Journey to College

Site Coordinator Resource Manual

2022-2023

DEPARTMENT OF
HIGHER EDUCATION &
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Subscribe for MDHEWD Communications: https://dhewd.mo.gov/connect.php

Order publications and promotional items: https://dhewd.mo.gov/publications.php

facebook.com/journeytocollege twitter.com/Journey2College instagram.com/Journey2College

Journey to College

2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR NUMBERS

181

REGISTERED SITE COORDINATORS

91,661

NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS SHIPPED

49,696

NUMBER OF PROMOTIONAL ITEMS SHIPPED

2021-2022 PROGRAM OUTCOMES SNAPSHOT

APPLY MISSOURI

25%
% OF SENIORS WHO APPLIED DURING APPLY MO

1.7
AVERAGE # OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED PER STUDENT

NUMBER OF SITES REGISTERED **98**

43 SITES REPORTED DATA

FAFSA FRENZY

1,328
STUDENTS ATTENDING EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE

47.5%
OVERALL FAFSA COMPLETION

NUMBER OF SITES REGISTERED **166**

73 SITES REPORTED DATA

DECISION DAY

82%
OF SENIORS REPORTING PLANS FOR EDUCATION, MILITARY, OR WORK AFTER GRADUATION

NUMBER OF SITES REGISTERED **109**

25 SITES REPORTED DATA

Contact the Journey to College Team with questions at journeytocollege@dhewd.mo.gov.

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Journey to College

Journey to College, a Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development program, works to increase college access and affordability to help Missouri students plan for the future. Journey to College includes outreach programs, publications, a student-centered website, social media, and presentations. To learn more about Journey to College services, visit *http://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/journeytocollege.php*.

Outreach Programs

Apply Missouri provides assistance during the regular school day to help students select and apply to colleges, apprenticeships, and other training programs that best meet their needs. The program promotes a college-going culture and helps create important communication channels between students and colleges and training programs. High schools host Apply Missouri activities and events during September and October.

Counselor page: *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/applymissouri.php*
Student page: *https://journeytocollege.mo.gov/apply-missouri/*
Hashtags: #ApplyMO, #IApplied

FAFSA Frenzy provides free, one-on-one assistance to help students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is the primary form used by federal, state, and college financial assistance programs to determine a student's eligibility for grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study programs. High schools, colleges, and community organizations host FAFSA Frenzy activities and events October through January.

Counselor page: *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/fafsafrenzy.php*
Student page: *https://journeytocollege.mo.gov/fafsa-frenzy/*
Hashtags: #FAFSAFrenzy, #IFiled

Decision Day celebrates seniors' postsecondary plans to enroll in college, enter the military, or go straight into the workforce and helps kick-start a plan for seniors who have not yet decided. The program encourages seniors to finalize and follow through on their plans for the future and helps build interest in college among younger students. High schools host Decision Day activities and events on or near May 1, the date by which most seniors must notify a college of their plans to enroll.

Counselor page: *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/decisionday.php*
Student page: *https://journeytocollege.mo.gov/decision-day/*
Hashtags: #MODecisionDay, #IDecided, #Classof2023

Hosting a Journey to College Program

Do I have to specifically name my activity or event to match the name of the Journey to College program?

You may register as a Journey to College site coordinator and use different names for your activities and events. Our goal is to be a resource and to provide helpful assistance.

Logo policy – We encourage you to use the Journey to College logos to promote your activities and events. We have posted several materials such as fliers and worksheets on our website and we have a social media toolkit that you may use to promote your programs. If you use the logos on other pieces specific to your event, please consider the following:

- Avoid distorting or stretching the logos in any way.
- When reducing the size of the logos, they must not appear smaller than two inches wide by 1/2-inch tall.
- Logos should have a minimum surrounding clear space of 1/4 inch.
- Logos should not appear over imagery (i.e. busy patterns or background photography).
- All logos may be used in black and white or in the original colors.

Download the Journey to College logos at:

- *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/journeytocollegeresourcemanual.php*

Order free resources

Utilize MDHEWD publications and promotional materials. See page 29.

Data Collection

Survey data is gathered only for aggregated, general statistical purposes. No student personal data will be shared in any way. See Outcome Report on page 3.

Share best practices and photos

Many of the activities in this manual came from site coordinators. We want to hear from you! Send examples of your ideas and photos approved for promotional use to us at *journeytocollege@dhewd.mo.gov*.

Program timeline, terminology and helpful links

Timeline *

Apply Missouri:

Events held
September - October

FAFSA Frenzy:

Events held
October 1 - January 31

Decision Day:

Events held the last few months of the school year.

