

Founded in 1998, Santa Fe Girls' School (SFGS) was conceived in response to the community's need for a small academic setting where adolescent girls from a variety of economic and cultural backgrounds could thrive in a single-gender environment that cultivates emotional growth and intellectual strength, preparing girls for the demands of high school, college, and young adulthood. SFGS is a private 501(c)(3) middle school for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade girls—the only one of its kind in New Mexico—with admissions criteria prioritizing a desire to learn over prior academic achievement. Some girls, therefore, join our sixth grade well behind grade level—even as much as two or three grades behind—but when they graduate from the eighth grade, our experience has been that they test at the twelfth-grade level and above.

To attract a diverse student body from a variety of economic and cultural backgrounds, tuition is set at half the cost of other Santa Fe private middle schools. Thirty-five percent of the 2010-2011 student population is not Anglo-American. And in the last five years, between 13 and 26% of the school's students have received tuition assistance. In the 2010-2011 school year, 20.5% of the student population will receive tuition assistance, which means that their tuition will cost 50% of the total \$9,700 for the academic year. It should also be noted that because SFGS's tuition covers only approximately 70% of the cost to educate each student, every girl, in fact, receives some tuition assistance.

Santa Fe Girls' School offers a nurturing and challenging space for adolescent girls to find their voices in the absence of adolescent boys, whose learning styles and maturity levels are arguably dissimilar. The advantages of a period of single-gender education are strengthened by the school's small size (45 students; 15 in each grade), and its practice of Socratic and seminar-style teaching methods, rooted in the belief that profound and enduring learning occurs through active inquiry and debate, and the investigation of multiple perspectives. The integrated curriculum builds critical-thinking skills and confident leadership in girls who may not otherwise be encouraged. SFGS's three-year investment in girls between their public elementary and public high school experiences cultivates eighth grade graduates who score in the top 16% of the nation's eighth grade students in reading, language, math, social studies, and science. SFGS graduates are invited to attend any high school they choose, however, 77% of graduates choose public high schools, where they arrive as academic and social leaders, enthusiastic to take advantage of AP classes and the energy of a larger student body. This year, our tenth graduating class chose Santa Fe High, Desert Academy, New Mexico School for Arts, Albuquerque Academy, the North Carolina School for the Arts, and St. Michaels. We have no reason to doubt that they can expect an array of colleges available to them, as our alumnae have attended Bard, Cornell, American University, Smith, Harvard, Carlton College, and Lewis & Clark, among many other top schools.

As previously stated, SFGS's mission is to create a diverse classroom and school on a variety of levels—culturally, academically, and economically. The reasons for this are many, and include SFGS's desire to truly serve the community of the greater Santa Fe area by offering a superior educational experience to the girl who wants to learn above all else. As well, SFGS believes that learning is relational, or social and collaborative, and that deeper learning can occur when the experience of the students is more varied. While SFGS has not turned any one 2010-2011 financial aid applicant away, the reduced reserves allocated for tuition assistance would make it challenging to accept any additional financial aid students in the coming school year. The \$26,000 net earned from our May auction and a portion of the money raised through the Annual Fund drive in December of 2009 have both been used for tuition assistance, and SFGS will continue to use these historically reliable practices and others to secure funds that will allow us to invite low-income families to join our school.

To establish ever more reliable funding for tuition assistance, SFGS is requesting scholarship support in the amount of \$2,500 from Wells Fargo. SFGS' general policy is to award any single student no more than 50% of the total tuition for any year, depending on financial assessment through the services of School and Student Services for Financial Aid (SSS). With the 2010-2011 school year tuition as a starting point, here is a picture of what one financial aid student's tuition payment could look like with Wells Fargo's assistance:

**Tuition Program for One SFGS Financial Aid Student
with Wells Fargo Scholarship**

2010-2011 School Year Tuition	\$9,700
Tuition Assistance from SFGS at up to 50%	\$-2,350
Wells Fargo Scholarship Contribution	\$-2,500
Total academic year cost to SFGS family on financial assistance	\$4,850

Of course, there is also the possibility of a qualifying student being awarded only the Wells Fargo Scholarship for a total tuition for the year at \$7,200.

Because SFGS tuition covers approximately 70% of the cost to educate each student, SFGS seeks funding from a variety of sources, including private donors, grant-making foundations, and fundraising. Through these relationships, SFGS creates partnerships that help it remain vital.

Current Funders

- LANL Foundation
- McCune Charitable Foundation
- PNM Fund
- Witter Bynner
- Variety of private donors

SFGS also collaborates with the following organizations: Girls, Inc. (SFGS has an enduring relationship with Girls, Inc., serving as a potential educational opportunity for specific Girls, Inc. girls who could benefit from the collaborative, personalized environment.) Think New Mexico (SFGS and Think New Mexico have similarly potent views on small school education and have collaborated on radio programs and in newspaper coverage.) Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (SFGS works with members of the RMYC to offer conflict resolution programming and outdoor adventure opportunities.) Prescott College (SFGS mentors Prescott students in order to share its field-based environmental education and restoration program. Prescott students receive course credit for their exposure to SFGS pedagogy.) Project PRESERVE (Protecting the River Environment, Stopping Erosion, and Restoring the Vital Ecology, an environmental restoration project is in its sixth year on a 9-acre parcel of the Santa Fe River) collaborates with RiverSource, Santa Fe Watershed Association, Bureau of Land Management, the County of Santa Fe, Center for Intercultural Education, Wildearth Guardians, Grassworks Inc., and Santa Fe Community College for program support, consultation, historic data, and current best practices for riparian restoration. SFGS plans to share its middle school environmental science programming with the public elementary and middle schools in the coming years as the criticality of restoring the Santa Fe River grows.