

College Application and FAFSA Campaigns

Including Senior Signing Day

A RISE Network Strategy Guide



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About the RISE Network

The RISE Network represents a partnership between teachers, counselors, and administrators working in different communities to help all students achieve college, career, and life success. Founded in 2016, the Connecticut RISE Network’s mission is to empower educators to achieve breakthrough results, helping all students realize and achieve their full potential. RISE currently partners with 10 public high schools across nine districts, serving over 13,000 students. We collaborate as a community of educators to use data to pinpoint needs, form hypotheses, and pursue ideas to advance student achievement. In addition to our direct partnerships and student outcomes goals, we aspire to have catalytic impact. Just as we share innovations and learnings within and across the RISE Network, we are also committed to sharing resources in an open-source way with educators to enhance our collective impact. We hope this strategy guide supports your efforts to improve student engagement, learning, and achievement in your community.

I. Strategy Guide

Context and Goals

High schools in the RISE Network implement strategies to promote student engagement, on-track achievement, and college and career readiness. Through our partnership, we embrace evidence-based strategies and ideas informed by national research, educator expertise, student voice, and data insights. As we pilot new ideas and understand what works under which conditions, RISE is committed to supporting educators with tools and resources to support scalable change, systems solutions, and improved student outcomes. As a community, we learn from one another's successes, challenges, and unique approaches to advance shared goals.

Guide Sections

Through the RISE Network strategy guides, we are excited to share actionable ideas and tools with educators driving student success in their local communities. Each of the RISE strategy guides are organized to include the following sections, which are summarized here.

- II. **Strategy Overview:** This section provides an introduction to the strategy and our approach. We use local and national research to illustrate the need we aim to address.
- III. **Strategy Components:** Each strategy involves specific steps or components, and this section breaks the strategy into more manageable parts.
- IV. **Templates and Tools:** RISE aims to maximize impact and minimize time spent reinventing the wheel. This section provides links to resources to support implementation. Most are in the form of Google slides and documents that can be copied for editing and local customization.
- V. **Strategies in Action:** Each high school in the RISE Network implements the network-wide strategies, but local implementation varies by school. This section provides specific ideas from partner schools, showcasing how schools put their own spin on the network strategies.
- VI. **Helpful Tips:** RISE partners are committed to continuous learning and improvement. This section summarizes learnings from multiple rounds of implementation and refinement.
- VII. **Project Planning:** Turning ideas into action takes careful planning. This section provides step-by-step project management tools to organize action steps, both during the planning and implementation phases.
- VIII. **Progress Monitoring:** Great student outcomes are our top priority. This section explains how the strategy is designed to positively impact students. It also provides guidance and reflection questions to support progress monitoring and continuous improvement.



II. College Application and FAFSA Campaigns Overview

Need and Opportunity

By 2020, more than 70% of Connecticut jobs will require some form of education beyond a high school diploma, and nine of the 10 fastest-growing occupations require at least an associate's degree.¹ While research shows that most students aspire to a college education, only 20% of Connecticut's low-income high school graduates will earn a college degree within six years of graduating from high school. College enrollment, persistence, and completion data also show alarming gaps for English learners and low-income, Black, Hispanic, and special education students.²



The college application and financial aid processes can be overwhelming for students and families, and oftentimes the work to complete these critical steps becomes concentrated during students' senior year. One of those steps, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, can help make college a more affordable postsecondary option for students, and data show a strong relationship between FAFSA completion and college graduation. Each year, students nationwide miss out on close to \$3 billion in available federal funding due to not submitting the FAFSA.³

Our Approach

In an effort to ensure all students graduate from high school with a meaningful and personalized postsecondary plan, RISE collaborates with high schools to make college and career readiness and access visible and consistent parts of the school culture. College application and FAFSA completion campaigns aim to maximize the number of students who submit strong applications and unlock future opportunities. Daunting as they can be, application processes include relatively clear steps for students enrolling in college, enlisting in the military, or entering the workforce. College application campaigns encourage all students to apply to at least one college, and the campaign structure makes the process more manageable for students, including a culminating Senior Signing Day event that elevates and celebrates students' selection of postsecondary pathways.

The campaigns build on schools' work with students in Grades 9 through 11, when students explore options, meet in small groups, and indicate their emerging plans through annual exit surveys. During senior year, students engage in senior planning meetings, review checklists, complete essays, solicit recommendations, and submit applications. FAFSA completion campaigns kick off in the fall when students and families can begin to submit the FAFSA. Schools use different tactics (e.g., parent workshops, flyers, after-school help) to encourage all students to complete the FAFSA and provide necessary support to facilitate the process. The campaigns also celebrate student and school progress relative to goals as students are submitting applications, and during a high-energy Senior Signing Day event in May or June. The greatest return on investment can be achieved when these campaigns are paired with strong college and career readiness efforts, rooted in rigorous academic preparation and career exploration throughout the high school years.

¹ 2018 Field Guide to Education. ConnCAN. <https://conncan.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/03/2018-ConnCAN-Field-Guide-to-Education-in-Connecticut.pdf>.

² National Student Clearinghouse Report for CSBE. 2017.

http://edsight.ct.gov/NSC%20Reports/9999970hs_10001735_10001735_62079_BASIC_EFFDT_20161117_RUNDT_20161221160227373.pdf; College Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation: Statewide Results. CSDE. 2015. <http://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/College%20Enrollment%20Statewide%20Results%202015.pdf>.

³How to Grab Nearly 3 Billion of College Aid, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnwasik/2018/10/19/how-to-grab-nearly-3-billion-of-college-aid/>

III. Strategy Components

Summary

College application and FAFSA completion campaigns can support and reinforce a culture of postsecondary access and success. To maximize their impact, college application and FAFSA completion campaigns require careful planning and attention to detail. This section outlines the major phases or components of a campaign strategy. These elements are listed sequentially, and Section IV provides templates and tools to plan and execute many of these strategy components.



Design and Planning

Goal-Setting and Calendaring: Strong college campaigns require a compelling goal, motivating targets, and clear timeline, in addition to carefully planned and sequenced opportunities for students to receive support during the campaign process. School teams should use historical data to explore college application and FAFSA completion rates and to establish targets for the campaigns. For example, some schools aim for all students who plan to attend a 2- or 4-year college to submit at least one application by a given date, often December 31st. Some schools use their campaign goal to emphasize the importance of applying to colleges at different levels of selectivity by, for example, establishing an expectation that students apply to at least one reach, match, and safety school. In planning supports for students, consider which parts of the process present significant roadblocks for students and plan workshops, office hours, lessons, or other opportunities around those steps.

Postsecondary Planning Tracker: Schools must develop and maintain systems to track students' postsecondary milestones. Too often, information about students' postsecondary goals, college applications, FAFSA status, etc. exist in disparate locations and trackers. Using a one-stop tracker that aggregates information stored in multiple sources (e.g., Naviance, Powerschool, College Board, Google Sheets) can help pinpoint student needs, monitor cohort progress, and collaborate in support of students. Begin by bringing together a representative group of staff to help design or revise a tool to capture and centralize information that counselors, college and career staff, administrators, and Grade 12 teachers need to be able to readily access. In creating this type of spreadsheet, RISE high schools have found it helpful to include column headers for basic student information (e.g., name, ID, counselor), students' stated postsecondary goals (e.g., military, 2-year college, 4-year college, technical program), steps in the process (e.g., completed brag sheet, number of college applications submitted, FAFSA status), acceptances, and final decision. A tracking system enables the campaign process and pays dividends over the course of the year, including providing updated information for culminating celebrations such as Senior Signing Day and graduation.

