

Instruction

FAFSA Completion Program

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes that college, for many students, continues to be an important pathway that helps to provide students with the necessary skills for work and for lifelong learning. In addition, research has indicated the students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are more likely to attend college with financial aid.

Many Connecticut students, eligible for college, fail to complete the FAFSA each year, resulting in the loss of funds that could help support their postsecondary education.

The Board acknowledges that Connecticut has, for eligible school districts, implemented a FAFSA Completion Challenge (Challenge). This Challenge is based on the premise that FAFSA completion is strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment and outcomes. Students who complete the FAFSA, in greater numbers, attend college directly from high school in comparison to non-completers.

Therefore, the Board, through this policy, sets as a goal a District initiative to improve the completion rates for FAFSA among grade 12 students or students in District adult education programs. This goal aims to strengthen District efforts to improve postsecondary enrollment and student outcomes and to make it easier for students to attend postsecondary education.

District efforts to meet this initiative should spark and support local creativity to increase FAFSA completion and postsecondary enrollment rates. The Board directs the administration to develop plans to pilot and initiate new strategies to increase yearly student FAFSA completion rates. The Board may accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations, to implement this policy.

As a currently SDE designated alliance district, (or as a previously designated alliance district) the Board will add to the list of goals that it includes in its application to the Commissioner of Education for alliance district funds the goal of implementing its policy to improve FAFSA completion rates by grade 12 and for adult education students.

Strategies

The Board believes this goal of increased FAFSA completion rates can be attained utilizing, but not limited to, the following strategies/considerations:

Instruction

FAFSA Completion Program

Strategies (continued)

1. Design FAFSA completion initiatives according to the target population's needs. Low-income students, English-Language students, homeless students, foster youth, and first generational youth should be the center of this initiative.
2. Establish and maintain strong partnerships with as many stakeholders as possible, with multiple organizations to assist.
3. Make the completion process a component of graduation. Provide a parental opt-out so that no one is denied a diploma.
4. Incorporate financial aid training into the existing curriculum.
5. Provide individualized meeting between students and staff.
6. Collect and monitor appropriate data to identify which students are not completing applications and target extra support to them.
7. Build trusting relationships with parents and the community in order to ensure students and their families feel comfortable in filling out the forms.
8. Design systems, tools and events focusing on students who might otherwise not complete an application.
9. Provide a network of resources to support school counselors and teachers.
10. Start raising awareness about FAFSA early, prior to senior year.
11. Provide sufficient and easily accessible resources on district/school websites.
12. Offer school-day and evening support for students and their parents/guardians.
13. Create a FAFSA student/parent portal pertaining to FAFSA.
14. Use existing programs and forums, such as advisor periods, college and career planning seminars, parent meetings etc. to provide assistance.
15. Stress financial aid is for technical, two and four year schools.
16. Build a school or campus-based FAFSA team to monthly review data and discuss and implement strategies to reach students.
17. Partner with local postsecondary institutions.
18. Create a FAFSA phone assistance bank.

As required, the Board will publish and make available on the District website the annual FAFSA student completion rate for the graduating class of each high school within the District.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
P. A. 21-199 An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Statutes Relating to Education and Workforce Development, Sect. 6, 7, 8.

Policy adopted:
cps 11/21