**Your events do not have to be limited to these typical time frames.*

Terminology

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) — A number calculated according to a formula established by federal law that is used to determine your eligibility for financial aid. The formula can consider a number of factors including your family's income and assets, as well as the number of family members attending college during the year. The EFC is based on the financial information you provide on the FAFSA. The number is reported to you on your Student Aid Report. It is not a bill, nor does it indicate the amount you will owe to the college you plan to attend.

FAFSA – The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is used to determine eligibility for federal student aid, such as federal grants, loans, and work-study, and is often the first step to apply for state and institutional aid.

FSA ID – A Federal Student Aid Account username and password that serves as a student's or parent's identifier to allow access to personal information in various U.S. Department of Education systems and acts as a digital signature on some online forms. *studentaid.gov*

Missouri State Student Financial Aid Portal – Students can access the redesigned financial aid portal to estimate their state financial aid and see their state aid awards such as the Access Missouri Grant. *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/studentportal/*

Registered Apprenticeship – Registered Apprenticeship is an employer-driven training model that provides on-the-job, earn as you learn technical and academic instruction, that leads to long-term employment, increased wages and industry-recognized credentials.

Student Aid Report (SAR) — A summary of the information a student submits on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The student receives this report via email a few days after their FAFSA has been processed or by mail within 7–10 days. If there are no corrections or additional information they must provide, their SAR contains their Expected Family Contribution and basic information about their eligibility for federal student financial aid.

Verification – A process initiated by the U.S. Department of Education, where the information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is compared with the student (and parent/spouse) tax information and/or other financial documents that were submitted to the IRS.

Program timeline, terminology, and helpful links continued

Links

ACT
- *http://www.act.org*

American College Application Campaign (ACAC)
- *https://equityinlearning.act.org/acac/*

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- *https://dese.mo.gov*

Federal Student Aid/FAFSA official mobile app
- *myStudentAid app*

FAFSA on the web
- *https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa*

Federal Student Aid
- *studentaid.gov*

Federal student Aid Homeless and Foster Youth Information
- *https://studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/homeless-youth.pdf*

Federal Student Aid Loan Simulator
- *https://studentaid.gov/loan-simulator/*

MDHEWD homeless/foster youth information
- *dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/homelessyouth.php*
- *journeytocollege.mo.gov/plan/foster-and-homeless-youth/*

MDHEWD YouTube Videos
- *youtube.com/mohighereducation*

Missouri College & Career Attainment Network (MOCCAN)
- *mocollegecareer.org*

Missouri College and Degree Search
- *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/collegedegreesearch/collegesearch.faces*

Missouri Course Transfer Tracker
- *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/coursetransfertracker/homepage.faces*

Missouri State Financial Aid Portal
- *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/studentportal/*

Missouri Student Workspace
- *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/studentworkspace/*

National College Attainment Network (NCAN)
- *https://www.ncan.org/*

My Scholarship Central
- *myscholarshipcentral.org*

U.S. Department of Education
- *https://www.ed.gov/*
- 1-800-872-5327

Why Not Us documentary
- *http://whynotusfilm.com/*

Apply Missouri is a part of the American College Application Campaign, a national program sponsored by the ACT Center for Equity in Learning.

All 50 states participate in the American College Application Campaign activities.

ACAC
American College Application Campaign
ACT® Center for Equity in Learning

Helping Missouri students apply to college

Applying to college can be a daunting process, especially for students who would be the first in their family to attend college, low-income students, and others who are underrepresented in higher education. Helping students navigate the college application process can put them on a path to reach their full potential. Apply Missouri is a college application program designed to help students plan for their future , whether it be at a 2- or 4- year college, certificate program, apprenticeship, the military, or workforce.. All high schools in Missouri are invited to participate in the program in September and October.

Purpose and expectations

The purpose of Apply Missouri is to encourage students to consider a variety of higher all of their postsecondary options, find the "best fit" for their future, and submit one or more applications. The program can help create a college-going culture, generating interest and engagement among students.

Participating schools are asked to:

- Register to host an event.
- Provide a computer lab, staffing, and time during the school day for students to submit college applications.
- Collect participants' names **and** birthdays on the sign-in sheet template found in the resource library and send the list to the MDHEWD within three days following your event.
- Have participants complete the online student survey.
- Complete the site coordinator survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/applymissouri.php*. This survey will ask for your number of participants, number of students submitting applications, and the total number of applications submitted. It will also ask for feedback to help improve the Apply Missouri program in the future.

High schools can expand their events to offer other college-related activities, including assemblies, college and career fairs, contests, and class assignments.

By participating in Apply Missouri, your school can ensure that all seniors have an opportunity to receive hands-on assistance as they take the first big step toward continuing their education beyond high school.