Strategy Implementation

Team Coordination and Collaboration: A diverse group of educators support students in developing and pursuing their postsecondary plans. Schools should establish a regular time for key staff to come together, analyze relevant data, and coordinate next steps in response to the data. These meetings generally include some combination of counselors, college and career staff, grade-level administrators, teachers, and/or class

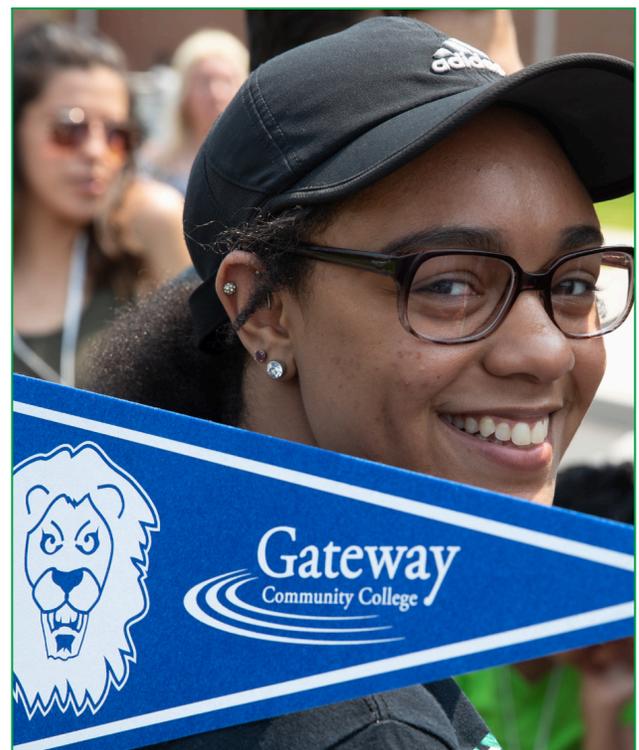
advisers. Some schools also leverage student leaders in their campaigns and the broader work of the college and career office. These meetings should serve as opportunities to identify trends in students' progress through the postsecondary process and for the team to collaborate around support for individual students and groups.

Start-of-Year Small Group Meetings: Some RISE high schools have found it helpful to bring small groups of seniors together in September or October based on similar self-identified postsecondary plans (e.g., military, 2-year college, technical program, 4-year college, workforce). During these meetings, staff introduce the campaign -- the goals, timeline, and objectives -- and share information relevant to those students' pathways (e.g., requirements, deadlines, available supports). In these sessions, students also take key initial steps (e.g., starting the Common Application, linking their accounts to Naviance). These sessions complement individual meetings between students and school counselors. School staff find the group sessions helpful for coordinating messaging and infusing a spirit of collaboration among students pursuing similar goals.

College-Going Culture-Building: College application and FAFSA completion campaigns can support -- but also require -- a healthy college-going culture. Staff should be intentional about infusing experiences and messages that motivate students through the complex and difficult work of completing applications. School staff build culture and community around these shared goals in a variety of ways, including: thermometer-style hallway displays and recognition of individual students' progress; regular updates during school announcements; days designated to wear college gear; and social media posts connected to the national #WhyApply campaign.

Intentional Planning for Career- and Military-Bound Students: Students pursuing pathways other than college experience different timelines and requirements. In addition to ensuring career- and military-bound students benefit from the same levels of individualized postsecondary supports that any graduating senior should expect, it is important to make campaigns feel inclusive. Schools have accomplished this by planning networking activities where students exploring the military are able to connect with servicemembers or veterans from multiple branches of the armed services, or where those entering particular trades are invited to participate in visits to engage with professionals in those fields. Opportunities where students can develop resumes, practice their interview skills, and engage in hiring fairs with local employers can also be high-impact.

Leveraging Community Partnerships: Completing the FAFSA can be a daunting step for students and their families. It requires coordination with students' families, demands focused time and energy, and also involves tax and financial terminology and documentation that are unfamiliar to most students (and many adults!). Many schools find it helpful to engage community partners with FAFSA expertise by inviting representatives from local banks or credit unions or other financial professionals -- retired or active -- who are willing to donate their time to the campaign can help students and families navigate this sometimes-tricky part of the process. RISE high schools have also found success in tapping into FAFSA programming organized by local college access organizations, both independent non-profits and city- or state-affiliated organizations that offer support to students who are pursuing higher education.





Recognizing and Sharing Acceptances: As acceptance letters start rolling in, it is important to recognize and celebrate students' good news and emerging postsecondary plans. In part, this acknowledges the considerable efforts that get students to this point and the many triumphs over challenges along the way. Simple visual reminders of these positive outcomes keep up the momentum and energy through months-long campaigns. Schools can build visibility around students' postsecondary plans by sharing photographs on social media and creating a central bulletin board in the school with a photo collage of acceptance pictures or a thermometer to track progress (e.g., college applications, acceptances) relative to goals.

Celebrating Postsecondary Plans: Many RISE high schools organize culminating Senior Signing Day events in May or June to create a special time and space to honor students' individual pathways after high school. While graduation is an exciting tradition to mark the conclusion of students' high school careers, Senior Signing Day events encourage students to share and

celebrate their diverse and personalized plans to join the military, enroll in college or trade programs, or join the workforce. This specific style of pre-graduation event typically has a more festive, energetic tone for students to congratulate each other, get excited about the next step in their own journeys, and strengthen bonds with other students bound for the same college, trade school, or branch of the military. High schools often choose to have underclassmen in the audience to build a college-going culture among younger students and seize the opportunity to elevate other postsecondary pathways, such as apprenticeships or military service.

A Note for Implementation During COVID-19: During this time, it is important to keep the energy and momentum up with students pursuing their postsecondary plans after graduation. Many students and families are changing their original thoughts about what's next after graduation. Engaging students through virtual Google Meets, hosting office hours, and moving family events online are a great way to help students and families have access to their traditional individual and group interventions. Engaging students through social media and text messages is another way to make sure seniors have announcements on what is next in the process. Using [Senior List Meetings](#) is also a strategy for identifying as a team what students have not articulated a postsecondary plan or are off track for their stated postsecondary plan. Finally, consider how you can partner with additional staff in the building, either partnering to push in to virtual classes to share information for seniors, or partnering on how teachers can be involved in encouraging students to complete key tasks.

