type the following URL into your browser: <http://tinyurl.com/CommonSchoolFinancialAid>. The school requires submission of additional forms which accompany this document. The supplemental forms are also on our website.

Here is a **review of the required steps in your application process:**

1. **Complete your final tax return in time for the application deadline of February 16** (unless you are a late applicant).
2. **Go to FAST - <http://tinyurl.com/CommonSchoolFinancialAid> or use the link on our website.**
3. **Your data including taxes and other forms must be submitted to FAST in order to complete your application.** We can help with tips on obtaining information from your employers or banks if W-2s or 1099's are not received on time.
4. **Submit the "Financial Aid Application Completed" form to our office when your FAST application is completed.**

We will notify returning students of their awards by early March. Because financial aid funds are limited and demand is high, late filing of materials may result in your application not being considered for the first pass of awards and could lead to unavailability of funds.

I am aware that this process may be intimidating and please know that we are here to help. Please notify the business office of any complication in your application. We don't want you to miss the deadline and we are happy to help resolve problems. Feel free to call for help anywhere along your application experience. No question is a foolish one or likely to be one that we have not been asked before.

Sincerely,

Gary Powsner, Business Manager



Financial Aid Application Completed form

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AS SOON AS YOUR FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND FILED WITH *FAST* THEN

RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO THE SCHOOL

CHILD(REN)'S NAME(S) _____

DATE ON WHICH YOUR *FAST* APPLICATION WAS SUBMITTED _____

DATE ON WHICH YOUR TAX RETURN WAS SUBMITTED _____

FOR NURSERY AND P1 STUDENTS: I expect to request ZERO 2 3 4 days
of afternoon program (12:00 – 3:00 Nursery/12:00-3:00 P1)
for my child (best guess; not a commitment at this point)

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME (PLEASE PRINT) _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____

TODAY'S DATE _____

Thank you!

Frequently Asked Question (FAQ's) about the Financial Aid Application

1. Do I need to keep a copy of my application?

We strongly suggest that you download and keep a copy of your completed application including all supplemental materials submitted for your records in the event that it gets lost in cyberspace.

2. Do I need to submit my actual W-2s, 1099s, and all my tax return, other schedules and attachments?

Yes, all of them.

3. What if I make mistakes?

If you discover your error before your application is finalized, you may re-enter FAST and make your change. If you do not discover your error until after you have completed the process, you must notify the Common School Business Manager (413-256-8989) of your error. Only the school can amend your application after completion.

Your application will be reviewed for accuracy and completeness after it is submitted and you may be contacted either by FAST or our office for clarification or additional information. FAST numbers are only as valid as the accuracy with which forms are filled out, so **please read instructions carefully as you go** and call the Business Manager with questions. We do consider any additional information you submit.

4. How do I indicate that other adults to whom I am not related share my home? Do I have to report this?

If there are two or more household-sharing adults in your home, regardless of gender, relationship, marital status or if they are a biological parent, information about them must be included even if they are a non-parental relative or renter.

1) If you are living as a family together and sharing childcare, regardless of legal status, you should enter the 2 adults as Adult 1 and Adult 2.

2) If there are any other non-caretaking adults (i.e. renter, grandparent or other relative) in the household, regardless of their relationship to you or whether they are responsible for childcare expenses, they must be included as well; simply list them as adult dependents (don't be thrown by the word "dependent." It is used by FAST to include them as part of your household. You will be asked how much this individual contributes to your household. You can make your best estimate if you do not have an exact dollar amount.

5. How do I list the money that I am paying for child care this year if my child does not attend a "school?"

Include Day Care facilities as tuition charging institutions currently being paid.

6. What do I do if I am separated from a former spouse?

The same application should be used by **non-custodial separated/divorced parents**. You will each be able to have separate (not shared), confidential log-ins.

7. What do I do if I have trouble getting my 1099's by the application deadline? I sometime have other problems holding me up as well, like my K-1 partnership form.

You will need to **complete your 2017 tax return** by February 16 in order to complete your application. Ask Gary, the Business Manager, for advice if you are lacking any other forms preventing you from completing the Financial Aid application process. We may be able to give you tips on getting what you need, or may request other forms for our use in the meantime. Any applications that are not filed by Feb 16 may miss the first round of awards, so do not wait until the last minute to tell Gary about this problem.

Final Checklist for Financial Aid Applicants

Please check the following list to be certain that your aid application is complete:

About your FAST application:

- Did you read the instructions before answering each question (some may surprise you)?
- On the Letter/Agreement page did you:
 - a) Include a narrative letter describing why you feel you need assistance? This is the place to submit any additional pertinent information as there may be information you consider relevant which is not specifically requested on the FAST form.
 - b) Did you answer the question about what you could afford to contribute towards tuition? If this is confusing for you, please speak to the Business Manager to clarify.
- Did you clarify any questions you may have had with the Business Manager?
- Did you submit your application by Feb. 16? Exemptions from this deadline will be made only for late admissions and/or by prior arrangement with the Financial Aid Committee via Gary Powsner, Business Manager.

Other required parts of the process:

- Did you complete and submit your tax return?** A copy of your completed actual tax return, including all attachments, must be submitted to complete your application. Drafts are not acceptable.
- Did you return your **Financial Aid Application Completed form** to the office?