Site Coordinator checklist

- ❒ Reserve space for activities, including computer lab space for students to research colleges, submit applications, and other online activities.
- ❒ Add Apply Missouri activities to the school calendar.
- ❒ Contact your regional outreach coordinator to order free promotional items for your events. (See page 29)
- ❒ Promote your event on social media, with signage, announcements, ads, etc.
- ❒ Distribute event preparation materials to students.
- ❒ Encourage students to complete college research prior to Apply Missouri activities.
- ❒ Complete your site coordinator survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/applymissouri.php.*

Quick Tips

Application fees — Many colleges require an application fee when a student submits an application. Some colleges may require a credit card, pre-paid credit card, debit card or electronic check information in order to submit an application online. Students unable to provide payment information during Apply Missouri, can save an application and submit it later.

Waivers — Applying for college can be expensive. It's important to let students and parents know they may be eligible for fee waivers. There are three types of waivers typically accepted by colleges and universities, but not all colleges and universities will accept fee waivers.

1. National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
2. ACT
3. College Board

Total cost, net price and other data — Net price is the difference between the "sticker" price (full cost) to attend college, minus any grants and scholarships. By federal law, each institution is required to provide a version of the Net Price Calculator on its website. To find out the "net price" for a specific college or university, check out *https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price*. Schools will also typically provide information such as their first-to-second year retention rates, the numbers and percentages of students enrolled by various demographic categories, graduation rates, average student loan debt of its graduates, and more. The U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center provides a College Scorecard to help students and families better understand the affordability and outcomes associated with particular postsecondary schools. For more information, visit *https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/*.

Federal school codes for the ACT — *https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/resource-type/Federal%20School%20Code%20Lists*

Sample Activities

In-person Virtual

College fairs — If your school is hosting or attending an in-person or virtual college fair, you may want to coordinate your Apply Missouri activities with the college fair schedule. This can be a great way for your seniors to direct questions to specific colleges as well as build enthusiasm over college attendance.

Get the school involved — Designate a day that teachers and staff wear their college gear and/or decorate their rooms with their college swag. Ask teachers to talk with students about how they decided where to attend college and what made them choose their school. Asking teachers to incorporate assignments into their classes that will help with college planning and applications is another way to get teachers involved. Sample assignments by subject are below:

English

- Write college admissions essays

Government/Economics

- "College match" lesson where students research and identify schools that are a good fit academically, financially, and socially. Students may complete the "college fit" worksheet found in the resource library

Math/Personal Finance

- Lesson on calculating financial need and student loan repayment options using the U.S. Department of Education's Loan Simulator at *https://studentaid.gov/loan-simulator/*
- Other relevant lesson plans for a multitude of college student needs can be found at *https://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/teach/lesson_plans*

Media/Journalism

- Create ads for local media outlets and an Apply Missouri social media campaign for the school

Student selfies or videos — Use a printable, fill-in-the blank sheet and ask students to share why they applied to go to school and where. Consider sharing these on your school's webpage, learning management system, or on social media. Be sure to use Missouri's hashtags in your social media posts: #ApplyMO, #IDecided, and #Classof2023.

Don't forget to order your promotional items at least 3 week prior to your event!
Check them out on page 30.

Sample Activities Continued

Viewing of the documentary Why Not Us? — Why Not Us? is a documentary created by The College Board, in partnership with Roadtrip Nation, which follows the journey of four first-generation college students as they take a road trip across the United States. During their journey, they interview leaders like Ana Maria Cavez, CEO of Girl Scouts of America; Grammy and Academy Award-winner John Legend; and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz who are all the first in their families to attend college. It is an inspiring documentary that will promote a college-going atmosphere in your school. This documentary can be accessed at *http://whynotusfilm.com/*. A Companion Discussion Guide is also available at this website.

Daily college-related contests with prizes — School office staff may announce a daily riddle or provide a daily fun fact or tip related to attending college. You may wish to organize contests such as college trivia, college bingo, a scavenger hunt, or an art, video or design contest. You can solicit donations for prizes, such as gift cards or college T-shirts, from local postsecondary institutions and businesses.

Decorate Parking Spaces — Allow students to decorate their parking spaces with college logos, military branches, etc. You could even turn this into a decorating contest. Get some creative ideas at *https://www.pinterest.com/pin/316377942543607080/?lp=true*.