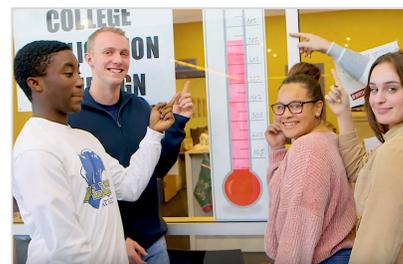
IV. Templates and Tools

This section provides links to tools and resources to support the design and implementation of college application and FAFSA completion campaigns, and the planning for Senior Signing Day celebrations. This includes planning templates, sample presentations, student handouts, and postsecondary checklists. Most of the materials are provided in a Google format, allowing schools to easily copy and customize the content. Click on the blue hyperlinks below to access the various templates and tools as standalone files. The materials are school-agnostic, meaning that schools may customize these materials by adding school logos and branding. Many of these resources are also compiled in the [Appendix](#) at the end of this document for ease of reference.

College Application Campaign

[Overview Video](#)

This short video provides an introduction to the college and career supports offered across the RISE Network, including college application and FAFSA campaigns. The video features conversations with college and career staff and students discussing the importance and impact of this work on students' postsecondary goals and attainment.



[College and Career Culture Inventory](#)

This inventory guides school leaders and staff through a process of identifying strengths and growth areas around promoting postsecondary readiness and access. School teams may want to use this near the beginning of the school year to identify assets to leverage throughout the year, as well as strategic priorities. Teams should solicit and generate honest and accurate reflections, and seek to ground their assessment in qualitative and quantitative data.

College and Career Culture Inventory

Instructions: This inventory tool is based on Dr. Patricia McDonough's framework for building and strengthening a school's college and career culture. For each element, indicate ("X") your assessment of our school's stage of implementation.

Definitions of Stages of Implementation:

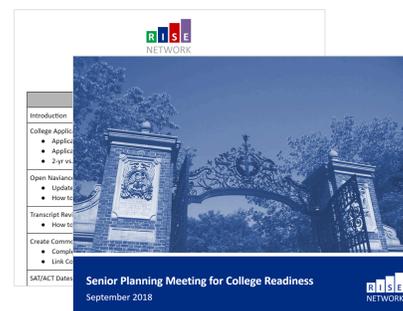
- **Not Yet:** Limited evidence and/or spotty implementation (e.g. individual staff members or teams).
- **Initial Stages:** Evidence of early and intentional progress, potentially with some stronger pockets.
- **Developing:** Considerable adoption and implementation with areas for continued growth and expansion.
- **Well-Established:** Full, consistent, and exemplary implementation. Model school for this element.

Elements of College and Career Culture	Stages of Implementation			
	Not Yet	Initial Stages	Developing	Well-Established
1. College and Career Talk: Clear, ongoing communication about college and careers so that all students develop a college- and career-bound identity.				
2. Clear Expectations: Explicit goals around college and career preparation are defined and communicated clearly, consistently, and in a variety of ways.				
3. Information and Resources: Students have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college and career information.				
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model: All counselors are postsecondary-focused counselors, and all				

Senior Group Meeting Resources

These resources support small group meetings with high school seniors during the beginning of the school year. Schools should survey students to understand their postsecondary goals (e.g., military, workforce, college), and then engage students in differentiated small-group sessions to provide guidance and support at the beginning of the application process. Exit surveys administered after the group meetings then allow counselors to follow up with individual students in targeted ways.

- Four-year path: [Sample Slides](#), [Meeting Agendas](#)
- Two-year path: [Sample Slides](#), [Meeting Agendas](#)
- Military path: [Sample Slides](#), [Meeting Agendas](#)
- Apprenticeship path: [Sample Slides](#), [Meeting Agendas](#)
- Workforce path: [Sample Slides](#), [Meeting Agendas](#)
- [Sample Senior Exit Survey](#), completed at the end of group meetings



Postsecondary Pathway Checklists

These checklists provide students, families, and staff with a high-level summary of the process for postsecondary pathways: four-year college, two-year college/technical school, military, apprenticeship, and workforce. Each handout breaks down senior year tasks into small steps and milestones with corresponding timelines. These checklists may be particularly helpful in demystifying the process for first-generation college students as well as equipping students to monitor their own progress toward pursuing their postsecondary goals.



Four-Year College Application Checklist		
Milestone	Completion Date	
Meet with your counselor to discuss interest in attending a four-year college and draft initial college list during junior planning meeting	March - April (Junior year)	
Create Common Application account	September	
Complete the Profile and Education section on your Common Application and link with Naviance	September	
Meet with your counselor to confirm interest in the four-year college path, update email address, and complete "Colleges I'm Applying To" list in Naviance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review checklist requirements, including type of application Register to retake SAT if needed 	September	
Complete Brag Sheet in Naviance	September	
Request recommendation letters from teachers	September - November	
Complete Common Application and/or all college applications	September - November	
Create FAFSA account and FSA ID and CSS/Financial Aid profile if needed	October	

Sample Senior Midpoint Survey

This sample survey serves as a data collection tool midway through students' senior year to efficiently gather information about students' progress on college applications and the FAFSA. Students can identify areas where they may need additional assistance. RISE high schools have used this survey tool ahead of a major college readiness events to enable staff to prioritize and personalize supports and touchpoints based on students' responses.

Senior Midpoint Survey

Form description

Email address *

Valid email address

This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)

First Name *

Short answer text

Last Name *

Short answer text

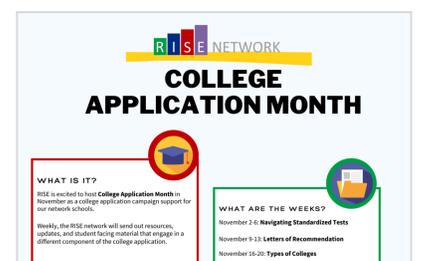
#WhyApply Selfie Printout

#WhyApply is a national social media campaign that can serve as a powerful catalyst to build excitement and engagement around postsecondary planning. This document includes an explanation of the 2018 #WhyApply social media campaign, as well as a selfie printout for school participation in the campaign. Students (and adults!) can fill in their reason(s) for applying to college and take a selfie to post on their social media accounts, as well as school-affiliated accounts, as appropriate.



College Application Month

College Application Month is a RISE internal network strategy to increase college application completion during the month of November by leveraging a different application metric weekly. Weekly during this month, the RISE Network will share a newsletter, a student one pager full of shareable information, and strategies on how to drive completion. Weekly topics include standardized tests, letters of recommendation, the college essay, and types of college applications.



Reach Higher College Signing Day Toolkit

This toolkit, provided by Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher Initiative, includes helpful ideas, resources, and links to support preparation for Senior Signing Day events or increase the impact of an existing event. Schools can increase their event’s visibility and receive additional resources by registering on the [Reach Higher website](#).



Sample Senior Surveys

These Google Forms can be adapted and used by teams collecting information from seniors in the weeks leading up to graduation. While some schools opt for a short exit survey to collect students’ plans to unveil at Senior Signing Day, others find value in longer surveys that dig into students’ experiences throughout the postsecondary planning process.

- [Postsecondary Plans Survey](#) for a quick snapshot
- [Senior Survey Question Bank](#) for detailed information gathering

A screenshot of a Google Form with two sections. The first section is titled "[RISE HIGH SCHOOL] Postsecondary Plans Survey" and the second is "[RISE HIGH SCHOOL] Senior Exit Survey [QUESTION BANK]". Both sections have a "Required" label. The form includes fields for "Email address" and "First name".

