

MPA Ambassador Kit 2012-2013

Talking about Tuition

By Dana Boyle, MPA Parent and Trustee

There is no shying away from the fact that a Mounds Park Academy education is costly - particularly for families with multiple children. We are sensitive to the concerns that parents have regarding affordability, and we are extremely responsible to the critical value proposition that keeps families coming here year after year.

Most private schools offer financial aid packages to students in need, and Mounds Park Academy is no exception; however, there is a large population of middle and upper middle class families that do not qualify for financial aid.

This overview is meant to provide you with some ways to talk to other parents about affording an MPA education. It draws on input from families who have been on the fence about whether or not to send their children to Mounds Park Academy and have chosen to make it work.

While we have families in our community that represent every part of the financial spectrum, we know that a large majority consider their children's tuition to be a big expense in the context of their personal budgets and that they would not be sending their children to Mounds Park Academy if the value wasn't exceptional.

How can we justify MPA over public school? Minnesota is known as one of the top states in the nation for public education. That means that a school like MPA must go far beyond what neighborhood schools offer, in helping to develop and engage excellent young minds. We are known across the board (in all grades) for our approach to whole-child education. In addition, the Mounds Park approach to experiential learning means that students exercise their brains and bodies through academics, athletics and the arts, with specialized teachers in dedicated facilities throughout their 13 years here. While public schools may excel in a few key areas, none provide the combination that MPA offers in terms of the rigorous blend of subjects in addition to a wide variety of opportunities to actively participate in many in-school and after-school areas of interest.

Many of our families seek a school like MPA because of the small class size. This is particularly important for children of all ages who - though they may be extremely bright - simply require more time, space and a teacher's attention in order to find and develop their voice. We are often touched to hear from deeply thankful parents whose kids might otherwise have slipped between the cracks, but who instead blossomed beyond their wildest dreams through an MPA education. Many of those families initially stretched their budgets to get that one child here; but once they saw how MPA is so special, we have seen numerous families each year transfer their remaining children to the school. It's a huge endorsement, especially when we know it means having to stretch their dollars even more to make that happen.

How can we justify our tuition over other private schools? We know that as much as some families weigh the difference between MPA and their local public school, others are considering the tradeoffs between MPA and other private schools. What makes MPA unique? This relatively young school (founded in 1982) was created to celebrate the joy

of learning. Take one step into the halls of Mounds Park Academy - whether Lower, Middle or Upper School - and you will feel that spirit alive today! MPA is also, at heart, a very multi-cultural school. Some families value a faith-based private education for their children. What MPA offers instead is an independent (non-religious) approach that nurtures the development of character through a global lens, embracing innumerable points of view. Our tremendously talented faculty is what makes an MPA education stand out from other private schools, and many of our teachers are prominently recognized by their peers in the outside world for their professional accomplishments.

If you are still wondering how to justify the tuition at MPA, you should know that many of our families have two parents who earn incomes, many have foregone the cost of a vacation home or extra luxuries in favor of investing in a private school education and some families have enlisted grandparents to help offset the cost of tuition. We respect that not everyone will be able to reach this decision or make it work, but we want you to know that we're open to having this discussion with you if it would help to have a sounding board.

Finally, there is a family feeling that our whole community of students, alumni, faculty, administration and parents share. The spirit that binds us is a great love and appreciation for education - for our children as both scholars and citizens. We live our mission daily and we hope you'll join this very special community!