Student Workspace and Student Portal Account Registration — Help students log in to the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development's redesigned State Student Financial Aid Portal at *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/studentportal/* and the Student Workspace, *https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/studentworkspace/*. Through the portal, students can complete a state aid eligibility estimator, as well as apply for and learn more about state financial aid. Students can use the Student Workspace as an online college portfolio, saving vital information such as admission letters, scholarship applications, transcripts, resumes, etc. High school seniors should sign up for the portal. Underclassmen can sign up for the workspace and add the portal account during their senior year. Students can go seamlessly between the portal and workspace.

College alternatives— Help students understand there are many options for after high school. Students interested in joining the military or workforce can use the time set aside for Apply Missouri events to complete necessary applications, forms, and research. Encourage those who are undecided to fill out at least one college application for the experience, and the opportunity it may provide in the future.

School of Excellence

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC) is a national effort to increase the number of first-generation college students and students from low-income families pursuing a college degree or other higher education credential. For a second year, ACAC School of Excellence awards have recognized outstanding schools across the nation that are helping students pursue postsecondary success.

ACAC selected the School of Excellence award recipients based on their demonstrated commitment to student success for serving as an exemplary model for their state's application campaign and timely submission of student application data.

Missouri's winner for the 2021 Apply Missouri campaign was Blue Eye High School. The 2020 winner was Fort Osage High School, Independence. The 2019 winner was Osceola High School. We are extremely proud to present this award to the hard-working counselors and advisers that help Missouri students through the application process.

FAFSA Frenzy is in its 20th year and helps thousands of students complete the FAFSA each year.

FAFSA Frenzy is a part of national completion efforts headed up by the National College Attainmant Network (NCAN).

Helping Missouri students apply for financial aid

Thinking about how to pay for college can be overwhelming. Helping students navigate the financial aid process can help them get to college and complete a degree. FAFSA Frenzy is designed to help students secure financial aid. Community organizations, high schools, and colleges in Missouri are invited to participate in the program.

Purpose and expectations

The purpose of FAFSA Frenzy is to help students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA is the primary form used by federal, state, and institutional financial assistance programs in determining a student's eligibility for grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans.

The FAFSA is scheduled to be available Oct. 1, every year. Participating schools and organizations can plan activities any time October through January.

Participating schools are asked to:

- Register to host FAFSA Frenzy activities.
- Provide a computer lab for participants to complete the FAFSA.
- Recruit and manage volunteers in your area to ensure adequate staffing for your event.
- Promote the Journey to College Book Scholarship through My Scholarship Central.
- Collect participants names and birthdays on the sign-in sheet template found in the resource library and send to MDHEWD within three days following your event.
- Complete the site coordinator survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/fafsafrenzy.php*. This survey will ask for your number of participants, number of students submitting applications, and the total number of applications submitted. It will also ask for feedback to help improve the FAFSA Frenzy program in the future.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development will use this information to calculate your FAFSA Frenzy filing rates and help evaluate the effectiveness of the FAFSA Frenzy program.

Site Coordinator checklist

- ❒ Reserve facility space and needed technology for the event/activities. Add FAFSA Frenzy activities to the school calendar. Promote your event on social media, with signage, announcements, ads, etc.
- ❒ Contact your regional outreach coordinator to order free promotional items for your events. (See page 29)
- ❒ Have appropriate supplies on hand, such as pens and paper.
- ❒ Make sure computers have the FAFSA website saved as a favorite for easy access.
- ❒ Use the student sign-in sheet to gather student names and birth dates.
- ❒ Remind students to complete the Journey to College Book Scholarship application.
- ❒ Recruit volunteers in your area to ensure adequate staffing for your event. Volunteers do not have to be financial aid experts, but familiarity with the FAFSA would be helpful.
- ❒ Complete the FAFSA Frenzy Site Coordinator Survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/fafsafrenzy.php*.
- ❒ Mail completed sign-in sheets to: journeytocollege@dhewd.mo.gov or Journey to College team, MDHEWD, P.O. Box 1469, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1469.

FAFSA Frenzy Best Practices

- Encourage students and parents to set up their Federal Student Aid accounts with a username and password prior to your FAFSA Frenzy event at *https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account*. See tip sheets in the resource library.
- Send reminders to students and parents to bring appropriate supporting documentation to your FAFSA Frenzy event.

Volunteers

Site coordinators are responsible for recruiting and managing FAFSA Frenzy volunteers to ensure adequate staffing for an event. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development maintains a webpage for interested volunteers with event dates and site coordinator contact information. Volunteers are able to contact site coordinators at the location where they want to volunteer.

Sample Activities In-person Virtual

Get your piece of the pie — Incorporate pizza or pie into your FAFSA Frenzy promotion. Explain that filing the FAFSA is the only way to receive your piece of the federal grants and loans available.