Sample Senior Signing Day Schedule

This sample schedule from Platt High School in Meriden illustrates how some schools have opted to extend a Senior Signing Day into a full-day event. This schedule includes both an assembly-style ceremony and a relaxed celebration outside with refreshments, a photo booth, and raffle prizes throughout the afternoon to allow students time to connect and celebrate as a class before the formal cap-and-gown fanfare of graduation.

A graphic titled "Platt Senior Signing Day Schedule" with the RISE NETWORK logo. It contains a table with columns for Time, Activity, and Lead.

Time	Activity	Lead
9:45 AM	Announcement for juniors and seniors to come to the gym - Band begins to play in gym	Principal Band Director
10:00 AM	Program begins - Emcee welcomes everyone, introduces program	Emcee
10:05 AM	Brief speeches - Welcome from Principal - Message from Superintendent - Two teacher speeches	Emcee
10:20 AM	Recognition of seniors by college, military, and workforce plans - Each group is called out alphabetically by institution name, students stand as their individual names are read - Military/Veteran Guest to introduce Military	Emcee Counselors/CCR Coordinator
10:50 AM	Emcee closes, gives dismissal instructions to juniors	Emcee

Sample Senior Signing Day Ceremony Materials

These sample materials for a program (emcee) script, speaker talking points, and corresponding slide deck offer a basic foundation based on previous Senior Signing Day events at network schools. These materials can be modified to meet a school’s specific vision, run-of-show, and selected venue and time allotment; they can also serve as plug-and-play templates by simply adding in student names and their respective colleges.

- [Slide deck](#) with college logos
- [Emcee script](#)
- [Potential talking points](#) for special guests and speakers



[#CollegeSigningDay Selfie Printout](#)

This printout can be used as a social media component connected to Senior Signing Day events. Students, staff, and families can take selfies in their college gear and share to their own social media accounts and/or school-affiliated accounts, using the included hashtags to increase visibility of the celebration and join in on the national movement.



V. Strategies in Action

Within the RISE Network, partner schools adapt each of the network-wide strategies to align to their local needs, vision, and context. While the goals and central components are consistent across partner schools, each school puts a local spin on their approach. Educators in each school collaborate to design and implement the strategies consistent with the school's goals, priorities, and culture.

Hill Regional Career High School

Hill Regional Career High School in New Haven (locally known as “Career”) takes a community-based approach to supporting college access. For example, Career leverages a partnership with Higher Heights, a local nonprofit that supports college-bound students from underrepresented backgrounds, to support FAFSA completion rates. Higher Heights helps to source volunteers to work with Grade 12 students and their families through a series of FAFSA Night workshops. The school's College and Career Center and Higher Heights hosts these events to inform and engage students and families around financial planning for college, including the FAFSA. This partnership responds to the needs for additional adult support and expertise related specifically to the FAFSA, and these workshops support the school's FAFSA completion goals through their FAFSA campaign.

The FAFSA workshops hosted at Career included introductions by school staff to connect students and families with available resources, an overview of information found in the online FAFSA toolkit, and an interactive workshop to set up FAFSA accounts. The event closed with work time during which attendees received one-on-one support from school staff or volunteers from Higher Heights and other local colleges or businesses.

Platt and Maloney High Schools

Platt and Maloney High Schools in Meriden launched their college application campaigns by sharing key information with high school seniors in an effort to empower and equip students with postsecondary guidance. Counselors organized seniors into small “Grad Groups” based on shared student-identified postsecondary goals (e.g., workforce, military, college). Each Grad Group met with counselors during the first few weeks of the new school year. The schools' College and Career Coordinators and Grade 12 school counselors facilitated these sessions to offer targeted information aligned to each Grad Group's respective postsecondary goals. These sessions also fostered peer networks among seniors pursuing similar plans after high school.

Counselors shared pathway-specific planning checklists for students looking to enroll in four-year colleges, two-year colleges, technical programs, the military, apprenticeships or trades, and the workforce, helping to give these groups a clear purpose and next steps. The checklists include milestones and deadlines, such as attending informational events, completing forms, applying for scholarships, registering for assessments, completing and submitting the FAFSA, requesting transcripts and finalizing essays. The Grad Groups allow Platt and Maloney's counselors to connect with hundreds of seniors in a matter of days, ensuring that all seniors receive the information and tools they need at the beginning of the application process. Counselors then met with seniors individually to discuss plans, questions, and



progress relative to the postsecondary checklists distributed during Grad Group sessions. Maloney and Platt’s senior Grad Groups kick off the college application campaign with purpose, substance, and peer camaraderie.

East Hartford High School

East Hartford High School (EHHS) wanted to gain a better understanding of students’ postsecondary plans and application progress through their college application and FAFSA completion campaigns. The school takes a truly data-driven approach to the campaign strategy. EHHS developed a nuanced central tracking system and a series of student surveys to collect more accurate and timely data to then inform counselors’ supports for students and families. The senior student surveys dovetail with the school’s postsecondary checklists. EHHS solicits information about which steps students have completed (e.g., recommendation letters requested, essay completed) and highlight areas where students might require additional support. The school’s counselors and College and Career Readiness Taskforce (comprised of teachers, counselors, and administrators) use the survey data to customize follow-up conversations with students during individual conferences scheduled for half-day College and Career Readiness Days hosted throughout the school year. EHHS also uses the survey data to group students according to their postsecondary plans to provide targeted guidance during Senior Seminar classes.

The student surveys culminate with a more substantial Senior Exit Survey that captures students’ final intended postsecondary plans. The school compares this data with National Student Clearinghouse data during the following fall to determine if students ended up enrolling in the same college they planned to attend upon graduation. These tracking efforts uncovered some challenges around “summer melt,” a somewhat common national trend where students intend to enroll in college upon graduation and then do not ultimately matriculate. Through their data tracking efforts, the school pinpointed the need to better support alumni during the summer prior to college enrollment. Data systems at EHHS enable students’ postsecondary success, as well as the school’s continuous growth and improvement.

Hartford Public High School

Educators at Hartford Public High School organize a Senior Signing Day celebration to recognize the diverse postsecondary pathways being pursued by the graduating class. This festive finale goes deeper than simply reading students’ names as they cross a stage. The planning team incorporates a range of staff members involved in seniors’ postsecondary planning, allowing those entrenched in the day-to-day efforts to have a hand in crafting a meaningful and inclusive celebration for graduating seniors.

Students who are embarking on postsecondary pathways outside of two- and four-year colleges are able to share their specific plans (e.g. plumbing apprenticeship, gap year) with the planning team to ensure they can enjoy the same recognition and enthusiasm as their college-bound peers.

In keeping with the day’s celebratory tone, the planning team builds energy and excitement among students and staff, with the goal of making Senior Signing Day less of a formal school activity and more like a pep rally. A high-energy emcee, and the requisite lights, music, and fun, all help to transform the auditorium. Thoughtful additions like raffle prizes, college swag, balloons, and other decorations heighten the excitement. Students close out the event by signing a vinyl “Class of” banner to leave their mark behind as they embark on various pathways.



