



AWARD WINNER CASE STUDIES

The following data reflect strategies employed by ten Alabama high schools that received the MVP Award and the Most Improved Award for the highest rate of FAFSA completion and greatest year-over-year improvement rate in FAFSA completion, respectively.

MOST COMMON STRATEGIES

Eight out of ten schools utilized three approaches to support families with FAFSA completion.



INFO SESSION

Provide FAFSA info at the beginning of the academic year



FSA ID CREATION

Create accounts early during school hours



IN-PERSON EVENT

Offer families direct support on the school's campus



DELAYED WAIVERS

The majority of award-winning schools delayed promoting or utilizing the opt-out waiver.



WORKFORCE

INTEREST

With increased interest in workforce opportunities, educators used FAFSA completion as a counseling tool, emphasizing the FAFSA's importance for paying for future technical and trade programs. By earning valuable credentials through these programs, students can advance their careers and increase their wage-earning potential.

PARTNERSHIPS

Educators cultivated close relationships with internal and external partners



COMMUNICATIONS

Educators used various platforms to promote the FAFSA. While some schools relied on electronic communications through Schoology, texts, social media, and email newsletters; other schools used in-person platforms like school announcements and broadcasts.

ELECTRONIC



IN-PERSON



TAILORED RESOURCES



Educators created custom resources for families to better understand the FAFSA process. These included folders given at an information night, PowerPoint slides with screenshots of the application, and a How to Pay for College guide.



INCENTIVE IDEAS

Six out of ten high schools used incentives like gift cards, prom tickets, and dorm essentials to encourage FAFSA completion.



2024-25

AWARD WINNER CASE STUDIES



MVP

HEWITT-TRUSSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

With such a large senior class, Career Coach Lisa Smith and Counselor Jessica Morris worked closely to build early awareness with families through an evening information session in the fall. Families received consistent messaging via the newsletter and a curated landing page of FAFSA resources. After a successful hands-on workshop in early spring, educators directly contacted the remaining families to schedule appointments to offer support.

EXTRA LARGE

MARY G. MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL

After giving introductory presentations during Enrichment classes, Counselor Savannah Gillman hosted two FAFSA workshops, one during the school day and one in the evening with the help of Bishop State Community College and University of South Alabama. A friendly competition among the Enrichment classes motivated students to complete the task early, while regular reminders on social media and Schoology kept their families informed.

MOST IMPROVED

FAIRHOPE HIGH SCHOOL

Counselor Treavie Ainsworth and Career Coach Gabrielle Massey started the conversation early by preparing families of rising seniors in spring for what to expect next year. Classroom presentations in August were followed by FSA ID creation in September. Despite having a large senior class, educators offered one-on-one support to troubleshoot issues and discuss any barriers for students who had not completed during the spring semester.

LARGE

CARVER HIGH SCHOOL

To reach a growing senior class after two high schools merged, Counselor Pamela Williams Johnson hosted several events in the fall including a college tailgate and roundtable discussion with alumni. Students were incentivized to complete the FAFSA by December in order to win prom tickets, giftcards, and other college-related gear. They also received hands-on support via financial aid labs offered for three hours every other week.

SARALAND HIGH SCHOOL

During senior information night, Counselor Kim Zwierzynski and Career Coach Emily Easterbrook discussed the graduation checklist. Soon after, FSA IDs were created and the student portion of the FAFSA was completed during school hours with extra credit as an incentive. Parents could complete their portion on campus with support from local colleges. Any family that had not completed the form received a letter reminding them of this important task.

MEDIUM

ALBARTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Counselor Lindsey Knott and Career Coach Lindsey Beck created a timeline and provided regular opportunities for families to complete the FAFSA. From frequent sessions in the library where students could come and go as needed to FAFSA food truck events after school, families were motivated to meet the school's March 1st deadline. Families were also frequently reminded of the graduation requirement through Remind and Google Voice.

GUNTERSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Career Coach Sherry Brown supported students with setting up their FSA IDs quickly and completing as much of the form as possible during school hours. A Senior Work Day offered students a dedicated opportunity to focus on college- and career-related tasks while juniors took the ACT. Students who completed by March were given an E-learning day, while students who had not completed were provided direct assistance.

SMALL

COLLINSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

To build awareness, Counselor Georgana Crisson and Career Coach Brandy Dupree used Google classroom to promote the FAFSA. Through the platform, families could sign up to receive support in the school's computer lab. To enhance the community's understanding of the process, students participating in the video production class created a podcast all about financial aid, which was promoted on the school's social media.

EXTRA SMALL

DADEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Counselor Kim Counts started with parent meetings at the beginning of the year and promoted early FAFSA completion by setting a December deadline for a chance to be entered into a FAFSA Frenzy drawing. This incentive motivated seniors to finish the form early in order to win appealing prizes that included essential items for their future dorm room or apartment. Students could receive one-on-one support to ensure completion.

BCS VIRTUAL ACADEMY OF LEARNING

Although working with a virtual population presented a few challenges, Counselor Brad Hodge used homeroom check-ins to provide virtual on-demand FAFSA support. Students were incentivized to complete their FAFSA in order to take advantage of the Birmingham Promise Scholarship, and the district sent out regular reminders via email and Remind. Campus tours and college fairs cemented the importance of getting the task done.