FAFSA Frenzy Fright Night — The possibilities are endless when you incorporate Halloween as a fun theme for your FAFSA Frenzy event! Candy, spooky decorations, pumpkins -- or pumpkin-spiced lattes -- and more!

Go! Fight! FAFSA for the win! — School spirit is one of the best ways to get students, teachers, and parents involved and excited about filing the FAFSA. You could even host a FAFSA Frenzy the week before you kick off your school's homecoming or court-warming spirit week.

Utilizing holidays, seasons, major sporting events, and school spirit will help make your activities and/or events fun and relatable to the students.

Parking Lot /Drive-Thru FAFSA Frenzy — Consider hosting a FAFSA Frenzy outside in the parking lot. Set up a table with a few laptops and invite students and their parents to come to the parking lot on a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon for help completing their FAFSA. If wi-fi doesn't extend to the parking lot, use a couple of hotspots. Students and parents can also use their cell phones to complete the FAFSA on the myStudentAid app while remaining in their vehicles. Volunteers can be available to assist at the car window when needed. If you have access to a popcorn machine, use it as an attention getter! Just be sure to practice safety when handling food for others. Parents will appreciate your assistance and sensitivity to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Don't forget to order your promotional items at least 3 weeks prior to your event!
Check them out on page 30.

Host a Virtual FAFSA Frenzy

Video Options

Perhaps the easiest way to host a virtual event with an in-person feel would be to use whatever video conferencing software your school uses. Common platforms are Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Webex, and Skype. Use the social media press kit at thesocialpresskit.com/fafsafrenzy to post answers to common FAFSA questions in advance of your event to hopefully answer students' questions before the event happens. This can help reduce the number of students that need simple questions answered and allow students that need more unique help to be prioritized at your event. You can also promote creating a Federal Student Aid account to set up usernames and passwords prior to your FAFSA Frenzy event via social media.

Online Events and Breakout Rooms

When families log on to the event, they can be in a waiting room that is managed by someone on your team. Your FAFSA Frenzy volunteers can be set up in breakout rooms, and the event host can move students/families into their breakout rooms to chat. Volunteers can communicate with the event host to let them know when they are ready for the next student.

- **Suggested timeframe**: 2 – 2.5 hours
- **Cost**: potentially expensive if your school does not already have a virtual conferencing tool subscription
- **Number of Volunteers Recommended**: 3-5 FAFSA volunteers, 1-2 general volunteers
- **Creating breakout rooms in Microsoft Teams**: *https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/use-breakout-rooms-in-teams-meetings-7de1f48a-da07-466c-a5ab-4ebace28e461*
- **Creating breakout rooms in Google Meet**: *https://support.google.com/meet/answer/10099500?hl=en*
- **Creating breakout rooms in Zoom**: *https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476093-Getting-Started-with-Breakout-Rooms*

Scheduled Help

Another option is to confer with your volunteers and see if they would be willing to provide FAFSA assistance over a few days instead of just one evening. This may be the way to go if you have only a few volunteers, but many students who need FAFSA assistance. Set up a survey (or a scheduling app like Calendly, SignUp Genius, or Doodle) with the times that your volunteers are available. Students should sign up for time slots and be sent the virtual meeting details after they do so.

- **Suggested timeframe**: 1-2 hours per evening over a few days
- **Cost**: potentially expensive if your school does not already have a virtual conferencing tool subscription
- **Number of Volunteers Recommended**: 3-5 FAFSA volunteers, 1-2 general volunteers

Virtual FAFSA Frenzy Continued

Alphabet week

For more one-on-one assistance, you could divide your students by alphabet throughout the week. Set up events or time blocks where you have students with last names that start with (A-H) for one event, then next (I-M) and so on. This may help with larger senior class sizes and conducting a more personal and helpful virtual event.

- **Suggested timeframe**: whatever time is needed over a few days
- **Cost**: very low
- **Number of Volunteers Recommended**: 3-5 FAFSA volunteers, 1-2 general volunteers

Phone Options

Not all FAFSA questions need to be answered face-to-face. Sometimes a phone call is all that is needed. To do a "televent," set your date and time as usual, but instead of a location, publicize a phone number at your school that students can call. It's helpful if that phone has call waiting or rolls over to a different phone when not answered. You and possibly other staff should answer the phone calls as they come in to the school number. After you answer and get the student/family information for attendance, connect/transfer them to one of your FAFSA Frenzy volunteers that is on standby via phone. It is a good idea to have a text message or chat going with your volunteers so that you know when one of them is free to take the next call.