VI. Helpful Tips

1) Establish Attainable Goals and Targets. For students, life after graduation can seem both far away and just around the corner. Additionally, the postsecondary planning and application processes can seem overwhelming and confusing for students, families, and staff. Schools should set smaller and more manageable goals and targets for students (e.g., all students will complete a resume by October 1st; all college-bound students will submit one application by December 31st). These goals should be ambitious, attainable, and rooted in historic data. School administrators should make students and staff aware of their progress toward goals, including celebrations when the school achieves specific milestones and targets.

2) Use a Collaborative Tracking System. Many school teams use a Google spreadsheet to securely track students' postsecondary progress. A centralized tracking tool allows for collaboration among all staff working with seniors. These tools can promote shared accountability and team efficiency. A shared, online tracking system (i.e., one row per student, one column per step in the process) can make it easier for individuals on a team to share updates and collaborate effectively with limited resources.

3) Build Out a Communications and Messaging Plan. Schools and counselors should strive to make the college application and FAFSA completion processes feel more manageable and less opaque for students and families. School staff should identify key communication moments (e.g., beginning of senior year, when the FAFSA becomes available) and methods (e.g., emails, mailings, text messages, in-person workshops). In all communications, staff should strive to distill information into easily digestible checklists and how-to guides. Maintain a motivational, upbeat, and informational tone.

4) Engage Student Voice. School teams should consider ways to incorporate student voice and leadership in both the design and implementation of college campaigns. Students are well positioned to offer ideas and promote engagement among their peers, helping create a broad college-going culture. For example, on the national #WhyApply Day in September, students can boost the campaign on social media and host a photo booth in the cafeteria during lunch waves. Seniors can serve as peer reviewers for juniors' initial draft college essays. Students from any grade can also add energy to Senior Signing Day, including through participation by the cheerleading team or drum lines or student speakers.

5) Host Visible Campaign Events. Many RISE schools host application-themed events to help students and families access information, resources, and school staff, well ahead of the culminating Senior Signing Day celebration. For example, some network schools distributed ice cream on #WhyApply Day as students shared their reasons for pursuing college. Another school hosted "Cookies, Cocoa, and Common App" workshops after half days leading up to winter vacation.

6) Seek Creative Ways to Involve More Adults. Preparing for any postsecondary pathway requires a variety of skill sets -- from the writing skills necessary for college applications and essays, to the financial literacy skills needed to complete the FAFSA and analyze financial aid packages. Fortunately, high schools have staff and partners who have a wide range of skills and areas of expertise. Schools should work toward a culture where all adults share responsibility for students' postsecondary success. In doing so, schools should look for ways to engage a variety of teachers, volunteers, etc. in helping students with application processes.

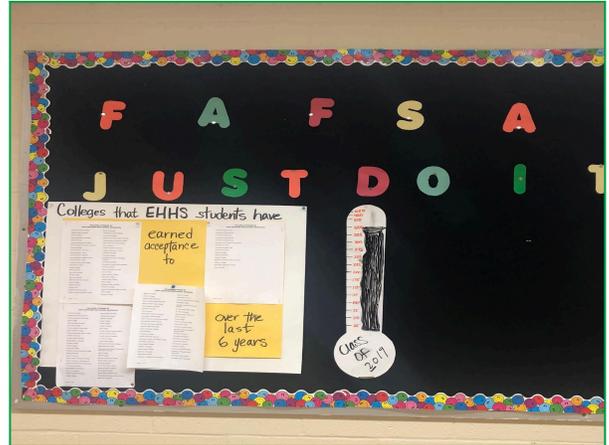


VII. Project Planning

Planning Questions

This section provides planning questions for school teams looking to design and launch successful college application and/or FAFSA completion campaigns. Careful organization, data tracking, and strong communication are central to the success of these campaigns, and school teams are encouraged to proactively establish their vision and goals for these types of initiatives at the outset.

The questions below are meant to support teams in establishing a shared vision and engaging in detailed planning to help the team achieve their goals for impactful college campaigns.



Purpose - Why?

1. What are our strengths and challenges in supporting students' postsecondary planning efforts? What difficulties do students most commonly encounter in the application and financial aid processes?
2. What do the school's historic data tell us (e.g., college application rates, FAFSA completion rates, student surveys)? How can we set ambitious and attainable targets for this year? How will we publicize our targets and track our progress over time?
3. What do we want to achieve through our college application and FAFSA completion campaigns (e.g., cultivate a college-going culture, increase college match rates)? How do we want to celebrate outcomes?

Design - What? How?

4. How do we currently track students' progress through the college application and FAFSA processes?
5. What are our campaign activities? What events are happening when, and what targets do we aim to meet?
6. What systems and structures could improve collaborative efforts around postsecondary planning?
7. How can our team broaden educators' engagement in supporting students' postsecondary access and readiness, especially in connection to college application and/or FAFSA completion campaigns?
8. How can we better inform students and families about postsecondary options and milestones?

Logistics - Who? When? Where?

9. Who is interested in and equipped to lead each of these campaigns and events? How can we distribute tasks among a variety of staff to build engagement and buy-in?
10. What spaces, both physical and temporal (e.g., college and career center, advisory block, counseling appointments, etc.), exist for students to explore and prepare for postsecondary opportunities?

11. What will the kickoff look like for each campaign? What supplies and resources are needed?

Action Plan

Overarching Postsecondary Planning Action Items

Timing	Task/Activity	✓
Late Summer or Beginning of School Year	Form a diverse and representative CCR committee, and establish owners for both the college application and FAFSA completion campaigns, as well as a lead coordinator for Senior Signing Day.	
	Establish CCR committee meeting time, norms, and objectives.	
	Engage in CCR audit and data review (such as College and Career Culture Inventory).	
Fall	Launch college application and FAFSA completion campaigns in a visible way for students, families, and staff.	
Spring	Celebrate successes connected to the college application and FAFSA completion campaigns (e.g., Senior Signing Day, senior awards night, school social media posts).	
	During CCR committee meetings, reflect upon and analyze campaign activities and progress. Add campaign elements in response to the data and student needs. Carefully record reflections and learnings, and preserve data to inform the following year's CCR activities.	

College Application Campaign

Timing	Task/Activity	✓
Design/ Planning to Launch	Gather and review relevant data from prior year (e.g., application rate, senior survey).	
	Engage staff (e.g., school counselors, Grade 12 leaders, and other interested educators) in considering past practices to start, stop, or continue to better support students' application efforts.	
	Create campaign calendar (e.g., workshops, evening events, incentives), including planning team meetings to review data and plan for upcoming events.	
	Create campaign communications plan and promotional materials (e.g., posters, announcements, social media).	
	Create tracking system and/or tools to document student progress and coordinate efforts; establish expectations for data entry and maintenance.	
Launch	Share campaign goals and plan with students and entire school staff.	
	Promote campaign with students and families, including upcoming events.	
Ongoing	Meet with students and families one-on-one, in small groups, and at events to provide support in selecting postsecondary options and compiling application materials.	
	Update tracking system and/or tools as students complete application components.	

	Share out progress at CCR committee meetings, as well as during all-staff meetings. Collaboratively problem solve any hurdles that arise in executing the campaign plan.	
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FAFSA Completion Campaign

Timing	Task/Activity	✓
Design/ Planning to Launch	Gather and review relevant data from previous years' FAFSA completion rates to take stock of current efforts and establish school-wide needs.	
	Engage staff (e.g., school counselors, Grade 12 leaders, and other interested educators) in considering past practices to start, stop, or continue to better support students' FAFSA completion.	
	Create campaign calendar (e.g., workshops, evening events, incentives), including planning team meetings to review data and plan for upcoming events.	
	Create campaign communications plan and promotional materials (e.g., posters, announcements, social media).	
	Create tracking system and/or tools to document student progress and coordinate efforts; establish expectations for data entry and maintenance.	
Launch	Share campaign goals and plan with students and entire school staff.	
	Promote campaign with students and families, including upcoming events.	
Ongoing	Meet with students and families one-on-one, in small groups, and at events to provide support in completing FAFSA or institutional aid form (note: this is especially important for undocumented students applying as Connecticut residents to Connecticut state college and universities).	
	Update tracking system and/or tools as students complete FAFSA or institutional aid forms.	
	Share out progress at regular CCR committee meetings, as well as during all-staff meetings. Collaboratively address any hurdles that arise in executing the campaign plan.	

Senior Signing Day

Timing	Task/Activity	✓
Three months before event	Gather interested staff from CCR Committee (and potentially students) to set a vision for the event, share a timeline for major tasks, and delegate as necessary.	
	Confirm date and time of event and add to school calendar; if inviting families and/or underclassmen, share this information with parents and impacted teachers.	
	Reserve event space, including back-up location, if selecting an outdoor space.	
	Reserve or rent any special equipment (e.g., projector, A/V setup, photo booth).	
	Select presenters and/or performers and confirm availability (e.g., emcee, guest speaker, district superintendent, DJ or drumline, cheerleaders).	

	Determine supply list, including any college swag or prizes, and place supply orders.	
One month before event	Finalize process and any necessary survey tools to collect students' final postsecondary plans (e.g., spreadsheet for counselors, Google Form student survey).	
	Begin collecting students' finalized postsecondary plans using the developed senior exit survey process and tools.	
	Create the program schedule and draft corresponding slide deck.	
	Promote the event among seniors (and families, if applicable) to build excitement and spark conversations among students and staff about the decision-making process for selecting a college and/or other postsecondary pathway.	
One week before event	Review the database of students' finalized postsecondary plans and follow up with individuals who have not yet shared their plans to ensure they are included in the programming.	
	Complete slide deck with students' names and pathways, updating as needed up until the day of the event.	
	Send a final event reminder to presenters, performers, guests, school staff, and families, as applicable.	
Day of event	Decorate event space to create a festive and celebratory backdrop, using college pennants, school colors, and other graduation-themed decor.	
	Celebrate with students!	
	Share photos and/or video with students, families, staff, and social media outlets, as appropriate.	

VIII. Progress Monitoring

Outcome Goals

When designing and implementing new school strategies, it is always important to convey a clear and compelling purpose behind new practices. School leaders should establish why new strategies are important and how they connect to the school's priorities and student outcome goals. In the RISE Network, we connect our strategies to the network's results framework (shown at right). As a results-driven partnership, high schools within the RISE Network work to advance five shared goal areas with measurable performance indicators aligned to each goal.

College application and FAFSA completion campaigns, like all strategies, are intended to impact leading and lagging indicators of student success. Depending on the needs of the school, past student data, existing school systems and structures, teams may identify different focus indicators to measure and monitor their progress. The most important piece is being clear about the school's goals in implementing the strategy and then collecting data and feedback to support continuous learning and improvement.

Goal 1: On-Track Achievement

- Grade 9/schoolwide on-track credit earning
- Grade 9/schoolwide on-track attendance
- Grade 9/schoolwide on-track behavior
- Grade 9/schoolwide overall on-track achievement

Goal 2: College and Career Readiness

- 4-year high school graduation rate
- Grade 9 and schoolwide Bs or better college-ready unweighted GPA ≥ 3.0
- Grades 9-12 PSAT and SAT college readiness benchmark attainment
- CSDE college readiness attainment (Grade 11-12 SAT and/or AP benchmark)
- AP participation

Goal 3: College and Career Access

- FAFSA completion
- College application rates

Goal 4: Postsecondary Success

- College enrollment
- College persistence

Goal 5: Gap Closure

- Grade 9 on-track gap closure by subgroup
- College readiness gap closure by subgroup



Reflection Questions

College application and FAFSA completion campaigns are designed to support postsecondary access and, ultimately, college and career success for all students. Bear in mind that the greatest return on investment can be achieved when these campaigns are paired with strong college and career readiness efforts, rooted in rigorous academic preparation and career exploration throughout the high school years.

Educators involved in college application and FAFSA completion campaigns typically work on a collaborative team or committee to plan and execute effective campaign strategies. These CCR committees often meet on a regular basis to coordinate efforts and address challenges that arise with individual students and/or the cohort at large. Consider leveraging the questions below to guide team reflection conversations, as well as the design of campaign trackers, student and educator feedback surveys, and other pertinent data sources -- both quantitative and qualitative -- connected to this strategy.

College Application and FAFSA Completion Campaign

Implementation Questions

- How effectively did the school implement each of the campaign events and activities? What were the biggest successes and challenges aligned to these events? What conditions supported and enabled specific successes, and how can these conditions be recreated again next year? What root causes contributed to specific challenges, and how can these be addressed in future years?
- What did student and family engagement look like for each event? What feedback did the events generate from students and families?
- What percentage of the staff are involved in the FAFSA and college application campaign efforts? Is the school effectively engaging educators in a variety of different roles (e.g., teachers, administrators, school counselors, college and career coordinators)?
- How often did staff members leading campaigns meet to discuss progress and challenges?
- Did staff receive training aligned to campaign activities? How were these trainings received?
- How are we systematically logging college application and FAFSA completion? What tools or trackers are employed to coordinate efforts? How often are they updated and by whom?

Impact Questions

- How many students have applied to one or more colleges? And according to [federal data](#), how many students have completed the FAFSA? How do these data compare to past years'? In reviewing student-level data, are there demographic trends that require further examination?
- What percentage of students met specific application milestones? How did the school team respond if and when the school failed to meet specific application milestones?
- Did key campaign events (e.g., FAFSA Night, #WhyApply) support upticks in completed applications?
- What is the most impactful strategy we have seen to engage a diverse group of students to submit the FAFSA and/or a college application?

- In what ways has the school's college and career culture shifted as a result of the campaign efforts? What evidence supports this observation?

Senior Signing Day

Implementation Questions

- What did we experience as successes and challenges, both in planning and execution?
 - What conditions supported and enabled specific successes, and how can these conditions be recreated again next year?
 - What root causes contributed to specific challenges, and how can these be addressed in future years?
- Which staff, students, and special guests were included in the planning and day-of activities?
 - How were ideas from different stakeholders incorporated into the plans for the day?
 - How were college-bound students recognized and celebrated leading up to and during the Senior Signing Day activities?
 - How were students selecting other postsecondary pathways recognized and celebrated?
- Who was in the audience for the Senior Signing Day event? How did this add to or detract from the vision and focus for the day?