- **Suggested timeframe**: 2 – 2.5 hours
- **Cost**: very low
- **Number of Volunteers Recommended**: 3-5 FAFSA volunteers, 1-2 general volunteers

Resources

- FSA Helplines: *https://studentaid.gov/help-center/contact*
- FSA videos: *https://www.youtube.com/user/FederalStudentAid/videos*
- SignUp Genius: *https://www.signupgenius.com/*
- Doodle: *https://doodle.com/en/*

FAFSA Resources

Supplement your FAFSA outreach using these programs and tools from MDHEWD.

Finish Your FAFSA

The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development launched a new informational campaign called Finish Your FAFSA in 2021. This campaign will run again from January - March of 2023. We will be utilizing our social media to post helpful FAFSA tips as well as reminders for upcoming FAFSA deadlines. You are welcome to share our posts to get the word out to your students.

In addition to our own posts, we encourage you to utilize the social media toolkit available at the following link: *https://thesocialpresskit.com/journeytocollege* Posting reminders from your accounts will undoubtedly reach more students with this valuable information. Pre-made Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram posts are ready – and posting is as easy as clicking a button on the one you want to share. You can edit the text before you post to help customize the information for your students. We hope that you will join us in helping the Class of 2023 to Finish Their FAFSA!

FAFSA Completion Project

The goal of the Missouri FAFSA Completion Project is to increase the number of students in Missouri who successfully complete a FAFSA. High school administrators and counselors can access a secure webpage to view their High School FAFSA Report in order to offer assistance to students who need help completing a FAFSA. The report provides a list of their students who have filed a FAFSA, as well as a filing status (no signature, error, complete) and whether the student has been selected for verification.

The High School FAFSA Report is available beginning in mid- to late- October, when FAFSA information first becomes available for seniors, through June 30, when the seniors have graduated and the high school's working relationship with the student has ended.

Participation is at the district level. Superintendents enter into the FAFSA Data Access Agreement with the commissioner of higher education and designate the district employees authorized to access the student-specific data. Each authorized employee must register for a user ID and password.

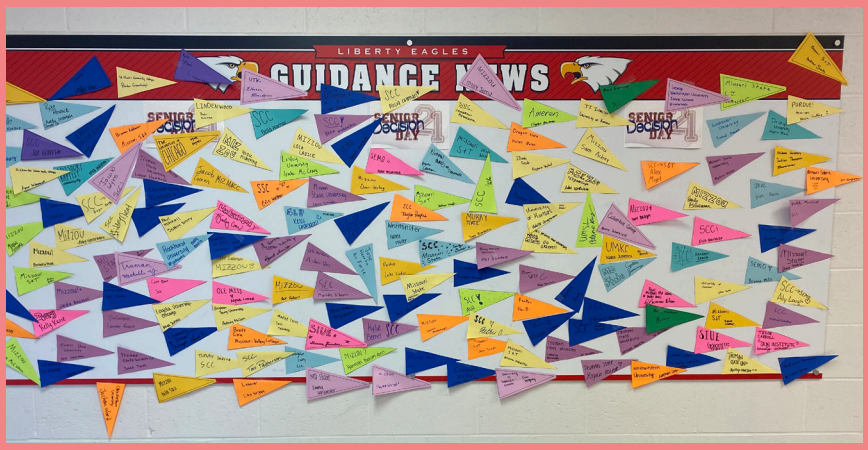
For more information or assistance with any part of the participation process, please email *FAFSACompletionProject@dhewd.mo.gov*.

Show-Me FAFSA Challenge

The Show-Me FAFSA Challenge is a statewide FAFSA completion competition among Missouri public high schools. Schools compete with each other for scholarship prizes to be awarded to one of their students in categories such as highest completion rate and most improved completion rate. See the Show-Me FAFSA Challenge webpage for more details. *https://dhewd.mo.gov/fafsachallenge*

Decision Day is part of the National College Signing Day celebration.

Decision Day is in its eighth year in Missouri.



Celebrating seniors' plans for the future

Decision Day celebrates seniors' postsecondary plans. It also generates excitement for graduating seniors and provides information to students who have not yet made plans.

Hosting activities and events during the school day and involving younger students will promote a college-going culture and the importance of planning for the future.

Purpose and expectations

Decision Day is held annually on or near May 1 and is designed to coincide with the date by which most students must inform a college of their plans to enroll.

Participating schools are asked to:

- Register to host an event/activity.
- Recognize all students for their postsecondary plans, including plans to attend a vocational tech school, two- or four-year college or university, enter the military, start an apprenticeship or job, or pursue other postsecondary training.
- If possible, include the entire student body in your celebration and make sure that students who do not yet have plans know that they still have options.
- Complete the site coordinator survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/decisionday.php*. This survey will ask for your final number of participating seniors and the number with plans after high school. It also will ask for feedback to help improve the Decision Day program in the future.