Impact Questions

- In what ways did Senior Signing Day help the school collect data on students' postsecondary plans?
 - How can this information be used to inform changes to other postsecondary planning supports, such as the college application campaign or visits from military recruiters?
 - How can this information be used to inform changes in college and career readiness and access efforts across Grades 9 through 11, such as early college visits or career exploration activities?
- What feedback did students offer from the Senior Signing Day event?
 - How has this impacted their excitement and commitment to follow through on their postsecondary plans? What evidence supports these observations?
- In what ways has the school's college and career culture shifted as a result of the Senior Signing Day event and activities leading up to it? What evidence supports this observation?
 - If underclassmen were involved, what culture shifts have been noted among those students?

Appendix

College Application and FAFSA Campaign Templates and Tools

College and Career Culture Inventory | [P. 22](#) or standalone [file](#)

Sample Senior Meeting Agendas - 4 Year College | [P. 24](#) or standalone [file](#)

Sample Senior Meeting Agendas - 2 Year College | [P. 26](#) or standalone [file](#)

College Application Checklists | [P. 28](#) or standalone [file](#)

College Enrollment Checklist | [P. 30](#) or standalone [file](#)

Sample Senior Signing Day Schedule (Full Day) | [P. 33](#) or standalone [file](#)

COLLEGE AND CAREER CULTURE INVENTORY

Instructions: This inventory tool is based on Dr. Patricia McDonough’s framework for building and strengthening a school’s college and career culture. For each element, indicate (“X”) your assessment of our school’s stage of implementation.

Definitions of Stages of implementation:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not Yet: Limited evidence and/or spotty implementation (e.g. individual staff members or teams). ● Initial Stages: Evidence of early and intentional progress, potentially with some stronger pockets. ● Developing: Considerable adoption and implementation with areas for continued growth and exploration. ● Well-Established: Full, consistent, and exemplary implementation. Model school for this element. 				
Elements of College and Career Culture	Stages of Implementation			
	Not Yet	Initial Stages	Developing	Well-Established
1. College and Career Talk: Clear, ongoing communication about college and careers so that all students develop a college- and career-bound identity.				
2. Clear Expectations: Explicit goals around college and career preparation are defined and communicated clearly, consistently, and in a variety of ways.				
3. Information and Resources: Students have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college and career information.				
4. Comprehensive Counseling Model: All counselors are postsecondary-focused counselors, and all student interactions with counselors are college and career advising opportunities.				
5. Testing and Curriculum: Students are informed about necessary tests and are given opportunities to prepare for them.				
6. Faculty Involvement: Faculty are active, informed partners with counselors, students, and families and professional development opportunities are available.				
7. Family Involvement: Family members have opportunities to gain college and career knowledge and understand their role in supporting students.				
8. Partnerships: There are active links between the school and local colleges, universities, apprenticeship programs, etc., that can lead to field trips, fairs, and enrichment opportunities.				
9. Articulation: Students have a seamless experience from Kindergarten through HS graduation, with ongoing vertical communication and coordination of college and career activities among schools.				

College and Career Culture Inventory Protocol

1. Individual review and completion of the inventory (5 minutes).
2. Each person shares two elements that stood out, one for its high presence at the school and one for its limited presence (10 minutes).
3. Open discussion, guided by the following questions (10 minutes)
 - a. What **strengths** did this activity reveal?
 - b. What **gaps** did this activity reveal?

Consider using the sections below to plan out the month-by-month campaign/programming foci for your CCR team, and the data you will examine at different moments throughout the year.

Campaign/Program Foci	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Sophomore college visits										
SAT strategy										
College app campaign										
FAFSA app campaign										
Gr. 12 college app completion										
Senior signing day										
CCR summer transition										

Data Foci	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Gr. 9-12 B's or better										
Gr. 9-12 grad on-track										
Gr. 11 post-secondary plan										
Gr. 12 post-secondary plan										
Gr. 12 college app completion										
Gr. 12 FAFSA completion										
Gr. 12 job app completion										

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE-BOUND SENIOR MEETING AGENDAS

Fall Senior Group Meeting Agenda *Four-Year College*

Agenda	Time
Introduction	5 minutes
College Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application components ● Application options ● 2-year vs. 4-year 	5 minutes
Naviance Account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update email address ● How to sign up for college visits 	5 minutes
Transcript Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to request a transcript in Naviance 	5 minutes
Common Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create account ● Complete Education section ● Link Common App to Naviance 	25 minutes
SAT/ACT Dates and Deadlines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SAT October Exam, Registration deadline ● SAT November Exam, Registration deadline ● ACT October Exam, Registration deadline 	5 minutes
Student Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review application checklist for next steps ● Read resource packet ● Log community service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of hours (scholarship/Promise if available) ○ Available upcoming opportunities ● Keep in communication with counselor 	Handouts
Exit Survey	5 minutes

Individual Senior Meeting Agenda

Four-Year College

Agenda	Time
Review graduation requirements	5 minutes
Brag Sheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location within Naviance ● Steps to submit ● Use in scholarship applications ● Letter of recommendation requests 	5 minutes
College Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review list of colleges ● Explain additional college exploration options, if needed 	10 minutes
SAT Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review score(s) ● Use grid data to determine if retaking is beneficial ● Share SAT retake options 	5 minutes
Four-year College Checklist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review next steps ● Clarify student responsibilities 	5 minutes
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions or concerns? ● Keep in communication with counselor 	5 minutes

TWO-YEAR COLLEGE-BOUND SENIOR MEETING AGENDAS

Fall Senior Group Meeting Agenda *Two-Year College/Technical Programs*

Agenda	Time
Introduction	5 minutes
College Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application components ● Application options ● 2-year vs. 4-year ● Transferring via CT Transfer Ticket 	10 minutes
Community College Application Days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical schools application process (<i>pending interest</i>) ● Fee Waivers / Application Fee ● Community College Fair in January 	5 minutes
Naviance Account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update email address ● How to sign up for college visits 	10 minutes
Transcript Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to request a transcript in Naviance 	10 minutes
SAT Dates and Deadlines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SAT October Exam, Registration deadline ● SAT November Exam, Registration deadline 	5 minutes
Student Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review application checklist for next steps ● Read resource packet ● Log community service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of hours (scholarship/Promise if available) ○ Available upcoming opportunities ● Keep in communication with counselor 	Handouts
Exit Survey	5 minutes

Individual Senior Meeting Agenda

Two-Year College/Technical School

Agenda	Time
Review graduation requirements	5 minutes
Brag Sheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location within Naviance ● Steps to submit ● Use in scholarship applications ● Letter of recommendation requests 	5 minutes
Community College/Technical School Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss programs of interest ● Review list of community colleges/technical schools ● Encourage (community) college campus visits ● Promote Community College Fair in January 	10 minutes
Review Two-Year/Technical School Checklist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review next steps ● Clarify student responsibilities 	5 minutes
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions or concerns? ● Keep in communication with counselor 	5 minutes

COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLISTS

Four-Year College Application Checklist	
Milestone	Completion Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your counselor to discuss interest in attending a four-year college and draft initial college list during junior planning meeting	March - April <i>(junior year)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Create Common Application account	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the <i>Profile and Education</i> section on your Common Application and link with Naviance	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your counselor to confirm interest in the four-year college path, update email address, and complete “ <i>Colleges I’m Applying To</i> ” list in Naviance. <input type="checkbox"/> Review checklist requirements, including type of application <input type="checkbox"/> Register to retake SAT if needed	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete Brag Sheet in Naviance	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Request recommendation letters from teachers	September-November
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete Common Application and/or all college applications	September -November
<input type="checkbox"/> Create FAFSA account and FSA ID and CSS/Financial Aid profile if needed	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize college essay	October-November
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm SAT Scores are sent to colleges through College Board account	October-December
<input type="checkbox"/> “ <i>Request transcript</i> ” for all colleges you are applying to in Naviance	October-December
<input type="checkbox"/> When ready to submit application(s), review with your counselor and confirm all materials are complete	Two weeks prior to the deadline
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend Scholarship Fair	January
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete and submit the FAFSA	January <i>(can be done as early as October)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Review acceptance letters and financial aid information with your counselor or college and career coordinator	March-April
<input type="checkbox"/> Select college and pay deposit	April

Two-Year College and Technical Programs Application Checklist

Milestone	Completion Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your counselor to discuss interest in attending a two year college and draft initial college list during junior planning meeting	March-April <i>(junior year)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your counselor to confirm interest in the two year college path and review checklist requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Application requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Fee Waiver <input type="checkbox"/> SAT Scores exemption and/or consider retaking the SAT <input type="checkbox"/> Register to attend one of the upcoming field trips on the Community College Tour 	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Create FAFSA account and FSA ID	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend the Community College Fair	January
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend the Scholarship Fair	January
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete and submit the FAFSA	January <i>(can be done as early as October)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit applications to community colleges and/or technical schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Register to attend a Community College Application Day 	January-March
<input type="checkbox"/> Review community college/technical school acceptances, financial aid, and placement information with your counselor or the college and career coordinator	March-April
<input type="checkbox"/> Create MyCommnet account when acceptance email is received	March-May
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule Accuplacer assessment if needed	May-June
<input type="checkbox"/> Register for Classes	May-June

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT CHECKLIST

This checklist will provide you with the steps necessary to successfully enroll in college after accepting a spot in their incoming freshman class. As you complete each task in the sections below, mark it completed using the checkbox, to keep yourself on track. In addition to using this guide, ensure that you regularly check your mail, college email address, and college school portal account over the summer.

Admissions and Commitment Fee

<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm Admissions You will receive notification of admissions four to six weeks after you submit your application. If you have any questions, call the Admissions office.	Deadline/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment Fee/Deposit You can pay your deposit online by logging into your college website's student portal.	Deadline/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Set Up Email Once you have been accepted, make sure you set up your college email on the college website's student portal. Check this account daily since important information will be communicated.	Deadline/Notes

Testing

<input type="checkbox"/> Take Placement Exams You will take your placement tests during orientation. Contact the Admissions Office with any questions.	Deadline/Notes
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Financial Aid

<input type="checkbox"/> Accept Financial Aid / Set Up Payment Plan You can view your award and find loan information by going to your student account. See your college's website on how to set up an account. For additional questions, call the Financial Aid office.	Deadline/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete Entrance Counseling / Sign MPN If you are taking out any federal loans for college, you will need to complete entrance counseling and sign your Master Promissory Note (MPN) before their loans are disbursed. Entrance counseling and signing the MPN can be completed at www.studentloans.gov .	Deadline/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Check for Verification Colleges may send you a verification form which means that you will not be able to receive any financial aid until you provide additional documents. Complete the verification form and log into your FAFSA to use the IRS link to transfer your family's updated tax forms. If it doesn't work online you will need to request a copy of your tax transcript at https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript . For more information, contact the Financial Aid Office.	Deadline/Notes

Housing Forms

<input type="checkbox"/> Housing Deposit If you will be living on-campus, submit a housing deposit to confirm your registration.	Deadline/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit Housing Forms Your college will send you housing forms to complete during the summer. If you have questions, contact the Residential Life Office.	Deadline/Notes

Special Opportunity Programs

- Submit Forms and Attend Orientation / Summer Programs**
If you have been accepted through EOP, you are required to attend a pre-college summer program. Call EOP or visit the college's website for more information.

Deadline/Notes

Orientation / Class Registration

- Submit Immunization Records and High School Diploma**
You are required to complete and submit your Immunization forms before you start classes. Visit your college's website to learn more about submitting immunization records. Contact Admissions to confirm that they have received your final transcript.

Deadline/Notes

- Sign Up for Orientation**
Summer Orientation Programs are scheduled during the summer, and are often mandatory. Visit your college's website or contact the Admissions Office to learn more.

Deadline/Notes

- Register for Classes**
You will complete your enrollment form and, based on your preferences, your college will enroll you in classes, which can be altered later with an advisor during orientation.

Deadline/Notes

- Follow-Up on Individual Education Plan**
If you had an IEP in high school or if you require additional services, make sure that you contact the office of disability support at your college.

Deadline/Notes

First Day of Class

- Confirm First Day of Class**
Visit your college's website to view the academic calendar for important dates.

Deadline/Notes

This document is adapted from the college- and university-specific enrollment checklists provided by New Visions for Public Schools.



Platt Senior Signing Day Schedule

Time	Activity	Lead
9:45 AM	Announcement for juniors and seniors to come to the gym - Band begins to play in gym	Principal Band Director
10:00 AM	Program begins - Emcee welcomes everyone, introduces program	Emcee
10:05 AM	Brief speeches - Welcome from Principal - Message from Superintendent - Two teacher speeches	Emcee
10:20 AM	Recognition of seniors by college, military, and workforce plans - Each group is called out alphabetically by institution name, students stand as their individual names are read - Military/Veteran Guest to introduce Military	Emcee Counselors/CCR Coordinator
10:50 AM	Emcee closes, gives dismissal instructions to juniors	Emcee
10:55 AM	Bell rings, juniors dismiss	Emcee
11:00 AM	Seniors dismissed by college to begin senior celebration - Bracelets, lanyards, and tickets distributed as seniors file out - Food trucks arrive - Music from senior Spotify playlist begins over speakers - Prize drawing and banner-signing tables open	Supervisor (distribute tickets) Counselor (food trucks) CCR Coordinator (prizes/banner)
11:30 AM	Photo booth opens	Counselor
11:45 AM	First small prize drawing	Counselor
12:15 PM	Second small prize drawing	Counselor
12:45 PM	Third small prize drawing	CCR Coordinator
1:00 PM	Food trucks leave	Counselor
1:30 PM	Photo booth closes	Counselor
1:40 PM	Final prize drawings	Counselor
2:00 PM	End of celebration	