Planning your Decision Day activities/events

Site Coordinator checklist

- ❒ Develop your schedule of activities.
- ❒ Add activities to the school calendar
- ❒ Contact your regional outreach coordinator to order free promotional items for your events. (See page 30)
- ❒ Promote via social media, signage, announcements, ads, etc.
- ❒ Include younger grade levels in activities to promote a college-going culture.
- ❒ Complete the site coordinator survey at *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/decisionday.php*.

Quick Tips

Decision Day activities will look different at each school. Make your schedule of activities or events based on your school's individual needs. Have fun, be creative, and celebrate with the entire student body, faculty, and staff.

For those students who are waiting to make a decision or are still unsure of their plans, this might be an anxious time. Not everyone follows the same timeline and the most important thing is that they understand the deadlines for whatever path they are considering.

Sample Activities In-person Virtual

"Ask me about it!" activity — This activity asks staff members to get involved and gives students the opportunity to learn a little more about their teachers. Have faculty and staff display a poster that lists their alma mater(s) and post college signs in other areas of the school. You can also create a scavenger hunt during a specific time frame and allow students to complete challenges. Examples include finding as many schools as possible, finding the school farthest away, the school with the most alumni, etc. Award small prizes.

The purpose of this activity is to identify staff members by their institutions of higher education and to engage students in a dialogue with faculty regarding college access, college preparation, application, enrollment, etc.

Sample Activities Continued

- **College Bingo** — You can utilize the prefilled and/or fillable sample bingo cards to make this a great activity to involve the entire student body. Have all homeroom teachers distribute bingo cards on the same day. Ask students to locate teachers or other staff members who have experienced the different scenarios. Be sure to ask students to only use one person for each space.

- **Create a "College Wall"** — Have seniors write the names of the college they plan to attend on banners or strips of construction paper to hang in a main hallway. You can also hang school pennants or mascots with the names of those students attending that school throughout the hallways. Utilize art teachers (if available) to develop additional materials to promote a college-going culture on the walls of your school. You can even create or utilize a large U.S. or Missouri map where students drop a pin, note, or mark where they plan to attend college.

- **Assembly** — Host an all-school assembly to celebrate seniors' plans for higher education. This could be an add-on to an already established school activity or a stand-alone event. Make sure to invite all grade levels to participate. Consider having the Kindergarten class walk across the stage with seniors.

- **Decision Day Donuts** — This is a simple breakfast option to help kick off your Decision Day!

- **Where have you been? Where are you going?** — Print out a blank pennant and give it to teachers and students to fill out. Create two separate wall collections of "Where have you been?" teacher pennants and "Where are you going?" student pennants.

- **Decision Day Door Decorating** — Have teachers decorate their classroom doors with the colors and logos of their alma mater and advice to students to create a college-going culture throughout the school. This could be an easy way for students and teachers to engage and talk about different aspects and expectations of college life.

- **Instagram photo prop** — Create a large photo booth prop for students to stand in the middle of for pictures! You can then post the pictures to your school's social media, and even get a retweet from our Journey to college Twitter page.

Don't forget to order your promotional items at least 3 weeks prior to your event!
Check them out on page 30.

Sample Activities Continued

Guest speakers — Whether you host a school assembly, a community event, Instagram Live, or Twitter chat, invite high school alumni, elected officials, college admissions and financial aid representatives, local business leaders, and parents to elaborate from personal experience about the importance of college. Ask faculty and staff at your school to give their single "best advice" to the students as well.

Interviews — Interview seniors about their postsecondary plans and send the articles or videos to local news outlets or post on your school's website and social media pages. Ask media classes to incorporate their stories in school newspaper ads or articles; or create a special section in the school newspaper that gives the names of seniors and their postsecondary plans. Ask seniors to visit with elementary and middle school classes to share their future plans. Choose a variety of students to showcase different pathways they may be taking.

College gear — Encourage students and school staff to wear college T-shirts on a particular day of the week. Note: Great to utilize this if you have a main Decision Day activity or event date planned.

Social media — Set up a photo booth or ask students to post photos of themselves with the Decision Day photo booth props. Post photos on your school's website and social media using the designated #MODecisionDay or #IDecided hashtags.

Guess Who — Schools can use their social media feeds or online platforms to post a series of small clues about a teacher or staff member. Clues can include the high school and college the teacher attended, as well as their major and graduation year. Students can post their guesses online or on a fillable graphic, with small prizes awarded to the winners.

By sharing the educational background, faculty and staff can better engage students who might have questions about college preparation, the application process, enrollment, and more. Ask students to engage with posts and ask questions.

Sample Activities Continued

Pennants/signs/social media — Ask students to fill out the "I Decided" sign or create their own at home; they could also create their own college pennant to show their decision. Students can share which school they've decided to attend, as well as what path they've chosen to take – entering the workforce, military, apprenticeship or work-based learning, associate degree, or bachelor's degree. Ask students to use the hashtag #MODecisionDay and tag the school and @Journey2College in their posts. If students don't have social media or don't feel comfortable posting on their own pages but want to share their decision, designate someone for students to email their photos/videos to in order for the school to post them.

Garage door/Front door decorating — Suggest students and families celebrate their seniors' high school career and kick off their next steps by decorating their front door or garage doors. Ask them to post photos on social media and/or send to the school for posting online. This will help generate excitement and a college-going culture at your school.

Car Parade — Teachers can celebrate seniors' plans for after high school by decorating their vehicles with signs, balloons, and window chalk and drive a specific route to pass by seniors' homes.

College Tours — Help students make final choices by visiting campuses online or in person.

Resource Library *https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/journeytocollegeresourcemanual.php*

Below is a list of online resources available on our website to help make your Apply Missouri, FAFSA Frenzy, and Decision Day events a success.

Apply Missouri

- ❒ Bingo card
- ❒ Trivia questions
- ❒ College Fit Worksheet
- ❒ High School Code List for the ACT
- ❒ Apply Missouri Fliers
- ❒ Creating an FSA ID Tips Sheet
- ❒ Sign-in Sheet (excel and pdf)
- ❒ Apply Missouri presskit
- ❒ Student survey
- ❒ Site Coordinator Survey

FAFSA Frenzy

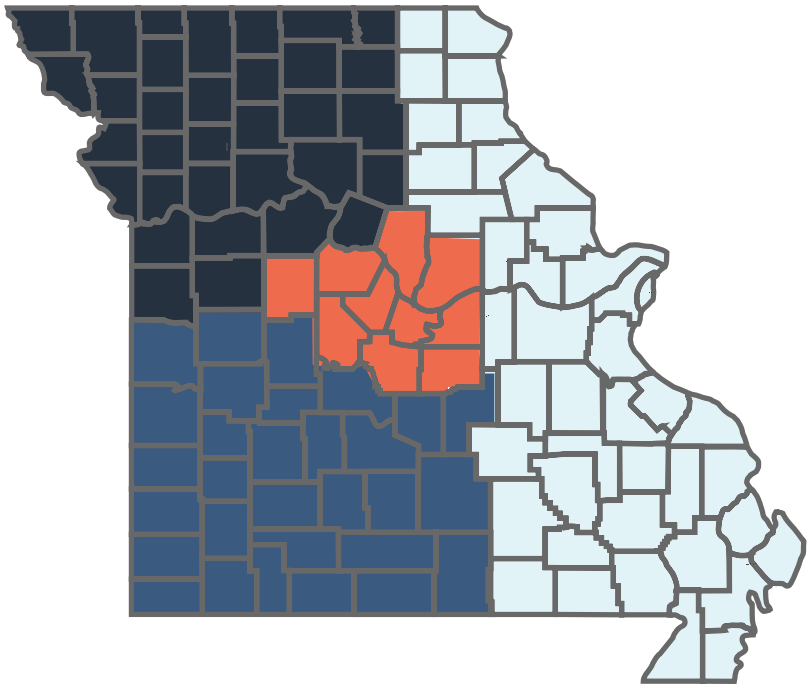
- ❒ Creating an FSA ID Tips Sheet
- ❒ FAFSA Frenzy fliers
- ❒ College Cost Comparison Worksheet
- ❒ Sign-in Sheet (excel and pdf)
- ❒ Journey to College Book Scholarship Instructions Flier
- ❒ Yard Signs/Directional arrow signs
- ❒ FAFSA Frenzy Presskit
- ❒ Site Coordinator Survey

Decision Day

- ❒ Ask Me About It Activity Instructions
- ❒ Ask Me About It Activity Template
- ❒ Bingo card
- ❒ Photo Booth Props
- ❒ Decision Day Fliers
- ❒ It's Not Too Late handout
- ❒ Decision Day Presskit
- ❒ Site Coordinator Survey

MDHEWD Outreach Regional Map

Contact the Outreach Services Coordinator in your region for more information and assistance.



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(573) 291-9149

Communications Sign-up

https://dhewd.mo.gov/connect.php

View and Order Publications

https://dhewd.mo.gov/publications.php

Promo Items

Journey to College Rainbow Gel Pens

Journey to College Color Changing Pencils

Journey to College Color Changing Cups

Journey to College Decision Day mini foam fingers

Journey to College color changing stress balls

Journey to College promotional banner

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